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CLOSE OR BE CLOSED:

**TO WHAT EXTENT
CAN SCHOOL CLOSURES AND MERGERS
BE CONTESTED AND NEGOTIATED?**

Three New Zealand Case Studies:

Masterton District Network Review 2003

Makoura College Closure Crisis 2008

Bush District Community Initiated Education Plan 2009

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
In
Education
at Massey University, Palmerston North.

CLAIRE HILLS

2013

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Dedicated to

My parents Graeme and Grace Ayson who encouraged me from an early age to value education and lifelong learning

and

My late husband Peter who sowed the seeds of confronting the challenge of doctoral studies

and

our children: John, Sarah, Charlotte, Adrian, Georgina, Timothy, Frederick and Alexandra and their families whose encouragement has been so important to me in my journey towards a Ph.D.

CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

I certify that the thesis entitled *Close or be Closed: To What Extent Can School Closures and Mergers be Contested and Negotiated? Three New Zealand case studies: Masterton District Network Review 2003, Makoura College Closure Crisis 2008 and Bush District Community Initiated Education Plan 2009* and submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand, is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis (or any part of the same), has not been submitted for any other degree to any other university or institution.

Signed

Date

ABSTRACT

When faced with school closures and mergers stakeholders have a number of options: they can volunteer to close, they can seek a merger with a suitable partner, they can seek a stay of action by seeking more time, they can invest effort in negotiating an alternative outcome or they can resist closure by fighting to survive as a stand-alone school. Organised individual school and/or community protests are other options that may be used. This thesis explores the contestability of school closures and mergers in post *Tomorrow's Schools* rural New Zealand contexts in both the primary and secondary sectors. The three case studies selected are the Masterton District Network Review 2003, the Makoura College closure decision 2008 and the Bush District Initiated Education Plan 2009.

This thesis will show that the school closure/merger process can sometimes be successfully contested by politicised and determined educational communities. If and when the level of community concern reaches the level of community wide outrage, then politicians may decide to back down. In the Masterton District Review 2003 some schools were more successful than others in contesting mergers and closures. The reasons will be explored. Community resistance was crucial in overturning the Makoura College closure decision in 2008. The Community Initiated Education Plan policy trialled in the Bush District in 2009 resulted in a victory for the stakeholders throughout the region who actively contested the proposals and won.

The research literature in New Zealand, and overseas, shows that school closures and mergers can be expected to cause significant community culture shock. Stakeholders discover that they have a deep emotional attachment to their schools. They usually close ranks as its guardians to defend the Taonga (cultural treasure) and social capital that their school represents. In this process distinct patterns of response emerge. Anger and grief are expressed in on-going outbursts of emotive language. Parents assert their 'right' to choose the most suitable school for their child conferred by *Tomorrow's Schools* and demand clear and transparent communication from the Ministry of Education and to be fully consulted during the process. There is a clear pattern of communication breakdown between the Ministry and local stakeholders. This can be seen in community meetings, protest marches, petitions, contentious debates about transport issues, racism, white flight, demographics, economics, the virtues of smaller schools versus larger schools and the destruction of core communities. The conflict in values leads to community infighting and conflict between schools and with the Ministry and the Minister of Education. After school mergers, stakeholders face the often unwelcome task letting go of the past and engaging in the on-going challenge of creating a new culture where the unconscious taken for granted beliefs and values which had provided the cultural glue for the merging schools must be revisited until a new culture develops which is accepted by the new school community as appropriate to its needs. In the aftermath of school closures abandoned buildings, trapped in prolonged disposal processes, become environmental eyesores in their communities as they slowly succumb to vandalism and arson.

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I have been particularly fortunate to have had Professor Roger Openshaw and Professor Howard Lee as my supervisors. Their long standing reputation in educational research and supervising PhD students is recognised both in New Zealand and overseas. There is a great degree of complexity involved in doctoral supervision. It is perhaps best summed up in the term 'critical friends.' As my 'critical friends' Professor Openshaw and Professor Lee have found many different ways of encouraging me to dig deeper in the search for new understanding about the nature of school closures and mergers. For their unfailing support and their belief in me they have my deepest gratitude.

All researchers owe a huge debt to those who have gone before. The findings of New Zealand and overseas researchers, acknowledged in the bibliography, have provided very valuable insights into the complexities of the school closure and merger process for the communities involved both at the time and afterwards. I have regarded previous researchers as unseen friends on my own research journey.

The media has played a very important role in providing a record of how communities feel about school closures and mergers and how they are affected. Thank you to the *Wairarapa News*, *Wairarapa Times Age*, *Manawatu Standard*, *Dominion Post*, *Dannevirke News*, *Upper Hutt News* and *Bush Telegraph* for permission to use material from their coverage.

Thank you to over forty parents, teachers, principals and school ancillary staff involved in the Masterton District Review 2003 for their willingness to respond to my thesis survey. I thank Peter Nikolaison for permission to use a selection of his aerial photographs of Masterton schools. I am very grateful to Katherine Shaw, former member of the Aorangi School Board of Trustees in Christchurch for her hugely valuable insights into the issues facing her school and its stakeholders during its closure process and the Aorangi Judicial Review.

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Mangatainoka School, Kirsty Silvester, former Principal of Mangamaire Country School, Jo Emerson, former Principal of Hillcrest School, Jo Gibbs, Principal of Kumeroa Hopelands School, Lynne Huddleston, Principal of Pahiatua School, Vicki Maughan, Principal of Ballance School and Gerry McGirr, Principal of Woodville School.

Thank you to the members of the Senior Management Team and my professional colleagues at Chanel College who have encouraged me during my doctoral studies.

Last, but certainly not least, I thank my family and friends for their loving support and unfailing encouragement in my extra-mural studies which has always meant so much to me.

