

GREATER CHRISTCHURCH EDUCATION RENEWAL PROCESS

1. I propose that the Committee note the decisions I intend to make, in accordance with the Education Act 1989, about which schools in Aranui and New Brighton will close or merge.

Executive Summary

2. In 2012 Cabinet agreed to a \$1 billion investment in the renewal of education in greater Christchurch to address both pre-existing and earthquake related issues. In September, I announced the overall plan for education renewal, including proposals for 38 schools to close or merge.
3. Two schools sought voluntary closure and closed on 27 January 2013. I announced final decisions for 28 schools earlier this year. These decisions were that:
 - Glenmoor, Greenpark, Kendal and Richmond Schools will close in January 2014;
 - Branston Intermediate, Linwood Intermediate and Manning Intermediate Schools will close in January 2014, with students moving to local secondary schools, which will become year 7-13 schools from term one, 2014;
 - Burwood and Windsor, Phillipstown and Woolston, and Discovery One and Unlimited Paenga Tawhiti Schools will merge in January 2014;
 - Lyttleton Main and Lyttelton West Schools will merge in May 2014; and,
 - Bromley, Burnham, Burnside Primary, Duvauchelle, Gilberthorpe, Linwood Avenue, Okains Bay, Ouruhia Model, Shirley Intermediate, South New Brighton and Yaldhurst Model Schools, and TKKM o Te Whanau Tahī and TKKM o Waitaha will remain open as separate institutions in the schooling network.
4. This paper sets out my thinking for the eight remaining schools (five in Aranui and three in New Brighton). I intend to:
 - establish a year 1-13 campus in Aranui in January 2017, at the same time as closing Aranui High, Aranui Primary, Avondale and Wainoni Schools. I intend to retain Chisnallwood Intermediate School in the network pending a review in 2020; and,
 - merge Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools in January 2015.

If these decisions are confirmed, then of the 38 schools proposed to close or merge, two have already closed voluntarily and a further eleven will close. Eleven more will merge, and fourteen will remain open as separate institutions.

5. I acknowledge that these changes will be difficult for school communities, and I am committed to providing extensive additional support to ensure the successful implementation of the decisions and a smooth transition to new or merged schools for children, their families, and staff. The Ministry has appointed a Principal to lead this work, who is being supported by expert change managers (who are experienced in school leadership and governance work), residual agents and, for merging schools, governance facilitators. All of these roles will have a strong emphasis on working to ensure that children and parents are well supported through transition. The Ministry will begin consultation with the Aranui community about the structure of schooling on the campus in September.

Background

6. Raising student achievement, as reflected in our Better Public Service targets, and ensuring that all young people can access high quality teaching in modern learning environments is one of our Government's priorities, as is the rebuild of Christchurch. In this context there is considerable opportunity in Christchurch to provide current and future children with greatly enhanced access to quality education to improve their achievement.
7. While the necessary investment in infrastructure provides a platform for promoting access to quality education, I am also focused on enhanced quality of teaching and leadership, both of which are at the heart of student achievement. The concurrent work being done by the 35 geographical groups of schools and early childhood education services to develop and implement plans to maximise achievement is critical.
8. The earthquakes of 2010-11 caused massive disruption and loss for the people of greater Christchurch. They resulted in unprecedented damage to housing, infrastructure and businesses in the area. Approximately 100,000 homes were damaged (around half the housing stock). More than 7,800 properties have been zoned red, which means the land is unsuitable for rebuilding on for a considerable period of time. Those households and families have to leave their homes and rebuild their homes and lives elsewhere. The extent of the damage, subsequent people movement and changes to life in the city means that Christchurch will not be returned to how it was in September 2010. In the same way that we will not rebuild the CBD exactly as it was before, the schooling network needs to adapt to changes in Canterbury. Instead, we have the chance to use the investment to provide better facilities and opportunities for the people of greater Christchurch and future generations.

