

Appel activity

Appel claims to represent schools teaching the majority of English language students in New Zealand and says it is the active voice of the country's private language teaching industry, despite withdrawing its support from Education New Zealand last year. We talk to BARBARA TAKASE, Appel Chairperson.

Fact box



Full name: Association of Private Providers of English Language Inc.

Year established: 1999

Number of members: 71

Type of members: private English language schools

Government recognition: yes

Membership criteria: NZQA registration, signatories of the New Zealand Ministry of Education

Association's main role: being the recognised voice of registered private English language schools, conducting useful research and engaging in proactive liaison with government agencies

Code of practice: no

Complaints procedure: under development

Agent workshops/fam trips: no

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Q Appel is an association for English language schools in New Zealand. Please recap for our readers how and why it was established?

A In April 1999, the English language school directors had a meeting in Christchurch to discuss industry matters and decided to form a new association which included as many schools as possible - Appel. The long-established associations, CreIsNZ and FielsNZ, both gave Appel their support and have made it a requirement for their members also to be members of Appel. CreIs and Fiels continue to focus on quality development, marketing and member support, while Appel has taken on the roles of government liaison and lobbying. Appel started with 45 member schools and it now has 71. As all of the larger and longer-established schools are members, we estimate that Appel member schools account for more than 80 per cent of all English language students in the country.

Q Since Appel was founded, what have been some of the key issues that you have provided industry leadership on?

A One of the key issues Appel has taken leadership on has been the campaign to oppose the export education tax (levy), which was sprung on the industry without consultation last year. The tax has been enforced in spite of the strong opposition not only of Appel but also of all the universities in New Zealand. While Appel continues to strenuously oppose this iniquitous tax and work towards its repeal, we have developed a proposal to administer the spending of Appel's share of the levy funds

collected. Appel schools have, for years, developed and offered excellent teacher and other training courses. A major project over the past year has been our professional development coordination team, led by Dr Kate Herbert of Kiwi English, which has made all development courses accessible via the Appel website. In addition to this, the team has developed some great new initiatives such as front-line reception training and [host family] coordinator courses. We are in regular consultation with New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) on a variety of projects, and we have submitted a number of ideas to them about ways of improving services and protection to our students.

Q Do you maintain a working relationship with Education New Zealand now?

A Appel has represented the industry on various government forums and has continued to work alongside Education New Zealand to support the NZIEMN network, which developed the New Zealand education brand, website and associated promotional materials. We continue to work with Education New Zealand on projects such as this, though our members have given a very clear indication in an industry poll (98 per cent) that they prefer not to become [active] members.

Q There has been media coverage about an influx of Chinese students in New Zealand, and an associated reaction from state schools keen to limit their numbers. Has this been over-reported, or are Chinese stu-

dents in danger of dominating enrolment balance?

A Last year was a peak year in New Zealand for the enrolment of Chinese students. However, with effective marketing in other markets, and also with a leveling-off of Chinese enrolments due to a number of internal and external factors, this situation has changed noticeably in the past six months. Our traditional markets of Japan and Korea have surged ahead and there are encouraging results from some European markets.

Q Has the new requirement for all schools to be accredited by NZQA, even those only offering short-term courses, impacted on the market in any way?

A The new NZQA requirements for accreditation of all schools, even those only offering short courses, will come into effect from July this year. Established Appel schools will be watching this development with interest. We are hopeful that it will result in more stability in the market, which has been damaged by low quality unregulated providers.

Q What are Appel's hopes and plans for the future?

A For the future, Appel has plans in place for the further development of its professional development and research projects. We have huge confidence in the unique product that New Zealand English language schools can offer to international students, and we look forward to ensuring that that product continues to improve, with minimal interference from government.