Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga
Ministry of Education

Report: Polytechnic Orders in Council: results of consultation, final advice on establishment, and draft LEG paper

To:	Hon Penny Simmonds, Minister for Tertiary Education		
Date:	22/04/2026	Deadline:	24/04/2026
Priority:	Medium		
From:	Katrina Sutich General Manager, Tertiary Policy	Phone:	9(2)(a)
Drafter:	9(2)(a)	METIS No:	1355461
Title ok for release?		Yes	

Why are we sending this to you?

- This paper provides the draft Cabinet paper on the Orders in Council that will establish the Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT), Whitireia and WelTec Institute of Technology (Whitireia/WelTec), and Northland Polytechnic (NorthTec) for any feedback prior to ministerial and agency consultation.
- It also provides the final advice on the establishment of these three polytechnics, including a summary of feedback from the statutory consultation process.

What action do we need, by when?

- We are seeking your feedback on the draft Cabinet paper by 24 April 2026 so we can make any final changes and return the paper to you for approval prior to ministerial and agency consultation, beginning on 29 April 2026.
- Please return the signed paper by 24 April 2026.

Key facts, issues and questions

- The Education and Training Act 2020 sets out requirements that must be met before Orders establishing polytechnics can be made, including a requirement to consult with relevant stakeholders and industry representatives.
- We consider these requirements have been met for each proposed polytechnic.

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Alignment with Government priorities

1. This report supports the ongoing implementation of the redesign of the vocational education and training (VET) system, which is one of your priorities for the Tertiary Education portfolio.

Background

2. On 25 March 2026, Cabinet agreed to establish three of the remaining polytechnic divisions of the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology (NZIST) as stand-alone polytechnics and noted your intention to designate them as federation polytechnics [SOU-26-MIN-0022 refers].
3. The Education and Training Act 2020 (the Act) requires you to meet certain procedural requirements before recommending that an Order in Council (Order) establishing a polytechnic is made. This paper outlines how those requirements have been met.
4. You are taking a paper to the 14 May 2026 meeting of the Cabinet Legislation Committee (LEG), seeking agreement to the Orders that will establish the final polytechnics (attached as **Annex 1**).

The criteria for establishing each proposed polytechnic have been met

5. Before establishing each polytechnic, section 315 (2) of the Act requires you to:
    i. seek advice from the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) on quality assurance matters and consider any advice given,
    ii. consult other persons or bodies that the Minister thinks fit,
    iii. take into account the characteristics of a polytechnic, and
    iv. be satisfied that the establishment of the polytechnic is in the interests of the tertiary education system and the nation as a whole.

No major issues have been raised by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority

6. The NZQA has provided you with advice on each proposed polytechnic, as required by section 315(2)(a) of the Act [OC 02431 refers]. Based on monitoring of performance as business divisions of NZIST from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025, NZQA have not identified any issues that would cause fundamental concern about each of these polytechnic division's overarching capabilities to deliver quality outcomes as stand-alone polytechnics.

We have completed the necessary statutory consultation on polytechnics

7. The Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) has managed a targeted consultation process with NZIST and invited polytechnic stakeholders, running from 8 April to 17 April 2026, as required by section 315 (2) (b) of the Act. The results of this consultation are outlined in **Annex 2.**
8. This statutory consultation builds on extensive earlier engagement and formal consultation throughout the VET redesign work, including:
    i. consultation over August and September 2024 on proposals for the new system, and

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ii. written and oral submissions to the select committee during the legislative process in 2025.

9. We received relatively few responses to the consultation invitations (ten submissions by form and one written submission). This likely reflects a combination of the previous engagement and consultation undertaken as noted above, and broad acceptance of the proposed polytechnics. In this context, we consider the overall response rate to be acceptable.
10. This response rate should be kept in mind when interpreting consultation results. However, respondents fully supported establishing the proposed polytechnics.
11. For each polytechnic, stakeholders were asked if they supported the proposed name, if they agreed that the relevant polytechnic was likely to meet the statutory characteristics if it was established this year, and whether establishing it would be in the interests of the tertiary education system.

Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT)

12. Three stakeholders responded on this polytechnic. All supported the proposed name and considered that establishing it would be in the interests of the tertiary education system. Two submitters felt that WITT would be likely to meet all the statutory characteristics of a polytechnic, however, one was unsure of whether they could undertake research.

Whitireia and WelTec Institute of Technology (Whitireia/WelTec)

13. Two stakeholders responded regarding Whitireia/WelTec, both supported the proposed name and considered that establishing it would be in the interests of the tertiary education system. One submitter felt that Whitireia/WelTec would be likely to meet all the statutory characteristics of a polytechnic, however, one was unsure of whether they could undertake research.

Northland Polytechnic (NorthTec)

14. Five stakeholders provided a response on NorthTec. Three supported the proposed name, one was against it, and one expressed no opinion. Four submitters felt that NorthTec would be likely to meet all the statutory characteristics of a polytechnic (although three were unsure of whether NorthTec could undertake research) and considered that establishing it would be in the interests of the tertiary education system. One submitter did not feel that NorthTec would be likely to meet all the statutory characteristics of a polytechnic, and did not consider establishing NorthTec to be in the interest of the tertiary education system.
15. The one submitter who disagreed with the proposed name suggested "NorthTec Te Tai Tokerau Wānanga" as an alternative based on regional and cultural identity as well as reducing cost and effort to rebrand. We note that the proposed name in the Orders is the legal name of the institution and that NorthTec has no plans to change their trading name, which is "NorthTec Tai Tokerau Wānanga" as seen on their public facing websites.
16. Separately, in a letter to you from Te Kahu o Taonui on 13 April 2026, they expressed support for the establishment of NorthTec, and noted the enduring importance of tertiary provision for Te Tai Tokerau.

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General feedback

17. We also received one written submission from BusinessNZ that was not specific to one polytechnic. They felt the names of the polytechnics are a matter for local communities and that international recognition should be balanced when considering a name change.
18. BusinessNZ also felt there is a need for alignment between the characteristics of polytechnics in the Act and the Tertiary Education Strategy, as well as between the Orders for the establishment of polytechnics and the Orders for Industry Skills Boards.

Submissions that were out of the scope of this consultation

19. In their 13 April letter to you, Te Kahu o Taonui noted the ongoing advocacy from many community members including iwi for a Northland tertiary provider and expressed the desire to be involved in the appointments of EAG members. We understand the TEC is drafting a response to this letter for your office.
20. Additionally, during the consultation process, the Mātauranga Iwi Leaders Group contacted officials to facilitate a meeting between Ministry and TEC officials and members representing various Māori interest groups from Northland[1]. This meeting occurred on 20 April, after the consultation period had ended. The representatives expressed support for the establishment of NorthTec. However, they also expressed concerns about the tertiary hub model prioritising VET learning in Whāngarei, and noted a need for NorthTec to meaningfully engage with the wider region to locally serve remote communities and students who face structural barriers in accessing learning.
21. The TEC noted that there is an opportunity for iwi and NorthTec's council to re-establish a meaningful relationship and work together to address some of these concerns alongside the hub project. This could be a matter for future engagement with iwi as the polytechnic settles into its operations.
22. The opportunity to be involved with council appointments was also raised at the 20 April meeting. The TEC explained the appointments process at the meeting. Officials noted that aside from Ministerial appointments, they are free to engage with the NorthTec council regarding the other member appointments.

There is evidence that each of the proposed polytechnics can meet the statutory characteristics of a polytechnic

23. Section 315(2)(c) of the Act requires you to consider the characteristics of a polytechnic, which are set out in section 314. These are:
    i. they offer a wide diversity of continuing education that contributes to the maintenance, advancement, and dissemination of knowledge and expertise and promotes community learning
    ii. they are predominantly involved in providing continuing education that responds to the education and training needs of local communities and industries in their regions
    iii. they undertake research, particularly applied and technological research

[1] There was representation from:
- Te Hiku Iwi Development Trust, representing Te Rarawa, Te Aupōuri, and Ngāi Takoto
- Hauora Māori Advisory Committee
- Pou Tangata Iwi Leaders Groups (Mātauranga ILG, and Skills and Employment ILG)

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iv. they improve outcomes for Māori students and trainees and Māori communities in collaboration with Māori and iwi and other interested persons or bodies.