Decisions about Individual Proposals

9. The school closure and merger process is governed by sections 154, 156A and 157 of the Education Act 1989 (the Act). These sections require the Minister of Education to consult the Board of the school concerned and the Boards of any state schools where the roll might be affected before making an initial decision to close or merge a school. Under the Act, the Minister then gives the Board of the school proposed for **closure** 28 days in which to provide any further arguments or information in favour of the decision not proceeding. I provided 6 weeks instead of the required 28 days and I also provided the same opportunity to Boards of schools proposed to **merge**, even though the Act does not require this.
10. On 29 July, the Ministry provided me with detailed education reports concerning the schools in Aranui and New Brighton. I have been carefully considering the case for each school, while ensuring that I consider the impact of the proposals more widely and the viability of the school network in greater Christchurch overall. Maps of student distribution in Aranui and New Brighton are provided in appendices 1 and 2.

11. As with the Ministry's earlier reports to inform my interim and final decisions, the reports examine each argument and proposal which have been made by Boards in their submissions, and set out the Ministry's response and final recommendation. They include the Ministry's analysis of the effect of proposals on children's access to schooling, and the financial and property implications of different options. Before being submitted, each report was considered by a governance group consisting of senior officials from Christchurch and Wellington, and the final report was signed off by the Deputy Secretary, Regional Operations. I have subsequently had meetings with officials to consider the analysis and recommendations.
12. It is important that parents/caregivers and schools are able, in a timely way, to see the information I considered when making decisions and, learning from previous announcements, I again intend to publish all the education reports on the website dedicated to Christchurch Education Renewal – Shaping Education, at the same time as I announce my decisions.

Schools in Aranui

13. Aranui is a suburb located approximately 8km to the east of the CBD. It is one of the poorest and most ethnically diverse areas in greater Christchurch, and is also one of the communities that has been most seriously affected by the earthquakes. Much of the land that borders the Avon River is part of the CERA red zone. Whilst levels of achievement in Aranui have improved recently, they are still low. In 2012, just 40% of school leavers at Aranui High School achieved NCEA Level 2.
14. There are currently five state schools in the Aranui area:

	Decile	Year	Roll ¹	Ethnicity of students ²			
				Māori	Pasifika	Euro-pean	Other
Aranui School	1	1-8	159	32%	27%	40%	1%
Aranui High School	2	9-13	455	33%	16%	44%	7%
Avondale School	2	1-6	301	28%	6%	63%	3%
Chisnallwood Intermediate School	5	7-8	692	16%	4%	76%	4%
Wainoni School	1	1-8	99	42%	21%	36%	1%

15. In September 2012, I proposed the closure of five schools in Aranui to establish a new Aranui community campus. Like the other proposals, this was developed in response to the damage to land and buildings, and subsequent people movements as a result of the earthquakes. Between March 2010 and March 2013, the combined rolls of the five state schools fell from 2,286 to 1,695 children, which has contributed significantly to the schools having substantial spare capacity. For example, Wainoni School is operating at around one-third of its capacity.

¹ Based on March 2013 data.

² Based on July 2012 data, as ethnicity details are not available for March data.

16. All five schools suffered earthquake damage to varying degrees, and the combined ten year property costs for the five schools is \$36.9 million. Given the extent of the damage and over-capacity in the area, repairing all the schools and retaining the network as it is at the moment is not a practical option. The need for some changes was recognised by the Boards of all the schools in their submissions in March in response to the original proposals.
17. After considering these submissions, I made an interim decision to establish a new community campus with year 1-13 schooling in January 2017, and to close Aranui Primary, Aranui High, Avondale and Wainoni Schools at the same time. I also made an interim decision that Chisnallwood Intermediate School should remain open in the network until a review in 2020. I was persuaded by the argument put forward by Chisnallwood's Board that it serves a wider catchment than just the Aranui area, so should be retained to provide a choice of intermediate provision for parents. I asked all the Boards to provide feedback on my interim decisions by 3 July and again supported them with funding to employ a facilitator to assist with that consultation.
18. The Boards of Aranui Primary, Aranui High and Wainoni Schools are supportive of the idea of a community campus, but raised issues about the possible use of public private partnership (PPP) funding and how the schools would be supported through the transition. The Board of Chisnallwood School agreed with my interim decision to retain the school.
19. The Board of Avondale School disagreed with the interim decision. The Board states that Avondale School is a "school of choice", earthquake damage is minimal, and that retention of the school would not negatively affect the sustainability of the community campus. It suggests that the school should remain open, and it could work more closely with Chisnallwood and/or add early childhood education facilities on its current site.
20. Whilst there is undoubtedly support amongst its community for Avondale to remain open, it is not in the same position as Chisnallwood. A key reason for the retention of Chisnallwood in the network is that the majority of its students come from outside the Aranui area. This is not the case for Avondale, as 80% of its students live in Aranui³. Whilst earthquake damage at Avondale is not as extensive as elsewhere, it would still require \$4.8 million of capital work. Repairing individual schools would not allow us to respond effectively to the community's needs by developing a new pattern of education provision through a single campus.
21. As at March 2013, 559 children attend Aranui Primary, Avondale and Wainoni Schools. If these children were divided between two schools, each would have a roll of 280 children, which is small for a city school. This would have a negative impact on the sustainability of the Aranui campus. Having schools on two sites would compromise our ability to provide comprehensive wrap-around services from other agencies, and potentially increase the number of transitions that children have to make between schools.
22. The decision about whether to use PPP funding will be made by Cabinet after consideration of whether it provides better value for money than other procurement options. It is important to note that using PPP is compatible with campus facilities being available for public use.

