

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



Dear/Tēnā koutou, Right Honourable Prime Minister Christopher Luxon, Honourable Deputy Prime Minister Winston Peters, Honourable David Seymour, Honourable Minister of Finance Nicola Willis, Honourable Minister for Social Development and Employment and Minister for Disability Issues, Louise Upston, Honourable Minister of Education Erica Stanford, Honourable Minister for Tertiary Education and Skills Penny Simmonds, Honourable Minister for Youth Matt Doocey, and Honourable Minister for Children, Karen Chhour.

This open letter has been signed by cross-industry partners to call on the Coalition Government to ensure that all young people leave school equipped with employability skills and a clear pathway plan.

Youth Employability Aotearoa (YEA) represents a network of youth employment, education and career practitioners, business interests, and supporters who understand the vital importance of a young healthy workforce for the future success of our country.

We are ready and able to work alongside ministers and policymakers to ensure young people are supported to become work-ready, thrive in the workplace, lead sustainable and fulfilling careers, and form a reliable workforce pipeline to fulfil our labour market needs.

Young people should leave school with skills for work and an appropriate pathway plan to give them the confidence and ability to find and sustain employment. Our school system needs to effectively connect education with the world of work to engage students with relevant learnings. While there are some schools that are excelling in this space, there are too many youth falling out of school, or struggling to sustain employment, who are at risk of becoming NEET statistics*.

BusinessNZ's The Future of Workforce Supply 2023 highlights a workforce shortfall of 250,000 by 2048. With this challenge reflected across the OECD countries, immigration will not be the silver bullet for New Zealand. Seeking solutions within our own borders solves not just our talent and skill shortage but will reduce the strain on mental health care and reduce crime while empowering young New Zealanders to become successful and contribute positively to society and tax revenue.

* The Tertiary Education Commission identifies the following risk factors for those transitioning to NEET as:
• Educational factors such as lower leaving qualifications • Lack of work experience • Lack of soft skills • Feeling as if school is “not for me”

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



Businesses need pipelines of local talent if they are to be successful and grow the economy. However, many employers have become disillusioned with young employees who fail to meet basic standards of work readiness. We need better integration of employability training across New Zealand schools to prepare all young people to become contributing members of society.

We wholeheartedly support the Coalition Government's ambition to redress the shortcomings in our education system. We ask that improvements are not limited to literacy and numeracy. The poor attendance records, low NCEA scores, and growing number of NEETs, reveal just how disengaged the youth of today are from the education system they find themselves in. The Coalition Government wants to improve school attendance. Our network knows firsthand that youth engage with employability training – it's not a hard sell because youth understand the 'why'. They attend and engage in training that clearly prepares them for their future work life.

The World Economic Forum's Future of Jobs 2023 report concludes that analytical and creative thinking are the most important skills for workers, followed by resilience, flexibility and agility, motivation and self-awareness, curiosity, and lifelong learning. These soft skills are recognised as vital for employees who must adapt to disrupted workplaces as the world of work rapidly changes. Therefore, these soft skills need to be explicitly integrated into school learning programmes.

OECD longitudinal studies show that career guidance should begin before the age of 15. Students at secondary school should extensively explore and experience the world of work, and young people should have access to a trained career counsellor to support their pathway planning. However, New Zealand lacks an environment that enables quality career education in schools. We urgently need to scope and develop options that support the delivery of quality careers services in all secondary schools.

Early investment in employability skill training, professional career advice, and pathway planning for all secondary school students will ultimately lead to better outcomes for our youth, businesses, and communities. Present and future generations of New Zealanders depend upon action now.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



We ask that all young people at high school be given access to:

Professional Career Advice and Connections to Employment for all students

A lack of understanding of career pathways contributes to nearly one in four youth suffering from high levels of anxiety, fatigue, and depression. School career services are not delivered with consistency or equity across New Zealand schools.

