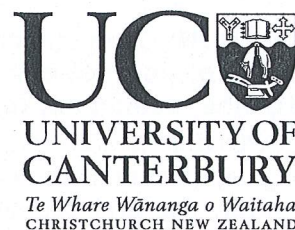


### College of Science

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March 28<sup>th</sup> 2016

To whom it may concern,

#### Re: Closure of Redcliffs School

##### Background:

I am a Professor of Geography at the University of Canterbury, where I am also Director of the GeoHealth Laboratory and Director of the Geospatial Research Institute. I have been an active researcher and academic for 28 years and have over 150 peer reviewed academic outputs including over 80 journal articles. These have included research done for the New Zealand Ministries of Health (MoH), Environment (MfE), Transport (MoT) and Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) as well as for the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA).

My research is broadly focused on researching the relationships between urban environment and health. Foci include: Transport - how we can make transport more sustainable and looks at people's perceptions and attitudes to transport, focusing specifically on school and work travel; Health geography - social and environmental determinants of health.

I am also an Expert Advisor on the Canterbury Regional Transport Committee, was an Advisory Board member for the EU funded URGENCHE project ([www.urgenche.eu](http://www.urgenche.eu)) (to 2015) and was a Member of the Greater Christchurch Urban Development Strategy Forum (to 2010).

I have been asked by the Redcliffs School Board of Trustees to comment on the following questions within my area of expertise. My responses are based partially on ongoing research by Karen Banwell and myself as part of the MBIE funded Resilient Urban Futures (<http://sustainablecities.org.nz/resilient-urban-futures/residential-choice/>) project. This includes geographically focused research in: Phillipstown, Opawa, Hoon Hay, Merivale, plus interviews with key informant in wider Christchurch.

**QUESTION: Based on your expertise and experience, how important are local communities to psycho/social recovery following natural disaster events?**

**RESPONSE:** Strong local community is emerging as a key determinant of a strong recovery following the 2011 earthquakes.

**QUESTION: Do you consider that local communities, such as Redcliffs, have unique identities? How do you consider that the unique identity of a local community is relevant to the social recovery of its members?**

**RESPONSE:** Every community is different and therefore unique. However they also have many things in common; it is these that this research seeks to identify to help inform future community planning. People in areas with clear geographical boundaries i.e. they know which community they live in, have a stronger sense of community identity. Redcliffs would fit into this category. A strong sense of belonging and community is emerging as a sign of a faster post-disaster recovery.



**QUESTION: Can you comment on the importance of local schools within local communities as part of psycho/social recovery, for children and parents in the school community, and also other community members?**

RESPONSE: Schools are emerging as key gathering/bumping places. Communities that had such bumping/gathering places were better able to act collectively for the common good and recover stronger. These places are not places to meet after the disaster but places that create community before the disaster strikes. Schools are the best examples of these gathering/bumping places. Other good examples included some larger more outward-looking community focused churches (e.g. Grace Vineyard, South West Baptist and St Anne's were identified examples) and some pubs e.g. Heathcote, but generally not cafes, unless they stay open later. In the case of Redcliffs, pre-EQ the school would have been a key local gathering/bumping place. People whose children go to a local school are more embedded in their communities; this enabled a better post-EQ response.

**QUESTION: What effect do school closures have on local communities in general?**

RESPONSE: Our research did not specifically look at this, although it became clear that the closure of Phillipstown Primary and Manning Intermediate schools has been felt heavily by people in those communities. This includes among those who did not have children at the school, but feel the loss of not having and hearing children in their communities. This came out unexpectedly strongly as we were not looking specifically for this. Ironically the closure of Phillipstown School has strengthened the resolve of the community and now provides a valuable community space.

**QUESTION: Can you comment on the likely effect of the closure of Redcliffs School at the end of 2016 on both the school community and wider community, in the context of the recovery phase, against the background of the previous disruptions that the school and community have managed over the past 5 years?**

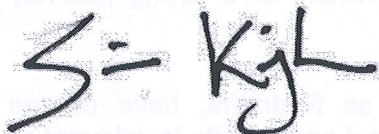
RESPONSE: It will clearly be negative for both the school and wider community. It will leave a hole in the local community and weaken social connectedness.

**QUESTION: Can you comment on the impact on future generations of Redcliffs children who may be marginalised by not living in the local vicinity of their school and have to be driven to school?**

RESPONSE: Children travelling to school on their own becoming more independent earlier. They learn valuable skills relating to their local environment, assessing risk, and managing socially, psychosocial independence and a whole raft of other skills. In addition of course we would expect an increase (possibly not measureable) in physical inactivity and obesity.

I trust this is of use. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S= KijL'.

Prof Simon Kingham  
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