MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

[redacted]

Thank you for your email of 14 March 2019 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

- *"plans to address population growth in Bell Block, New Plymouth. This includes any plans for the existing two primary schools (Bell Block School and Puketapu School), any consideration of further zoning (for those two schools, or other schools impacting by the growth), any proposals for new schools etc."*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act). I apologise for the delay you experienced in receiving this response.

As communities change, so too do the schooling needs of their children and young people. We have developed a draft National Education Growth Plan (NEGP) which identifies what we know about the anticipated location and patterns of growth in school aged children between now and 2030, and identifies what the Government may need to consider to meet this growth. Greater Auckland, greater Christchurch, greater Hamilton, Tauranga and Western Bay of Plenty, Queenstown and, more recently, New Plymouth and Whangarei, are all high growth areas.

The draft NEGP is currently being considered by the Minister. I am, therefore, withholding this in full under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by the Minister. In the interim, I have listed below the actions and general information about what is being undertaken to mitigate roll pressure in the area.

The New Plymouth District is a High Growth Urban Area, exceeding 10 percent growth over a ten-year period, with peak growth predicted around 2024 to 2026. As growth progresses, we expect schools with capacity to accommodate students that live within their local area.

We will work with all schools in the area to ensure the best use of existing school infrastructure by considering enrolment schemes, transport provision and the maximum rolls of integrated schools.

Currently, Bell Block School has capacity for students that live within its enrolment scheme home zone. We will work with the school board to support it to reduce the number of out-of-zone enrolments as local demand increases.

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We are also considering all options to mitigate future capacity pressure at all schools. This includes reviewing the existing enrolment scheme boundaries and decisions on adding additional teaching spaces as required to manage roll pressure.

We are discussing the potential need to implement an enrolment scheme to manage demand at Puketapu School.

We will continue to monitor the school network in the area and may recommend new schools in the future, should school-age population growth support it. However, we will only do so after we have optimised all existing schooling options, so as to ensure local students are able to continue to attend their local schools.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement and Support

Cc Jann Marshall, Director of Education for Taranaki, Whanganui, Manawatū

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