

2 July 2014

nicky.wagner@parliament.co.nz
gerry.brownlee@parliament.co.nz
hekia.parata@parliament.co.nz
john.key@parliament.co.nz

Dear all,

Re: Closure of Our Lady of Fatima, Christchurch

I am writing to all of you with regard to the proposed closure of Our Lady of Fatima, Christchurch.

The Bishop has made his recommendation without meaningful consultation with those who will be most affected by the closure of Fatima. The logic behind the decision is unclear. The fact there has been no forum for proper discussion, which would allow for transparency in the process, is extremely disappointing.

In the 18 months which have passed since the Bishop made this recommendation St Paul's has lost staff and pupils because of its displacement, while Fatima has continued to thrive and remains intact within its community. It makes no sense to close both schools when Fatima is a fully functional school, lucky enough to still be able to operate on the same site it has done for many years.

The teachers at Fatima have a wealth of experience (some taught me) and care deeply for the children in both their general education and in learning about the Catholic faith. If Fatima closes and all staff lose their jobs and have to reapply, it will cause a huge fissure in our community. We have all been through so much with the earthquakes; for us school life has been the one constant. Christchurch and its people are clearly still in recovery mode and the effects of the earthquakes will be felt for years to come, so it is so important we retain some normalcy for our children where at all possible.

I ask you to disregard the Bishop's recommendation and to instead put the wellbeing of the children at Fatima first. The only logical option is to close St Paul's and to allow Fatima to continue to operate, along with any staff and pupils from St Pauls who wish to join us.

Yours sincerely,

From: Tuesday, 1 July 2014 12:29 p.m.
Sent: Hekia Parata
To: Christchurch Catholic school closures
Subject:

E1.20599

Dear Ms Parata

I am writing to you expressing my very deep concern with Bishop Jones intention to close two of our Catholic schools then to immediately establish a new school on the same site as the existing Our Lady of Fatima school. I do have a vested interest in this matter as I am a parent at Fatima and I belong to the Mairehau parish and attended a number of the consultation meetings outlining the proposals for establishing a new school on the site in Innes Road. The facilitator's report presented to you many months ago was a very unprofessional document which contained numerous inaccuracies and gave an extremely slanted view of the feelings of both staff and parishioners at the two schools affected.

No reasonable options were presented for staff to vote on regarding the merger of St Pauls and Our Lady of Fatima schools, hence many of the staff rightly abstained from voting. They fully expected that Bishop Jones would come back with some very meaningful proposals on a more suitable way forward. Sadly this never eventuated and now all of the staff are faced with the termination of their jobs. ¹

schools in Christchurch and now, despite handling the earthquakes well, it is marked for closure.

I am sure that you will be consulting with your Ministry officials regarding what is happening in the Mairehau Catholic community and will have some concerns about how the matter is being handled. It would be an appropriate time for your Ministry officials to sit down with Bishop Jones and to look at a more desirable way forward without terminating the jobs of a considerable number of loyal staff, as well as spending \$700 000 dollars or more of public money on redundancies. It is difficult to reconcile the caring Catholic community that I belong to with the very callous and unchristian way that the Bishop is treating the many fine teachers and support staff of the two affected schools. Your officials may want to sit down with him and discuss the serious concerns held by many parishioners in the Mairehau Parish regarding the proposed closure of the two schools. I have already communicated my concerns to Bishop Jones but the time has now come for your top officials to suggest a more appropriate way to resolve these issues.

Thanking you for taking the time to read of my concerns.

Dear Minister

I am writing to express my views regarding the proposed closure of Our Lady of Fatima and St Paul's schools to enable a new, catholic school entity to be built on the Our Lady Fatima site.

I have had three frustrating rounds of consultation with the Bishop over the last twenty two months. I feel that the consultation has not been genuine and that the Bishop has not listened to our community's views.

From the outset the Bishop set limitations on options so no other solutions could be found and did not create the environment where the Ministry's advice or the union's advice was able to help find an answer. A clear example of this was when he ignored the advice from NZEI that the staff from St Paul's could be given PRIORITY for their jobs and ultimately familiar faces for the St Pauls children could come over with them to Our Lady of Fatima.

This third option which the Bishop included in Round 2, to close St Paul's and leave Our Lady of Fatima open to become an enlarged school for St Paul's students was not clearly explained in the facilitators report. It came across as meaning the staff at St Pauls would have no PRIORITY to these jobs, which is simply not true according to NZEI.

If this had happened I believe we would still be fulfilling the Bishops vision of 'one parish one school'.

It is disappointing I believe that The Bishop selected his own facilitator and submitted to the Minister an unprofessional, biased and defamatory report from her. In the report my fellow colleagues at Our Lady of Fatima are made out to be selfish, unconciliatory and an impediment to the process.

The Bishop insisted when he meet with us as a staff that he did not want to close two schools and upset two communities however he now claims that he has no choice but to close both schools because of a lack of consensus about how to come together.

I personally believe that we worked hard as a staff and as a whole community to come up with an option that was viable and legal through the NZEI to deliver for St Pauls a solution that also delivers the Bishops vision of 'one parish one school'.

The Bishop is intending to close a perfectly functioning school at Our Lady of Fatima where no staff have left post quake and where the roll is stable.