NOTES ON THE RESEARCHER

I was educated at state schools, Masterton Central School then Wairarapa College, itself the product of the contentious merger of Masterton Technical School and Wairarapa High School in 1938. I attended Victoria University 1962–1965. In 1966 I married Peter Hills, which was also my first year of teaching. Most of my teaching experience from 1967-1984 was part time except in two separate years when I had three children under the age of five. We were blessed with eight children, John, Sarah, Charlotte, Adrian, Georgina, Timothy, Frederick and Alexandra. I returned to full time secondary teaching in 1985.

Extramural study has long been a source of pleasure, professional development and personal growth. It has also proved very beneficial in providing me with a home based personal interest, which was very important given the size of our family. I commenced extra-mural at the Advanced Studies for Teachers Unit at the Wellington College of Education and Massey University to complete my BA and Diploma of Teaching. This was later followed by a Diploma of Second Language Teaching at Massey University. I completed the Master of Educational Administration degree at Massey University in 1999 and the Master of Educational Leadership degree at Australian Catholic University in 2005. I was accepted into the Ph.D in Education programme at Massey University in 2007.

My first piece of historical writing was as editor and compiler of '*Central School 1865–1990*'. I established the Chanel College archive and edited the annual Chanel College magazine for 10 years. I was also editor and compiler of '*The Story of Catholic Education in Wairarapa 1883–1995*,' written for the St Joseph's College Golden Jubilee. I have also contributed essays to *New Zealand Dictionary of Biography, volumes II and IV* on three Irish Catholic priests who made outstanding contributions to the development of the Catholic Church and Catholic education in the Wairarapa. Like many other New Zealanders I have enjoyed the challenge of engaging in family research: the Caradus and Carr family on my mother's side, the Ayson and Mackay families on my father's side and the Hills, Longuet, Burns and Pullar, families on my late husband's side.

After an initial teaching appointment in 1966 at Sacred Heart College in Island Bay, Wellington we moved to the Wairarapa in 1967 where I have been teaching ever since. I have had the opportunity to teach in five of the secondary schools in Masterton: St Bride's College, Solway College, Wairarapa College, St Matthew's College, and Chanel College where I have taught part time and full time since its establishment in 1978. My teaching experience has therefore included single sex and co-educational colleges, state, private and integrated schools. I am presently Senior Teacher, Principal's Nominee and Head of English/Drama at Chanel College. At various times I have also served as the staff representative on its Board of Governors and later, its Board of Trustees.

My interest in school closures and mergers and emerging understanding of their complexity and potential for leaving a toxic cultural legacy began in 1978 when, as teacher, parent and parishioner, I experienced the contentious merger of St Bride's College for girls and St Joseph's College for boys to form Chanel College. This merger later became the focus for my M Ed Admin thesis: *The amalgamation of secondary schools: a case study of amalgamation culture shock in a rural New Zealand Catholic community (1999)*. Following the passing of the Conditional Integration Act in 1975, twenty-six Catholic secondary schools experienced closures and mergers. Chanel College was the first Catholic secondary school in New Zealand that was co-educational from its beginning. The thesis examined the local stakeholder experience and compared it with the experience of the closures and mergers of Catholic secondary schools throughout New Zealand. Since this time I have taken a close personal interest in how school closures and mergers happen and how communities are affected.

This thesis examines school closure/merger issues within three case study contexts in both the primary and secondary schools in the state education sector. My experience of the Masterton District Network Review of 2003 and the Makoura College crisis of 2008 was as a member of the community in which they occurred. While there are many similarities to be observed in closure and merger processes in the primary and secondary sector there are also distinct differences that arise from the different educational contexts in which they occur.

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CHAPTER 1

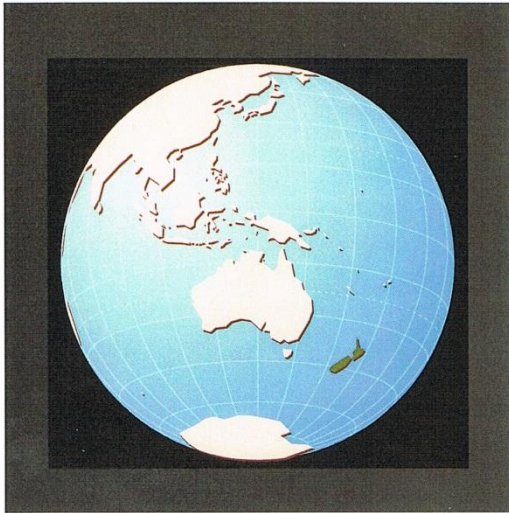
SCHOOL CLOSURES AND MERGERS: THE NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT

In the fifteen year period between 1990-2005, during the terms of both Labour and National led governments, 380 schools were closed in New Zealand. This thesis will examine how New Zealand rural schools and communities have experienced government policies which aim to consolidate schooling provision through school mergers and closures, why and how communities resist, and to what extent it is possible to contest and negotiate the outcomes. This question will be examined in three different contexts: the Masterton District Network Review of 2003, the attempted closure of Makoura College Masterton 2008 and the Bush District Community Initiated Education Plan 2009. This thesis will show that local communities, through the use of strategic thinking and by taking advantage of the context specific opportunities that exist, can successfully resist or modify decisions made centrally in Wellington. A further contention of this thesis is that, if and when the level of community concern reaches the level of community-wide outrage, then politicians may decide to back down.

There are many reasons why research into school closures and mergers has on-going societal relevance. Although they have been a part of New Zealand history since 'consolidation' began in the early twentieth century, there has been limited research into how they affect communities. The closure and merger of schools is a very significant issue for the community, particularly in small towns. In recent times, those involved in the politically contentious Educational Development Initiatives (EDIs), network reviews and Community Initiated Education Plans (CIEPs) have played a very important role in shaping the educational history of New Zealand in the biggest restructuring since *Tomorrow's Schools*.

