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1 July 2021

Report to the Ministry of Education on the Community Consultation Regarding Proposed Changes to the Heretaunga College Enrolment Scheme: May - June 2021

Summary

Following a meeting with Shelley Govier, Lead Adviser Network, and Jeena Baines, Network Analyst, at the Ministry of Education Wellington Regional Office and meeting with the Principal of Heretaunga College, Fiona Craven, I launched the consultation on the proposed changes to the Enrolment Scheme for Heretaunga College on May 24th, 2021.

The consultation took the form of a letter emailed to both the Presiding Chairs and Principals of 16 state and state integrated schools in the Upper Hutt area. These schools included the two state secondary schools; Heretaunga College and Upper Hutt College; the two Intermediate Schools, Maidstone Intermediate and Fergusson Intermediate; and all the state primaries as well as the two Catholic State Integrated primary schools in the area. The letter had links to the proposed changes to the Enrolment Scheme and maps showing the proposed changes. I then offered Heretaunga College, Upper Hutt College, the two Intermediate schools and St Joseph's School a short communique designed to be sent to parents / whanau and asked them to send these out to their community to try to ensure all Year 8 parents in the district were aware of the proposed changes and the consultation process.

I had a number of conversations with the acting Principal at Maidstone Intermediate whose pupils were likely to be the most directly affected group. Both Maidstone Intermediate and Heretaunga College published the proposed changes to their whole community.

I attended the Heretaunga College Open Evening, with 3 MOE staff, on June 9th. The Open Evening was attended by approximately 500 students and whanau. We were introduced and about 20 families came and talked to us. Most of these people were aware of the proposed changes and were unhappy about them. We discussed the issues with them and encouraged them to email comments to me. The cutoff date for comments / submissions was the 25th of June.

I received 28 emailed comments /submissions. Of these submissions

- 4 were from Boards of Trustees.
 - Upper Hutt College
 - Maidstone Intermediate
 - Pinehaven School
 - St Brendan's School
- 2 were from Year 8 students.
- 22 were from parents / whanau / teachers.

Almost all the submissions expressed some objection to the proposed changes to the Heretaunga College Enrolment Scheme.

The key points raised by the submissions were:

1. **Closest School:** The proposed changes mean that for some families their children will no longer be able to attend their closest secondary school. People felt this was wrong as they feel families should be able to send their children to the nearest school. (7 respondents) Some families said we should be encouraging students to be able to walk to school and these proposals do not do that.
2. **Elderslea being split in two:** Associated with this was the concern that the suburb of Elderslea was essentially being cut in half so the natural progression of children with their friends from the same community was being broken. Apparently, many children in this area have gone to the same kindergarten, primary school, Maidstone Intermediate and to Heretaunga College. This would be really upsetting for the children who would no longer be in the Heretaunga College zone. ***Note:** I understand Maidstone Intermediate had taken all its Year 8 students on a visit to Heretaunga College before these proposals were made public, so many students had decided they wanted to go to Heretaunga with their friends. They have since found out that they may not be able to. This has been very upsetting for these students. Clearly, they feel they should be able to go to the same school as their peers. They feel this is unfair.* (6 respondents)
3. **Time Frames for the proposed changes too short:** Associated with Point 1 and 2. A number of families claimed the time frames are far too short and unfair on this year's Year 8 students. These students had presumed they were going to Heretaunga College but now may not be able to. (6 respondents) They say their children are incredibly stressed by this and some asked for a year's grace. At least one respondent suggested that children caught out by the zone change this

year should still be able to enrol at Heretaunga College and the new zone boundaries should be enforced in 2022.

4. **No automatic right for siblings to attend:** Some people were upset that siblings of current Heretaunga College students would not have an automatic right of enrolment. They say this adds extra costs, inconvenience, and stress to families. (4 respondents)
5. **Historic Connections to Heretaunga College:** Some families say they have historical connections to Heretaunga College: parents attended or older siblings etc and this should give them the right to have their children attend. (4 respondents.) One respondent though, said historical connections should not count as military families move into the area to work at Trentham and they should have an equal right to send their children to Heretaunga College as others.
6. **Different boundaries suggested:**
 - Some respondents believe a more natural boundary would be Whakatiki Street, which would keep Elderslea children all in one zone. (5 respondents)
 - The Upper Hutt College Board of Trustees suggested that the reduced zone will not be small enough to contain the roll of Heretaunga College. They suggested that the new Wallaceville Estate area should be zoned to Upper Hutt College. This was echoed by at least one other respondent.
 - Other respondents suggested that the southern boundary of the Heretaunga College zone should be moved further north (as far as Liverpool or even John Street) as people in this area are closer to Upper Hutt College, and in return the current Elderslea and Poet's Block areas should remain in the Heretaunga College zone.
7. **Pinehaven and Silverstream:** 4 families from Pinehaven and one from Silverstream are upset that they could be out of zone with the proposed new boundaries even though they have close associations with Heretaunga College.
8. **Families should have a choice:** A number of families strongly believe that they should have a choice as to which high school their children should go to. (At least 4 respondents) Some of them argued that the MOE should increase capacity in both Colleges as the numbers of college age children in Upper Hutt is growing and will continue to do so, meaning increased capacity is needed.

9. **Stokes Valley Families:** Several Stokes Valley families have sent their Intermediate age children to Maidstone Intermediate because they want them to go on to Heretaunga College. They are very disappointed that their children may now miss out. (2 respondents)

10. **Rural Families:** One Blue Mountain Road family has complained that the proposed changes will cut Whiteman's Valley in half which they say is not fair. They say there are minimal students involved and it is ridiculous to remove choice for one or two of them when their school bus goes directly to Heretaunga College.

11. **Strictly enforce current zone boundaries:** One school submission (Pinehaven School) suggested that Heretaunga College needs to strictly adhere to its current zone before further shrinking its zone to try to avoid overcrowding.

I submitted this report to the Ministry of Education for their consideration on July 1st, 2021.

Neal Swindells.