



31<sup>st</sup> October 2016

To the Hon Hekia Parata, Mark Mitchell MP, John Karl, Janet Schofield, Emma Bourne and Yasmin Renders,

I have been associated with Silverdale School since 2007, and have been Chairperson of the Board of Trustees since June 2008. In that time I have seen the school's roll increase from 156 to 657. We are currently a full primary Year 1 – 8, and are situated in a significant population growth area, as evident by our rapid enrollment increase. Nearby, Millwater on the Hibiscus Coast, will see over 3000 homes built around the community in the near future.

In my time as a Board member I have had many dealings with the Ministry of Education in regards to building new classrooms, roll growth, amending our zone and now decapitation (which we prefer to call reclassifying). We are currently in the process of completing a further eight classrooms, a process which was put on hold for ten months with no adequate explanation.

We have been in discussions for a number of years in regards to amending our zone and reclassifying. We amended our zone in April of this year and now we are in the process of talking to our community about reclassifying. We have worked hard to manage these processes while retaining the culture of our school. Ultimately, we do not wish to lose our Year 7 and 8 students. As a school community, we are very proud of all of them and feel they benefit our school greatly. Our Year 7 and 8 students are given opportunities that they would not get at a larger school. For many, being a Year 7 and 8 in a Year 1 - 8 school provides the perfect space for them to develop their confidence and skills to successfully transition to secondary school.

While I know it is a numbers game and that it may be inevitable that we have to reclassify, I would like to express my ongoing frustration with the Ministry of Education through these processes. One of the things that has frustrated me the most in dealing with the Ministry of Education, in regards to reclassification, is not one person from the Ministry has ever bothered to come into our school and visit our Year 7 and 8 classrooms. They have not seen what an incredible job our four teachers do for the children who are in our classrooms. If the Ministry were to come and visit they would see an amazing group of teachers and students working together to create a learning environment that shows the teachers have dedicated their time and effort into making our Year 7 and 8 students the best they can be, by creating a learning programme which benefits all the children who attend our school.

We have had many visitors to the school such as our Prime Minister, the Rt Hon John Key. He visited our school last year and he had a question and answer session with our Year 7 and 8 students, during which he stated "what an amazing group of young people you have in your school". We have also had Edward Carlson from Google, Sydney and his comments were that our children had integrated IT so well and were by far the best students he had seen with their IT skills.

On numerous occasions, we and the surrounding schools, have asked the MoE to inform us where and when they are going to build a new school in our area and we have never been told exactly, just that you are looking into it! We asked our local MP Mark Mitchell to organise a meeting with the Local Council, the Ministry and our local schools to talk about the roll growth situation in our area; but again, this has all fallen on deaf ears. We feel that we have been ignored. Our local community are rightly concerned and frustrated at what they view as a reactive process without a clear strategy for managing the growth in the area and the ongoing pressure this will have on our local schools.

In view of all of this, I would like to see the following items given priority going forwards:

- To give parents the choice of which school they would like their child to attend in Year 7 & 8. Our school of 100 or the school the MoE have suggested which is a school of over 800 Year 7 & 8 students or another suggestion by the MoE was a school nearly 30 minutes away by car.
- If we reclassify, that the Ministry give recognition to our teachers in Year 7 & 8.
- That we and our wider community are provided with a clear strategy for managing the projected growth including:
  - when and where a new primary will be built;
  - a clear understanding of the capacity of Orewa College and the impact that projected growth will have on them and how this will be managed;
  - regular and up to date information about the status of this strategy and any proposed revisions

Silverdale School (even without our Year 7 and 8 students) will be at capacity with the predictions of the Ministry by 2019. Since this is just over two years away, we struggle to see how the Ministry will be able to build a new school by then, especially given it has taken us two years to get 8 classrooms the go ahead!!

Our community needs certainty and they need to know that if we reclassify, that it will not be in vain - that there is a plan in place to ensure we do not find ourselves reacting to another capacity problem in two year's time.

Yours sincerely



Alison Gilchrist  
Chairperson  
Board of Trustees  
Silverdale School