Before examining some of the issues, we need to clarify some of the terms used in the merger and closure of schools. A 'merger' is the term used when two schools combine, the staff must apply for new positions and students transfer to one site, while 'closure' denotes the complete shutdown of a school and consequent job losses. The power to close or merge schools is given to the Minister of Education under the 1989 Education Act. The *Educational Development Initiative, Policy Framework; Redesigning Education at the Community Level*¹ published by the Ministry of Education in 2000, specified the restructuring options available to boards of trustees considering closure or merger. The framework included combining primary schools, combining secondary schools, combining intermediate and secondary schools to create year seven to thirteen schools, combining primary and intermediate schools or combining primary and secondary schools to form area schools.

An **area review** provides an opportunity for the community and the Ministry to look at the way schooling has been arranged in the past, and to reach a view of how the 'cluster' of schools might provide best quality education services for students into the future.²



3 location maps to show the location of New Zealand and the Wairarapa and Bush districts. Cartographic Art Company 2001

The opportunity to engage in an Educational Development Initiative and gain additional school funding, arises out of the school closure and merger process. The extra resources and funding support for the educational benefit of the students involved in the reorganisation of schools, available through memorandums of agreement to boards of trustees, is explained in the *Educational Institution Codebook*, revised edition, (2004).³

The term 'area review' was officially changed to a 'network review' from 2003–2004. In a 2003 media release⁴ prior to the Grey Valley Review, the Minister of Education, Trevor Mallard, explained the purpose of the EDI policy as the management of school closure and merger funding and defined a network review as:

...a process undertaken by the Ministry of Education and directed by the Education Minister. A review assesses the way education is currently being provided in a particular area and what reorganisation is needed to make sure a high quality of education can be provided for the next 10–15 years.⁵

The term 'network review' was also defined in the *Educational Institution Codebook*.⁶

A **Network Review** is the process used to determine and implement the schooling needs for a network of schools.

The consultation process undertaken for a Network Review includes those required for school **closures** and **mergers** under the 1989 Education Act.

All school **closures** are actioned under s154 of the 1989 Education Act. All **mergers** are actioned under s156a. In both cases some are voluntary (i.e. the BOT do not oppose it), some are forced. In a voluntary closure or merger, the school's BOT initiates the process by writing to the Minister indicating that they are seeking a closure/merger. In a forced closure there is consultation with the school BOT and the community. The Minister also writes to the school's BOT which then has 28 days to go back and argue their position.⁷

The Educational Review Office (ERO) conducted an evaluation of the cluster of schools which had experienced the 2001 Wainuiomata Network Review. In its June 2003 report⁸ it defined the objectives of the network review policy as follows:

- To improve or future proof the quality of educational provision;
- To create more viable professional communities of teachers;
- To create platforms for co-operation between schools;
- To involve communities in educational debate;
- To create certainty and stability in the medium and longer term; and
- To release resources for use within the sector.⁹

While the closure of 380 schools over a fifteen year period was a large number nation wide, in the communities in which they occurred, the decision to close or merge schools was a relatively rare and culturally significant event. The potential for political fallout was huge. Acutely aware of this, the Ministry of Education adopted the more inclusive term, 'Education Development Initiative,' put forward by the School Trustees Association, to denote educational restructuring achieved through school mergers and closures. The language that accompanies a process reveals the thinking behind it. The connotations of words such as 'development' and 'initiative' suggest that the outcomes of the process will be positive and progressive. Carefully chosen euphemisms such as these are used as tools to position stakeholders. They give no hint of the upheaval and cultural trauma that will be experienced by students, parents, principals, staff and the wider community as the process unfolds. School

mergers and closures cause educational earthquakes through disturbing and shifting core assumptions, beliefs and values about educational provision.

Social and educational needs change over time. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many children walked to the town school or rode on horseback over unsealed roads to one classroom country schools. Today most country roads are sealed and most students are transported to school by bus or car. The population decline in rural New Zealand and provincial towns and cities in recent years has produced a domino effect resulting in the loss of general practitioners, hospitals, pharmacies, railway stations, post offices, banks and freezing works. Despite the growing popularity of 'lifestyle' blocks, property amalgamation has been a growing trend over some decades, resulting in many farms growing larger for reasons of economic viability. In many rural communities, all that is left to hold small rural communities together is the school. The power of this social reality combined with the emotional attachment that communities have to their schools were clearly evident in the Community Initiated Education Plan in the Bush District in 2009.

Schools are not simply institutions or learning organisations. They are deeply embedded in a cultural context. When parents enrol their child in a school they are not just filling in forms required for administration purposes, they are choosing to walk through the gates of a particular school into an educational community. Parents cement the communal, cultural glue with their neighbourhood school over a period of time by their response to the many opportunities available to become involved in their child's education. This can be seen when parents become involved as school trustees or become members of the PTFA, participate in working bees, sell raffle tickets, coach sports teams, attend school sporting fixtures, assist with school camps and fund raising activities, respond to academic reports, discipline and pastoral issues, attend parent teacher interviews, camps, school productions, sports and cultural events, dances, balls and prize givings. If parents have more than one child, then their close association with a particular school extends over a greater period of time. The seven years students spend at primary schools and the five years at secondary schools play a very important role in shaping what sort of adult they will become and the choices they will have later in life.

It became increasingly clear as my research proceeded that, despite the market driven approach of *Tomorrow's Schools*, many stakeholders regard their school as a 'cultural taonga.' I have created this term to describe the depth of feeling that a community has for its schools. The connotations of the Te Reo word for 'treasure' are different from its English meaning. The *Collins English Dictionary* defines treasure as "wealth and riches, usually hoarded, especially in the form of money, precious metals or gems or a thing or a person that is highly valued." The meaning of the word 'taonga' in Te Reo, one of the official languages of New Zealand, is not blurred by the denotation of material riches and seems to me to more appropriately capture the deep emotional attachment to and the relationship of the person with the thing (the school) considered precious. I cannot find an equivalent term in the research literature which accurately captures this emotional connectedness that so many New Zealanders feel for their schools that is so strong that they are willing to fight to preserve them.