We ask that the Tertiary Education Commission's National Careers System Strategy be endorsed by the Government and that the plans for improvements continue. We ask that all high school students receive career guidance from professionals, who are trained and supported, so NZ youth can make informed decisions about their future studies. We support the Careers and Transition Education Association NZ, and we ask the Coalition Government to endorse their recommendations.

Employability Skills Training

Experts agree, now more than ever, that youth need skills and career guidance to prepare them for the changing world of work. The advent of AI ensures that soft skills, such as adaptability, resilience, interpersonal skills, and critical thinking, are highly crucial in creating a workforce pipeline that is ready for this shifting landscape.

We ask that all schoolchildren in Years 7 to 10 receive training in these core skills through Learning Programmes, that in the new curriculum design, there is a focus on the soft skills in all learning areas so that all students have access to them from the beginning of school.

Driver licence Training

Many youth struggle to access driver education and training. Only 24% of job seekers aged 18-24 have a restricted or full licence, but over 70% of jobs and apprenticeships require at least a restricted driver's licence. Enabling high school students to start their driver licence journey is more important than ever.

We support the Driving Change Network, which represents over 450 community driver licence providers. We ask the Government to incorporate and fund driver education, training, and licensing into all NZ secondary schools through partnerships with community driver licensing providers.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



To achieve these goals, we, the undersigned, ask the Coalition Government to invest in the existing business units within MOE and TEC that support transitions. We ask the Coalition Government to support the creation of a working group of community, education, industry, and Local Government representatives to align with those business units and promote best practice implementation of employability skill training, driver licensing, and professional pathway guidance in secondary schools across the county.

MTFJ

MAYORS TASKFORCE FOR JOBS

Mayors Taskforce for Jobs (MTFJ) is pleased to sign this open letter in support of YEA. MTFJ shares the vision that all young people have opportunities to develop their potential and determine their futures. Our collective of mayors across the country understands the importance and necessity of developing pathways that build economic well-being for young people. We wholeheartedly join YEA in its call to the Coalition Government to take decisive action towards ensuring that every young person in New Zealand has access to quality career guidance, employability training, and pathway planning, empowering them to thrive in the workforce and contribute to the prosperity of their communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Baxter', written in a cursive style.

Mayor Max Baxter,
Chair, Mayors Taskforce for Jobs

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



CAREERS AND TRANSITIONS EDUCATION ASSOCIATION NZ
Tara Heta
Kaiarahi
Craig Dyason
National President
Hamish Davidson
Co-Chair Wellington & Wairarapa



DRIVING CHANGE NETWORK
Wendy Robertson
Director



CAREER DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND
Cherie Perrow
President



ARA TAIOHI
Jane Zintl
Chief Executive Officer

Ara Taiohi supports the call from YEA for the government to work with employability and Youth Work experts to invest in systems and infrastructure that support rangatahi to transition well into employment.



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION
Colleen Upton
President

We 100% agree with what YEA are saying in regard to ensuring all young people leave school equipped with employability skills. Across industry we repeatedly see young people applying for jobs in construction and infrastructure woefully unprepared.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



CHRISTCHURCH YOUTH COUNCIL
Charles Romero, Member
& Kate Burgess, Coordinator



SELWYN YOUTH COUNCIL
Bhavya Malhotra
Two-term Member

We are signing because in our recent survey we have noticed that youth want more job opportunities and ways into the workforce



WAITAKI YOUTH COUNCIL
Sophie Notman &
Lincoln Matua Brosnahan
Chair & Deputy Chair

We are signing because we believe these are very important things that need to be properly addressed. Children find their independence by driving and they need further support around it. Our country is full of older people, we need these younger children to be coming through/ growing older with experience and a good vision for their country, for their world, and for their society. So many people our age think they are invincible when they are not. We are going through a massive financial crisis and money is tight - they need to see this, and awareness needs to be done. Skills to be able to work in a workspace need to be developed in school not once they are out of school - it is vital this is done. This is why we are signing our names towards this project something needs to be done!



