

National Executive Candidates 2027 – 2028

Curriculum Vitae



Name: Rebekah Lessels
Nominated for: President

Relevant skills, attributes and qualifications:

DipTeaching, Wellington College of Education
Level 200 Te Reo Māori, Massey University
Māori Medium Literacy and Bilingual/Māori Medium education, Kia Ata Mai Educational Trust & Waikato University
ANZEI-TRR
Fellow NZEI-TRR
Teaching Council -Deputy Chair
Current Manukura / President NZEI-TRR

NZEI experience:

I am the current Manukura/President NZEI-TRR having served as Vice President for 2 years prior.

I have been a union activist for the last 30+ years holding every office available in Te Aronui Tōmua, and Area Council. Together with my colleagues we have participated in every campaign.

I have served on the Principals Council for 10 years as the Te Reo Areare representative and have led the Negotiating team for Area School Principals Collective Bargaining through the last 2 negotiating rounds.

I have travelled as the Ministerial delegation to 3 International Summit on the Teaching Profession, 2023 Washington DC with Minister Tinetti, 2024 Singapore and 2025 Iceland with Minister Stanford.

I have also joined the delegation to the World Indigenous Peoples Conference on Education in Adelaide AUS, and again in Auckland NZ

I have a passion for union activism and the direction towards a Treaty Partner organisation. Mōku te Ao is premised on relationships that builds cultural understanding.

Other background and personal information:

I am of Tūhoe, Ngati Awa, Te Arawa, Ngati Tūwharetoa descent and have extensive experience in the education sector and have taught at both primary and secondary levels in both Māori and English.

I am currently principal of the Māori Medium Area School, Te Whata Tau o Pūtauaki Kura, in Kawerau and in Dec 2024 resigned as the deputy chair of the Teaching Council - Matatu Aotearoa.

I continue to take an active role in supporting principals across the sector. I am a mentor principal for Ngā Kura ā Iwi o Aotearoa's Principals support group and a member of several professional principals' associations.

I have studied Māori Medium Literacy and Bilingual/Māori Medium education at Kia Ata Mai Educational Trust & Waikato University. My Te Reo Māori skills and experience in Māori medium have been highly valued and used by organisation across the profession. I have strong governance experience and active in Ngā Kura ā Iwi o Aotearoa, having held roles in its governance group and strategic planning team. I was a member of the Board that transitioned Kawerau North School to a Māori medium, Te Whata Tau o Pūtauaki Kura and I became the school's founding Principal in 2012.

I have spent 40+ years in the teaching profession and have a wide knowledge and experience of teaching and learning.

I am a mother, grandmother and great grandmother and have been married to Maurice for 40+ years.

Ripeka Lessels

Nominated by: Te Pipirimananui o nga Tātāhā ā Maui