



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga

Education Report: Interim advice on consultation and future options for Residential Special Schools

Date:	29 June 2012	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	686541

ORIGINAL SENT TO
29 JUN 2012
MINISTERS OFFICE

Action Sought

Addressee	Action Sought	Deadline
Hon Hekia Parata Minister of Education	Agree to the Ministry of Education providing you with further advice on options to either close two of the residential special schools or keep all four schools operating.	
Hon Craig Foss Associate Minister of Education	Note the contents of this report	
Enclosure: No		Round robin: No

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)

Name	Position	Telephone	1 st Contact
Brian Coffey	Group Manager Strategy Special Education	04 4638769	s 9(2)(a) ✓
Julia Dawson	Programme Manager		

The following departments/agencies have seen this report:

Minister to Complete (please circle)

1 = very poor

2 = poor

3 = acceptable

4 = good

5 = very good

Minister's Office to Complete:

2/7/12

☒ Approved

☐ Declined

☐ Noted

☐ Needs change

☐ Seen

☐ Overtaken by events

☐ See minister's notes

☐ Withdrawn

☒ Signed

Comments:



Education Report: Interim advice on consultation and future options for Residential Special Schools

Recommendations

We recommend that you:

1. **note** that this paper summarises our initial analysis of the submissions received from our consultation on the proposed Intensive Wraparound Service and the implications for residential special schools
2. **note** we have considered a range of options for the future configuration of residential special schools
3. **agree** to the Ministry providing you with more detailed advice on the following two options:
 - keeping all four schools open and improving their current operational and governance arrangements;
 - and, rationalising current provision by closing two residential special schools.

AGREE / DISAGREE

Brian Coffey
Group Manager, Special Education Strategy
Early Years and Learning Support

Hon Hekia Parata

Minister of Education

2, 7, 12

Education Report: Interim advice on consultation and future options for Residential Special Schools

Purpose

1. As requested, this paper:
 - summarises our initial analysis of submissions received through the Ministry's consultation on the proposed Intensive Wraparound Service and the future of residential special schools
 - outlines possible options for the future configuration of residential special schools.

Submissions on the future of residential special schools

2. On 18 April (METIS No 655400) you agreed that the Ministry initiate consultation about a new service model for learners with complex needs, and the implications this will have for residential special schools, including the possible closure of Halswell Residential College, McKenzie Residential School, Salisbury School and Westbridge Residential School.
3. Public submissions were invited as part of this consultation. We also held meetings with stakeholders, including the School Boards of Trustees (Boards) and staff of residential schools, parents and whānau and communities.

Themes from submissions received

4. Over 360 written submissions were received as part of the public consultation. The major submitters were:
 - parents and whānau – 88 (24%)
 - classroom teachers – 55 (15%)
 - principals – 29 (8%)
 - others, including sector organisations such as the Public Service Association, Post Primary Teachers' Association and CCS Disability Action – 135 (38%).
5. Two high-level themes shared across submissions were that:
 - a small number of learners with complex needs will continue to require 24/7 attention in a specialised and controlled environment, at least for a short period in their lives
 - there is a lack of certainty about, or confidence, in the capability and capacity of the proposed Intensive Wraparound Service to deal with all learners with complex needs.

6. Although submissions reflected overall support for the purpose and philosophy of an Intensive Wraparound Service, there are significant and widely-held reservations about the overall effectiveness of the service, especially if it was to be the only option available. However, few submissions directly challenged or questioned the capability of wraparound services to produce good results.
7. Submitters commented on a wide range of operational policy issues and concerns about the likely capability and capacity of the proposed Intensive Wraparound Service to deliver consistent quality and coverage of service. Submitters also questioned if there is the necessary supply of the right skills, in the right places around the country, to deliver the services; if the level of resourcing will be enough to make a difference; and how different categories of need (behavioural/intellectual) will be dealt with by one service.
8. Submissions from the Halswell, McKenzie and Westbridge residential special schools made some practical suggestions for improving the overall mix and management of both services (ie, residential special schools and the Intensive Wraparound Service) and promoting their ability to work together in joined-up ways. They suggested that current (status quo) arrangements for the schools need to be reconsidered and that changes in overall service delivery and governance should be made on the basis of better knowledge about what works. Salisbury School campaigned to keep that school open.
9. Many submitters were anxious at the likely speed of change possibly involving school closures this year. They expressed a lack of confidence that the Intensive Wraparound Service – both in terms of its service delivery methodology and access to resources – could support with all eligible learners having complex needs, and also with their families, whānau and local schools.

Ministry comment

10. The Ministry is confident that the proposed Intensive Wraparound Service could meet increased demand resulting from closure of any or all of the residential special schools. Submitters have expressed a strong desire to maintain a nationwide residential special school service capacity – at least for learners with the most complex needs.
11. The challenge for the Ministry will be to increase confidence in the evidence that demonstrates the effectiveness of the Intensive Wraparound Service and give assurance that the service can operate at the necessary scale, and achieve better results.

Possible options for the future of residential special schools

12. Our proposal for a new service model of intensive wraparound personalised services to better support learners with complex needs in their own community has implications for the role and configuration of residential special schools.
13. In assessing possible options for the future of residential special schools we considered the extent to which each option would:
 - enhance a child's connection or re-connection with their family, whānau,

school and local community

- promote social and educational connections
- make overall admissions policies more consistent and focused on identified levels of need
- ensure better value for money
- better integrate residential special schools and the Intensive Wraparound Service
- connect better with local mental health and social support services for learners and their family and whānau.