HASTINGS YOUTH COUNCIL
Chris Proctor
Chair



YOUTH VOICE CANTERBURY
Caroline Gordon
Project Coordinator

High School is an important developmental time for our youth, so we should be providing them with as many opportunities as we can that set them up for their best future, regardless of the career path that they choose.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



Auckland Business Chamber delivers a range of services including Education to Employment, Employment placement services for MSD, and Work Readiness training for NEET youth, and is the largest driving licence provider to the Government.

AUCKLAND BUSINESS CHAMBER
Leah Gates
General Manager

We wholeheartedly agree with the issues raised in this letter based on our 20 years of experience.



VENTURE TIMARU
Nigel Davenport
Kaiwhakahaere Matua / Chief Executive



BUSINESS SOUTH
Mike Collins
Chief Executive Officer

Business South advocates for over 1,300 businesses across Otago and Southland and we work with the majority of Secondary Schools, Agencies like MOE, TEC, and MSD and Tertiary providers in the region creating career pathways for our youth into the business community.

We would like to work in partnership with the Government to overcome the issues of today with practical solutions that will make a tangible difference and therefore support this open letter and its focus areas.



HUTT VALLEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Patrick McKibbin
Chief Executive

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



TODD FOUNDATION
Seumas Fantham
Executive Director



JR MCKENZIE TRUST
Robyn Scott
Executive Director



LEN REYNOLDS TRUST
Melissa Gibson
Chief Executive Officer



HUIHUI
Logan Walden
Director

As the Director of Mahi 4 The Future Limited T/A Huihui HR and Recruitment. I have over 10 years of experience with combined experience in HR, Recruitment, Corporate Services, and Employment Support.

Myself and the Organisation strongly believe that it is important for employment skills to be taught in secondary schools this would allow rangatahi to be more employable upon leaving school. Within my experience, I have found that youth who have employable-based skills or went through optional courses with an aspect of employment tend to aim higher and succeed more. As an Organisation we have a strong focus on coaching, supporting, and maximising these opportunities and outcomes this is a massive aspect for the government to consider and we fully support this open letter to stop the aspect and chances of Rangatahi immediately needing to go onto a benefit and instead allowing them to have employable skills training makes it more likely that they will secure a role before or upon finishing school.



WAIKATO WELLBEING PROJECT
Harvey Brookes
Executive Director

The WWP supports the open letter as it fully aligns with the results of our own research about rangatahi wellbeing (Rangatahi | Youth Waikato | Waikato Wellbeing Project), and the insights we have gained from actively listening to people and communities at the front line of wellbeing leadership and advocacy (Lots of Little Fires Waikato | Waikato Wellbeing Project). We fully endorse the positive and impactful recommendations that YEA are making and urge the government and all organisations who are engaged in youth wellbeing to apply their resources and influence to make these changes happen.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



Apprenticeship Training Trust

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING
TRUST

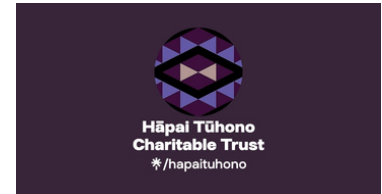
Nicola Dashper
Chief Executive Officer



TWIN COAST CYCLE TRAIL

POU HERENGA TAI

Trace Dalton
General Manager



HĀPAI TŪHONO

Tanya Kaihe
Amorangi Chief Executive Officer



WHAKAATA TOHU TOHU
MIRROR SERVICES

Deb Fraser
Kaitiaki / Director

It is vital young people have the opportunity to achieve skills and assistance that are easily integrated into their education, training and career pathway. That ultimately assist them to be successful with in employment.