³ Based on July 2012 data.

23. The Boards of the four schools also submitted that they would prefer the schools to merge, rather than close, to promote job security for existing staff. Whilst I acknowledge that a merger may help staff by giving them the first opportunity to obtain roles at the merged school, I am not persuaded that this would lead to any benefits for the students at the schools. Closing the schools gives the new campus the opportunity to employ the best teaching and support staff. Where current staff have the capabilities required, they will be appointed through this process. Merging the identities and cultures from the four schools would also not provide the same opportunities for change and innovation that a new campus being developed by the community as a whole can. The campus will still embrace the very best parts of the education at the existing four schools.
24. If my interim decision is confirmed, the Ministry will work with the Board of each school to determine the support which is needed to promote effective teaching and learning through the transition period. This will include supporting the recruitment of high-quality staff by allowing schools to appoint permanent staffing positions where needed until the end of 2015. The Ministry will also implement the successful Positive Behaviour for Learning programme in the four schools. Secondary schools in the east have already indicated they will work together to ensure a rich curriculum is available in all local schools, including Aranui High School. The Ministry will also consider how to support Aranui High School in raising achievement before the campus is established.
25. At the same time as announcing my final decision about the existing schools in Aranui, I plan to announce a further consultation with the community about the way schooling is organised on the new campus, and the services and facilities the community would like to be available on the campus. This will fulfil the legislative requirement to undertake consultation with the Boards of schools whose roll may be affected by the establishment of new provision, as well as providing an opportunity to hear the community's ideas and concerns.
26. The Boards of the schools in Aranui have worked with the Aranui Community Trust Incorporated Society and the wider community to develop a vision for the campus. Like me, they would like to consider how early childhood, special education, te reo Māori provision, tertiary, social and sporting organisations could operate from the campus to provide a learning hub that would fundamentally change how education is delivered for the community.
27. This consultation will run from September to December, and I will be in a position to make a final decision about the structure of schooling on the campus in early 2014. In parallel with this process, the Ministry will work with Christchurch City Council, CERA and other government agencies to discuss the co-location of other services and facilities on the campus site.
28. I would seek to appoint an Establishment Board of Trustees (or Boards of Trustees) from term two, 2014, which would bring together representatives from the four schools' communities and the wider community. The Establishment Board will have the important role of taking the community's vision for the campus through to completion, and making staff appointments.

Schools in New Brighton

29. New Brighton is a coastal suburb to the east of the CBD. Like Aranui, New Brighton was one of the areas that was most affected by the earthquakes. There are four state primary schools in New Brighton:

	Decile	Year levels	Roll ⁴	Ethnicity of students ⁵			
				Māori	Pasifika	Euro-pean	Other
Central New Brighton School	2	1-8	100	28%	8%	62%	2%
Freeville School	4	1-8	275	28%	2%	68%	2%
North New Brighton School	4	1-8	214	25%	4%	69%	2%
South New Brighton School	5	1-8	426	12%	1%	86%	1%