14. We considered the following four options for residential special schools:

- *Status quo*: Retain all four schools in their current configuration
- *Four schools*: Retain the four existing schools and put in place new operating, governance, and admissions arrangements
- *Two schools*: Fund two co-educational schools with one focused on behavioural, and the other on intellectual, needs
- *No schools*: Close all four schools.

15. Other variants of these options were also considered – for example, closing one, or three schools; establishing residential capacity outside the residential special schools system such as through funding residential care places around the country as needed.

16. The impacts of the four options are summarised in Table 1 below.

Option 1: Status quo

17. Keeping all four schools open under existing arrangements and funding levels would not release any funding for reallocation to the Intensive Wraparound Service and would not address any of the current governance and operational issues. This option would not serve to improve or lift capability within local communities and schools.

Option 2: Four Schools

18. Under this option, the four existing schools would:

- be governed by a single, Ministerially appointed, Board
- be managed in new ways and collectively function as an integrated residential special school service, with their operations refocused onto core business
- operate with one national admissions committee to ensure consistency of use of admissions criteria.

19. At present the four existing schools do not operate in sufficiently joined-up ways; admissions criteria are not consistently applied; and their operations and their geographical locations present access difficulties for some family and whānau. Governance of these schools is more complex, in particular as parents – who are widely dispersed geographically – are less able to participate as Board members.

20. Current funding levels for the schools have been set and adjusted over time on

formula bases and do not now reflect the operational needs of schools – in terms of actual rolls, staffing levels, and the delivery of core services.

21. Under this option we propose reducing notional rolls to more accurately reflect actual enrolments. Reducing the notional rolls would release approximately \$5.3 million that could be allocated to the Intensive Wraparound Service while maintaining 130 places in the residential special schools.
22. Three main concerns with this option are that the change is not sufficiently substantive to achieve the long-term solution of better outcomes for students with complex needs; the on-going cost of funding these four schools represents an over-investment in this type of provision; and, this option does not improve access issues for families.

Option 3: Two Schools

23. Under this option, two schools would be closed and two would be redeveloped and:
 - governed by a single Ministerially appointed Board
 - operated with one national admissions committee to ensure consistency of use of admissions criteria
 - changed to co-educational schools
 - deliver specialised services for learners with behavioural needs and for learners with intellectual needs.
24. Because of population concentration in the Auckland region, we propose maintaining residential special school provision there.
25. The duration of enrolments in the schools could also be made more flexible to respond to need and the length of stay reduced; eg, more short-term respite provision as residential special school services become better integrated with the Intensive Wraparound Service.
26. Approximately \$8.7 million could be reallocated to provide services to an extra 155 students through the Intensive Wraparound Service while retaining 100 places in the remaining two residential special schools.

Option 4: All four schools closed

27. Closing all four schools would release annual funding of \$12.5 million for reallocation to the Intensive Wraparound Service. This funding could be reapplied for various alternative special education purposes, such as funding other residential places as respite for parents around the country. This option has not been considered in detail as it does not acknowledge the overwhelming support in submissions for residential beds to be available within the system.
28. Therefore, in view of the lack of confidence about transferring all residential special schools resources to the Intensive Wraparound Service and closing the four schools expressed in the submissions, we do not support this option at

present.

Conclusion

29. The Ministry concludes that the realistic options for the future configuration of the residential special schools are Options 2 (four schools) and 3 (two schools). These options involve substantive service improvements and mitigate the concerns reflected in submissions. Option 2 would improve the operations of the four existing schools and Option 3 would rationalise provision into two schools delivering services that are co-educational, and specific to both needs-groups.
30. A key feature of these two options would be:
- the implementation of a single governance structure through combining existing boards into one combined Ministerially appointed Board
 - a national admissions procedure to ensure consistent prioritisation of learners for admission.

Table 1: Impacts of possible options for the future of residential special schools

Impacts	Option 1 Status quo	Option 2 Four schools	Option 3 Two schools	Option 4 No schools
Consistency of admissions	No change	Improved	Improved	Not relevant
Consistent governance	No change	Improved	Improved	Not relevant
Student connection with family	No change	No change	Improved	-
Integration with IWS	No change	Improved	Improved	-
Capacity for providing nationally consistent outreach services	No change	Improved	Improved	Improved
Co-educational learning increased	No	No	Yes	Not relevant
Estimated level of funding released (annual)	0	\$5.3 M	\$8.7M	\$12.5 M
Additional IWS places that could be offered	0	110	155	To be calculated
Total places available through RSS + IWS + IBS	235	350	360	To be calculated

31. Detailed costings of options have not yet been finalised and there will be financial and legal implications from possible changes and any disposals of property and

assets. For example, Salisbury School is included in a proposed Treaty Settlement (Rangitane o Wairau) and a portion of the McKenzie School's site was gifted to the Education Department in 1968.

Next steps

32. Subject to your agreement we will provide detailed advice on our preferred options as part of the Education Report due on 13 July.
33. This report will provide detailed analysis of the feedback from the consultation process and advice on the preferred options and provide letters for Boards and Commissioners.