MINDMATTERS

Dr Louise Cowpertwait
Founder & Chief Executive Officer



DISABILITY CONNECT

Mike Potter
Chief Executive Officer

IHC's recent publication Health and Wellbeing Indicators for New Zealanders with Intellectual Disability published December 2023 shows that people with Intellectual Disabilities have considerably lower NCEA 2 achievement than their peers and that approximately 40% of 15 to 24-year-olds with Intellectual Disabilities are not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET). Given 1 million of our population is estimated as having a disability we need to take seriously the need to provide an education that leads to post-school opportunities for disabled people.



WHITECLIFFE COLLEGE

Fay Amaral
Chief Executive Officer

Every day at Whitecliffe College we see the employability challenges faced by students entering from school and in tertiary education. Practical skills are universally needed in schools to support employability for all our rangatahi.



IHC

Tania Thomas
Director of Advocacy

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



INSPIRING STORIES.

INSPIRING STORIES
Devon Murphy-Davids
Chief Executive

At Inspiring Stories, we believe in the power of young people to create change. Do you? We support young New Zealanders to connect, be inspired, build capability, and take action to make a difference for our future.

What better way to care for and support Aotearoa's young people in making a difference for our future than upskilling our rangatahi in schools with the tools of employability training, driver licensing, and professional career advice in schools.

Our rangatahi are our future - they deserve the best fit-for-purpose knowledge possible that sets them up for the optimal chance for success! Thank you for considering this letter.



AMY SCOTT EPIC PEOPLE
DEVELOPMENT
Amy Scott
Founder & Director

It's time NZ catches up to the rest of the world, and be leaders in supporting our kids learning real and practical skills to assist with getting jobs. Empower our tamariki of today to gain skills and guidance that will truly help them.



FIREBRAND
Malcolm Hayes
Marketing & Design Strategist

As a Recruitment business leader, we see every day the impact that a lack of understanding of soft skills and behavioural aptitude results in poor employment outcomes. This includes longevity in employment. Pastoral care of our youth as they head toward employment is critical. This care can come from a variety of sources but most importantly starts in our education sector and with wrap-around programs like Youth Employability, it drives better outcomes.

The Recruitment industry has a vested interest in youth development and employment. Many recruiters are already working alongside schools or in ways to help. Our youth are our future leaders and we must invest in them now.



ERG RECRUITMENT
Fiona Harland
Director

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



CAREER DYNAMIC

Auckland, New Zealand

CAREER DYNAMIC
Lee Brodie
Director

We need to address the necessity to provide practical and effective support to all school leavers prior to entering the marketplace or education starting with:

- enabling students to understand what they want from their work and life in the future
- their innate interests and strengths that act as motivators
- how to access the information and resources that they need to make informed and accurate career decisions.
- How to navigate the marketplace

Understanding how to make well-informed and accurate career decisions and how to successfully access and navigate the marketplace lay the foundations for developing greater employability, engagement, confidence, and resilience for the rest of their working lives. Otherwise, they run the risk of heading down unsatisfying career pathways and are more likely to feel confused, defeated, and stuck and to reactively latch onto the first idea of a job that is suggested to them.

In our practice over the last 30 years, we have worked with thousands of adults who present as confused, frustrated, and disengaged with their career or lack of - 10/20/30 years after leaving school. Some have been trapped in low-wage work but many are high-achieving professionals and workers who have hit the wall - stuck, often depressed, frustrated, and very vulnerable in economic recessions. When they rethink and discover their future career pathways and are excited, motivated, and galvanised for action they inevitably say - **IMAGINE WHAT I COULD HAVE ACHIEVED IN MY LIFE IF I HAD KNOWN HOW TO MAKE SOUND CAREER DECISIONS WHEN I LEFT SCHOOL.** This is the basis of an economic and human productivity issue for New Zealand.



