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Submitted by email to [ResourceTeacher.Consultation@education.govt.nz](mailto:ResourceTeacher.Consultation@education.govt.nz)

## Submission on Proposed Changes to Funding for Resource Teachers: Literacy and Resource Teachers: Māori

### Introduction

The New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association (NZSTA) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the proposed funding changes for Resource Teachers: Literacy (RTLit) and Resource Teachers: Māori (RTM). We acknowledge the government's current strategy and intent to enhance Tier 1 support, particularly in literacy and numeracy. However, we have concerns regarding the potential impact on students requiring specialised Tier 2 and 3 interventions, especially those with speech, language, and literacy needs.

### The Critical Role of Specialists in Supporting Speech, Language, and Literacy

Specialists such as RTLit and RTM play a pivotal role in addressing the diverse needs of students with speech, language, and literacy challenges. Their expertise includes:

- **Early Identification and Intervention:** Specialists are adept at recognising early signs of difficulties with literacy and how this may interact with speech and language development, facilitating timely interventions that can significantly improve educational outcomes.
- **Tailored Support:** They provide customised strategies and resources, aligning interventions with individual student needs, thereby promoting effective learning.
- **Capacity Building:** By collaborating with classroom teachers, specialists enhance overall teaching practices, fostering an inclusive environment that supports all learners.

### Concerns Regarding the Proposed Funding Changes

While strengthening Tier 1 support is commendable, it is crucial to maintain robust Tier 2 and 3 interventions for students who require additional assistance. Our concerns include:

- **Alignment Challenges:** The current variability in structured literacy professional learning and development (PLD) across schools leads to inconsistencies in support. Specialists are essential in bridging these gaps, ensuring that interventions across all tiers are cohesive and effective.
- **Equity of Access:** The proposed funding changes may result in inequitable access to specialised support, particularly affecting vulnerable students who rely on these services for their educational success.

- **Loss of Expertise:** Reducing specialist roles could lead to a significant loss of expertise within the education system, hindering the ability to address complex speech, language, and literacy needs effectively.

## Recommendations

To ensure that all students, especially those with specialised needs, receive appropriate support, we recommend:

1. **Maintain Specialist Roles:** Preserve the funding for RTLit and RTM positions to continue providing essential Tier 2 and 3 interventions.
2. **Enhance Collaboration:** Foster stronger collaboration between specialists and classroom teachers to align Tier 1, 2, and 3 interventions, ensuring consistency and effectiveness across all levels of support.
3. **Standardise PLD:** Implement a cohesive approach to structured literacy PLD, ensuring that all schools have access to high-quality training that aligns with specialist interventions.
4. **Monitor and Evaluate:** Establish mechanisms to regularly assess the effectiveness of literacy interventions across all tiers, allowing for data-driven decisions that best serve student needs.

## Conclusion

The NZSTA urges careful consideration of the proposed funding changes, emphasising the indispensable role of specialists in supporting students with speech, language, and literacy needs. A balanced approach that strengthens Tier 1 support while preserving essential Tier 2 and 3 interventions is vital for the educational success of all students.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide this submission and are willing to engage further in discussions to ensure optimal outcomes for our students.

## \*Who are we?

The New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association (NZSTA), established in 1946, represents speech-language therapists (SLTs). NZSTA supports over 1,100 registered speech-language therapists nationally. Well over 95 per cent of the workforce are registered members.

The Association operates a self-regulatory process that provides for –

- annual practising certificates
- a clear scope of practice
- code of ethics
- complaints process
- programme accreditation of tertiary speech and language courses and the approval of international speech-language therapy qualifications to ensure equivalency with New Zealand standards.
- a structured supervisory framework for new graduates or return-to-practice therapists
- continued quality assurance of its registered professionals.

Speech-language therapists study, diagnose, and treat communication disorders, including difficulties with speaking, listening, understanding language, reading, writing, social skills, stuttering, and voice use.

They work with people of all ages who have difficulty communicating because of developmental delays, stroke, brain injuries, learning disability, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, dementia and hearing loss, and other problems that affect speech and language.

Individuals who experience difficulties swallowing food and drinking safely can also benefit from the assistance of a speech-language therapist.

Speech-language therapists work in various settings, including schools, hospitals, courts, prisons, childcare centres, or a client's home.

Speech-language therapists complete either a four-year bachelor's degree or a master's in speech-language therapy.

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