

Waitaha Special School Christchurch. Our journey.

The events following the 2010/2011 earthquakes had devastating and unforeseen effects on Education in Christchurch.

Rolleston became a rapidly growing and evolving community following the 2010 earthquake, following a move to the South and West of Christchurch of families and businesses.

For Waitaha Special School, this journey began in 2012 with the Ministerial Review of Special Education in Christchurch. This demanded thorough and extensive community, staff and student consultation to a level that we owed our communities. This took a huge emotional, physical and intellectual toll on all parties involved. The fear of change, the lack of genuine Ministry consultation, and the uncertainty that was placed on an already stressed community, was enormous. None of the proposed changes were accepted- Waitaha Base on West Rolleston Primary School Site or Rolleston College Site..

In 2014, Waitaha School and its community was invited to consider the development of three (now four) new builds, all on shared sites. The need to build genuine, trusting, respectful relationships with a number of stakeholders was critical to the development of clear understandings and desired outcomes for the communities that the new facilities were serving. The relationships that developed during these projects are to be cherished - they created friendships, developed and enhanced professional understandings and growth; most importantly, creating a strong network across the new communities. The timeframe and the number of projects that Waitaha was involved in demanded that the Principal and BOT were required to spend an inordinate amount of time on building the relationships that, in turn would ensure the success of the projects. We were committed to ensuring that all stakeholders were involved, informed and updated as the projects developed, opened, and then operated as successful educational facilities.

While all of the building was occurring, and with all of the consultation that the projects demanded, the Principal, BOT, and staff continued to lead and operate a successful school, to fulfill the statutory obligations and requirements. While we received some additional staffing, there was no consideration given to the amount of time pressure, and stress this number of building projects placed upon the Waitaha community. There was little or no consideration given to our health and well-being during this time. No school, no community, no Principal, BOT or staff should be expected to undertake projects of this importance and of this value, without consideration of the effects on well-being. The BOT and Principal did not

foresee that property knowledge and management would consume their lives for such a long period of time. This was exacerbated at the end of the school year of 2017 by the relocation of Waitaha Base school to a new site. This demanded that staff dismantle, pack and label an entire school, meet the carrying company at the new site, direct all resources to appropriate spaces, unpack and set up the furniture, resources and equipment in order to be ready for the new school year at the beginning of 2018 - an enormous undertaking for the staff and BOT. This coincided with the bringing forward of the fourth build, the Halswell satellite build consultation, to Term 4, 2017. This added considerable pressure to an already pressured year.

Four building projects completed in five years, one of those being a major rebuild and school relocation, has taken a significant toll on my personal and professional life. I was physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted during 2017. Requests for support for myself and my team during this year were largely ignored. My health and well-being during the sustained period of change was not considered or acknowledged. The building aspect was demanding and out of my area of expertise. Significant roll growth occurred alongside these projects. These demanded staff recruitment, internal leadership review, growth and restructuring alongside the building demands. Change is stressful and the need for relevant and ongoing professional development for all staff was recognized and implemented.

Staff & Student Numbers 2009 - 2018

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Year	Staff Total	Staff @ pp 10 early Aug		Students Total	Students @ 1 July return	
		Teachers	Support		Male	Female
2009	31	12	19	20	14	6
2010	31	13	18	20	13	7
2011	30	13	17	32	14	18
2012	30	14	16	32	22	10
2013	30	14	16	40	28	12
2014	36	17	19	46	30	16
2015	40	19	21	44	32	12
2016	62	25	37	65	44	21
2017	70	29	41	77	55	22
2018	67	29	38	80	57	23
2019	75	31	44	96		

Te Pa Harakeke opener
Te Rito Harakeke open
Lemonwood Grove site
Knights Stream Satellit

There were significant MOE changes and demands over a very short period of time during 2016 -2017 that added significant pressure.

