

25 June 2017

Submission in support of the Redcliffs Park Land Swap:

Redcliffs School Board of Trustees

Background

Following the Christchurch earthquakes and consequent rock fall near the school site, Redcliffs School was relocated to a local church, then to the Sumner School hall, and finally to the Van Asch Deaf Education Centre, some three kilometres away. Despite the numerous moves and distance from our community, we have continued to operate a thriving school over the past six years. One of our key challenges during this time was the decision, on 23 March 2015 by the Minister of Education, Hekia Parata, to propose the closure Redcliffs School. The proposal was made because the Minister was not satisfied that a return to the school site would provide uninterrupted education provision in the future, if future rockfall meant the site required reassessment. The Redcliffs School Board of Trustees engaged geotechnical experts and consulted with the community, and opposed the proposed closure, concluding that the Minister's concerns could be mitigated. A consultation period was initiated, and the school Board and community made submissions in response to the closure proposal. In November 2015, the Ministry of Education responded with an interim decision proposing closure, disputing the Board's experts and raising new issues in terms of the ongoing monitoring and maintenance of the cliff and mitigation works. Another consultation and submission process was initiated, which resulted in:

- 2700 submissions to the Ministry of Education in support of the school returning to Redcliffs
- 0 submissions in favour of closure
- 2000 people turning out at the 'Walk for Redcliffs'
- 6576 people signing the online petition
- 15,000 postcards sent from the community to Minister and Members of Parliament
- 4500 followers on the Support Redcliffs School Facebook page
- Strong support from Mayor Lianne Dalziel and the Christchurch City Council

In June 2016, 15 months after the initial closure proposal, and following coordinated, high profile and unrelenting opposition from the community, the Minister of Education did not confirm her interim closure decision and agreed to return Redcliffs School to Redcliffs. The condition, however, was that the school move from its existing site. Staff from the Ministry of Education have subsequently made it clear to the Board of Trustees that a return to Main Road site is not an option that they could recommend, demonstrating that a change of Minister or even government is unlikely to result in a reversal of this decision. The return of Redcliffs school to Redcliffs has always been the Board of Trustees' primary

objective, backed by the overwhelming support of the Redcliffs community. It is with this mandate, therefore, that we support the proposed land swap to enable our move to Redcliffs Park, which we believe will make an excellent alternative location for our school.

Board of Trustees' support for the Redcliffs Park land swap

We believe that the land swap provides a good result for the Redcliffs community, by retaining the balance of public space in Redcliffs. It also offers the opportunity for a sharing of facilities within the new school as well as the maintenance of some of the school facilities on the old site to be used in the park if the Council and the community chooses to do so. The size of the site allows ample opportunity for sensitively designing and locating the built structures to avoid or minimise effects on surrounding residents. We are committed to working alongside the community to ensure the final design is suitable. Of all the other locations in the area assessed by the Ministry of Education, Redcliffs Park was found to be the most suitable. Developing a new schoolOur students have been learning extremely effectively since 2011 in their small and suboptimal facilities at Van Asch, and they are excited about having the chance to experience a brand new contemporary school like many other students in Christchurch. The move into the new school is currently estimated to be mid 2019 provided the process is not subject to any unforeseen delays. Our early planning has demonstrated the many positives of the Redcliffs Park site. Along with the modern buildings, we are looking forward to embracing the opportunity to be kaitiaki/guardians of the Ihutai (estuary),and the significant environmental education opportunities this will bring as a unique part of our school culture and curriculum. This connection with the outdoors is a part of who we are in Redcliffs, and this will only increase with proximity to the estuary and the waterways. As Board members we are also local residents, and we are ourselves excited about the possibilities of this new school for the Redcliffs community. The land swap will maintain sports facilities and a field on the old school site meaning that the community will end up with more space for sport, as well as the opportunity to use the school facilities and meeting spaces, with the potential to share access as demonstrated by the Lyttelton Arts Factory collaboration with Lyttelton School. Access to schoolRedcliffs Park is centrally located in our school catchment. Before the earthquake (and before several McCormacks Bay/Mt Pleasant families moved to Mt Pleasant School rather than travel to Sumner), 46% of our children came from the western side of Redcliffs School. With its small geographical catchment, Redcliffs is ideally suited to having children walk, scooter and cycle to school, embedding these transport behaviours early, which is completely in line with the Christchurch City Council's aspirations for increased active travel modes in the city. The safe, world class shared use path running adjacent to the school site will provide children and parents the confidence to again walk and cycle to school from the majority of the Redcliffs School zone, which we are looking forward to after all these years of taking school buses to Sumner. Redcliffs Park also offers ease of access from Main Road, a major arterial route for those driving, and plenty of on and off street parking (on Main Road and using existing parking over the road at the old school site). Due to the new site being virtually opposite the existing school site it is actually a very equivalent transport choice to what we had 6 years ago at our old site. With good information sharing with parents this needn't change significantly.

Working with the community

Redcliffs School has a long history of working cooperatively with its neighbours. This continues today. We have already established a strong communication channel and we share information freely with Redcliffs Park neighbours, and intend to continue to keep the communication open regarding the future design of the school and its functions, while also honouring the significant local and cultural history of this site. We will work with local residents during the detailed design phase to mitigate any particular issues, and have already planned community sessions to help inform the design. If the land swap is confirmed, these sessions will occur in later this year, with presentations from the Board and the Ministry, continuing the conversation with the Redcliffs community and ensuring that the school represents our entire neighbourhood. These sessions will provide the opportunity for Redcliffs people to contribute to the building and land design.

In conclusion

During the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, Redcliffs School performed a critical role in community support, uniting people in these times of crisis. The subsequent response to the Ministry's closure proposal brought our community closer together than ever before, aligned in the fight to save our school. This has provided us with a strong platform to support the future of the school in the Redcliffs community. At the time we make this submission, we have been operating outside of our own community for six long years. During this time, our school has continued to provide high quality education, gaining the highest Education Review Office commendations and retaining a static roll, low staff turnover, and a strong school culture. This is a school and a community which has been through a lot, but our teachers, parents, Board of Trustees and community have carried on with the confidence that we will be back in Redcliffs in 2019. We do feel like we've moved heaven and earth to keep our school in Redcliffs, and now it's time to go home, home not only to a quality, local school, but to a community resource in a beautiful and inspiring location.