

NZNO Statement Re Petition

7 May 2020

On 6 May 2020 a group of NZNO members launched a petition requesting the NZNO Chief Executive to issue notice of a Special General Meeting:

“That the membership of NZNO expresses no confidence in the current Board of Directors, calls for the dissolution of the full Board and requests that an election be held for all eleven Director positions, according to the provisions of the NZNO Constitution.”

Now more than ever we need to be united, so it is disappointing this action has been taken at this time. But we want to be clear about the facts regarding this petition and what we think you as members need to know.

NZNO is “not crippled by infighting.” The fact is the remaining Board is united and strong, and staff and members within the organisation are continuing to work hard on business as usual. For example we are representing members to the Auditor General today regarding the PPE audit. The Primary Health Care MECA is being balloted with members as we speak. We are appearing daily in the news working for the wellbeing of our members in light of the COVID-19 crisis, and a member-driven DHB MECA campaign is well underway. We’re also still working constructively with other unions in New Zealand and international nursing bodies. These are just some of the many things NZNO continues to do every single day.

The petition serves only to undermine member confidence in their union and professional association at a time when we need to be working with and supporting our members in the fight against COVID-19 and in their ongoing important work to meet the health needs of the people of Aotearoa New Zealand. We remain the most powerful and effective health union and professional association in the country.

Democracy and your vote

The existing Board members **are** democratically elected and this petition seeks to undermine this process. That is not democracy. The Board has already announced plans to hold by-elections to replace the President and three vacant Board positions. NZNO has the democratic processes in place for this to happen where **everyone** will have a voice.

The Background – it’s very personal

We want to be very clear that this petition has its source in the findings of serious misconduct against the former President Grant Brookes which led to two SGMs in 2019. One involved the Board calling for Mr Brookes to be removed from office (which he survived by less than 51 percent). The second was a vote of confidence and support for Mr Brookes, purportedly launched by members, which he lost by 66 percent.

This is an orchestrated campaign to undermine and destabilise the union. We are having to spend a huge amount of time responding to this situation so we have less time for what we should be doing right now, supporting our members and working hard on their behalf.

It must stop now. It's damaging to our reputation and damaging to those who are working so hard at the moment under stressful conditions.

We have been getting a lot of feedback from members who are sick of all the "noise" around this issue and just want it to stop as well.

We would also like to point out that a vote of no confidence does not force anyone to resign. Mr Brookes himself has demonstrated that. The person the petitioners would most like to remove is our Kaiwhakahaere Kerri Nuku, but the Kaiwhakahaere and Tumu Whakarae can only be removed by a vote of no confidence by Te Rūnanga, in accordance with Tikanga and NZNO's commitment to bi-culturalism.

Closing call to action

Now is the time for everyone to stop making personal attacks; to show respect for democratically elected leaders and to deal with any remaining conflicts with kindness and solidarity. We are calling on all parties to stop divisive actions such as this petition and personal Facebook attacks, and for people to stop putting their personal agendas first. Only then can we continue working towards being "freed to care and proud to nurse".

The Board: Kerri Nuku, Simon Auty, Andrew Cunningham, Anamaria Watene, Margaret Hand, Titihuia Pakeho