The closure of both schools would result in a large number of job losses, particularly from Our Lady of Fatima. A taxpayer redundancy of approximately \$700,000 would need to be paid out by the Ministry. This is money that I'm sure could be put into the education of our tamariki in a much more beneficial way.

The stress, sadness and most importantly confusion the communities have endured since the process began 22 months ago is unfair and shows a lack of empathy and compassion.

Therefore I am very grateful to receive a round of consultation led by the Minister which will be an opportunity to have my say in an open and transparent process.

Yours sincerely

(Teacher Our Lady of Fatima)

From:
Sent: Tuesday, 1 July 2014 12:44 p.m.
To: Hekla Parata
Subject: Closure of Our Lady Of Fatima School, Christchurch

E1.20598

Dear Minister

I am writing to you as a very concerned parent. Our [redacted] attends Our Lady Of Fatima. The change in her is beyond words. She is so confident and what she is achieving in her class work is amazing. It is a huge credit to her brilliant teacher and the caring nature of the other staff at the school.

What the Bishop is suggesting and asking you to agree on is not only very disturbing and makes no sense at all. OLOF is a thriving school. We are not damaged, we have a great roll. The children are all so polite, happy and doing well. There is something very special about the school. It would be a terrible shame to take this away, when there is no reason too.

St Pauls are welcomed at our school. That has never been an issue. A lot of the children at St Pauls may not actually come to OLOF. There are four other Catholic schools that are closer to them.

I understand you have had to make some very hard decisions regarding Christchurch schools. But OLOF has no reason to be considered for closure. This would not only be a complete waste of time and a lot of money, but these are real people who would lose their jobs for no reason at all. Children would lose their school for no reason. This will cause a lot of anger, confusing and heartache. They are a very proud school, and rightly so. There is a lot of pride in wearing the OLOF uniform.

I think the Bishop is very wrong in his suggestions and I feel it is a very unfair position to put you in.

I have also emailed the Prime Minister expressing my concern and complete confusion. I am a National supporter and the reason I am is I think no other Political party is intelligent enough to run the country or make any real life decisions. So I'm really hoping that you will see this situation as we all do. It is a complete waste of time and makes no sense.

Please keep OLOF open as it is. The thought of it closing just because the bishop thinks it should is just ridiculous.

Thank you for taking the time to read my email. I really do appreciate it.

Regards

Christchurch

From:
Sent: Thursday, 3 July 2014 7:35 p.m.
To: Hekia Parata
Subject: Our Lady of Fatima School (Christchurch) Closure Proposal

E1.20634

Hi

I am of the understanding that Bishop Barry has proposed the closure of Our Lady of Fatima School and St Pauls after Term2 of next year (2015). I also understand that the you, the Minister of Education, have decided to hold your own consultation on this proposal before making a final decision.

If this were to go ahead I understand that this would mean our kids would come back from holiday to a new school and (possibly) new teachers.

It's bad enough that one community (St Pauls) has already been through so much upheaval and now this proposal is going to inflict the same on our school - and I don't really understand the motivation behind this proposal as it seems to me that it's the children of OLOF who will suffer, not to mention the unnecessary stress put upon our wonderful teachers at the prospect of having to reapply for their position!

I get that we are going to merge with St Pauls and I get that the name of the school will (and should) change and that is OK and it's all good as far as I'm concerned. However I don't get why you'd close a school, make the teachers reapply for their position in the middle of the year - Why would you agree to unnecessarily causing so much upheaval to a community- families, children & teachers alike.

I would like you to consider:

- Our principal was the principal of St Paul's for 11 years. He's only been with us for 8 and a half years. He is perfectly placed to draw the two cultures and communities together.
- There are genuine issues that St Paul's students won't come. There are four Catholic primary schools closer to their houses than ours.
- It seems to me that this is a waste of taxpayers money - it is unnecessary and it achieves no educational benefit. Surely it'd be better that money be spent on the education of children.

We are relying on the you to make sure the decision focuses on children and education and I would be grateful if you were the voice of reason and advocate on our behalf.

Yours sincerely

(Mother of One at Our Lady of Fatima)

From: [HekiaParata.MP@parliament.govt.nz]
Sent: Thursday, 26 June 2014 9:13 a.m.
To:
Subject: FW: school closure

on behalf of Office of Hekia Parata

E1.20548

From: ()
Sent: Wednesday, 25 June 2014 9:47 p.m.
To: Office of Hekia Parata
Subject: school closure

Christchurch
June 25 2014
Dear Minister,
I am writing to you as a .

I don't think you realise the trauma of this whole closing of 2 schools saga.
All the teachers of both schools have been affected by earthquakes, ill health, red-zoning, rebuilding and general frustrations of the rebuild. Many are the sole breadwinners.
By showing compassion in this situation would be to join both schools so that all staffs would have employment.
I think in this whole sorry saga the children have been forgotten.
They too are hurting from the aftermath of the earthquakes and need stability in the known, particularly staff that they trust, show compassion and care about them.
Many of our staff and parents are questioning their Faith because what is happening seems so inhumane on so many levels.
Therefore it is not too late for you to change any decisions made which would then create a new school environment, with happy staff from both schools and children who know we care about their future in Faith.
Thank you