



## Briefing Note: Meeting with Associate Professor Dr Rebecca Jesson, and Perry Rush of the University of Auckland

<b>To:</b>	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	10 November 2022	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1298559
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<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	No	<b>Round Robin:</b>	No

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is to:

Provide information for your meeting with Associate Professor Rebecca Jesson, Academic Director: Literacy at Reading Recovery Aotearoa and Perry Rush: Stakeholder Engagement/Leadership Advisor, both of the University of Auckland.

### Summary

- Associate Professor Jesson has initiated this meeting and indicates she wishes to discuss:
  - The refreshed Reading Recovery (now called Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Support – RR&ELS)
  - Coherence with Better Start Literacy Approach (BSLA) and other approaches to teaching literacy
  - The role of teacher expertise and knowledge in teaching literacy
  - Opportunities for harmony between various approaches to teaching literacy.
- Minister Tinetti is meeting with Associate Professor Rebecca Jesson at 11-11.30am, 18 November at the UoA Epsom Campus.

## Proactive Release

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- a **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you.

☒ Agree ☐ Disagree.

*Release*

Pauline Cleaver  
**Associate Deputy Secretary**  
**Te Poutāhū | Curriculum Centre**

10/11/2022

*J. Tinetti*

Hon Jan Tinetti  
**Associate Minister of**  
**Education**

11/11/2022

## Background

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### The refreshed RR&ELS

1. Reading Recovery and Early Literacy Approach (RR&ELS) is one of three components of the Ministry's early literacy approach. It attracts strong and vocal support as well as criticism.
2. RR&ELS is an enhancement of the traditional Reading Recovery (RR) 1:1 intensive literacy instruction for 6-year-olds most at need of support.
3. As part of a three-tier model, it now includes RR kaiako using their expertise to contribute across the school, advising literacy-learning approaches as well as supporting small-group instruction across a wider age range.
4. In addition, RR&ELS kaiako are required to use the Ready to Read Phonics Plus books with their strengthened focus on an incremental approach to phonics, focus on reading strategies and vocabulary development.
5. The University of Auckland trainers (including Professor Jesson) support tutors from the Universities of Waikato and Otago to deliver these enhanced services. Tutors in turn support RR&ELS kaiako in schools.
6. The Ministry collects data from the intensive 1:1 work, and this is reported annually. The 2021 data has been collated and this is being prepared for release. You will receive an Education Weekly Update shortly about this.
7. Key findings from the 2021 data are that 21% fewer schools participated in RR in 2021 than in 2019 and a smaller proportion of ākonga successfully completed the programme (71%, compared to 74% in 2019). This is a continuation of previous trends. Ākonga who exited the programme had comparable age and outcome levels to previous years.
8. NOTE: Note that there was no central data collation for 2020. This was due to Covid disruptions alongside a pause to upgrade the RR database.
9. Professor Jesson will have additional data showing the impact of the small-group work, in particular on ākonga literacy achievement. She is likely to want to discuss this with you.
10. In the first two years of RR&ELS, numbers of schools and ākonga involved in the small-group work have been small.
11. The Ministry has been in discussion with the three universities about the slow implementation of the enhanced RR&ELS services and what they can expect to be asked to deliver in 2023. The services we contract for 2023 will reflect feedback given to milestone reports and in advisory meetings.

### **Coherence with BSLA (and other approaches to teaching literacy)**

12. The Ministry's early literacy approach currently involves RR&ELS, BSLA and the Ready to Read Phonics Plus books.
13. The University of Canterbury (which no longer offers RR services) has delivered some information seminars to RR trainers and tutors about BSLA.
14. Some RR teachers have been involved in BSLA training.
15. Professor Jesson is particularly keen to explore connections with BSLA using her wider literacy academic background as well as her role as a trainer in RR&ELS.
16. Both Professor Jesson and Professor Gail Gillon of the University of Canterbury have identified possible connections between RR&ELS and BSLA.
17. A challenge for the Ministry (and providers) is the variety of literacy assessments being used by the different approaches. Both RR&ELS and BSLA have their own assessment tools.
18. Professor Brigid O'Neill of the University of Canterbury BSLA team has been invited to be part of the RR&ELS Advisory Group.

