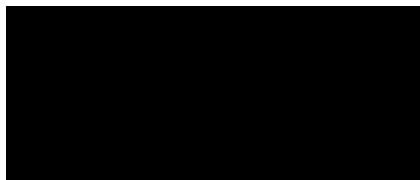




24 July 2019



Thank you for your email of 26 June 2019 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information in relation to a recent Ministry led trip to Melbourne and Adelaide:

1. *Who went?*
2. *For how long?*
3. *Why?*
4. *What was learned?*
5. *What will be the impact on NZ special education?*
6. *Why couldn't MOE staff look at plans, photos and skype with the relevant Australian parties, rather than visiting?*
7. *Why were Melbourne and Adelaide chosen? (as opposed to Brisbane for instance?)*
8. *Is there any hope at all that New Zealand is going to have Australian quality special schools in the near future (one to two years)?*
9. *Was this a very future focused trip?*
10. *Is there a budget for travel in MOE that can't be used for anything else?*
11. *Wouldn't the travel money be better spent on a satellite class in New Zealand? Either providing more resources for a current one, or putting towards a new one?*

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

The Ministry is in the early planning stages of three projects that will see delivery of rebuilt schools at three Base Special Schools in the Auckland Region: Sommerville Special School, Sir Keith Park Special School and Central Auckland Special School.

The Ministry has design guidance for special schools 'Standards and Guidelines for Special Schools' that was produced in 2009. Special education has moved on considerably since this guidance was developed, and the Ministry has rebuilt only one special school in the last seven years. There is limited special schools design knowledge, and best practice examples in New Zealand.

The proposed investment for the current three special school projects is significant and will meet ongoing growth needs, improve property condition, and upgrade facilities that no longer meet the needs of students.

Arranging for school staff and stakeholders to visit new schools that are relevant examples of good design, is standard practice. The closest geographical examples of recent good practice are in Australia, with Adelaide and Melbourne being selected, in consultation with the three Auckland schools and the designers engaged in the projects. Adelaide has a number of newly built examples of special schools which were considered representative of different approaches we could learn from. Melbourne was chosen both for its experience in new school design and the similarity with New Zealand's education infrastructure delivery model.

Viewing the schools, discussing the benefits, and identifying any disadvantages with the school users at each facility is an essential part of this process. This level of engagement could not be achieved by reviewing plans and photos, or through video conference. Joint visits with the design teams also support a common understanding of successful design, and allow for discussions about school priorities.

A group comprising of Ministry staff, school Principals, and key stakeholders visited examples of recently built Special Schools in Adelaide and Melbourne from 27 to 31 May 2019.

The group comprised:

- Priscilla Kingi, Senior Delivery Manager, Capital Works, Education Infrastructure Service
- Bernard Fenton, Delivery Manager, Capital Works, Education Infrastructure Service
- Aaron Conwell, Senior Policy Analyst, Education Infrastructure Service
- Christine Miller, Lead Advisor, Special Schools Network, Sector Enablement & Support
- Diane Hankins, Principal, Sommerville Special School
- Corey Busfield, Senior Leader, Sommerville Special School
- Trudi Brocas, Principal, Central Auckland Special School
- Kathy Davidson, Principal, Sir Keith Park Special School
- Karen White, Occupational Therapist, Sir Keith Park Special School

In addition, two project architects travelled with the group, at their own expense.

Along with the development of designs for the three existing projects, the insights will inform updated Standards and Guidelines for Special Schools. These Standards and Guidelines will help schools and communities to determine how infrastructure can best support their teaching and learning approaches when engaging in the early planning and design stages of future projects.

There are no ring-fenced funds for travel of this nature. The costs associated with the trip will be met from the Ministry's operations budget. Our operations budget is the money that Government provides for the running of our organisation, and it is separate to the funding that Government provides for building and resourcing schools and satellite units. We have policies and processes in place to ensure that Ministry spending on travel is appropriate and cost-effective, and we report on this expenditure yearly through our Annual Report and to a Parliamentary Select Committee. For the 2017/18 financial year, 0.85% of our operating budget was spent on travel within New Zealand and Australia.

Our vision is to deliver high quality, fit for purpose special schools accommodation that matches the schools' pedagogy, and meets the needs of students. I am confident that, as a result of this trip, the Ministry has gained valuable insights and ideas that will translate to improved property outcomes in special schools.

Please note, the Ministry now proactively publishes OIA responses on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

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

Yours sincerely



Kim Shannon
Head of Education Infrastructure Service