**Briefing Note: Rongotea School Swimming pool**

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<th>To:</th>
<th>Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education</th>
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<td>Date:</td>
<td>18 February 2019</td>
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<td>Key Contact:</td>
<td>Emma Dorrian</td>
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<td>Messaging seen by Communications team:</td>
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**Purpose**

The purpose of this paper is to provide you with further information on Rongotea School's request to replace their school swimming pool.

**Summary**

- **s 9(2)(a)**

  - The Rongotea School swimming pool is utilised by the school and the local community. It is now in need of maintenance and repair. The Board approached the Ministry, in July 2016, with a proposal to replace the swimming pool.

  - The cost of replacing the school swimming pool was estimated at $450,000. The Ministry recommended that Rongotea School repair its school swimming pool at a cost of $80,000.

  - The Ministry determined that Rongotea School was not in a strong financial position to replace the swimming pool.

  - The Board has proceeded, without Ministry approval, to purchase a swimming pool liner costing $152,000, using funding they received from the Lottery Commission. The school require a further $215,050 to complete installation of this swimming pool liner. In order for the school to proceed, the Ministry has requested to see evidence of secured funding before the board enter into any contract to install the swimming pool liner.
Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

a. **note** that the Ministry completed a fair and accurate assessment of Rongotea School’s financial position.

   Noted

b. **note** that the cost of replacing the swimming pool, at Rongotea School, was approximately $450,000.

   Noted

c. **note** that the Ministry recommended Rongotea School repair the school swimming pool, for approximately $80,000.

   Noted

d. **sign** the draft reply, written by the Ministry, in response to e-mail dated 20 December 2018.

e. **agree** that this Briefing will be proactively released.

   Agree / Disagree

Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary – Sector Enablement & Support

18.2.2019
Background

1. Rongotea School has a swimming pool that is used by the school and local community. The swimming pool is now in need of maintenance and repair. In July 2016 the Board approached the Ministry with a proposal to replace the swimming pool. At that time the Ministry determined that the school was not in strong financial position to replace the swimming pool but could instead repair the swimming pool to meet curriculum expectations of the Board.

Rongotea School

2. Rongotea School is a full primary school; the average number of students enrolled between 2014 and 2017 was 93. They have a current roll of 113 students.

Financial Viability of the Development

3. The Rongotea School Board’s (the Board) preference was to replace the swimming pool rather than repair it. However Rongotea School did not have the financial resources to replace the swimming pool to the standard designed by the Board’s fundraising committee.

4. Consequently, the Ministry was approached by Rongotea School to help meet the cost of replacing the swimming pool in July 2016. The cost of replacing the swimming pool was approximately $450,000. The Ministry recommended that the school swimming pool be repaired at a cost of $80,000.

5. The Ministry assessed the cost of replacing the school swimming pool against the school’s financial position and advised the school was not in a strong financial position to do so. The Ministry advised the school that they would need to fundraise to meet the costs if they wanted to replace the swimming pool.

6. Rongotea School is continuing to advocate the replacement of the swimming pool rather than have the swimming pool repaired.

7. The Board has proceeded, without Ministry approval, to purchase a swimming pool liner costing $152,000 using funding they received from the Lottery Commission. The school require a further $215,050 to complete installation of this swimming pool liner. In order for the school to proceed, the Ministry has requested to see evidence of secured funding before the Board enter into any contract to install the swimming pool liner.

Rongotea School’s Financial Position

8. Under the Crown Entities Act 2004 the Board is required to operate in a financially responsible manner and to prudently manage its assets and liabilities.

9. The Ministry reviewed the school’s financial position and established that between 2014 and 2017 the Board reported losses totalling $135,000.

10. The average value of the assets managed by the Board is $125,000.

11. Consequently the Ministry does not believe the swimming pool development is a viable or sustainable investment for Rongotea School.
Key Risks and Benefits

12. There has been no increased media interest in the cost and benefits of school swimming pools and their impact, if any, on water safety. It is possible that s 9(2)(a) may continue to draw attention to what he believes is an unacceptable outcome for his former school.

Proactive Release

13. It is intended that this briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Agree / Disagree

Annexes

Annex 1: s 9(2)(a)
Annex 2: [Redacted]
Dear [Name],

Thank you for your email of 20 December 2018 about the community pool at Rongotea School. I appreciate you taking the time to share your experience with me.

I am sorry you felt Ministry of Education staff were not supportive in your efforts to replace the pool. The pool is clearly a valued community asset and I can understand your frustration with the process to date. I have referred your email to the Ministry and asked that the matters you have raised are addressed directly with the school leadership at Rongotea School.

I understand that the Ministry’s concerns were based on the significant cost of the upgrade work required and the impact it would have on funding available for replacing other school assets. The Ministry will continue to work with Rongotea School on a solution that ensures students are given the best possible opportunity to be confident in the water.

Thank you again for raising this matter with me and for your service as a school leader. I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

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