The hype and the change in law regarding restraint and seclusion

The implementation of MAPA training and its significant demands

Changes to the Section 9 implementation in Canterbury,

A major revision of and implementation of SESTA,

E.C. changes to appraisal expectations and the revised Professional Standards and Code of Professional Responsibility,

Changes to SSS review and implementation

ERO changes to internal evaluation expectations

The introduction this year of new Schools Planning and Reporting Requirements.

Individually their impact may have been manageable, however all occurred on top of what was an already unmanageable workload.

The major project of a Base build and move came with no additional release or time provision for the Principal. This became particularly significant during Term 4 of that year when the fourth provision at Halswell initial consultation began. This occurred on top of the Base build project completion period, the move and readiness for opening.

The lack of provision of a deconstruction project team for base had a significant impact on myself and my family. The closure of base school, the packing, the move, the unpacking and setup of the new site with little support became all-consuming from the end of 2017.

The expectation that Principals will, and can, undertake projects of this significance, with little or no consideration for their health and well-being is concerning. Once the rollercoaster began, and I was on the treadmill of projects, I did not recognise the impact it was having. The constant demands, and my professional dedication required that I keep the momentum going. I was in the groove and just kept absorbing the consequences, regardless of the impact. My mental, emotional and physical health and well-being were impacted significantly.

The lack of communication from the Ministry of Education regarding roles and responsibilities for relocation, set up and de commission, must be addressed for the future. It was untenable, as it was left entirely to the Waitaha staff and their whanau. For property purposes ours was a relocation of the Base school, and a new build. The demands are very different and this should be recognised for future projects.

We were extremely fortunate to have been involved in these projects: they have provided first class facilities for our young people, our staff and for the communities. We have had opportunities that few will be fortunate enough to have

experienced. We have worked alongside dedicated teams of people and have learned a great deal from all of them. For that we are extremely grateful. We have learned a great deal, made some mistakes, laughed a lot and cried at times. These educational facilities are now pivotal to the uniqueness of this Community of Education in Rolleston.

I would like to thank all of those who have contributed to and supported myself and the Waitaha team on our journey. While it has been incredibly demanding, the opportunities were presented, we embraced them and are very grateful for what we have created.

These educational facilities and the uniqueness of them, represent an outstanding credit to our resilience, our tenacity, dedication and commitment to do the very best for our communities. The collaborative nature of the consultations that this journey demanded, is to be celebrated. I acknowledge the outstanding contribution made to these projects from the West Rolleston EBOT and Principal Sylvia Fidow, the Rolleston College EBOT and Principal Steve Saville, the Lemonwood Grove EBOT and Principal Sean Bailey, and currently the Knights Stream EBOT and Principal Mike Molloy.

Having quality time to reflect on and learn from the many and complex aspects of this process, will provide valuable and insightful lessons for the future. Now is a perfect opportunity to reflect on the journeys, the lessons learned and on the opportunities we have provided for our students, our staff and for our shared communities.

- Te Pa Harakeke satellite @West Rolleston Primary School. New Builds -**Began 2014-2015, opened January 2016.**
- Te Rito Harakeke satellite @Rolleston College. New Builds Public, Private, Partnership. **Began 2015-2016, opened January 2017.**
- Waitaha Base school- Relocation and re build on a shared site with Lemonwood Grove Primary School. **Began 2016-2017, opened January 2018.**
- Waitaha satellite@ Knights Stream. New build. **Began end of 2017, opening January 2019.**

Principals Recommendations for future consideration.

- The health and well-being of Principals involved in building work becomes an integral aspect of the project.