Each school develops a unique special character which evolves as a result of its location, purpose, values, challenges and achievements and the people who are part of its story. Schools embody the history, pride and aspirations of the

communities they serve. As the guardians of this 'treasure,' it is to be expected that they will rally to protect it if it is threatened. This concept has an added dimension in a rural region like the Wairarapa which is a relatively small, comparatively isolated community. The links between school and community, always close, strengthened further after *Tomorrow's Schools* introduced parental boards of trustees.

This thesis will also explore the culture shock associated with school closures and mergers, an area often overlooked or given less attention than it deserves. A major reason why closures and mergers cause so much cultural grief is because school communities do not wish to lose their special character and identity. Any threat of closure is seen as a direct threat to the local community itself. The more the educational culture of a school is valued, the more likely it is that its community will resist closure or merger. If a school is simply a learning organisation, rather than a community, why do people experience grief when it closes?

In the context of this thesis the term 'stakeholders' describes those with an obvious interest in Government policies to close and/or merge schools: the Government, the taxpayers, the Minister of Education, the Ministry of Education, the people contracted by the Ministry to administer the process, local government authorities, students, parents, teachers, ancillary staff and school trustees.

The triennial election of school boards of trustees has become New Zealand's largest democratic event. It is a sign of the times that in 2010 only three schools did not have the number of trustees required. For these three schools a commissioner was available. The changed mind sets about the power relationships between parents, schools and the Ministry have also affected the way in which the closure/merger process has developed. In an era of self-governing schools built on the notion of a partnership between the trustees and the Ministry of Education, it is no longer possible for the Ministry to act unilaterally in the matter of school closures and mergers. It is nevertheless ironic that a significant number of closures were caused as a result of parents exercising the freedom given to them by *Tomorrow's Schools* to remove their children from their neighbourhood school and enrol them in another school they preferred. As a result of these decisions the 'neighbourhood school' often found itself with empty classrooms while the preferred 'popular' schools needed more classroom space. It is also a paradox that at a time when the Ministry of Education has been trying to tighten its control over school closures and mergers that *Tomorrow's Schools* has provided parents the opportunity to resist and contest such decisions. These are further reasons why the choice theory underpinning the *Tomorrow's Schools* warrants closer examination.

Schools also represent significant social and cultural capital, particularly in rural areas where they are vital symbols of local community because they combine their educational function with a community social bonding function. It is often the case that different generations of a family have attended the same school. The depth of feeling becomes clear when a community is confronted with the closure of its much loved school. After the Masterton District Network Review draft report announced the closure of Miki Miki, a small, one teacher rural school over a hundred years old, Peter Teahan, Chairman of its board of trustees, leapt to its defence. He told a *Wairarapa Times Age* reporter:¹⁰

It's just devastating, but the board is committed to seeing the school remains open and plans to fight tooth and nail to see that it does... This report is affecting the children; we are a community in crisis. I can promise you there will be a bloody war if there are any talks of closure....¹¹

As Rosemary McLennan expressed it so succinctly in her editorial of February 4, 2004 in *Upper Hutt Leader*, “For most of us, the schools we attended are part of our heritage and identity.”¹² This is confirmed each year by the large numbers of New Zealanders who organise and attend school reunions. School is a place where we learn about ourselves and our relationship to others, our community and society. In his *Wairarapa Times Age* review of *1857–2007 Greytown School Celebrating 150 Years*,¹³ senior reporter Don Farmer commented:

Outside marriage and having a family, there is probably no greater bond in life than the friendships made and the moments shared with school mates. It is also true to say you really don't appreciate just how precious those days in the old school yard were until many years have passed and life has buffeted and battered you into realising the real value of those childhood years.¹⁴

At school reunions ex-students have opportunities to reconnect with their cultural roots, share history and core values, to rekindle relationships, to share food and good times, to reminisce, to recognise past achievements, to buy the reunion book and to express goodwill towards the school by making a donation towards a selected reunion project to benefit present day students.

Scandinavian researchers Egelund and Laustsen¹⁵ found the complex processes involved as school closures unfold encompass much more than economic rationalism based on demographic analysis linked to roll numbers, classroom and playground provision and how best to make efficient use of economic resources when roll numbers decline. Understanding the importance of the school as a community and how people feel about their schools is increasingly reflected in the work of overseas researchers. Gail Furman is an acknowledged expert in this area. In her introduction to *School as Community, From Promise to Practice*¹⁶ she writes:

Finally, I am convinced that ‘community’ is not another fad or ‘hot topic’ in education, rather, the interest in community is more like a sea change in how we think about schools and their place in society.¹⁷

A further rationale for research into school closures and mergers links to the ongoing need for communities to record and reflect on the significance of their shared experience. Many people involved in the network reviews no longer hold powerful positions in government, educational administration and school communities. Others have changed jobs or retired. If their understandings and experiences are not documented, analysed and remembered, there is a strong likelihood that they will be lost and mistakes repeated. For these reasons a survey of a selection of stakeholders involved in the Masterton District Review is included as part of this thesis.

The historical context of school closures and mergers in New Zealand includes the consolidation of schools in rural areas in the state sector (1924–1950), the radical restructuring of Catholic secondary schools following the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act of 1975, the EDIs introduced in 1991, followed by the school network reviews and more recently, the Community Initiated Education Plans. It is the third wave of school closures and mergers that provides the focus for this thesis. Apart from the name changes which attempted to neutralise the process, the context in which the third wave happened differed from the first two because it occurred after the restructuring of educational administration following *Tomorrow's Schools*. This policy, introduced by the fourth Labour Government, gave school communities the opportunity to contest the closure/merger process and to negotiate the outcomes, although this was not fully realised at the time. A five year moratorium on network

reviews was announced in February 2004. Soon after the new National led government was elected at the end of 2008 the moratorium was lifted. The threat of school closures once again hit the headlines in the rural districts of Kaikoura, Tararua and Murupara and in the city of Christchurch.