30. I initially proposed the merger of Freeville and North New Brighton Schools, and Central New Brighton and South New Brighton Schools. However, following consideration of the feedback from the consultation, I was persuaded by arguments from the Boards that few children who currently attend Central New Brighton School would be likely to attend the merged school. I also accepted the concerns of the Board of South New Brighton that there was no need to put children, staff and the community through a potentially disruptive merger process given the small number of children likely to transfer. I therefore decided not to proceed with the merger of South New Brighton and Central New Brighton Schools.
31. I asked the Boards of Central New Brighton, North New Brighton and Freeville Schools to consult on two new options. They were:
- a three-way merger of Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools. This merger was proposed by some of the affected schools and would take place in at the start of term two, 2014; and,
 - a merger of Freeville and North New Brighton Schools, and the closure of Central New Brighton School. The merger and closure would take place at the start of term two, 2014.

As well as responding to the concerns about children's access to school from the Board of Central New Brighton School and suggestions made by the Boards of Freeville, Central New Brighton and South New Brighton, these options allow more children to access the modern learning environments that will be available at the merged school once the North New Brighton School site has been redeveloped.

32. The Boards of Central and North New Brighton Schools agreed with the proposal for a three-way merger. The Board of North New Brighton said this option would "give equal and fair opportunity to all three schools from a community, student and staff perspective" and allow the three communities to come together to build a shared vision. The Board of Central New Brighton offered similar reasons.

⁴ Based on March 2013 data.

⁵ Based on July 2012 data, as ethnicity details are not available for March data.

33. The Board of Freeville School said its preference was for Freeville to remain as a separate institution in the network. If network changes were needed, it would prefer Central New Brighton to close. Failing that, they would prefer to merge solely with North New Brighton in January 2016. The Freeville Board was concerned that a three-way merger would mean that its own representation on the appointed Board 'will be diluted'. However, as recognised by the other Boards, a three-way merger actually offers the benefit of bringing together wider New Brighton community representation on the appointed Board for the merged school, as well as offering the chance to bring together the most positive aspects of all three schools.
34. Freeville was also concerned about the potential risks a merger could have on its existing bilingual unit. Ministry staff and the schools' change manager will support the unit to be included and enhanced in the merged school. All three Boards also raised issues around the implementation of the merger and the support that will be available to the schools and their communities during the process. I am confident that the comprehensive support which the Ministry will provide (set out in paragraph 38) will help to ensure a smooth transition for children, staff and the wider community.
35. The Boards were also concerned about the proposal to merge in May 2014, which would be part-way through the school year. All considered it would be difficult to develop new school-wide policies and practices, and implement the change during a school year. The Boards considered that there could be disruption to children's learning if they needed to change to a new site and/or have a new teacher. Whilst I do not believe it is impossible for an effective merger to happen at this point, I believe the likelihood of a successful three-way merger is increased by allowing it to happen at the beginning of a new school year.
36. I therefore intend to merge Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools, effective from January 2015. The merged school will operate on the existing Freeville and North New Brighton sites for 2015, before all children are accommodated in a rebuilt school on the North New Brighton site from January 2016.

Support for Schools

37. Throughout this process, I have recognised that school Boards and staff need a range of additional support throughout what will inevitably be a difficult period. I recognise that the Ministry will need to increase its support to schools and their communities, to ensure that children are able to make successful transitions to new and merged schools, and that their parents are well informed and supported through the changes.
38. In May, the Ministry appointed an experienced Principal to lead its work on implementing my school reorganisation decisions in Christchurch. As with other schools that are closing or merging, the boards of the three merging schools in New Brighton will work directly with a change manager, who will have substantial experience in a governance or school leadership capacity. The change manager role has been enlarged to ensure a greater focus on supporting the wellbeing of children and staff through the transition, and will work with schools' Boards and senior leaders to develop and deliver a tailored change management and support plan. This will include engaging a residual agent who is responsible for the effective and prudent management of school finances (including assets), funding, and a governance facilitator. The Ministry team will have the key role in co-ordinating this work. It will also meet with the schools' Boards to consider representation on the appointed Board for the merged school.

