

**Education Report: Issues of roll decline and demand at
Salisbury School (Nelson)**

Recommended Actions

We recommend that you:

- a. **note** the issues relating to Salisbury School's roll and financial viability; and
- b. **note** that four options for the future of Salisbury School are presented for discussion.



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Hon Hekia Parata
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Education Report: Issues of roll decline and demand at Salisbury School (Nelson)

Purpose of Report

1. This report provides you with an overview of the current roll, funding and demand for places at Salisbury School (Nelson).

Background

2. Following your decision to close Salisbury School and McKenzie Residential School in 2012, Salisbury took a successful judicial review opposing the decision to close their school. This resulted in Salisbury remaining open, retaining three residential special schools in the special education system.
3. The three residential special schools are intended to work in partnership with the Intensive Wraparound Service (IWS). Two of these schools, Salisbury School and Halswell Residential College, provide for students with complex behavioural and learning needs. Westbridge Residential School, provides for students with severe behaviour needs.
4. IWS currently supports 285 students a year. Demand for IWS is high and the service is at maximum capacity. There is more demand for IWS than can be met with current resourcing and capacity. In the last year 57 students who met the criteria for IWS were not immediately prioritised for a place; of these students, nine were girls. The total number of students referred to and supported by IWS since January 2013 is 368. Of these, 74 (20%) were girls¹.
5. Proportionally girls are more likely to want a residential placement than boys but numerically their numbers are low. Since January 2013, 26 (approximately 35%) parents/caregivers of girls have chosen a residential option. During the same period, of the 294 boys supported by IWS, 66 (approximately 23%) chose residential schooling.
6. An overall increase in IWS resource does not lead to a commensurate increase in demand for residential schooling. The additional fifty students that have recently been taken on for two years (as mentioned above) have not resulted in an increased demand for residential schooling.
7. Since it commenced at the beginning of 2013 the IWS has had an external evaluation by NZCER that has shown the service results in improved outcomes for students and is viewed positively by their parents/caregivers, local schools and their teachers.
8. When IWS was implemented it was clearly expected that a central flow on effect of the new service would be less demand for residential schooling. This expectation informed the rationale for the intended reduction in residential provision from four to two residential special schools nationally.
9. Current trends and demand for the three remaining residential schools show that this anticipated effect is occurring. The roll of Salisbury School in particular

¹ These figures exclude any student placed prior to January 2013 such as those already with the Intensive Behaviour Service (IBS).

has been significantly affected by the successful implementation of IWS, raising concerns about the school's viability and questions about its future.

10. Salisbury School's Board is concerned about the future of their school in the context of a declining roll and less demand for places at the school. It has sent Peter Hughes a proposal for an alternative purpose for the school called 'The Salisbury Solution'. The proposal is to disassociate from the IWS and take a specific group of complex young people who have autistic spectrum disorder.
11. Salisbury School has made a written submission to the Education and Science Select Committee 'Inquiry into the identification and support for students with the significant challenges of dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorders in primary and secondary schools' and made an oral submission on 2 December. Salisbury's submission recommends that to improve mainstream education for young people who have highly complex ASD, they should have *'easier access to appropriate residential facilities'* as they *'believe the mainstream education system in New Zealand is not currently meeting the needs of young people who have highly complex ASD'*.²

Overview of Issues

Roll Decline

12. Salisbury School's roll has declined due to lack of demand for residential schooling for girls with complex behaviour and learning needs. The majority of students with complex behavioural and learning needs are boys. Further, most parents of students who receive IWS prefer to have their children supported at home and do not choose a residential placement.
13. The decline may be partly influenced by a co-educational option for girls being available at Halswell Residential College and many parents preferring that choice. Halswell can currently take up to five girls. This can be increased provided the single sex nature of the school is maintained. Halswell's Board has made an application to become fully co-educational and the Ministry is currently processing this. If successful it will be implemented in January 2017.
14. A notional roll of 20 has been proposed to Salisbury for 2016. We consider 20 to be the minimum number for the school to be operationally viable. It may however be a challenging number to achieve. Their current roll is nine girls.³
- 15.

² Cited from Salisbury School's 'Submission to the Inquiry into the identification and support for students with the significant challenges of dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autism spectrum disorder in primary and secondary schools.'

³ The notional roll of Westbridge School has also been reduced for 2016 to 32 students.