There is a possibility that findings of this thesis might assist Government policy makers in finding ways to reduce the trauma for the school communities, put in a situation, usually not of their choosing, where they must participate in a school closure or merger process. As one Masterton Board of Trustees Chairperson explained to me in the survey, "There was no policy or booklet on the process. We learnt the importance of each step as we went through it."¹⁸ The findings might also assist in convincing politicians and officials in the Ministry of Education that the critical importance of schools as social capital in rural communities is an essential factor to consider in the cost benefit analysis of school closures or mergers.

Schools do not exist in a social vacuum. Adams, Openshaw, Hamer et al. in *Education and Society in Aotearoa New Zealand*¹⁹ provide valuable insights from an interdisciplinary perspective into the nature and complexity of the social, historical and political context of education from which contemporary educational issues cannot be divorced. The social context of Masterton is distinctive in a number of ways that make it an excellent focus for a case study of the historical, geographic, social and cultural context in which closures and mergers occur. It is the main town in the marginal Wairarapa electorate, a large sprawling rural region in the bottom south east area of the North Island of New Zealand. It has a stable population and a close knit community where schools are deeply embedded in the culture of the educational communities they serve. A location map is provided on page 2.

TABLE 1

POPULATION STATISTICS FOR THE WAIRARAPA AND TARARUA EDUCATIONAL DISTRICTS.

Data Source: Statistics New Zealand, www.stats.govt.nz, accessed January 28, 2008.²⁰

| TOWNS & DISTRICTS | 1991 census | 1996 census | 2001 census | 2006 census | 5 year variance |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Woodville (Tararua District) | 1 653 | 1 569 | 1 479 | 1 398 | - 81 |
| Pahiatua (Tararua District) | 2 907 | 2 720 | 2 610 | 2 559 | - 51 |
| Eketahuna (Tararua District) | 714 | 642 | 579 | 456 | - 123 |
| Masterton District | 22 566 | 22 758 | 22 617 | 22 623 | + 6 |
| Carterton District | 6 867 | 6 813 | 4 001 | 4 122 | + 21 |
| South Wairarapa District | | | 8 742 | 8 892 | + 150 |
| Greytown | 2 004 | 1 944 | 1 998 | 2 001 | + 3 |
| Featherston | 2 634 | 2 427 | 2 325 | 2 340 | + 15 |
| Martinborough | 1 560 | 1 455 | 1 356 | 1 326 | - 30 |
| Total Population | 40 905 | 40 328 | 44 705 | 45 717 | |

Figures from the Ministry of Social Development in 2010 and 2012 show that one in ten people in Masterton are receiving a benefit, which is higher than the national average. Statistics New Zealand 2008 figures show that the Gross Domestic Product of the Wairarapa comes from primary industry: farming and forestry twenty-one per cent, manufacturing and building twenty-two per cent, business services twenty-three per cent, retail distribution nineteen per cent and social and recreational services fifteen per cent. In recent years, forestry, viticulture and winemaking have grown in significance nationally and internationally. Over 1000 people in the Wairarapa travel by train each day to work in Wellington and the Hutt Valley. In 2001 the median income in Masterton District was \$16,500 in comparison with \$18,500 for

New Zealand overall. The median wage of \$21,700 for people over sixteen compared with \$24,000 nationally, reflects the number of older people and those on benefits and low wages. Statistics New Zealand 2001 census figures, which are the nearest available to the 2003 Masterton District Network Review, show greater population variances in the northern Wairarapa towns in the Tararua District than in the towns and districts further south.

Masterton has experienced several contentious school closures and mergers. The merger of the Masterton Technical High School with the Masterton District High School resulting in the formation of the multi-course, co-educational Wairarapa College in 1938 was deeply divisive and the merger of St Bride's College with St Joseph's College to form Chanel College in 1978 left long term scars in the Catholic community.

It is a source of community pride that in a town of just over 23,000 people, Masterton offers a wide range of educational options from state secular to Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Montessori, Kohanaga Reo and Kura Kaupapa. The lively community interest in education is reflected in the frequent coverage of educational matters in the local media, particularly in *Wairarapa Times Age*, as can be seen in the bibliography. Masterton also has a long tradition of reflection and review about improving the quality of educational opportunities and facilities for its young people. Its schools have been blessed by community trusts with a long history as benefactors of education. Schools receive valuable annual support on a school roll basis from the Masterton Trust Lands Trust, established in 1871 to administer unclaimed lands and investments on behalf of the Masterton district and to use the proceeds for the educational, community and cultural benefit of its citizens. It supports major professional development programmes for early childhood, primary, intermediate and secondary teachers as well as providing grants to all schools for projects not covered by Ministry of Education funding. Its original 165 pound value has grown to an asset base of more than \$54 million. Its 2009 report²¹ recorded grants for education totalling \$1,070 183. Trust House Limited and the Trust House Charitable Trust (a controlled entity) are primarily involved in the hospitality industry, operating a number of community owned bars, restaurants, bottle stores, two hotels, three general community stores and a large rental housing portfolio in the Wairarapa and elsewhere. This community owned organisation also returns support to the community and enhances quality of life through distributing a significant portion of its profits to the communities it serves. In 2009 it made 412 donations to educational, sporting and cultural organisations amounting to \$3.239 million.

When a government decides to ration the provision of basic social services through various restructuring strategies, strong community resistance is to be expected. It is relevant to consider the resistance to health restructuring in the Wairarapa, and Masterton in particular at this point, because it illustrates key similarities and differences with Government restructuring in education.