39. In order to provide a greater degree of certainty for parents about the availability of local schooling, the Ministry has considered likely changes to enrolment schemes if the merger proceeds. Freeville School is the only school with an enrolment scheme, and the Ministry will implement a special temporary enrolment scheme at Freeville School under the Canterbury Earthquake (Education Act) Order 2011 to give the siblings (not yet at school) of out-of-zone students enrolled at Freeville School on the date of the announcement entry to Freeville School.
40. This special temporary enrolment scheme will be replaced by a normal enrolment scheme following the date of merger. This normal enrolment scheme will be developed by the Board of Trustees, which will consult with neighbouring schools and community about what the normal enrolment scheme home zone should be for enrolments from 2015 onwards.
41. One of my most important goals is to ensure that the identities, languages and cultures of all children continue to be supported. As noted above, Freeville School offers Māori medium education and the change manager will work with the Board to ensure this provision is maintained and grown in the newly merged school. The Ministry is already working on a longer-term strategy for Māori medium education across greater Christchurch.

Communications with Schools and the Wider Community

42. I anticipate making this announcement as soon as possible in September. As they did in February and May, senior staff from the Ministry will visit each school before the announcement to deliver and discuss my decision with the Board Chair and the Principal. They will also provide a full information pack and the material that supported the decision, and detailed information about the next steps and timescales, including the support which the Ministry will be making available. The school leadership will be offered another visit in the following 48 hours to go through the information in more detail, once they have had the opportunity to talk to their communities.
43. I intend to invite all Board Chairs and Principals to meet me later on the same day. They will already know the decisions at this stage, but the purpose of the meeting is to give them the opportunity to discuss them. Briefings of key stakeholder groups will also occur on the day and I will hold a press conference and release the full list of decisions and supporting material.
44. I again want to be as open and transparent as possible about the decision-making process, the advice I received from the Ministry and the factors it considered. To support this, when schools are notified of the decision, they will receive a copy of the education report relating to their school. The education report that contained the overall advice to me will be emailed to each school immediately after the last school visit occurs. These education reports, as well as the detailed information packs which schools will receive, will be publicly released on the same day and will be available on the website from the announcement time.

Financial Implications

45. The Ministry has provided me with advice about the estimated costs and savings to the Crown as a result of the merger. In the first year of the closure or merger, there are often additional costs to the Crown (which may include redundancy costs). However, in the longer-term, closures or mergers almost always generate savings to the Crown as a result of slightly lower operational funding and staffing costs.

46. A percentage of those savings are reinvested in the schooling network, through the Education Development Initiative (EDI) and Joint Schools Initiative Funding (JSIF) grants. EDI funding is used to help with children's transition to their new school including projects to raise achievement and, in the case of closures, to cover any additional costs of closure and remaining debts of closing schools. JSIF is used by a group of schools for projects that raise student achievement across those schools.
47. The potential costs of EDI and JSIF and subsequent savings will depend on the structure of schooling in Aranui. As an example, if we were to establish a single year 1-13 school, the cost of the EDI enhancement would be \$1.169m and JSIF would be \$334,000. The estimated net operational costs and savings will be provided as part of consideration of the new schooling model in Aranui.
48. The cost to the Crown of the EDI enhancement for the merger of Central New Brighton, North New Brighton and Freeville Schools would be \$1.471 million based on the EDI policy. JSIF would be around \$420,000. It is estimated there would be operational costs to the Crown in the first year of \$834,000, with estimated annual operational savings after that of \$449,000 per year. The estimated total net operating savings to the Crown in the first ten years after merger are \$2.458 million.

Human Rights, Gender and Disability Implications

49. There are no human rights, gender or disability implications arising from this paper.

Consultation

50. The Treasury, the State Services Commission and the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Agency have been consulted on this paper, and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has been informed of its content.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Cabinet:

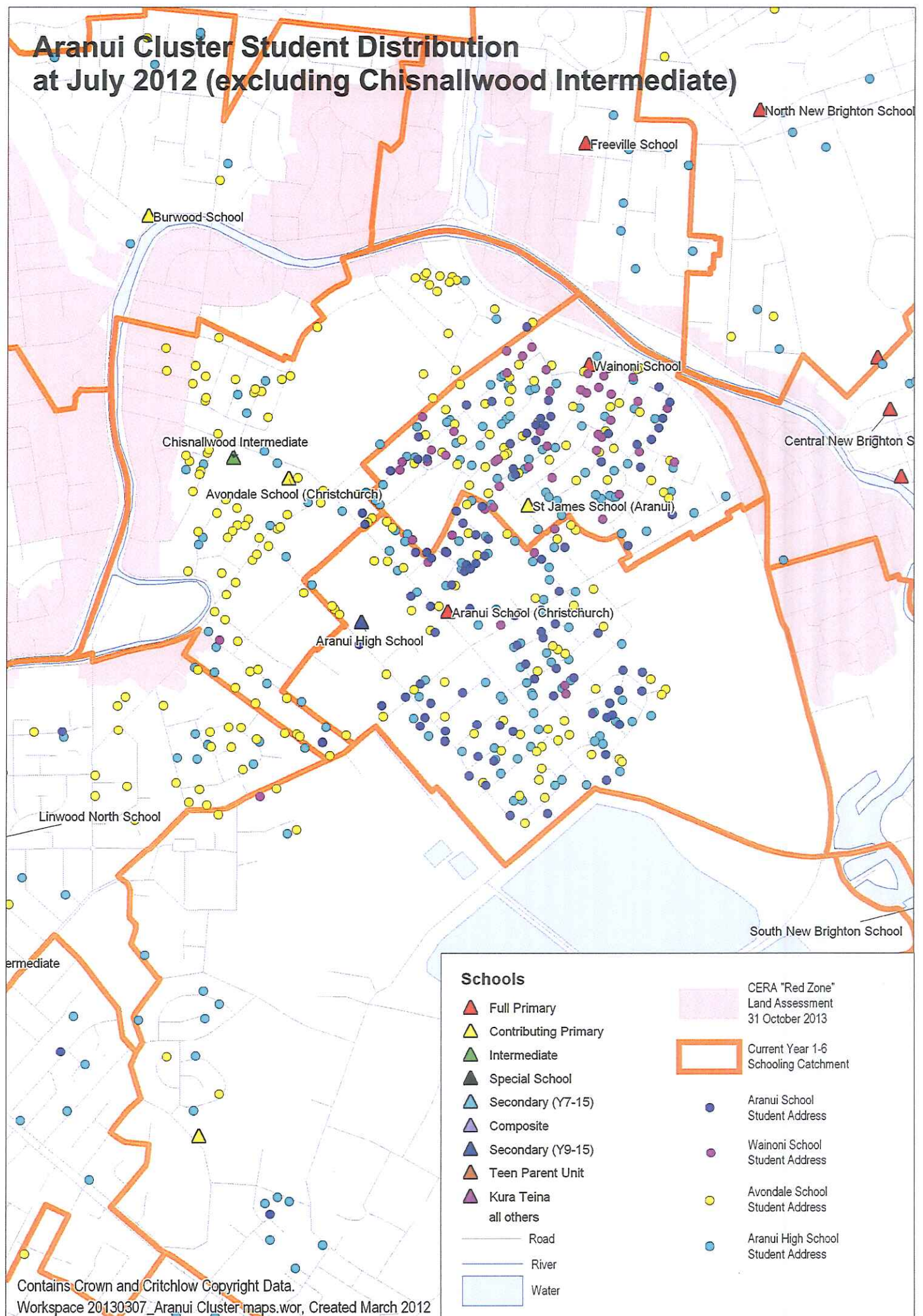
- 1 **note** that I continue to be mindful of the significant impact of the earthquake on children, parents, school staff and the wider community in greater Christchurch, and I am committed to ensuring appropriate support continues to be provided to students, their parents and teachers as the closure and merger process continues;
- 2 **note** the process of consultation that I have undertaken with the Boards of schools in Aranui and New Brighton proposed for closure or merger;
- 3 **note** that I intend to decide to proceed with a year 1-13 campus on the site of Aranui High School to open in January 2017, and to consult further about the details of this provision;
- 4 **note** that I intend to decide that Aranui High, Aranui Primary, Avondale and Wainoni Schools will close in January 2017, but that Chisnallwood Intermediate School will be retained in the network pending a review in 2020;
- 5 **note** that I intend to decide that Central New Brighton, Freeville and North New Brighton Schools will merge in January 2015, initially on the Freeville and North New Brighton sites, and from 2016 on the North New Brighton site;
- 6 **note** the additional support the Ministry is providing to schools to support students, schools and the wider community through these changes; and,
- 7 **note** the communications approach I am proposing to adopt, which reflects discussions with the sector and is consistent with the approach for the February and May 2013 announcements.