24. We have provided evidence in **Annex 3**, drawn from recent performance as polytechnic divisions of NZIST, that each of the proposed polytechnics would, if established, satisfy each of the statutory characteristics of a polytechnic.
25. This builds on analysis that was included in the Regulatory Impact Statement: Policy decisions about the remaining polytechnic divisions of the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology provided to Cabinet to support the establishment policy decisions in March 2026 [SOU-26-MIN-0022 refers].
26. Consultation has provided further support for this analysis, as discussed above.

You have previously demonstrated that you consider establishing each proposed polytechnic is in the interests of the tertiary education system and the nation

27. In March 2026, you presented evidence to Cabinet on the desirability of each proposed polytechnic being set up as a stand-alone institution. Cabinet agreed to establish WITT, Whitireia/WelTec, and NorthTec and made additional decisions to support their financial viability. These include 9(2)(b)(ii) providing financial support for NorthTec [SOU-26-MIN-0022 refers], 9(2)(f)(iv) No new information has arisen that should raise concerns or cause you to reconsider your position on each of these polytechnics.
28. The TEC has advised that all three polytechnics have a pathway to financial viability and can be established on 1 October 2026.
29. The polytechnics will join a national network of public VET providers that ensures regional access to vocational programmes, foundation education, and vocationally focussed higher education.

Risks

30. The targeted approach that was used for the consultation may create a risk that some stakeholders and representatives consider they have not had an appropriate chance to participate. This risk is mitigated by the large amount of public and sector focussed consultation and engagement on the redesigned VET system that has occurred over the past two years, and the multiple opportunities to engage.

Financial Implications

31. The Orders themselves have no financial implications.

Next Steps

32. Once you have considered this paper and provided feedback on the draft Cabinet paper, we will provide you with a final draft for approval to begin ministerial and agency consultation. We will also include an example copy of the Orders in Council (as an annex to the Cabinet paper).
33. The next steps and dates are as follows:

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Date	Process step
24 April	Minister's feedback on draft LEG paper due to the Ministry
27 April	*ANZAC Day*
28 April	Draft LEG paper to MO for approval to begin formal consultation
29 April – 6 May	Ministerial and agency consultation begin in parallel
11 May	Feedback incorporated and final LEG paper and Orders to Minister for approval for lodging
14 May	LEG paper lodged with the Cabinet office by 10.30am

Annexes

Annex 1: Draft Cabinet Paper - Orders in Council for the establishment of final polytechnics [attached separately]

Annex 2: Results of statutory consultation on proposed polytechnics

Annex 3: Evidence of polytechnic characteristics

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Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

a. **note** the results of statutory consultation on establishing the final polytechnics

Noted

b. **agree** that you have met the statutory requirements for establishing each of the three proposed polytechnics, as set out in section 315(2) of the Education and Training Act 2020

Agree / Disagree

c. **agree** to recommend to Cabinet Legislation Committee that Orders in Council are made to establish the following polytechnics:

i. Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki

Agree / Disagree

ii. Whitireia and WelTec Institute of Technology

Agree / Disagree

iii. Northland Polytechnic

Agree / Disagree

d. **provide** any comment on the draft Cabinet paper for the Orders that will establish the polytechnics

Agree / Disagree

Proactive Release:

e. **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this paper once the recommendation to make Orders in Council has been considered by Cabinet, with any information needing to be withheld done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Agree / Disagree

Katrina Sutich
General Manager, Tertiary
Te Pou Kaupapahere | Policy
22/04/2026

Hon Penny Simmonds
Minister for Tertiary Education
22/4/26

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