Government decisions to restructure basic social services usually have an economic trigger. One can illustrate this by looking at what happened in the health sector, which in a number of ways has proved analogous to what has subsequently occurred in education. The first trigger for the restructuring of health was the 1984 financial crisis. The second trigger was the share market crash of 1987. These economic shocks had severe consequences for New Zealand's dependent economy. It is well documented that the day after the 1984 snap general election Treasury informed the incoming Labour Government led by David Lange that New

Zealand was on the verge of bankruptcy. When there is not enough money to go round, one option is a radical restructuring of the public sector. The Labour Government, and the National Government that followed, sought to make significant savings through reducing the number of public servants and radically restructuring local government, health and education. Agricultural subsidies were removed. An on-going series of measures saw a devaluation of the currency in 1984, the floating of the dollar, the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax in 1986, and increasing it to 12.5 per cent in 1989. Both state schools and public hospitals are hugely expensive in terms of taxpayer dollars. In the three years from 1987-1989 one change followed another. In 1987 new State Owned Enterprises (SOEs) replaced government trading departments. The 1988 State Sector Act restructured the management of the government sector. The Task Force to Review Educational Administration produced *Administering for Excellence* (April 1988), commonly known as 'the Picot Report',²² which was soon followed by *Tomorrow's Schools, The Reform of Education Administration in New Zealand*, August 1988,²³ which in turn, led to the Education Act 1989, resulting in a radically restructured Ministry of Education and self-governing schools. In December of the following year the Economic and Social Initiative began.

TABLE 2

GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING OF HEALTH PROVISION IN NEW ZEALAND.

(Data taken from (2002) *Sociology of Health in New Zealand*, by Kevin Dew and Allison Kirkman.²⁴

| | |
|------------|---|
| 1974 | ACC established: no fault compensation scheme for accidents. National Government offers subsidies to private hospitals which make them a viable alternative to public hospitals resulting in growth of a state supported private hospital system. |
| 1977 | All patients allocated a unique number, NMPI, (National Master Patient Index) which allows providers to monitor individual use of health provision. Information accessible to primary care providers. |
| 1984 | Financial crisis. New Zealand on verge of bankruptcy. |
| 1987 | Share Market Crash. |
| 1988 | Twenty-nine New Zealand hospital boards were replaced by 14 area health boards. Part prescription charges introduced. |
| 1990 | Economic and Social Initiative in Health (December) National Government increases part charges for prescription items. |
| 1992 | Pharmac established to decide which drugs the Government would subsidise. |
| 1993 | Restructuring of Health by National Government: Area Health Boards replaced by four Regional Health Authorities which controlled the Government money and decided who got it by purchasing services on the basis of contracts that could be contested and negotiated, and twenty-three Crown Health Enterprises (CHEs) formerly called hospitals, which became state owned service providers. Community Services Card introduced. Universal health services removed. Subsidies available to those on low incomes or with Community Services Card. Health becomes a marketable commodity as private health service providers encouraged to compete for health contracts with public health sector so health services could be delivered efficiently and fairly. GPs respond to 1993 reforms by closing individual practices and merging with others in medical clusters known as IPA's, Independent Practice Associations. This strengthens their capacity to negotiate with health funding authorities, RHAs. |
| 1995 | By 1995 fifty per cent of GPs belonged to an IPA (Malcolm & Powell et al 1999). |
| 1990s | Punitive rationing of hospital services by asset testing old people. If they had assets, e.g. a house, they would have to pay for their hospital services. Once they became asset stripped (impoverished) they would no longer have to pay. Old people were the only group in the public health system to be charged for hospital care and who generally had charges determined on the basis of their assets, not their income. |
| Late 1990s | The four RHAs became one health funding agency and CHEs became hospitals again. |
| 1996 | First coalition government elected by MMP system in 1996 abolished public hospital asset testing. Twenty-four maternity hospitals closed. |
| 1998 | Surgical rationing: Patients referred for surgery given a score based on their surgical and clinical need. Must reach a certain threshold to be booked for surgery. |
| 1999-2000 | Ministry of Health spends about \$6 billion on health and disability services. Labour led Government establishes twenty-one district health boards. Health Funding Agency abolished. |

After the reforms a business based culture developed in the state sector in which the service provided was seen as a marketable commodity rather than an essential social service. Education and health providers in the 1990s found themselves having to work with the articulate advocates of a philosophy that has been variously described as 'the new Right,' business driven market liberalism, managerialism or neo-liberalism. Once again the use of language influenced how a thing was perceived. In 1990s, health provision became referred to with words usually associated with 'business.' The description of a hospital as a Crown Health Enterprise is a case in point. Health budget administrators found that they had to spend large sums of money on contract negotiations, legal requirements and paper work, money that, some would argue, could have been better spent on patients, who, like parents in schools, had now become known as 'clients.'

Gauld²⁵ provides very valuable insights in his analysis of the divisive ideological and values driven debates which developed about how core social services should be provided in New Zealand and whether or not a business based paradigm based on choice is appropriate for core social services such as health and education. He describes the health reforms in 1990s as, "...one of the most radical health sector restructurings witnessed anywhere in the world,"²⁶ and that, "...no other comparable system has attained the degree of 'marketisation' reached in New Zealand,"²⁷ based on the belief that incentive based competition is intrinsically efficient and innovative.

