

*Launch of the Education Forum Vision Piece*

**A New Deal:  
Making Education Work for All New Zealanders**

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**The New Zealand Portrait Gallery  
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## **A New Deal: Making Education Work for All New Zealanders**

Honourable Dr Nick Smith, Honourable Brian Donnelly, Deborah Coddington, Bernie Ogilvy, members of the Education Forum, ladies and gentlemen: welcome to the launch of the Education Forum vision piece.

We propose an optimistic future for New Zealand's schooling, which is why the document we are launching tonight is called *A New Deal: Making Education Work for All New Zealanders*.

We recognise that for our vision to become reality, we need to forge a real union with the groups that share our aims.

We need to work with political parties, grassroots organisations, iwi and lobby groups. We need to form a partnership with every parent who believes the old deal doesn't work for their children anymore.

As chairman of the Education Forum, I would like to thank each of the four education spokespeople who are hosting us this evening: Nick Smith from National, Brian Donnelly from New Zealand First, Deborah Coddington from ACT, and Bernie Ogilvy from United Future

[To MPs] We are proud to have each of you here tonight. We are grateful that you believe, as we do, that education is more important than party politics. We recognise that your presence doesn't mean that you have signed up to the Education Forum's vision lock, stock and barrel. But we are hopeful that, with your continued advocacy of the issues that are important to you, education will be the defining issue of the next election.

The document we are launching tonight provides a comprehensive vision for schooling policy for the new century.

*A New Deal* sets out the Education Forum's views on how the sector should be funded, how it should be regulated and how it should respond to the community.

There will be much in *A New Deal* that is familiar. The report's recommendations reflect the Education Forum's principles of excellence, choice, self-management and accountability in schooling.

Its key recommendations include:

- Giving parents greater freedom to determine what school will best suit their children and, more importantly, backing up that choice with state funding;
- Trusting teachers and principals to determine the best way of organising themselves to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population in New Zealand;
- Building a culture of professionalism in the teaching sector;

- Providing parents, teachers, principals and the government with the information required to determine how well the education system is serving New Zealand children; and
- Ensuring that students, parents and teachers have access to world class curricula and qualifications.

The importance of this document is that it brings together a comprehensive and coherent set of policy proposals for regulating the school sector. And it does so in an accessible format.

*A New Deal* presents a positive, sound and proven alternative to the negative, union-driven, agenda pursued by the current government.

Although we describe *A New Deal* as a ‘vision’ piece, in a sense it is far greater than that.

We know that the one-size-fits-all “vision” of education doesn’t work. The last thing the Education Forum wants to do is replace one narrow-minded vision with another. So, you will see that the set of policies we advocate will instead build a framework. In this framework, parents and dedicated teaching professionals will be able to develop their own vision of schooling for their own community.

The Education Forum has been an active and independent voice in education policy debate in New Zealand for many years.

We have stepped up our advocacy work in recent years. We have developed the Education Forum website, revamped our newsletter and pursued a more active communications campaign. And unlike a number of groups that have been in the news of late, we don’t ask taxpayers to finance our policy advocacy efforts!

*A New Deal* is a significant development for the Education Forum and will fit alongside the views we have put forward on tertiary education policy, and the early childhood vision piece that the Early Childhood Council and Education Forum are developing.

The timing of this document could not have been better. The past few weeks have seen the release of *Schools of Excellence* - the National Party’s discussion document on schooling, the school funding paper from the Independent Schools of New Zealand, Deborah Coddington’s book *Let Parents Choose* and Paul Henderson’s book *Vying for Our Children*.

The government and teacher union leaders must take note: there is a growing chorus for change.

Each of the organisations represented here tonight has one thing in common. We want to see the education system working for all New Zealanders. We may not agree on every detail of what a better vision for schooling should look like. But we should work to emphasise those areas where we do agree and respect our differences in those areas where we do not.

The past few weeks have shown that we can work together. The unity that we are developing, and the strength of our ideas, will see *A New Deal* become reality.

To each of the organisations that is represented here tonight, and to every parent who believes that the old deal just doesn't work anymore: we look forward to working with you!