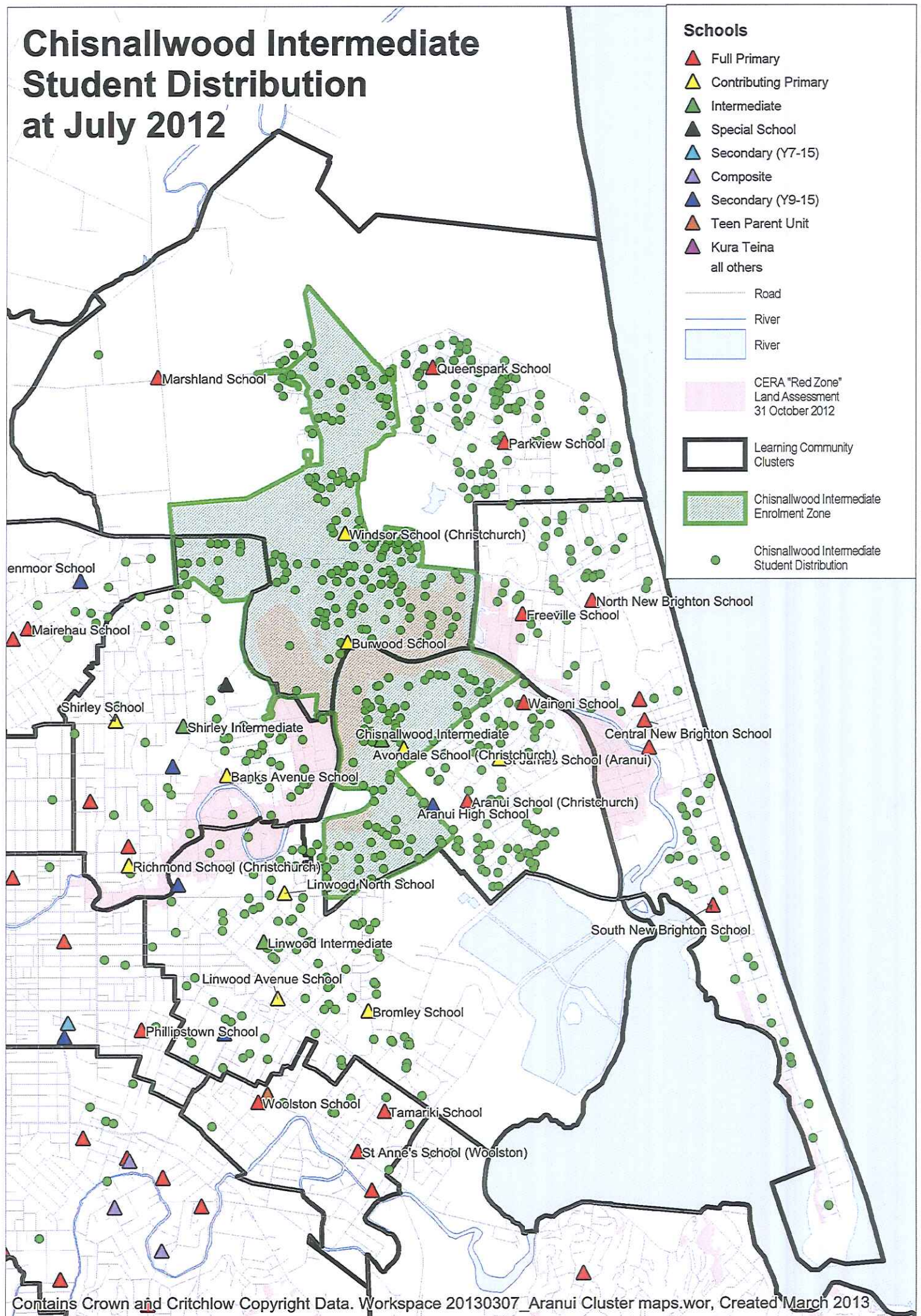
Hon Hekia Parata
Minister of Education

7, 8, 13

Aranui Cluster Student Distribution at July 2012 (excluding Chisnallwood Intermediate)



Chisnallwood Intermediate Student Distribution at July 2012



New Brighton primary student distribution at July 2012