Other researchers, such as Dew and Kirkman²⁸ and Duncan²⁹ also note that economic efficiency, public choice, utilitarianism and 'user pays' were the key ideas flowing into government policies. Duncan³⁰ provides a very useful definition of 'utilitarianism' to describe the nature of government policies relating to the restructuring of core social services such as health and education:

The utility of a good is 'measured' or judged by the satisfaction or value that the individual derives from using it. And we can only judge the utility of a good in relation to anyone's happiness or well-being if that person has had the liberty to choose that good over and above other goods. No one else can decide on your behalf what selection of goods will be best for your welfare.³¹

Duncan argues that the application of utilitarian principles of rational economic choice to public policy results in a mind-set that concludes that state monopolies in services such as health and education must be less effective economically, and less effective at satisfying the needs of consumers, than a free market, private enterprise and user pays approach.³² Such utilitarian thinking can be seen in *Tomorrow's Schools*, the policies for network reviews and CIEPs. The difference between education and health however, is that whereas under *Tomorrow's Schools* parents were given the option to choose a different school if not happy with the current one, ill health and accidents are not usually a matter of choice and are often a life and death issue.

Wairarapa people have long had a raw nerve about social justice issues related to the Government provision of transport, police, health and education services to the region. The following examples are especially relevant to this thesis because they show that when the dissatisfaction levels reach a certain threshold, a community can be organised to contest the Government restructuring of essential social services and succeed in achieving some of their key objectives. In 1920, led by leading businessman and community stalwart C. E. Daniell, 327 people travelled to Wellington and marched on parliament to protest against the Government's inaction

over better rail access. Following several other protest trips to Wellington a new deviation was installed.

Community protest action occurred again in 1988 to demonstrate support for those who deliver essential social services. On April 8, 3000 citizens rallied in a protest march to support the police after growing tensions between the police and Maori gangs in 1986 and 1987 resulted in a police dog being shot, a police car and garage being blown up, a Molotov cocktail thrown at a policeman's home and arson attacks on the police station and police homes.

The largest protest demonstration in the history of the Wairarapa was the famous 1991 'Hands Around Our Hospitals' campaign against Government proposals to restructure health services. On December 24, 1990, thirty-four Wairarapa doctors paid for a full page advertisement in *Wairarapa Times Age*, to warn the people of the Wairarapa of the gravest health crisis they had ever had to face and that they needed to act immediately: "The death of Wairarapa hospitals could mean the death of you or your family."³³ Soon afterwards Masterton businessman, Garry Daniell, used his January 1991 Mitre 10 newsletter to propose a 'Hands Around Our Hospitals' campaign to save Masterton and Greytown hospitals from threatened closure. He and co-organiser George Groombridge invited concerned citizens to join hands around either Greytown or Masterton Hospitals. It was an idea whose time had come.³⁴ Local businesses closed early. By 5.30pm 6,000 people had gathered at Greytown Hospital and 16,000 people, three quarters of the Masterton population, turned up to protest against the closure of their hospital. I was one of them. No event in Masterton before or since has attracted so many people and united them in a common cause. When the ambulance siren sounded we stood side by side and held hands in a protective cordon round the hospital buildings while the Masterton District Brass Band played rousing music. The cordon was reported to be eight deep around the front of the hospital and five deep round the back. The sound system on the top of the three storey building allowed us all to hear the rallying words of George Groombridge, "If this hospital dies so might you!" Other community leaders spoke. The crowd responded with chanting and cheers. Finally everybody sang the national anthem as two helicopters with reporters, photographers and a TV camera man hovered overhead to provide widespread media coverage.³⁵ On February 26, 1991, over 2000 people travelled to Wellington on fifteen buses and nine train carriages or by car to present to parliament a petition signed by 22,332 people.³⁶ In May 1991 it was announced that Masterton Hospital would remain relatively untouched.

These protests are well remembered. When Makoura College was threatened with closure seventeen years later, Tere Torea, one of Masterton's Pasifika leaders, advocated that the community should take similar protest action. Many of the respondents to the survey in conjunction with this thesis remembered the 1991 hospital protest or knew about it, even if they were not living in Masterton at the time. In 2011 the local media published reports and photographs of Garry Daniell and George Groombridge, the protest leaders, to remind the community that twenty years had passed since this successful community protest action.

In 1993, just over two years after the "Hands Around our Hospital" campaign, Jenny Shipley, Minister of Health in the National Government, introduced policies which restructured health provision. New Zealand was divided up into four Regional Health Authorities (RHAs) which were funded by central government and given the authority to purchase health services. The RHA directors were politically appointed by the

government. The twenty-three hospitals, described as state owned service providers, became known as Crown Health Enterprises (CHEs). The Ministers of the Crown became referred to as shareholding Ministers. Politically unpopular partial health charges were introduced. George Groombridge was a leading organiser of the “Don’t Pay Twice Campaign” of civil disobedience.³⁷ Masterton nurses refused to collect the user pay part charges, believing them to be unethical.³⁸ Although in the year ended June 30, 1995 Wairarapa Health collected \$104,050, it spent \$76,480 in its attempts to do so.

The RHA hired the town hall on August 8, 1995 to announce that the Wairarapa Crown Health Enterprise would be discontinuing continuing hospital care and intermittent care services at Masterton and reducing continuing care at Greytown to thirteen beds. The decision that access to services by alternative providers was to be means tested was hugely unpopular. The first protest meeting on August 21, 1995 in the Betts Room organised by Garry Daniell and George Groombridge, veterans from the 1991 campaign, was filled to capacity with 200–300 people. Citizens demanded answers about their downgraded health services from the RHA, local doctors and their MP, Wyatt Creech. Mr Creech was unable to attend citing prior commitments. A steering committee was chosen to report back to a second protest meeting at a time when Wyatt Creech could attend. The second protest meeting on September 15 at Masterton’s War Memorial Stadium was attended by 1200 people. Buses were organised to transport people from the South Wairarapa. Dr Aage Terpstra’s address reflected the frustration of the doctors:

The anger that I feel is compounded and brought into sharp focus by the fact that the RHA did not have the guts to front up before you today – that they had the gall to suggest that they should run your meeting. This illustrates what you are dealing with. The reason they are not here is because they are scared of facing the truth and scared of facing you and what your protest stands for. You are not a bunch of rebels to be feared – you are ordinary fair minded people wanting a fair go and wanting to express how you value your health services. I believe that most of you, the public, are being kept totally in the dark about what is happening by stealth in your health service.³⁹

A no confidence vote in the health restructuring policies of the National Government was passed unanimously.