- Principals to be released from their Leadership positions to enable them to become genuinely involved in the building process or provide management payments to them as acknowledgement of the extra workload. This becomes a negotiated aspect of the contract between the school and MOE at the beginning of projects.
- Employ project managers who have a respect for education and who will listen to the community.
- Peer review of project managers work by colleagues regularly during projects.
- Ensure that relevant and useful documentation and information is provided from the beginning of the process. MOU, understandings of PPP and the implications, PODD, Entitlements for BOT during the process-ie: decommissioning responsibilities, and staffing possibilities to support BOT and Principals.
- Provide a framework of the process to all stakeholders from the outset that includes clear guidelines of the roles and responsibilities of all the key people. Boards and Principals do not necessarily have any experience nor understandings of the design and building process. This must be understood and respected. The impact of all aspects of design must be explained in detail. What appears to be a minor detail can impact significantly in an education setting. There should be no surprises from design to actuality, simply because aspects are not explained adequately ie: cross bracing that eventuated, strengthening columns that appear as a small line in design but present as significant structures.
- When mistakes have been made, acknowledge them and remedy them in a timely manner.
- Make it easier for schools to share information- provide an experienced colleague for new Principals involved in the process.
- Listen to communities.
- Ensure that the quality of any build is equitable across projects.
- Two schools on a shared site is a new concept for New Zealand Education. It certainly has benefits for everyone involved . There are however, a number of issues with property that continues to have a significant impact on the

smooth running of both schools this year. These must be addressed for future builds on shared sites.

- Satellite provision is considered for all new builds or updates of facilities. This would facilitate and enhance opportunities for inclusive practices within and across facilities.
 1. We were under the impression that Waitaha and Lemonwood Grove systems for emergency warnings were separate. We have discovered that they were not. Waitaha and Lemonwood Grove have paid Wormolds to isolate both schools so that when we have a drill it is isolated to the specific school. The concern is that if there is an actual event because of the combined nature of the system going through Lemonwood Grove, the Emergency Services have got no way of knowing which school the actual emergency is at. This could cause a life threatening situation as time is critical and it must be addressed.
 2. Another example is having no tele-communications in working order for the first weeks of the 2018 school year. The stress caused by this was significant at a time when we were already under pressure. Waitaha Board and property team took all possible steps to ensure that everything was in place for the start of the school year but we were let down by this critical contractor.
 3. The schools sit on one parcel of land, this has caused issues with payment of rates and water as the Selwyn District Council cannot divide this one parcel and rate us separately.
 4. As one parcel of land we are only entitled to one allocation of wheelie bins. Waitaha School has to pay for our bins as the Selwyn District Council does not view us as two schools.
 5. The Principal's of Lemonwood Grove and Waitaha Schools had no problem with the shared site, but the implications of this were not made clear at any stage.

Waitaha School is in the unique position of having three new facilities (four at the end of 2018), all on shared sites. The opportunities for collaboration within and across these shared facilities will enhance teaching practices and learning opportunities. Waitaha School is part of Rolleston Kahui Ako, which provides a platform and framework for further interprofessional sharing across a diverse range of educational settings.

These scenarios present a perfect opportunity to collect evidence and reflect on whether the opportunities these facilities present for inclusive practice and

collaboration are being utilised, how are they being utilised, and what positive outcomes have they provide for students.



I have resigned from my position as Principal of Waitaha School. The cumulative demands of effectively leading a successful professional learning community as well as the demands of four new builds in five years, one of those being a complete move of Base school, has taken a huge toll - both professionally and personally.

I wish to acknowledge the outstanding support received from the Waitaha Board of Trustees, in particular James Baxter Board Chair, the Waitaha Property Team, the Waitaha Leadership team, the Waitaha staff and community, CPPA , and from my family. These were team projects from the beginning to the end. As a team we were undoubtedly extremely successful in our achievements and the facilities remain an outstanding testament to everyone involved.

My hope is that our experience will ensure that the lessons learned from this journey will support future thinking.

Finally - to the wonderful Waitaha staff. You are simply the best. I acknowledge and thank you all for travelling on this journey with us. I salute you and value every one of you for what you bring to this amazing learning community. I acknowledge and commend your outstanding professionalism and dedication, your courage during times of enormous and rapid change, your dedicated commitment to Special Education, and unwavering loyalty to the Waitaha Vision of Excellence, when the journey was exceptionally tough and demanding. You are the team who will continue this journey - create wonderful, exciting and innovative opportunities for education, and lead Waitaha School into the future.

Arohanui.

Margaret Dodds Principal Waitaha School.

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