Options to increase Salisbury's roll

16. To attempt to increase their roll Salisbury initially advocated for students to remain at their school longer than the other residential schools. The girls currently at the school have had their section 9 agreement to stay extended. As a result all nine girls are due to leave Salisbury School in July 2016.
17. The Ministry has considered increasing Salisbury's roll by changing the access pathway through IWS to the school. This would enable them to enrol girls who meet IWS criteria but have not been prioritised for IWS due to limited of capacity. On current trends that would only raise their roll by four girls in 2016.
18. Other options to increase the roll involve changing policy settings to lower the entry threshold to take students who do not have as high needs as those currently accepted for IWS. Any changes to policy settings would have potential impact on the other two residential schools. Salisbury School has recently presented its own proposal "The Salisbury Solution" which involves a significant policy shift. This proposal is discussed next.

The Salisbury Solution, an alternative proposal from Salisbury

19. Salisbury School has recently presented a proposal entitled 'The Salisbury Solution' to Peter Hughes for an alternative purpose for the school. The proposal is to disassociate the school from the IWS and take a specific group of 'complex young people' who have autistic spectrum disorder. The school also wants to re-establish its own enrolment committee and process.
20. Analysis indicates the following issues with the 'Salisbury Solution':
 - i) It does not align with the Ministry's statement of intent or strategic approach. It works against the vision of providing for students with special needs in their home community. Instead it proposes provision of specialised residential schooling to a different cohort of children (those students with autism spectrum disorder who do not meet IWS criteria) with a lower level of need to those currently enrolled at the school⁴.
 - ii) It contrasts with the vision and objectives of the New Zealand Disability Strategy, objective 3 of which is to "*provide the best education for disabled people*" and "*improve education so that all children, youth and adult learners will have equal opportunities to learn and develop in their local, regular education centres*".
 - iii) It does not align with key aspects of the New Zealand Autism Spectrum Disorder Guidelines. The guidelines state that '*children and young people with ASD should have opportunities to interact and socialise with typically developing peers.*' and '*The learning of new skills should take place in the child or young person's environment.*'
 - iv) It provides no evidence that it will provide positive outcomes for students with autism. Progress can be made by a child while in residential schooling, but evidence suggests that continued support beyond transition (as offered by IWS) is crucial to maintaining gains. Salisbury's proposal does not provide for any continued support for the child beyond 'transition'.

⁴ The IWS supports many children with ASD however Salisbury's proposal would be for those with ASD who are not disruptive at school.

- v) The proposal does not recognise that Salisbury is a state funded special school and as such access to the school is set by and with agreement of the Secretary for Education. The agreement to enrol a child at the school is between the Ministry and the parent by section 9 agreement.
- vi) The access criteria proposed appear to be based on parental desire rather than the child's needs, in that it speaks of '*an option of choice for families*' and '*families who strongly desire a residential placement for their daughter at Salisbury*'.
- vii) It offers no data or supporting evidence to show what level of need there is for this 'service' or how potential candidates would be prioritised.
- viii) The proposal is said to be cost neutral but would require additional property costs to allow the school to take boys. It would also use targeted high needs funding not allocated for such a purpose.
- ix) It includes the incorrect premise that the IWS is capped at 285 students. While current capacity allows IWS to support 285 students, additional funding could extend this capacity to take more children with high needs. The proposal would not reduce pressure on IWS as it is for children who do not meet the IWS criteria.
- x) The proposal includes the option of taking day school placements of local ASD and ID students as well as having placements for international students. No evidence of demand for this service has been produced. This would also require Ministry and parental section 9 agreement. There are legal barriers to Salisbury taking international students.

Funding

21. The current funding for the three residential special schools is shown in the table below:

School	Staffing	School operational funding	Residential funding	Total
Westbridge	\$795,713	\$247,659	\$2,063,230	\$3,106,602
Halswell	\$630,413	\$391,109	\$2,523,134	\$3,544,656
Salisbury	\$601,213	\$373,693	\$2,008,483	\$2,983,389
	\$2,027,339	\$1,012,461	\$6,594,847	\$9,634,647

22. The current per student funding based on the actual roll is:
- Westbridge \$155,330
 - Halswell \$154,116
 - Salisbury \$331,488
23. More details relating to rolls, funding and a comparison with the IWS are provided at appendix 1.

Future options for discussion

24. From the information above there are four potential future directions for Salisbury School that require discussion:
- i) Status quo. This involves continuing to fund the school at a notional roll of 20 but accepting that the actual roll will remain considerably less than this.
 - ii) Modify the IWS access pathway to Salisbury to make it easier for students accepted into IWS to attend. This maintains the entry threshold of the IWS system but it impacts minimally on potential roll growth for Salisbury.
 - iii) Consider a policy change which would repurpose the school along the lines of the "Salisbury Solution".
 - iv) Investigate closure of the school.

