



## Briefing Note: Climate change and school property

<b>To:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	12 March 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1247349
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### Purpose of Report

This paper provides you with information on how the Ministry currently manages climate related risks to school property.

### Summary

- The Ministry is aware of the risk from climate change and that we will need to prepare for a range of possible impacts it may have on the school property portfolio.
- Investment in school property is largely driven by ensuring education provision where there is community demand and improving the overall condition of the portfolio.
- Schooling provision responds to where need is identified and we look to manage and adapt to climate factors for as long as there is community demand for schooling. New and existing sites are assessed against climate based criteria as part of our overall site evaluation processes, and specific design features are adopted to respond to identified climate risks where required.
- The Ministry is contributing to a more coordinated approach across local and central government to prepare for and respond to the effects of climate change, through the National Adaptation Plan which is being led by the Ministry for the Environment.

### Proactive release

**Agree** that this Briefing will be proactively released after Ministerial consideration. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

**Agree/Disagree**



Kim Shannon  
Head of Education Infrastructure Service

Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education

12/3/21

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## Comment

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### ***An overview of how EIS takes into account climate considerations when building, rebuilding, or adding capacity to schools.***

1. The Ministry is aware of the risk to New Zealand from the effects of climate change, and that adaptation of the school property portfolio will be required. Given the scale of the portfolio and the wide geographical spread of schools across the country, we will prepare for a range of possible climate change impacts.
2. The Ministry's current priority for the schooling network is to deliver Quality Learning Environments by 2030. We target new capital investment towards areas where growth is presenting, through the National Education Growth Plan (NEGP). Aside from adding new capacity in areas of high growth, the National Schools Redevelopment Programme (NSRP) prioritises construction projects in schools, so they provide warm, dry and modern classrooms that are fit-for-purpose.
3. The location of new schools is largely determined by where population growth is presenting, regardless of the environmental conditions that may be present. Therefore, when we acquire land as part of the NEGP or assess the viability of existing sites through the NSRP, we must ensure their resilience and ability to support educational provision in the long term.
4. The Ministry carries out a site evaluation for new school sites to consider a wide range of requirements and risk mitigations. This multi-stage evaluation process may include geo-technical analysis of the site and assessing it for risks such as sea inundation and localised flooding.
5. As part of the design process for new buildings and redevelopments, we engage specialist architects and designers with the knowledge and experience required to develop facilities that have resilience to the local climate. This includes factoring known or potential hazards and implementing design solutions to mitigate these. For example, we use temperature projections from NIWA and the Ministry for the Environment to inform our design requirements and ensure that new school buildings in more temperate parts of the country incorporate passive cooling into the design.
6. For existing school sites and buildings, we identify known and potential risks through our 10 year property planning process. This may include climate-related risks to property, such as flood risk, but this is balanced against more immediate needs, such as health and safety issues and maintaining schools that are in poor condition.
7. We are currently reviewing our property planning process, to consider a longer-term view and to consider wider network considerations. This will be informed by engaging with councils' longer-term planning for sea level rise in areas where schools are part of communities that will be affected.

### ***How does the Ministry use advice from local councils/regional councils and their assessments of climate related risks in decision making.***

8. We work with local councils to ensure that, wherever possible, new school sites acquired are away from areas identified as being at high risk. Councils are required to comply with the National Environmental Standards and National Planning Standards under the Resource Management Act and other relevant guidance on environmental effects before endorsing plan changes that intensify residential development.

9. We are currently refreshing our site evaluation methodology to more specifically reference risks such as sea level rise, and better align with National Environmental Standards. We anticipate this update will be finalised in the first half of this year.

***At what point could/would the Ministry consider relocating a school, or building in additional mitigation features to a school site? How might an increasing need to do this work affect Ministry funding streams?***

10. Schools provide key social infrastructure within their communities and will continue to be an important community asset so long as there is local demand. Relocating an entire school would be a significant step that would only be considered if a school was no longer of service to its community.
11. In the short term, we do not anticipate the need to relocate any existing schools due to climate risk. If climate impacts began to significantly affect a school site, relocating the school would not necessarily be the best solution. The presenting climate risk would have a wider community impact, and communities would not necessarily shift in a uniform fashion, i.e. it is not a simple 'lift and shift' of the entire community.
12. It is likely that we would look to manage and adapt to climate factors for as long as there was community demand for schooling, before relocating a school or removing provision altogether. Our response to this scenario would be guided by an ongoing network assessment and the shifts in demand across a region.
13. In some instances, we are required to locate a school in an area where some climate-related risk is present. In these cases, the Ministry completes robust research on the potential effects in conjunction with design solutions to build in risk-mitigations and facilitate a long-term property outcome.
14. An example is the construction of Redcliffs School in Christchurch, following the Canterbury earthquakes. As the site identified for relocation within the Redcliff's community was low lying, the Ministry ensured that appropriate flood and coastal assessments of the site were undertaken before the development proceeded and that the new buildings included design features to mitigate the possible effects of a changing climate.
15. Design features that were implemented included raised floors to mitigate risks of inundation and specialised wastewater and stormwater systems that operate in the event of flooding onsite. These considerations ensure that the school is functional and future-proofed with the infrastructure required to adequately respond to flood inundation. This is an evidence-based approach we can replicate on other sites where there are similar climate risks.

**Broader cross-agency climate-related work**

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16. The Ministry is contributing to a more coordinated approach across both the local and central government sectors to better prepare for and adapt to a changing climate – including coastal retreat.
17. The Ministry for the Environment is currently leading the development of a National Adaptation Plan which will involve action plans for key priority areas, including infrastructure. This Plan will set out key actions the Ministry and other agencies will need to take as part of an all of government approach to manage identified climate risks.
18. We anticipate that this and other related work, including the development of legislation for managed retreat, will require us to undertake a more rigorous process for acquiring

land and identify existing school sites potentially subject to managed retreat or other climate risks.

19. The Ministry is a contributing agency to the development of the action plans, which are due by 2022. We expect that this work will help the Ministry to move towards a more coordinated approach to climate resilience across government. This work will contribute to ongoing refinements to our property planning processes to take a more strategic view towards managing the impacts of climate change.
20. Actions focused on community adaptation will be of particular importance to the Ministry, as our role is to serve communities and respond to population growth or decline wherever it presents. For this reason, the Ministry is unlikely to lead the relocation of a community. Rather, schooling provision will continue to respond to where need is identified and located.
21. Beyond climate change adaptation efforts, the Ministry has a significant amount of work underway to reduce the environmental impact of Crown owned school property. We are developing an Environmental Action Plan for school property that will identify key actions over the short, medium and long term to reduce the environmental footprint of the school property portfolio. We plan to provide your office with further detail on the action plan in coming months.
22. We are also working with the Ministry for the Environment to determine the nature and extent of emissions reporting for the schooling sector that will contribute to achieving environmental outcomes sought through the Carbon Neutral Government Programme (CNGP). We are currently establishing a work programme to respond to the enhanced requirements under the CNGP.
23. The Ministry already has a number of initiatives focused on achieving environmental outcomes, including:
  - the replacement of up to 90 coal boilers with low emissions alternatives,
  - installing insulation and replacing old inefficient lights with LEDs in around 600 small or remote state schools,
  - providing \$5M of funding to a wide range of projects at 94 schools through the Sustainability Contestable Fund, and
  - running Energy Efficiency Trials in 56 schools to better understand how energy is used and the steps we can take to support them to be more energy efficient.

## Next Steps

24. We will keep your office updated on developments coming out of the National Adaptation Plan, as we continue to engage with the Ministry for the Environment on this work.