CANTERBURY YOUTH WORKERS COLLECTIVE
RERENGA AWA
Tim Perry
Manager



PUKETE NEIGHBOURHOOD
HOUSE
Scott Tiffany
General Manager
Freya McMillan
Youth Development



INZONE
Peter Doake
Director



NEW ZEALAND ETHICAL
EMPLOYERS
Tanya Pouwhare
Chief Executive

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



GREENSPACE TRAINING
Jacqui Neilson
Founder & Director

I'm signing because I understand how vitally important it is for all our young people to be skilled and prepared for the world of work before they leave high school. I have worked alongside employers, businesses, and gateway teams in developing work-ready programs to support the construction and logistics sectors in upskilling school leavers, ensuring they are ready to enter the job market. As a mother of two, who chose to enrol my kids in the Gateway programme, I'd like to see Gateway receive the same status and support as the programmes that take our young people on the tertiary pathway.



AOTAHI
Naomi Hughes
Managing Director

We are currently working with rangatahi in our district in direct response to a need to improve rangatahi engagement in employment and/or further education when they leave school.

It is apparent that exposure to career pathways needs to start at a young age so that by the time rangatahi leave school they have been exposed to a range of options and feel prepared to make an informed decision about the best pathway forward for them.



We support the people of tomorrow to have access to the skills they will need to thrive in the workplace and also in life!
Poipoia te kakano kia puawai - nurture the seed and it will blossom



SEEDS FOR CHANGE
& SEED WAIKATO
Tania Pointon
Chief Executive Officer



MYNEXTMOVE
Liam Brown
Education to Employment Coordinator

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



OUTWARD BOUND
Malindi Mclean
Chief Executive



CAREER JOURNEY
Heather Lowery-Kappes
Career Development Professional



PARTNERS PORIRUA
Salā Henry Samia
General Manager



TAUPŌ PATHWAYS
Gaeleen Wilkie
Manager



YOUNG WORKERS RESOURCE CENTRE
Caitlin Wilson
General Manager



SOUTH AUCKLAND YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS
Jerome Tairi
Founder



JOBS IN CENTRAL HAWKE'S BAY
Jono Craig
MTFJ Coordinator



YOUTH EMPLOYMENT SUCCESS
Bex Twemlow
Founder



YOUTH TOWN
Andree Atkinson
Chief Executive (acting)

We share the government's concern that the longer a young person remains out of work, the more likely they are to suffer poor social and economic outcomes later in life. Evidence-based initiatives are essential to provide young people with the work-ready skills and confidence to get and keep a job. Youthtown fully supports Youth Employability Aotearoa's call to engage with the Coalition Government to work together identifying and implementing solutions that work for our young people.



WORK READY KĀPITI
John Scutter
Chair



REBEL BUSINESS SCHOOL
Tony Henderson-Newport
Chief Kiwi

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



REAP AOTEAROA
Tracey Shepherd
Director

REAPs work in rural communities and support young people in our rural schools to have access to effective, relevant and fit-for-purpose programmes that best meet their needs.

We know that access to many programmes is not equitable for rural students and support any quality initiatives that allow them to gain the valuable skills and knowledge to be successful in their post-school lives, whether that is in employment or in further study.



YOUTH INSPIRE
Desire Morris
General Manager

Youth Inspire works with young people who have either disengaged from the School Curriculum or have left School with no soft skills and are not work-ready. Having employability taught within the High School environment – as a starter or to plant a seed - would be advantageous to all. Youth organisations like us could then work with Young People that need extra care and guidance through their employability journey.

We see many young people come through, with little to no understanding of the working environments, what is needed, and what options are out there. Especially if they are not academically inclined, and their pathway is not Tertiary Education, namely University for various reasons. It is a hard time to navigate, and if there was more emphasis on support, understanding, and opportunities, We would see our young people lead with more purpose for themselves.



INDUSTRY TRAINING
SOLUTIONS
Poppy Clapperton
Chief Executive Officer

We wholeheartedly support the YEA wider network in ensuring that all young people leave school equipped with employability skills and a clear pathway plan. ITS courses contribute to narrowing the gap between school and connections to employment and careers advice. Our endorsement of this letter serves to show just how many of us are concerned that youth will be left behind and disadvantaged if suitable and effective improvements to ensure young people can become work-ready are not implemented in a “total” way.

