

12/06/2024

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Tēnā koe Rakesh

OIA: 1329125 – Massey Hobsonville Kaipara catchment growth

Thank you for your email of 19 May 2024 to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) requesting the following information:

I am writing to draw your attention to the urgent need for a high school to service the rapidly growing areas of Kumeu, Huapai, Riverhead, and their surroundings in West Auckland. This request stems from several critical factors affecting the residents and students of these regions.

Firstly, there has been a surge in new housing developments in these areas, attracting a growing number of residents. This population increase has naturally led to a higher demand for educational facilities, particularly at the secondary level.

Secondly, current high school students are compelled to travel long distances to attend schools, often resorting to costly private institutions. The excessive commuting times not only impose financial and logistical burdens on families but also detract from students' overall well-being and academic performance.

Lastly, the only zoned high school in Massey is currently operating beyond its capacity, further exacerbating the problem. This overcrowding undermines the quality of education and places additional stress on the already strained infrastructure.

The combined effect of these issues continues to significantly impact the quality of learning and the quality of life for our students. Therefore, I urge the Ministry to consider expediting the establishment of a high school servicing these communities to better serve the educational needs.

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

The Ministry has received a large number of requests for official information on the topic of a high school in Kumeū and growth in the Massey Hobsonville Kaipara catchment. We appreciate the time taken by the wider community to write to the Ministry.

We have developed one comprehensive response for all queries to date regarding the establishment of a new high school in Kumeū.

Acquisition of a new site in Kumeū

We appreciate that Kumeū is a fast-growing area and are aware of the population growth and resulting demand on the availability of secondary schools in the community.

The Ministry initiated negotiations for a Kumeū site in February 2023. There are two sites that comprise the potential College site and negotiations with the second landowner have not yet commenced. The Ministry remains in discussions with the owners of the first site. Information about the location of the potential College site is not publicly available to ensure that any commercial negotiations are not impacted. Therefore, any further details relating to these negotiations, are withheld under section 9(2)(j) of the Act, to enable the Ministry to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations.

As required under section 9(1) of the Act, I have considered the public interest in releasing the information withheld. I do not consider the public interest considerations favouring the release of this information are sufficient to outweigh the need to withhold it at this time.

The approach to acquisition negotiations for land considers a number of factors, including land options available, owner interest in selling and timing of the requirement. We note that the Minister of Education, as a requiring authority, can seek to use compulsory acquisition of land for education purposes through the provisions of the Public Works Act 1981. The large majority of land purchases are achieved by the Ministry without the use of compulsory acquisition. The Minister reserves the right to utilise those provisions if necessary and suitable. It would not be appropriate for the Ministry to comment on whether the education requirement in Kumeū is a candidate for compulsory acquisition.

There are currently no construction or design plans underway for the new high school in Kumeū, as any planning is subject to the acquisition of a new site and the subsequent development of a business case. Therefore, we are refusing the request for all available information on the plans for the building of a new high school in Kumeū under section 18(e) of the Act, as the information does not currently exist. The Ministry remains engaged with Auckland Council and other government agencies to inform and be informed about plans for residential growth.

Enrolments and roll growth in Kumeū

The Ministry's decisions to invest in school property, including Kumeū, are subject to a national prioritisation process, budget and funding approvals. The Ministry must prioritise its property investment to areas where the need is greatest. Decision making on the prioritisation of new schools considers a number of factors including the growth in student roll numbers and pressure on the existing school network. These factors are considered across the entire national new schools programme.

The Ministry continues to monitor rolls for the number of out of zone students and actively reminds schools in the area of their obligations to consider the longer-term implications of accepting out of zone enrolments. This includes working with individual schools to manage their out of zone student

numbers. The Secretary of Education's (the Secretary) guidelines on the operation of an enrolment scheme clearly state the following:

"An enrolment scheme is meant to be a tool that enables a board to prevent overcrowding at its school. The board has to remember that students living within the home zone have an absolute right to be enrolled. The board should not, therefore, enrol so many out-of-zone students that the capacity of the school is exceeded if, at a later date, students living in the home zone claim their right to be enrolled. The Ministry of Education will not look favourably on a request for additional classroom accommodation in such a situation. In all cases the Ministry will assess the situation on a case-by-case basis."

The Ministry has various options to manage growth in schools across the network, including the following:

1. We will fund additional classrooms where a school is significantly over utilised from in-zone growth. Where required, additional teaching spaces are provided to accommodate growing rolls. These may be permanent or temporary as appropriate.
2. The Secretary may amend an enrolment scheme if the Ministry considers it necessary to avoid overcrowding, or the likelihood of overcrowding, at the school. The process for amending an enrolment scheme is the same as the process for developing a new enrolment scheme and would involve consultation with the schools and community.

A very large roll does not necessarily negatively affect the quality of education. There are already several high performing, large secondary schools in Auckland. Schools in the wider area (including Huapai District School) are served by Massey High School and to a lesser extent by Kaipara College and Hobsonville Point Secondary School.

Massey High School has historically had sufficient student places to accommodate significant growth, however, we recognise the ongoing roll growth the Massey catchment is experiencing. We can confirm that Massey High School is being considered for additional classrooms to address in-zone roll growth. The Ministry is also planning to invest in their existing 12-classroom D block. Two classrooms in this block are currently in use, whilst the remainder are removed from service due to their condition. This means that the school is temporarily at capacity. A remediation project would include reroofing and recladding the block, as well as internal upgrades throughout such as new carpet and wall linings. The reopening of D block will provide additional permanent teaching spaces for the school.

You may find the following information from the National Education Growth Plan 2019 for the Massey-Hobsonville-Kaipara area to be of interest:

<https://assets.education.govt.nz/public/Documents/School/Network-of-Schools/MasseyHobsonvilleKaiparaCatchmentPlan.pdf>

Please note, we may publish this response on our website from the following working day. Your name and contact details will be removed.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review my decision on your request, in accordance with section 28 of the Act. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or to Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā



Isabel Evans
Hautū | Deputy Secretary
Te Mahau | Te Tai Raro (North)