



## **Aranui Learning Cluster**

### **Submission on the Hon. Hekia Parata's Interim Decisions for the Aranui Learning Cluster on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013 by the NZEI Te Riu Roa Waitaha/Canterbury Area Council**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 NZEI Te Riu Roa represents teaching staff employed at Aranui Primary, Avondale Primary and Wainoni Primary Schools, and support staff employed at these schools and at Aranui High School.
- 1.2 This submission reflects discussion with members in those schools. Not all of these schools support the Minister's interim decision to close and join the schools in one campus. However, should the Minister's final decision confirm one new campus is to proceed, the majority of members in the schools affected by the Minister's interim decision support a merger, rather than closure process.
- 1.3 The focus of our submission is on ways in which – should the Minister's final decision be that the schools are to form one new campus by January 2017 - the transition to the new campus can occur to ensure the best outcomes for students and their families, as well as staff. We are concerned at the detrimental impacts enforced closure, rather than merger, will have on the schools in terms of a positive transition.
- 1.4 Should the Minister's interim decision be confirmed, the learning from earlier reorganization decisions leads NZEI to strongly recommend "ring-fencing" of staff at the schools to avoid a prolonged and disruptive transition.
- 1.6 NZEI is concerned that a desire to progress with a PPP procurement process for the new campus has slowed down the transition process and may lead to an outcome that undermines the concept of a community campus.

## **2. Merger instead of Closure**

- 2.1 NZEI submits that if the Minister's interim decision is confirmed, that the schools should merge, not close.
- 2.2 The interim decision has been made that several schools will become one campus. The decision on how that change will be implemented has to be merger rather than closure to assist the students and the community accept and move towards supporting the new entity.
- 2.3 While the end result of either a closure or a merger process would achieve the Minister's wish to have one campus with flexibility of resource use, provision of community facilities and high quality teaching and learning in a modern learning environment, it is the merger process that would provide the best protection for students, socially, emotionally and educationally and this must be the paramount consideration.
- 2.4 The students have experienced disruption of schooling, home life and a long period of uncertainty about the future of their school. The Minister must take care her final decision does not increase or add to the trauma.
- 2.5 School staff have been the "glue" holding many children and families together since the earthquakes, but they also face stress from their own post-earthquake issues with housing, insurance and family dislocation. Requiring these staff to face an unnecessary new challenge - proposed closure of their schools – will greatly increase their stress.
- 2.6 The merger process allows affected students to identify as contributing to the new entity by bringing with them, as a group, the ethos, history and vision of their current schools. Teachers involved in past mergers have managed to work through the process with their students as a celebration, a coming together.
- 2.7 The closure process cannot foster this climate. Closure is final. The school will close leaving students with a feeling of loss; teachers and other staff face increased uncertainty about employment there is no sense of continuity moving from the old to the new. The word "closure" may suggest to parents that the schools are in some way failing. It is clear that promoting an exciting and vibrant new campus is critical to its success and to ensuring enrolments are as high as possible.
- 2.8 A merger gives continuity to the employment of most teaching and other staff, familiarity that supports student's learning as well as emotional state, a plus given the disruption experienced during and following the earthquakes. Merging schools ensures a higher degree of certainty about maintaining the long-term relationships built up by staff in these

schools, relationships which are critical to the educational success of students.

2.9 Merging schools is straight-forward industrially and there has been successful multi-school change processes previously. There is an agreed process between MOE, STA, PPTA and NZEI that provides the detail of how the implementation of the staffing proceeds under the two current collective agreements (PTCA and STCA). Those staff that are reconfirmed, reassigned or appointed to positions in the composite school are all covered by the ATCA when the new campus opens.

2. 10 The Crown must also consider the cost of redundancy should all four schools close instead of merge. If they close, then all permanently employed teachers in the schools are entitled to the surplus staffing provisions contained in the PTCA and STCA. This cost could add up to several million dollars. Merging the schools would avoid the majority of this unnecessary cost, as existing teaching staff would be considered for reconfirmation or reassignment to positions, where available, in the new Year 1 – 13 campus provided they were suitably qualified and experienced.

### **3. Ring-fencing staffing**

3.1 Like other schools involved in the Christchurch reorganisation, the four Aranui schools proposed for closure already face challenges maintaining staff, a situation that a closure decision would exacerbate.

3.2 It is important that Aranui schools are supported to retain permanent staff being able to give staff with some certainty of on-going employment. Requiring the schools to go through surplus staffing processes if rolls decrease over the next three years or refusing to permit the appointment of permanent new staff if vacancies arise would have an unacceptably negative impact on children's learning.

3.3 The security of work for support staff in schools has always been tenuous due to their funding coming from the ops grant. Without schools funding being secured by ring fencing their employment is even more tenuous. As they are the staff working closely with vulnerable students it is even more important that their jobs are secured.

3.4 NZEI Te Riu Roa therefore strongly recommends that staffing at the schools is ring-fenced at no less than 2013 levels.



#### 4. PPP procurement process

4.1 Cabinet papers show the Ministry of Education recommended the new community campus be opened in January 2016 because there is no need to look for a new site as the campus will be located on the existing Aranui High site. The Minister's recommendation to Cabinet was that this be pushed out to January 2017 to "incorporate consideration of Public/Private Partnership procurement".

4.2 This decision is contrary to the Minister's stated intention with other Christchurch schools, where re-organisations have been speeded up so that new schools open in January 2014, under the rationale that this will provide school communities with more certainty. Delaying the opening of the new school, when staff and students are positively committed and ready for the new campus, in order to meet an ideological commitment to PPPs, may unnecessarily increase stress in the school communities by forcing them to spend an additional year in quake-impacted buildings and environments.

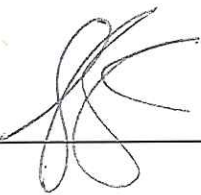

4.3 A PPP contract risks undermining the concept of a genuine community campus where there will be potentially multiple users of the site - community, health, sports, ECE etc. Private sector requirements to make a profit may be put ahead of the needs of a low decile community and optimum use of the campus if charges are passed on to users. There appears to be no desire by the community for a PPP.

4.4 NZEI believes stronger community input and ownership of the campus will be undermined if the design, construction, finance and ongoing maintenance is removed from public control for the next 25 years or more. There is no evidence that a PPP would cost the taxpayer less than standard procurement: not only is the cost of finance (debt) higher under a PPP model because Government can loan at lower rates than the private sector, but the transaction costs are potentially high. For example, the Hobsonville Point school campus built under a PPP has cost \$1.5 million more than it was claimed it would save because of the cost of developing the PPP business case, as well as further ongoing costs such as payment of a \$100,000 a year "relationship manager". Other risks include the fact that overseas banks and foreign infrastructure companies are likely to be the prime source of finance and expertise; they do not necessarily have any long term commitment to quality public education or to the Aranui community, and if they run into financial problems are unlikely to put the needs of the Aranui community first.

4.5 NZEI therefore opposes the use of PPP procurement for the Aranui community cluster.

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Signed by



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Sandra Spekreijse,  
Area Council Chair

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