

Office of The Mayor

30 March 2016

Hon Hekia Parata
Minister of Education
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

Dear Minister Parata

Re: Redcliffs School Christchurch

Redcliffs School has been the centre, the heart, of the Redcliffs community for more than 100 years. It is well documented that schools are one of the key local institutions contributing to the social cohesion, connectedness and resilience of communities. This is particularly so for communities such as Redcliffs, which unlike some areas of the city where boundaries between communities are fluid and allow for easy interactions, is geographically distinct from its neighboring suburbs.

The closure of Redcliffs School will mean that Redcliffs children will most likely attend either Sumner or Mt Pleasant Schools. This will have the effect of weakening or undermining the "connectedness" of the Redcliffs community.

Much has been written of the critical role played by schools in the periods immediately after the Canterbury Earthquakes, both in the immediate aftermath and in the long process of recovery. Even under so-called "normal" circumstances children form significant emotional attachments to their school. In post-earthquake Christchurch this continues to be enhanced.

International research confirms what we have witnessed in our own city; that the provision of a stable and familiar school environment is an important factor in a child's recovery post-disaster, and can represent a return to "normal". Closing schools attended by children still living in damaged communities, who may still be living in temporary or damaged accommodation, and who may still be experiencing physical and emotional symptoms as a result of the earthquake and its aftermath, represents neither best practice nor the best interests of a school's population.

As above, the closure of Redcliffs School means that the Redcliffs children will most likely attend either Sumner or Mt Pleasant Schools. This will not only affect the "connectedness" of the Redcliffs community, but the distances make it unlikely that Redcliffs children will from now on be able to walk or bike to school; nor even able to travel to school on their own.

The school in their submission has provided evidence supporting the "inextricable" link between education and health outcomes; that healthy children learn better, and that well-educated children are more likely to make healthy choices. Given the critical importance of

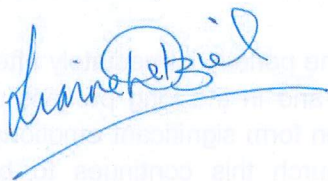
physical activity to children's health¹ and at a time when the number of children walking and cycling to school continues to decline², why make it even more difficult for Redcliffs children to walk or cycle to school.

Charles Montgomery, urbanist, author of *Happy City: Transforming our Lives through Urban Design*, and recent visitor to Christchurch, takes this further and attests we are happier and healthier when our communities are designed to have access to everything we need. This means communities where people can live within walking or cycling distance of schools, community centres, and transport links.

Redcliffs School is a critical part of the Redcliffs community. Even without the series of earthquakes affecting Christchurch in 2010 - 2011 the loss of Redcliffs School would have a significant and detrimental effect on that community. In light of the earthquakes and their ongoing effects on that community, that loss is immeasurable.

The Christchurch City Council asks the Minister to reconsider her decision to close Redcliffs School. This important school that seems to us, to provide the heart to this important community.

Yours Faithfully



Lianne Dalziel
MAYOR OF CHRISTCHURCH

¹ Physical activity is a key feature of the Ministry of Health's *Childhood Obesity Plan*

² 25 years of New Zealand travel: New Zealand Household Travel 1989-2014 Report of Ministry of Transport 2015