



PHYSICAL EDUCATION NEW ZEALAND

TE AO KORI AOTEAROA

14 August 2017

Professor Harlene Hayne
Vice-Chancellor
University of Otago
PO Box 56
Dunedin 9054
NEW ZEALAND.

Dear Professor Hayne,

Physical Education New Zealand (PENZ) is the national professional association for Physical Education representing over 3000 physical educators. PENZ have recently learned that the University of Otago has decided to discontinue offering the professional Physical Education, Outdoor Education and Dance papers in the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Science from 2018. PENZ is extremely concerned by this decision, particularly in light of Otago University's long history and international reputation with Physical Education.

As your University celebrates 148 years of providing first class academic degrees, many through internationally recognised and nationally loved schools such as Medicine, Dentistry and Physical Education, this move will destroy a 70 years dynasty of the School of Physical Education, initiated by the visionary leader, Professor Philip Smithells.

The University of Otago's Physical Education, Outdoor Education and Dance programme is a superb blend of physical education, critical pedagogy and professional practice which provisions graduates with the ability to work in schools and the wider education community to support the wellbeing of society (aspects of which are considered to be in crisis), appreciation and love for movement, physical education and sport. This will be lost by this decision. We seriously wonder which students your university will be recruiting for this school in future, if it does not offer a PE specialism programme? Graduates from exercise science and sports studies degrees are not suitable applicants for the physical education profession, due to exclusive focus on performance improvement which excludes the major of students in schools.

PENZ has always rated your graduates to be amongst the best physical educators the country has produced. Their depth of knowledge, ability to engage in and think critically about research, find and apply solutions to problems is a testament to the physical

education academics, such as Professors Douglas Booth and Lisette Burrows and the physical education specialism at the University of Otago.

As Vice Chancellor, you recently appointed Lisette Burrows as a professor on the grounds of her superior performance including A PBRF rating, excellent teaching evaluations and innumerable PhD graduates. Why would you now exclude an academic who has significant numbers of ongoing PhD supervisions and who has performed at the top level of your institution? Professor Burrows also has significant peer recognition being the most recent recipient of the Sir Alexander Gillies Medal for outstanding service to Physical Education and is a Fellow of PENZ.

PENZ understands that your professional physical education papers are well supported by students and respectfully suggests that while the current cohort will have to enrol in other specialisms within the School, future students will choose to attend universities who offer specific papers in Physical Education. Your numbers enrolling at the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Science are likely to drop further, something that you are trying to prevent.

Going forward, graduates from Otago, without professional physical education papers, are unlikely to be accepted into graduate diplomas for teaching or find work in the field of Physical Education, a discipline that Otago University has been proudly associated with for over 70 years. It seems unfair to suggest to your students that by attending a school with the name 'Physical Education' in its title, they will be well qualified for a career in Physical Education. This will serve to only further damage Otago's good name when they are not. I am sure that you, as someone who has had a long association with the University of Otago, appreciates the significance of ending Philip Smithell's inspiration to locate and lead Physical Education there. This is an absolute tragedy.

Recent publicity by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and Sport New Zealand, have identified the need to further develop the quality of Physical Education for students in early childhood, primary and the secondary sectors. The key to achieving this, is the provision of quality Physical Education, for which the University of Otago has a strong reputation both nationally and internationally. PENZ is unsure why you want to 'walk away' from this when the country is in need of more graduates in this area of expertise and your professional physical education papers are well supported by student numbers.

PENZ acknowledges that all universities are under significant pressure for EFTs. Otago University has enjoyed the support of significant numbers of physical education alumni, who support student numbers through recommendation. Many have encouraged their own children to attend your university because of the rich history of academic success. In Physical Education this has included your reputation as the only university in New Zealand to offer study in Physical Education at Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral levels. This will no longer be the case if you cut the well subscribed professional physical education papers.

'PE School' was due to celebrate its 70th anniversary next year but, a school without physical education papers, will no longer represent the physical educators who trained there. The concern is that the School of Physical Education, Sport and Exercise Sciences effectively no longer provides Physical Education. A school that no longer provides Physical Education will lose support of the PE alumni. Your alumni wish to celebrate more than a memory.

PENZ strongly believes that the discontinuation of the University of Otago's Physical Education, Outdoor Education and Dance papers and the loss of key academic staff such as Professors Douglas Booth and Lisette Burrows from 2018, will have a long term detrimental effect on the quality and diversity of physical education, education around the health and wellbeing of young people and society, as well as educational leadership in years to come.

PENZ respectfully requests that the University of Otago re-consider the wider and long-term effects that this decision might have on your student numbers, physical education graduates and Physical Education community throughout New Zealand.

Harlene, I wanted to also let you to know that while the letter is addressed to you, I have shared it with the wider PE community on whose behalf I write. I also wanted to let you know that I am happy to talk with you at any time to discuss the concerns raised in this letter. In summary these are the:

Impact on falling student numbers

Impact on the reputation of the University of Otago

End of Physical Education at the University of Otago

Loss of key academic staff including Professors Lisette Burrows and Douglas Booth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margot Bowes". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Margot Bowes

President