



6 December 2012

Draft Education Renewal Recovery Programme in Greater Christchurch
Ministry of Education
shapingeducation@minedu.govt.nz

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Education Renewal Recovery Programme

The North East Secondary Education Committee (NESE) presents this submission to the Ministry of Education's "Directions for Education Renewal in Greater Christchurch" document.

NESE formed in 2008 following growing concern in the community about local secondary schooling options in North East Christchurch. NESE's nine Management Committee members are all elected parents and grandparents representing a wide cross section of the local community. NESE is supported by the families of the North East through subscriptions to NESE's newsletter, a social media page and attendance at public meetings.

In this submission we speak on behalf of these supporters and refer to their homes as being in the 8083 area. The 8083 area is the post code for the area north of the Avon River, east of Marshland Road and south of the Waimakariri River.

Committee members are regular attendees and contributors to the education renewal process. Members have attended many of the consultation events held at local schools, as well as attending meetings where Hon Hekia Parata, Minister of Education has spoken. Prior to the earthquakes NESE thoroughly investigated the need for local secondary schooling in North East Christchurch. Many of our findings continue to be just as relevant post earthquake. The documents NESE presented to the Education Select Committee and to the Ministry of Education's Area Review were developed after research and robust consultation with the community¹.

NESE believes establishing a strong bridge between primary and secondary levels is a major component in achieving the vision of lifelong learning. Establishing a comprehensive network

¹ "A Proposal to Build a New High School in the North East of Christchurch Following Investigation into Secondary Education Requirements";

"Report to the Ministry of Education for Consideration in Conjunction with the Area Report on North East Christchurch".

encompassing all education services from Early Childhood through to Tertiary Education will build a strong education framework for communities during and beyond Christchurch's recovery phase.

There are currently eight state primary schools² and New Brighton Catholic School in the 8083 area. Several of these are proposed to close or merge³. From the community consultation meetings we understand that communities want answers from the Ministry of Education about how the overall plan will provide better education for all children, and why the vision for schooling does not describe plans for all the compulsory years of a child's learning, for all children across Christchurch.

Census data shows this area has the youngest demographic of any area in the city. It is a growing catchment with a high proportion of families. The North East suburbs have always been home to a large number of families with young children. This is evidenced in the many established early childhood centres such as community childcare services, private centres, kindergartens and playgroups, many of which have waiting lists. The transition from early childhood to school is smooth for children due to the networks created and the fact that the primary schools are part of and located within the community.

The 8083 area is a wonderful environment and a great community to live in. It is abundant with resources for an outdoor lifestyle. It caters well for children with primary schools, clubs, sports activities and local resources. It has the advantages of every amenity and facility required to sustain a community, except for a secondary school. No other area of equivalent population in New Zealand is without a secondary school.

This failure to provide a secondary school has left a void. This creates a dilemma for families in the area. There is considerable evidence of widespread relocation of families with secondary school aged children out of the area and into areas with secondary school zones. The community struggles to flourish under this transient flux. A local secondary school will stabilize the population giving more certainty to local businesses and community groups. This will enhance the long term wellbeing of the community which is especially needed after such a period of destruction and change.

NESE predicts North East Christchurch will continue to be an area with a high population of families with school aged children, as the area has a strong recreational focus and housing is affordable. The vast majority of our land is green zoned so houses will be repaired and rebuilt, despite the loss of some homes near the Avon River, Spencerville and Brooklands.

The education proposals indicate merged primary schools will become schools with larger rolls. There are also proposals to close the two intermediate schooling options that many of our children attend in neighbouring areas⁴. This may encourage more children to remain at the full primary schools for year 7 and 8. NESE believes there are advantages for both students and schools with educating locally and becoming more community based. Our community's preference is for local schooling, maintaining networks and minimising travel.

Some primary schools may need to consider extending services to provide for years 7 and 8. The education network in North East Christchurch would then have a sound full primary culture that will need strong directional transition into secondary education. We feel the Directions for Educational Renewal in Greater Christchurch should include a vision for secondary education in North East Christchurch.

NESE believes the comprehensive education plan must include a robust direction for local secondary education for children within the North East. This area is physically separated by major roads, rivers and red zone areas. The local primary school network provides an obvious catchment

² Queenspark, Parkview, Burwood, Windsor, Freeville, North New Brighton, Marshlands, Ouruhia.

³ Burwood & Windsor; Freeville & North New Brighton; Ouruhia.

⁴ Chisnallwood Intermediate, Shirley Intermediate.

for a local secondary school in the North East. Proposals for the existing secondary schools have not acknowledged the population of the North East. A plan needs to be made for the existing population that can be extended to include future growth from the proposed new housing developments. The population in the North East area is currently greater than the population of these proposed subdivisions and will remain so.

The population of the North East is quite varied. Many factors in the socio-economic make up of the population present as barriers to education for some children. We support an education plan that will address these inequities from Early Childhood through to Tertiary Education. We believe that locating a secondary school in the North East is imperative. A local secondary school will balance the disparity and separation, overcoming the good school vs bad school scenario previously so prevalent in Christchurch.

The multicultural make up of our eastern population has suffered from division and separation caused by the dispersal of our children to Intermediate schools and more than twenty different secondary schools across Christchurch. We wish to unite the community around a secondary school.

NESE believes every home in greater Christchurch should have a primary and secondary school for which they are zoned and that school zones or “catchments” should be logically placed to enhance their communities into the future. Many houses in the North East are outside existing school zones for primary or secondary schools, so many families are unsure which school community they will belong to until their child starts school. Too many children are completely unsure about which secondary school they will attend until after the secondary school ballot results. Children and their families find this very stressful.

The school clusters could be used beneficially to establish networks for schools to resource, share and interact; to smooth transitions and for all members of the community to have access to education. The common voice of parents wanting their children prepared for high school education would be assured through these strong connections between primary and secondary schools. Schools would be familiar and all years of a child’s education could be envisaged. Parents could still choose a different schooling option but a clear learning path would be known in each community.

NESE supports education being easily accessible through local schooling, active transport and with schools being community facilities. The ability for learners to access, participate and extend learning environments is crucial for enabling smooth transitions and establishing lifelong learners.

Parents are concerned about the cost and time used to travel to school. We want to waste less time transporting students. The current situation where more than 500 secondary students travel over 10 km to secondary school every day by car is neither economic nor healthy for our community in the long term.

One of NESE’s goals is to promote active transport in each suburb of the North East, linking services, businesses and schooling. Primary school children already use established safe travel routes to walk and bike to school. These should continue to be mapped to ensure mergers or closures of schools do not limit active transport. Equally, planning secondary schooling for children in the North East should facilitate and embrace active transport options.

Whether the proposed closures and mergers go ahead or not, NESE will continue to advocate for the educational direction of families in the 8083 area. While there is change and upheaval it’s a good time to focus on this area’s clusters and to plan and provide for comprehensive local access to secondary education.

NESE asks the Ministry of Education to ensure our community is adequately resourced for lifelong learning including provision of secondary education for the current and expected future student population.

NESE Committee members are available to share ideas for further proposals on the implementation of the community consultation outcomes.

Yours sincerely



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North East Secondary Education Committee Inc



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