### **The role of teacher expertise and knowledge in teaching literacy**

19. In recent discussions and in her writing Professor Jesson has described the importance of teacher expertise in providing support tailored to what the individual learners need, whether it's help with phonics, reading comprehension, writing, or often, a combination of these things.
20. She notes that activities designed for one-to-one support are difficult to adapt to groups but the close observation skills, problem-solving skills and assessment skills that Reading Recovery teachers have transfer well to the classroom.
21. With a tiered model (such as RR&ELS), a team approach is required to prevent literacy learning difficulties. At each tier, the group size gets smaller, meaning teaching is increasingly targeted to children requiring additional support and tailored to their learning profiles.
22. In this way, schools can systematically increase the literacy support by adding expertise, by bringing another expert teacher into the class to support the teaching of a small group. This approach adds another person to that existing relationship between the whānau, the teacher and the child. Formative use of assessments and conversations among professionals, whānau and students underpin teaching designed for specific children.
23. RR and now RR&ELS kaiako receive intensive training over a one-year period in the methods and approaches of RR. Once trained, kaiako continue to receive ongoing

professional support. (A key part of this has been observed teaching followed by peer critique.)

24. This in-school work is supported by the advanced academic qualifications of RR tutors, and the active research work of RR trainers.

### **Opportunities for harmony between various approaches to teaching literacy**

25. As noted in paragraph 1 above, there are perceptions of conflict between various approaches to learning literacy. Some commentators refer to a binary between (for example) 'phonics' and 'whole language'. Professor Jesson finds this a false dichotomy which does not support tailoring teaching approaches to the specific needs of individuals.
26. The Ministry's literacy approach currently includes support for several approaches and from several providers.
27. As also noted in paragraph 15 above, Associate Professor Jesson is particularly keen to explore connections and argues for deep teacher expertise so kaiako can understand and draw on a range of approaches.
28. She may ask if the Minister can facilitate these discussions and explorations.
29. Your meeting with Professor Jesson will occur while final decisions are being made about what literacy supports the Ministry will provide in 2023.
30. During 2023, the implementation of the Literacy & Communication and Maths Strategy will continue, and any supports will need to align with the common practice model as it is developed.

### **RR&ELS services for 2023**

31. Professor Jesson will be interested (as will staff of the other two universities providing RR&ELS services) in confirming arrangements for 2023 and beyond.
32. Final details are not yet fully approved within the Ministry, and no formal documentation has been sent to the universities. We have informally told the universities that we intend to procure RR&ELS for 2023. Online applications for schools to offer RR&ELS will have been completed by the time of your meeting.
33. We expect that reprocurring RR&ELS for 2023 will require providers to show how they will support all RR kaiako and the kaiako they work with to include more specific structured approaches to literacy elements, including using phoneme-grapheme diagnostic assessments, and primarily focusing on explicit teaching of unknown phoneme grapheme correspondences (PGC) during the beginning stages of the intervention at three levels of support.
34. Providers will continue to use of the Ready to Read Phonics Plus books with Colour Wheel books being introduced later.

35. The Ministry will also require providers to describe how consistency and impact of this support will be measured and reported.
36. Note: The three elements of the early literacy approach (RR&ELS, BSLA and the Phonics Plus books) are being evaluated through an external evaluation. The final report is due in June 2023.

#### **Associate Professor Jesson**

37. Professor Jesson works in literacy education at the Faculty of Education and Social Work. She is strongly focussed on research reflecting literacy learning needs in Aotearoa New Zealand and with Pacific communities.
38. Professor Jesson has been a primary school kaiako in several schools and year levels and has been a Reading Recovery kaiako.
39. Her research is on literacy learning and teaching and on writing. She advocates for children's literature and texts that represent Aotearoa New Zealand.
40. Currently, Professor Jesson is also working as a Reading Recovery trainer, training RR tutors in the three universities. She is leading the development and implementation of the enhanced RR&ELS services in Aotearoa New Zealand. (More information is available at <https://profiles.auckland.ac.nz/r-jesson>.)

#### **Mr Perry Rush**

41. Mr Rush was appointed as Leadership Consultant and member of Tui Tuia | Learning Circle's Senior Leadership Team in January 2022. Prior to this he was the National President of the New Zealand Principals' Federation and Principal of Hastings Intermediate School.
42. He leads stakeholder engagement and contributes to work across the Leadership Development team and with the University of Auckland Faculty of Education and Social Work.
43. He is likely to bring the perspective of principals and kaiako who need to support diverse communities. He has considerable sector experience. (More information is available at [https://www.learningcircle.co.nz/team/perry-rush?7f8221be\\_page=2](https://www.learningcircle.co.nz/team/perry-rush?7f8221be_page=2)).
44. Tui Tuia Learning Circle is part of Uniservices, a business arm of the University of Auckland.