

# Tapu

Religious Studies Teachers Association  
of Aotearoa New Zealand



**Newsletter (1): Sept 2012**

Dear colleagues,

Thank you for responding to our calls for expressions of interest in the new Association.

**This is our first email newsletter.**

We hope you like the design, which we actually think is quite stunning! We intend that the newsletter will be periodic, probably once a term, but variable depending on what needs to be communicated. It will go to HOD's Religious Studies and/or DRSSs, with the expectation that you will pass it on to your group, and of course it will also go to anyone else who has asked to be kept informed. If you have sent in a specific email with your individual address it will go to you at that address also. So in some cases you may receive the email twice - if that annoys you let us know and we'll remove your specific address.

**Why do we need to exist?**

First, we think it will be helpful to subject teachers to have a way to dialogue on subject matter. We expect therefore that we will develop sharing of ideas, expertise and resources. For those who are assessing against Achievement Standards there will, we hope, be chances to share expertise in this particular area. Many of you have already expressed similar hopes.

Second, we believe that it is essential to have a voice for Religious Studies in the wider forums where curriculum matters are discussed. Religious Studies is seen by the Ministry of Education as sitting under the Social Sciences area of the curriculum. It is important that we are able to represent ourselves, that we have a voice so that we can request what we might need, and that we can be contacted as a group. We have already had a number of contacts from sector organisations to ask about us. That is our external face and linkages.

The Ministry of Education is about to begin planning the review of Achievement Standards in 2013 and there will be a number of matters which will be linked to this review. It will be helpful to have the Association in place so that your opinions can be sought.

God is that  
to which  
your heart  
clings and  
entrusts  
itself.

Martin Luther  
King

### **Aim, purpose and vision**

This is where we need to start. We will have an after school meeting by teleconference on 1 November at 4pm, to discuss how we might begin to formulate these, and to discuss initial actions. Those who have already expressed interest in helping will receive an email with the necessary password. Please email me if you would like to be added to this list.

### **Practicalities for discussion:**

**How will we function?** At the moment we see the Association functioning as a loose email network, where questions can be asked, issues raised etc. This might operate, we hope, through a number of regional co-ordinators who might act as the “go to” person in their region, and who would keep the national people in touch with their region. The newsletter will keep people in touch, and will help to spur local initiatives.

**What will it cost?** At the moment there is no cost. As we become more organised and active we can consider whether, like other subject associations, we might charge a small fee per school per year - until we know what costs we might have we cannot make any decision on this.

**Will we hold a conference?** An annual conference is held by most subject associations, during one of the holiday breaks. It's not the first thing we need to organise, but I'm sure it will become important, and if we don't organise one in 2013 it's likely to be on the agenda for 2014! It would need to be very low cost, pay your own way, volunteer to present workshops etc. I'm sure there will be a school somewhere that will volunteer to host us for a very low cost, and we will have to work on everything else.

**Will we hold regional meetings?** We hope so - that is up to the regions, and will depend if someone local is prepared to put their hand up. We know that teachers have a range of support currently available to them, but different schools have different amounts of support, and there will be areas to explore, to develop whatever support and contacts are most useful.

**Will we put current support groups out of a job?** (e.g. support for the Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventist schools). Definitely not. The Association has the support of all of these groups, and will be able to function alongside the wonderful work they do.

### **Will we focus only on Achievement Standards?**

No. We are aware that, although this is very important for many schools, there are also quite a number of schools for which there are other matters they would like to have discussions on. We are aware, though, that Subject Associations are usually secondary school based, because this is where there are specialist teachers who have the interest in a dedicated group.

We will welcome any comments and help, and will hope that operating largely by email and teleconference will mean that people can be involved with minimal additional stress in their already over-busy lives.

### **Current co-ordinators**

Susan Apáthy, Deputy CEO, New Zealand Catholic Education Office (NZCEO). I have no background in teaching Religious Education. I taught in both state and Catholic secondary schools for many years, before coming to NZCEO. My role is administrative, to enable the Association to function by providing a central point.

Dr Kevin Wanden, Director, National Centre for Religious Studies (NCRS). Kevin has been a Catholic secondary school teacher of Religious Education, and has national responsibility for the Catholic religious education curriculum. Kevin was involved in the writing party that developed the Achievement Standards in Religious Studies.

We both have links to a wide number of faith schools, to other schools, and to a wide number of sector groups.

### **Finally...**

Please get in touch with your views, pass this newsletter on to anyone who may be interested, and let us know if we should add new people to the mailing list.

Susan and Kevin

