

Minister of Education
Honorable Chris Hipkins
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

15 October 2019

Kia ora Minita Hipkins,

Māori, Pasifika and low-income learners are being denied their right to a range of educational opportunities with programmes of study continuing to be slashed, based on a failed funding model.

Once again, the most vulnerable learners in our society are being disadvantaged by an education system that has traditionally failed them at all levels.

We hold grave fears that this failure will continue in the vocational education sector, despite the extensive reforms underway and the promises made in the recent draft Tertiary Education Strategy priorities.

We hold these grave fears because our education institutions are continuing to slash programmes based on a failed funding model.

The most recent example is the proposed cutting of programmes at Manukau Institute of Technology.

You will be very aware that MIT draws learners from communities with high levels of social and economic disadvantage; has a high proportion of learners who are Māori and Pasifika; and, has many adult and second chance learners.

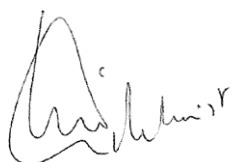
You have repeatedly stated that these learners are a high priority for you and your government. It is proposed for the new charter of NZIST that the institutions must hold 'inclusivity' as a core principle; and meet the needs of its learners 'in particular those who are under-served by the education system'; and, to ensure the needs of adult and second-chance learners are 'afforded high priority'.

Cuts like those at MIT – will mean that NZIST will fail to address the core principles of accessibility inclusivity, and culturally appropriate delivery.

What's more the ongoing reviews and restructurings in the ITP sector mean that NZIST will have lost institutional knowledge and excellent staff before it opens its door. At MIT it is proposed to cut specific Māori tourism– at a time when the value of Māori-specific education has been recognised. In addition, the cutting of the Pasifika-focused Creative Arts is a huge cultural loss to the South Auckland community, which holds the arts at its centre. These once-thriving programmes, both in the institution and the community, have been systematically dismantled by MIT.

Cuts like these will result in communities being driven to drop out of study altogether.

We urge you to take urgent action to turn around these devastating cuts. We request you convene a meeting with MIT's Chief Executive, Council Chair, and TEU leadership members to discuss how we can do better for all students.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Gilchrist', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael Gilchrist, National President
Hūhana Wātene, VP Māori
MIT TEU members