Appendix 1

Costs and Demand

Residential schooling and the IWS

1. The IWS costs less than a residential special school placement. The IWS:
 - Currently provides for a maximum of 285 students from across the country.
 - Is funded \$7.7m annually (average \$27,000 per student).
2. In comparison the three residential special schools are funded approximately \$9.7m with an average cost of \$94,000 per student. This per student amount is based on the notional roll of 102 students across the three schools (there were actually 52 students at the three schools as at July 2015).
3. Demand for IWS is high and the service is at maximum capacity. There is more demand for IWS than can be met with current resourcing and capacity. In the last year 57 students who met the criteria for IWS were not immediately prioritised for a place; of these students, nine were girls.
4. The total number of students referred to and supported by IWS since January 2013 is 368. Of these, 74 (20%) were girls⁵.
5. Proportionally girls are more likely to want a residential placement than boys but numerically their numbers are low. Since January 2013, 26 (approximately 35%) parents/caregivers of girls have chosen a residential option. During the same period, of the 294 boys supported by IWS, 66 (approximately 23%) chose residential schooling.

Current rolls and funding

6. All three residential special schools have had declining rolls since the IWS offered alternative support for students with complex behavioural and learning needs in their home community. The roll returns for the three residential special schools from 2012 to 2015 are in the table below.

School year	Salisbury Actual Roll*	Halswell Actual Roll*	Westbridge Actual Roll*
2012	43	31	26
2013	22	16	29
2014	15	22	34
2015	9	23	20

*School roll as at July each year.

⁵ These figures exclude any student placed prior to January 2013 such as those already with the Intensive Behaviour Service (IBS).

7. Salisbury School's roll decline was evident before the introduction of IWS. From 2011 to 2012 it reduced from 72 to 43 girls. This was due to the introduction of a new joint admissions committee where the two schools, Halswell and Salisbury, together with a Ministry representative decided on who should be enrolled at each of the two schools. The decline in this year reflected a shift in the enrolment process, from optional placement where each individual school chose whom should be enrolled at their school, to students being placed at the school based on the identified needs of the student. This brought about an element of consistency to the process that had not been evident before.⁶⁷
8. The greatest roll decline across all three schools has been seen at Salisbury. The decline can be attributed to:
- There being more boys than girls with complex behavioural and learning needs.
 - The IWS providing an effective wraparound service. There is now more provision to support these students in their home community and to attend their local school through the IWS. This is a service that was not previously available.
 - Less demand for a residential option: All parents whose children are prioritised for IWS are given a choice of residential schooling or staying in their home with IWS support. Since 2013 only 92 (25%) of the 368 students who have received IWS support have chosen residential schooling.
 - There being more than one residential option for girls receiving IWS, due to Halswell Residential College now being able to enrol up to five girls. For instance, in 2014 parents of eleven girls chose a residential option. Of these six went to Halswell and five to Salisbury⁸. A co-educational preference is a factor in this choice. Halswell generally reaches its maximum number of female enrolments.
9. Residential special schools are funded on a notional roll and this has been reduced for each school since the start of 2013 to match the decline in actual rolls. Current notional rolls for 2015 are:
- | | |
|--------------|----|
| • Salisbury | 30 |
| • Halswell | 32 |
| • Westbridge | 40 |
10. A notional roll of 20 for 2016 is being discussed with Salisbury as this is the lowest notional roll we can allow if the school is to remain financially viable⁹. Westbridge and Halswell's 2016 notional roll will also be reducing to better reflect the number of actual students likely to enrol in the schools. It's clear that Salisbury's roll will not increase to 20 yet the Ministry cannot reduce funding to a school knowing that it would impact upon their viability.

⁶ Halswell's roll declined considerably in 2011 following the Christchurch earthquake where students were sent home and supported by Halswell's outreach service in their home community.

⁷ Access to the schools is now through the four IWS regional prioritisation panels applying a prioritisation process to all applicants for IWS that ensures access for students with the highest needs to this high tariff service. The panel therefore provides impartiality and consistency so that residential schooling is offered to those that most need it.

⁸ Halswell has maintained a maximum of enrolment of 5 girls at any one time. During 2014, 6 girls attended the school as 1 girl left the school during that year allowing them to fill that place.

⁹ In 2014 the Ministry commissioned work to identify fixed costs, semi-variable costs and variable costs for the three residential special schools. This was undertaken in consultation with the three schools. Using assumptions from this work the Ministry's Strategic Financial Business Partner advises that the lowest notional roll on which a residential special school can viably operate would be on a notional roll of 20 students.

