

Tēnā koutou katoa,

E te mana whenua o te rohe nei, nei rā a ngākau e mihi nei, kia koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā hau e wha

Ata mārie, good morning, it is a great pleasure to welcome you all to **The New Zealand International Education Conference Ki Tua 2023**.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the moving welcome from Ngai Tahu this morning.

We feel especially blessed to be here, with you, for our first in-person hui since 2019.

This year marks a remarkable 30 years since the first New Zealand International Education Conference at the Wellington Airport Hotel in 1991.

There is so much to celebrate as we look back at shared endeavours and achievements.

And I hope we will discover over the next two days that there is much to be optimistic about as we look forward to the next 30 years and beyond.

Our theme for the conference is **Te Ara Ki Tua**, “The pathway forward”.

Much of what I want to talk to you about lies in the origin of this conference name and theme, so if you will bear with me, I want to talk a little about the whakapapa of this phrase.

Inspiration for the name came from a whakatauki, which is attributed to Rangi Mete-Kingi, and says:

*Ko te pae tawhiti whāia kia tata, ko te pae tata whakamaua kia tīna.*

**Seek the distant horizons, and cherish those you attain.**

So the phrase “ki tua” is aspirational. It encourages us to seek a place beyond what we know now, to reach our “pae tawhiti”, our distant horizons.

For me, as a former student of English literature hearing this whakatauki called to mind the Tennyson poem about the great adventurer Ulysses, in which he says

*“All experience is an arch wherethrough gleams that untravelled world, whose margin fades forever and forever when I move”.*

This conference theme propels us forward into a different time and space, providing us with the opportunity to seek new solutions as we recover from the pandemic, and face the new challenges that today presents.

So Ki Tua is not about returning to the status quo – it is about finding a fresh perspective that pushes our historical and current boundaries to meet the needs of future generations.

This is a path we must forge together, and this conference provides us with an opportunity to do just that, through the opportunities to network, listen and learn.

This conference is our chance to address the challenges our sector faces and develop new approaches to overcome them together –

It's a chance to unify around our common purpose of rebuilding –

- to catch up with old friends and make new ones –

- and to acknowledge the underlying power of Te Ao Māori values as we seek to define our unique position in a global industry.

### **I'm Optimistic**

I'm optimistic about the future of this sector, and the contribution it can make to all the people in Aotearoa and beyond.

In part, I draw my optimism from our diversity, which is reflected in the room before me.

From **our schools** - more than 470 of which are already involved in teaching international students – to **Te Pūkenga**, which is now one of the largest tertiary institutions in the world, to **our universities**, with their extensive international engagement and their long-term commitment to international education.

From our **Private Training Establishments**, which provide focused, specialised and nimble learning experiences, to our **English Language Schools**, which deliver language training for international students, often opening up other pathways for learning.

From our **Education Products and Services sub-sector**, comprising education technology companies and education publishers, which are helping diversify our sector's offerings, to our **Wānanga**, including **Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi** which is currently developing an innovative postgraduate programme with indigenous communities in the United States.

Many of these subsectors have peak bodies that play an important role supporting and advocating for their members.

I acknowledge and welcome representatives of all of these sectors, subsectors and peak bodies who are here today. We are stronger because of our diversity.

### **Our strength also lies in our ability to adapt.**

In early 2020 our world changed forever, and in the three and a half years since, we have all had to – time and time again – prove our ability to adapt and persist.

It's hard to believe it's only been a year since our borders fully reopened – and the world did not return to the old normal when that happened.

Whether we like it or not, the need to adapt has not gone away, and the changes in our country and the world continue around us.

As Tennyson said, the margins fade forever and forever when we move.

I want to acknowledge the work that everyone in this room has done in recent years to adapt and persist, and to acknowledge the fact that you continue to adapt to meet these challenges.

Your presence here today is testimony to your resilience and commitment to ongoing change.

So I'm optimistic not because everything will now return to the old normal, but because I know that together we will find ways to forge a new approach that's right for the time we are in: we will continue to seek our "pae tawhiti".

### **Education New Zealand Manapou ki te Ao has also been challenged to adapt**

Like you, have needed to refocus and find a pathway forward that is relevant in the new context.

We are acutely aware of the need to balance the pressing needs of today with preparedness for the future and – like everyone – doing so in a resource-constrained context.

We have the refreshed International Education Strategy to guide us, and the Board has recently confirmed an approach for **the coming 12 months** that concentrates on Focus Area One of that Strategy - helping providers of international education build back their bases through inbound student mobility growth. Our focus right now is very much on building momentum for the beginning of the academic and school year in 2024.

But although in that context we are prioritising our resources and targeting our efforts, we have not lost sight of the need to build long term resilience and stability, and we have a number of initiatives in this area, consistent with Focus Area Two of the strategy.

Some of you will be aware of the visit we hosted earlier this month of Professor Bean, and the work we have recently been doing through the CRRF funding to explore the diversification of products, services and modes of delivery.

We are also looking forward to working alongside Ōtautahi, Christchurch to bring the ICEF Australia New Zealand Agent Conference to Christchurch in April next year. This conference will bring the Australia and New Zealand education sectors together with education agents from around the world.

I must also mention our focus on honouring and giving effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi. This is both an obligation and an opportunity which our Board and the wider organisation take seriously.

And as you would expect, we will continue to work with our NZ Inc partner agencies to identify opportunities to help the sector to rebuild.

Finally in terms of Education New Zealand's work, I want to point to the efforts our team in New Zealand and offshore put into leveraging diplomatic engagement and supporting Ministerial travel, which is such an important part of enhancing New Zealand's reputation as a partner for international education.

The value of these initiatives is shown in the response to recent promotional trips to India, the US and Canada.

More recently, education was a significant part of the Prime Minister's visit to China where its importance as part of our bilateral relationship was mentioned in almost every major engagement.

## **Closing remarks**

This close level of engagement has also enabled us to welcome the People's Republic of China to our conference as the Country of Honour, and we're delighted that the Minister for Education, His Excellency, HUI Jinpeng will be joining us as a keynote speaker tomorrow.

Last night in Wellington, our Minister of Education Jan Tinetti and Minister Hui co-chaired the 11<sup>th</sup> New Zealand-China Joint Working Group on Education and Training and witnessed the signing of arrangements to strengthen education links between our countries.

We will have the pleasure of welcoming both Minister Tinetti and Minister HUI to our gala dinner tonight.

We have a busy two days ahead of us! I'm delighted to be here, and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible.

A few thank yous before I finish. Thank you to you – for being here. Thank you to our speakers, for the work and thought and energy they have put into preparing for this; and thank you to the organising team for all their efforts to get us here.

As Manapou ki te Ao, our values of manaakitanga, kaitiakitanga, aroha, being one and being bold guide us in our actions.

As you meet and talk with any member of our team over the coming two days, please talk with us, and share your experiences from the past and your hopes for the future. I know they will be listening.

Together we can forge Te Ara ki Tua for our sector and the people of Aotearoa – those who live here and those who visit and learn with us.

Nō reira, he mihi nui ki a koutou katoa.