

TEACHING COUNCIL

NEW ZEALAND | Matatū Aotearoa

22 March 2019

Tēnā Koe

Thank you for your request for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).
You asked:

- ... whether the Teaching Council of NZ has an official position on the spread of anti-vaccination misinformation by teachers to students in class time?

The Teaching Council does not have a position on this subject, or generally on matters of health and would normally take the advice of the Director General of Health on such matters. However, we recognise that teachers have a strong influence on learners and their understanding of the world, and virtually all teachers understand the trusted position they hold. Almost without exception, the stories we hear about teachers and learners are evidence of the way teachers are living the commitments under the teachers' *Code of Professional Responsibility (The Code)*. The Code can be found on our website at: <https://www.educationcouncil.org.nz/content/our-code-our-standards>.

However, as in society at large, there may be a small number of teachers whose views are inconsistent with the expectations the public and profession have of them and they may at times put forward these views in the classroom. Depending on the views themselves and the nature of the classroom conversation, such activity may or may not constitute a breach of the Code. For example, we expect a teacher would not use their influence as a teacher to inappropriately influence a learner to take a course of action. A discussion about anti-vaccination beliefs may be valid in some contexts, but an attempt to influence a learner's decision about vaccination is likely to breach various aspects of the Code, particularly if it includes use of information that has been proven to be false.

If there are complaints about a teacher breaching the Code they should generally be made to the teacher's employer first. However, in some circumstances they can be made directly to the Teaching Council.

I hope that this information is sufficient for your purposes. However, if you are not satisfied with my response, you have the right to seek an investigation and review of this response by the Ombudsman who can be contacted by writing to: The Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143, or email: info@ombudsman.parliament.govt.nz. A complaint to the Ombudsman can also be made online at <http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz/make-a-complaint/make-a-complaint-now>.

Nāku noa, nā



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