The employability skill training and pathway guidance that we undertake are essential in promoting, developing, and inspiring confidence in our youth so that they can achieve. In the current environment, unless this collaborative improvement is endorsed, we fear that the NZ youth will be further behind than even they are presently.

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



SCHOOL/KURA CAREERS ADVISORS / GATEWAY COORDINATORS / SPECIAL NEEDS SUPPORT

DOUGLAS MULLER
Careers Teacher
Orewa College

I work with young people every day and I see how hopelessly they are prepared to enter the adult world. Our careers department is actually relatively well resourced and we still find it extremely difficult to support our school leavers.

NATASHA JEFFREY
Careers and Pathways Coordinator
ELEANOR BLAKEY
Career Coach & Gateway Coordinator
One Tree Hill College

The curriculum is so full of 'important' but not meaningful for all 'stuff'. At the end of the day, you can have all the knowledge you like but if you don't know how or where to direct that knowledge, it becomes worthless knowledge. If you don't have a licence to get to work or the knowledge of how to find and secure a meaningful job, it affects mental health and therefore social constructs of society. Investigating and finding your career, your personal 'why' is important knowledge overarching all curriculum areas and needs to be valued in schools and not just given lip service. If we want our students to engage in school they need a purpose, they need to know how and why it fits into what they are doing. Look at Canada and the UK to see how they are integrating Career education, they see the value. If we don't have it mandated, principals will not value it and our students will miss out and, in the bigger picture, society will suffer.

DUNCAN TRICKEY
Special Needs Coordinator
Otago Girls Highschool

Signing on behalf of youth finding themselves funneled into university or seeing themselves as dropouts. This has to stop.

MEL VEITUNA
Pouarahi Māori
Ngā Taiātea Wharekura

MELISSA LOWE
Gateway Coordinator
Rangitoto College

JOSIE HUNTER
Careers Advisor
Karamū High School

MICHELLE MOTU-HETA
Senior Facilitator
Te Whare Waiura
After School & Holiday Programme

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE COALITION GOVERNMENT



CONTRACTORS / CONSULTANTS

BARUK JACOB
Experience Designer

I have personally seen the value of employability training - this is what helped me go from being a troubled teen to being in roles that help private and public sector organisations in Aotearoa NZ work on their strategy. Training in skills such as these makes a big difference, particularly to those of us who are trying to break out of the patterns of generational poverty.

TANYA DERRETT-HOUGHTON
Career Development Lecturer
& Career and Transition Specialist

I have spent many years working in education and see daily the impact of limited or no professional career support (from qualified and experienced Career Professionals). There is a huge disconnect for most students from school to further education or work. They lack an understanding of their own career needs, and what the opportunities are now and into the future, they are not equipped for the massive change that is happening in the world of work and lack the skills to navigate the change. It's unfair for them to not be educated in a way that sets them up sustainably.

KERRI HATLEY-JONES
National Learning Advisor

I work in the youth sector for a private training organisation and am ex-careers in school so I completely understand and agree with this Open Letter.

WENDY KAPONGA
Vocational Consultant

In the past, I have worked in the Education sector as a Careers practitioner/Careers Adviser and know the challenges for teaching staff who may be experts in their subject matter but, receive no professional development in transitioning or supporting students with preparing them for the world of work. With the myriad of other priorities that teachers are confronted with it would be better provided for by external providers this is why I strongly support the work that YEA and other like-minded agencies can provide students with and hope this can be also available in rural areas.

LYNETTE REID
Curriculum Specialist

BARBARA CAVANAGH
Curriculum Specialist

RHIANNON WALTON
Recruitment Consultant

KIT SINCLAIR
Animator