



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Education and Workforce Committee

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Kuranga, Take Hunga Mahi

54th Parliament
September 2026

**Petition of Education Outdoors NZ: Keep
Outdoor Education on the senior general
curriculum subject list**

**Petition of Lily Foster: Retain art history as a
stand-alone subject in Years 12 and 13**

**Petition of Home Economics and Technology
Teachers' Association of New Zealand: Retain
Home Economics / Food and Nutrition in the
curriculum**

Contents

Recommendation.....	3
Requests for retaining subjects in the curriculum	3
About the petition of Education Outdoors NZ	4
Information about the petition of Lily Foster.....	4
Information about the petition of Home Economics and Technology Teachers' Association of New Zealand.....	5
Our response to the petitions	6
Appendix.....	7

Petition of Education Outdoors NZ

Petition of Lily Foster

Petition of Home Economics and Technology Teachers' Association of New Zealand

Recommendation

The Education and Workforce Committee has considered the:

- Petition of Education Outdoors NZ: Keep Outdoor Education on the senior general curriculum subject list
- Petition of Lily Foster: Retain art history as a stand-alone subject in Years 12 and 13
- Petition of Home Economics and Technology Teachers' Association of New Zealand: Retain Home Economics / Food and Nutrition in the curriculum.

The committee recommends that the House take note of its report.

Requests for retaining subjects in the curriculum

The petition of Education Outdoors NZ was signed by 11 people on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Hon Willow-Jean Prime on 22 October 2025, and requests:

That the House of Representatives urge the Government to keep Outdoor Education as a senior general curriculum subject, with a dedicated curriculum written by the Ministry of Education; and note that 53,826 people signed a similar petition

The petition of Lily Foster was signed by 8,898 people on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Rachel Boyack on 1 December 2025, and requests:

That the House of Representatives urge the Minister of Education to retain art history for year 12 and 13 students, retaining art history as a standalone subject.

The petition of the Home Economics and Technology Teachers' Association of New Zealand was signed by one person on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan on 19 December 2025, and requests:

That the House of Representatives urge the Ministry of Education to retain Home Economics / Food and Nutrition as a stand-alone subject in the senior curriculum subject list, with dedicated curriculum, assessments, and resources; and note that 7,413 people have signed a similar petition.

The Petitions Committee grouped these petitions for its consideration and we continued this approach. That committee received written submissions from the petitioners, and from the Ministry of Education. The grouped petitions were transferred to us on 12 March 2026. We

held hearings with each of the petitioners on 27 May 2026 and asked the Ministry of Education to provide a further written response to the matters raised by the petitioners.

The petitioners seek the retention of particular subjects or learning areas affected by proposed curriculum changes announced by the Ministry of Education in late 2025. The proposals include changes to the structure and content of subject areas in the curriculum. They also reflect wider reforms to the vocational education and training system, including the establishment of Industry Skills Boards, which have responsibilities for developing qualifications, standards, and vocational programmes. The proposed changes were open for public consultation during the time that select committees have been considering the petitions.

About the petition of Education Outdoors NZ

Education Outdoors NZ (EONZ) submitted that the ministry's proposal to reclassify outdoor education as a solely vocational subject could risk dismantling an effective and equitable learning pathway for students. Vocational education helps students to acquire the skills and knowledge needed for work in specific roles and industries. In a submission to the Petitions Committee in December 2025, the ministry explained it was proposing to make outdoor education an industry-led subject at years 12 and 13. Under that approach, the ministry indicated that Industry Skills Boards would be responsible for developing the subject to include the skills and opportunities needed to pursue future pathways, enabling students to gain credits towards both secondary and tertiary qualifications.

EONZ submitted that outdoor education is valuable as a distinct academic discipline, rather than as a purely vocational subject. It highlighted the role outdoor education plays in students' wellbeing and cross-disciplinary learning, and the alignment between outdoor education principles and stated Government priorities. It therefore recommends keeping outdoor education as a standalone, ministry-led subject, with both academic and vocational pathways available to students.

On 27 July 2026, the ministry made a second submission informing us that the Government had revised its approach and, in doing so, it believes that it has addressed EONZ's concerns. The ministry told us that it will develop and lead outdoor education as a subject for years 12 and 13, rather than the subject being led by industry. We are pleased to see that the ministry's consultation process has resulted in meaningful change for the petitioner, as this is effectively the outcome we understand EONZ brought the petition to achieve.

Information about the petition of Lily Foster

Ms Foster advocates retaining art history as a secondary school subject. She shared her concern with us that the removal of art history as a standalone subject could have lasting impacts on New Zealand's arts and culture industry and on students' critical thinking and cultural understanding. In its submission dated 2 March 2026, the ministry acknowledged the important analytical and cultural value of art history as a school subject. It stated that this subject will continue to be taught in years 0 to 10, and that proposed changes to the curriculum would only affect art history learning in years 11 to 13.

