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11th March 2016

To the Redcliffs School Board of Trustees,

I have been asked to comment on the proposed closure of Redcliffs School, in particular the impact of the proposal on the wider community. I hold a Master of Arts, a Master of Applied Positive Psychology, and a PhD in resilience and wellbeing psychology. My research focus is on wellbeing and resilience science and I have worked with several organisations in the post-earthquake environment to promote resilience and effective psychological recovery. My professional practice investigates ways to effectively apply the findings of wellbeing research to promote and protect wellbeing in real world contexts. I work closely with schools developing effective and sustainable wellbeing and resilience strategies.

I am aware of the comments in the Education Report on Redcliffs School dated 25th November 2015 to the effect that the school's current quality of education can be replicated at either of the closest schools, Mt Pleasant and Sumner. My comments below specifically relate to the importance of the school as part of the wider community and the potential impact of the proposed closure on that community.

In light of evidence indicating that "schools have more than just an educational function" (CDHB, 2012 Appendix A) it is valid to say that Redcliffs school provides social cohesion – an important function for its community beyond that of providing a high quality educational experience. While the latter can be achieved elsewhere, closing Redcliffs School may have an effect on the community resilience of the suburb. Schools "can be the centre of identity for their community, providing a sense of social cohesion and ultimately contributing to better wellbeing for their community" (CDHB, 2012). Previous research has acknowledged that schools have more than just an educational function (for example, Witten et al., 2001 Appendix B, Kearns et al., 2009 Appendix C). Furthermore, I draw your attention to Peter Eachus's suggestion that "communities can provide resources and support structures that can promote the resilience of individuals" (Eachus, 2014, p.4 Appendix D). "It is the resilience of individuals interacting with their environment through the relevant institutions that gives a community resilience (Eachus, 2014, p.4). "The resilience of the community is inextricably bound up with that of the environment in which it is located" (Eachus 2014, p.5).

Community resilience relies on the presence of physical spaces where locals can meet and strengthen their bonds via opportunities for regular communication. While the Redcliffs children can receive a quality education from neighbouring suburbs, it is my opinion that the removal of the school will have a significant negative impact on community cohesion.

Yours sincerely,



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