

Opening gateways,  
expanding horizons.  
Rural leadership  
shaping tomorrow.

NZEI  
TERIU ROA

Rural and Teaching Principals' Conference  
Tāmaki Makaurau / 27–29 May 2026

## Keynote Speakers

### Tabitha Leonard

*High Performance Leadership Coach*



*Tabitha Leonard is a high-performance leadership coach and facilitator who helps principals and leadership teams lead with clarity, calm authority, and sustainable momentum in high-pressure environments — particularly in complex, high-load school contexts where connection, hauora, and practical execution matter. Her work blends high-performance psychology with communication and behavioural change, with a focus on **micro-level psychological safety** — the moment-to-moment behaviours that build or break trust, culture, and performance. Tabitha is known for a “quiet, calm, strong” delivery style that is practical, human, and action-oriented. She supports leaders to reduce overwhelm and decision fatigue, strengthen courageous conversations, and lead change without creating resistance.*

#### **Keynote Presentation | High Performance Leadership | Thursday 28 May 1pm**

Most rural and teaching principals don't have a capability problem. You have an operating problem — because the role demands you be the strategist, culture-builder, crisis manager, and often the classroom teacher, all at once. When the context is relentless, overwhelm and reactive leadership aren't a personal failure; they're a signal that the “operator” running your leadership system is overloaded and unsupported.

Aligned to the conference theme “Opening Gateways, Expanding Horizons: Rural leadership shaping tomorrow,” this keynote reframes rural principals as *super navigators* — leading people and communities through uncertainty with steadiness, courage, and connection. You'll learn why decision fatigue, hesitation, and inconsistent follow-through persist even in highly competent leaders — and how upgrading your leadership operating identity unlocks clarity, calm authority, and clean momentum. The core insight is simple: your leadership actions will never outperform the identity running them.

You'll leave able to identify the hidden patterns draining your energy, eliminate decision fatigue at its psychological source, make clean decisions under pressure, and shift from firefighting to steady, confident leadership — so your people feel safer, your priorities stay protected, and progress becomes predictable.

# Jake Bailey

**Resilience Educator, Author, Internationally acclaimed speaker.**



*Jake Bailey is an internationally acclaimed educator on resilience, the youngest #1 bestselling author in New Zealand history, and as a Commonwealth Study Conference alumnus has been recognised by HRH Princess Anne as one of the most promising emerging leaders across the Commonwealth.*

*Jake first caused a global sensation when he gave a speech from a wheelchair as head boy of Christchurch Boys' High. Delivered less than a week after Jake had been diagnosed with the most aggressive form of cancer known to man, the speech went on to touch the hearts of tens of millions and drew support from across the globe.*

*Once in remission, Jake's experience led him to study positive psychology in order to better understand what it is that enables people to overcome adversity. His search for answers has taken him to Antarctica, made him run ultramarathons, had him interview World Champions and Prime Ministers, and driven him to learn from experts and everyday people alike what it is that makes us resilient.*

*He has shared his work with over 100,000 people across the globe, through thousands of presentations across dozens of cities, and developed resilience strategies for corporations, organisations, and schools, educating audiences ranging from elite athletes to children in outback towns, Fortune 500 CEOs to prison inmates, and foreign governments to retirement homes on evidence-based tools to enable us to most effectively overcome adversity. He has also authored two best-selling books on the psychology of resilience*

## **Keynote Presentation | Developing naturally resilient young people | Friday 29 May 11.30am**

Resilience is the lynchpin skill of life. This session will explore how educators, schools, and communities can develop naturally resilient young people who are prepared to go out into the world and overcome adversity. It will draw on the foremost research into the psychology surrounding resilience, packing it into an easily understandable model, and canvas how all elements of a school community, including students, staff, and whānau, can shape the development of the proven skills of resilience which are shown to improve success and wellbeing for young people over the course of their lifetime.

# Te Radar

**Humourist. Documentarian. Raconteur.**



*In the course of his career Te Radar has dived with sharks, narrowly avoided a rabbit while racing a Formula 3 car at 200kph, plunged into the frozen Ross sea in only a skimpy pair of togs, interviewed Yassar Arafat under the watchful eye of gun-toting Palestinian soldiers, been stung in a rather awkward place by a scorpion, and become (unofficially) New Zealand's worst television gardener.*

*With a string of more official awards to his name, including the country's highest accolades for comedy and television, he is one of New Zealand's most recognized comedians and personalities.*

## **Keynote Presentation | The rural rumble | Wednesday 27 May 6.30pm**