The ministry assured us that art history knowledge will be taught through subjects like visual arts, history, and classics. Students would continue to engage with historical artworks, artists, and cultural movements through these subjects under this proposed new framework. We note that the petitioner is concerned that the skills, perspectives, and knowledge gained through this subject are unique to art history and cannot be adequately taught through other subjects. The ministry notes that these other subject areas have higher enrolment rates and that the proposed approach will therefore expose more students to art history concepts.

The petitioner does not believe that relatively low enrolment in art history justifies the subject being removed from the secondary school curriculum. Ms Foster stated that other courses with similarly low enrolment are not considered for removal. She believes this shows a discrepancy in the ministry's decision-making process. During our hearing, she expressed concern that removing art history from the high school curriculum may reduce enrolment in art history subjects at the university level and lead to fewer people pursuing careers in arts and culture.

Information about the petition of Home Economics and Technology Teachers' Association of New Zealand

The Home Economics and Technology Teachers' Association of New Zealand (HETTANZ) submitted that home economics (food and nutrition) should be retained in the curriculum from years 1 to 13, and as a standalone subject in years 12 and 13. HETTANZ emphasised that home economics (food and nutrition) is its own subject area that includes distinct skills and knowledge.

The ministry submitted that it is proposing to incorporate home economics concepts into broader subjects in the revised curriculum. HETTANZ argues that home economics (food and nutrition) teaches students about holistic and sustainable approaches to healthy living. It therefore considers that home economics (food and nutrition) cannot be incorporated into related disciplines like health and physical education without losing its unique educational structure and learning outcomes.

We also received evidence from the Nutrition Society of New Zealand. The Nutrition Society set out its reasons for supporting the retention of food and nutrition as a curriculum subject, which are based on an October 2025 survey it conducted of 38 high school and first-year university students.

HETTANZ expressed concern that the ministry's decision-making process reflected a "we think" approach rather than an evidence-based approach. HETTANZ believes that absorbing home economics into other subjects would, in practice, dismantle the home economics content. It also told us that it believes there is high demand for home economics from students. Therefore, it considers the removal of home economics (food and nutrition) would impact a popular, well-liked subject.

The ministry acknowledged New Zealand's long history of offering home economics as part of the health and physical education learning area. It also acknowledged stakeholders' concerns about a potential loss of "cohesive subject identity" because of the ministry's proposed changes. The ministry maintains that students will be better able to explore interconnected ideas and broader knowledge areas under its proposed approach. Its goal is

also to create a clearer, more knowledge-rich programme that is comparable to approaches in other countries.

The ministry considers that its proposed approach balances the value of home economics (food and nutrition) with school capacity, curriculum sustainability, educational coherence, and pathways to further learning.

Our response to the petitions

We thank the petitioners for bringing these matters to Parliament for consideration, and for their advocacy of their respective subject areas. Several of us enjoyed these courses at high school ourselves. The curriculum refresh that is underway is extremely important to get right for New Zealand's young people. We also expect the curriculum will continue to evolve.

We agree that these subject areas are important and that the skills and knowledge gained from learning about them prepare students for long-term success. We note the petitioners' concerns that the ministry's proposed changes could diminish student enrolment in these subjects at the tertiary level. We also note the ministry's assurance that its proposed curriculum changes will both retain access to core subject matter and make these subject areas more coherent and serviceable in the long term.

We see clear merits of each of the subject areas in question. However, we also understand that the ministry's revised approach to curriculum design aims to present other opportunities and ways of learning for students. We understand that it would not be feasible to retain every part of the current curriculum while implementing this approach.

The ministry's decision to retain outdoor education as a ministry-led subject in years 12 and 13 is a positive signal that the ministry is taking consultation and feedback seriously. However, some of us remain unconvinced that the ministry's rationale, as it was expressed to us, is strong enough to warrant removing art history and home economics as standalone subjects.

We expect that discussions about the refreshed curriculum will continue in the coming months and be a topic of interest to the Education and Workforce Committee of the 55th Parliament.

Appendix

Committee procedure

The petition of Education Outdoors NZ was signed by 11 people on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Hon Willow-Jean Prime on 22 October 2025 and transferred to us on 12 March 2026.

The petition of Lily Foster was signed by 8,898 people on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Rachel Boyack on 1 December 2025 and transferred to us on 12 March 2026.

The petition of Home Economics and Technology Teachers' Association of New Zealand was signed by one person on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan on 19 December 2025 and transferred to us on 12 March 2026.

We met between 25 March and 23 September 2026 to consider these petitions. We received written submissions from the petitioners and the Ministry of Education on each petition. We also received a written submission on the petition of Home Economics and Technology Teachers' Association of New Zealand from the Nutrition Society of New Zealand. We heard oral evidence from the petitioners on 27 May 2026.

Committee members

Katie Nimon (Chairperson)
Carl Bates (Deputy Chairperson)
Hon Ginny Andersen
Shanan Halbert
Grant McCallum
Dr Parmjeet Parmar
Hon Phil Twyford
Dr Vanessa Weenink
Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan

Related resources

The documents we received as evidence in relation to these petitions are available on the [Parliament website](#).

A recording of our hearings can be accessed online on the [Parliament website](#).