

## The Gardner Family

44 Meadowbank Drive  
Belmont Hills  
Lower Hutt 5010



October 5, 2016

The Hon Hekia Parata

### ***RE – MCAT YEAR 11 EXAMINATION***

We write on behalf of our youngest daughter Phoebe who sat the Level 1 Algebra Examination (MCAT) this past September.

Phoebe is a very good student who is diligent and studies hard. After her mock examinations her Mathematics result was not as good as she had hoped and we enrolled her at Numberworks to focus her attention on the MCAT. Based on the revision she did on previous years papers she was set for an Excellence grade.

After the MCAT examination Phoebe reported the difficulties she had and her bewilderment at her inability to answer a number of questions when she had put so much effort into her preparation. This examination is of course her first under the NCEA qualification and hence there was always going to be a level of anxiousness about it. Yet for a student so well prepared she could not reconcile her difficulties with the questions.

We are now of course well aware that the problems Phoebe encountered were not unique but rather ubiquitous as a result of the level at which the examination was set. You must not underestimate the amount of distress and nervousness this has caused students and continues to cause as they prepare for their end of year examinations. They are certainly suffering a crisis of confidence in the NCEA examination system.

In Phoebe's case her MCAT grade determines her Mathematics future for the remaining school years. She aspires to careers in professions that will require a high level of mathematical competence, hence our additional investment in her education. Her school is contemplating using her mock examination score as a substitute for the MCAT grade to determine where she is placed in the Mathematics stream next year. This is not acceptable in Phoebe's case because we sought remedial tutoring as a consequence of that result. Hence she could be penalised when she in fact sought help and put in extra effort to improve her circumstance.



Despite all the publicity in the papers and evidence provided of a poorly set exam, we have not yet read anything to indicate that NZQA has accepted responsibility. In the interest of the students we urge you to demand that they issue a public acknowledgement and apology and frankly if they won't, you need to.

We ask that you launch at the very least a ministerial inquiry into the processes at NZQA that allowed this exam to pass all of the requisite checks and balances for its appropriateness. Confidence is also required for those students sitting further Mathematics examinations at the end of the school year. It is imperative that they have some commitment to being examined appropriately.

We put our trust in you Minister to do the right thing by these aspiring young people and repair the damage that has been done to their academic careers and confidence in the system under which they are assessed. A poor result in terms of the government's management of this issue will potentially marginalise and impact quality young New Zealanders for years to come.

Yours sincerely

The Gardner Family

CC Chris Hipkins, Labour MP and Julia Davidson, Principal, Wellington Girls College