Access to health services can be a life and death issue. The National Coalition for Public Health revealed there were 85,000 on surgical waiting lists nationwide. When it was announced in October 1995 that seventy-nine jobs would go from Masterton Hospital, the lack of consultation incensed the community. There were large public meetings and a rally at the park. The *Wairarapa Times Age* picked up the community pulse and offered advertising support for the first meeting. The advertising for the second meeting organised for September 15 was supported by forty-two local businesses with Grey Power taking out separate advertisements. Cathy Casey petitioned the Chief Ombudsman to release the names of the members of the Central RHA. On November 15, forty-one local doctors joined together to make a public protest in a full page advertisement in *Wairarapa Times Age*⁴⁰ about the activities of the Crown Health Enterprise, the deterioration in the quantity of services available and the time it took to access services in a clinically safe time frame. This advertisement is relevant to this thesis because it provides an example of how a group of professional people, whose job it is to provide an essential public service, when pushed to extremes, were prepared to go public with their issues. (Visible public and professional protest was also a feature of the Bush District CIEP in 2009.) Many people voiced their protest through talk back radio. Thousands of

people signed a petition and trainloads of protesters once again travelled to Wellington on November 21, 1995 to march to parliament and present it.

Several responses from a small part of the thesis survey offer valuable insights into how Government restructuring in Health was perceived by the community. The nature of the survey will be explained in the methodology. When asked in Question 41 to describe any similarities between the government policies to restructure health by closing or merging hospitals and the government policies in education to close or merge schools, some respondents saw clear differences, but most saw no similarities at all. However two respondents saw clear similarities:

Yes. Cost cutting. The government has still won on the hospital as they downsized it to a point that it can't cope with winter admissions.⁴¹

Equally arbitrary and ill conceived. If anything engenders long felt acrimony in a community it is ill conceived education and health reforms for bottom line reasons only.⁴²

Other respondents pointed out that hospitals had a tactical advantage because since the threatened closure of the hospital was a life and death issue, it was easier for the community to unite to save it and harder for the government to ignore. Another respondent identified a distinct difference:

Different because there was ONE hospital and the community supported it. In the school rationalisation it was really school against school, school community against school community and MoE worked this to their advantage.⁴³

The 'bigger is better argument,' one of the justifications for school mergers, was also promoted in the health sector. Some government officials argued for the creation of so called 'super hospitals' and the rationalisation and downgrading of hospital facilities in rural areas. In retrospect, the objectives of the Government to rationalise and reduce the infrastructure involved in health provision for the Wairarapa were partially achieved. The three general hospitals at Pahiatua, Masterton and Greytown were closed and replaced with a regional Wairarapa Hospital with the only maternity unit in the valley in 2006. The maternity hospitals of Pahiatua, Eketahuna, Carterton Greytown and Martinborough were redeveloped to provide various modes of care for the elderly.

Just as the years of restructuring represented in Table 2 changed the context in which decisions about health were made, educational restructuring changed the context in which decisions about school closures and mergers were made. The radical restructuring of education has often co-incided with a change of government. The chronological organisation of the data in Table 3 provides an opportunity to review the details, to capture the time relationship of significant events and to remember that the order in which things happen is not necessarily the way in which they are experienced. While an important development might begin in a particular year, its impact on education is on-going and often one development overlaps another. Before one change can be securely culturally embedded there is another significant change knocking on the door waiting to be introduced. Educational leadership and management are dynamic in both theory and practice. The schools that were confronting the radical restructuring of education through school closures and mergers were also surrounded by this wider culture of rapid, radical on-going restructuring in every major area of education. This intensified the stress experienced, often resulting in 'change fatigue.'

TABLE 3

**SUMMARY TABLE OF GOVERNMENT RESTRUCTURING OF EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND
1988 – 2010.**

| DATE | EVENT |
|--------|---|
| 1984 | Maori Education Development Conference at Turangawaewae Marae addressed issues related to teaching and preserving Te Reo Maori. |
| 1984 | The Curriculum Review – two years of community consultation - Russell Marshall, Minister of Education. |
| 1987 | Prime Minister, David Lange becomes Minister of Education. |
| 1988 | The Taskforce to Review Educational Administration produces its report <i>Administering for Excellence</i> , known as ‘the Picot Report,’ April 1988. |
| | White Paper, “ <i>Tomorrow’s Schools</i> ”: <i>The Reform of Education Administration in New Zealand</i> , August 1988. Prime Minister and Minister of Education, David Lange./ |
| 1989 | 25 May <i>Tomorrow’s Schools</i> inaugurated. The Education Act restructures schooling in NZ: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Education replaced by Ministry of Education • 10 regional education boards for primary schools and three regional offices for secondary schools dissolved • Inspectorate replaced by Education Review office • Large scale job restructuring and redundancies • Introduction of self-managing schools • Boards of Governors replaced by Boards of Trustees • The reason for school closures and mergers defined. • Phil Goff becomes Minister of Education. |
| 1990 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kura Kaupapa Maori begin. • School zoning removed. Parental choice introduced. • Cabinet minute 14/12/1990CAB(90)M45/4 directs the Ministry of Education in consultation with the Treasury and the State Services Commission to report and review by February/March 1991. • The formula for schools’ operational grants. • The bulk funding of teachers’ salaries. • The economic and educational viability of small schools. • The provisions protecting surplus teachers. • The SSC’s role in wage bargaining in the education sector. • The teacher pupil ratio. |
| 1990 | Publication of <i>Report of the Economic and Educational Viability of Small Schools Review</i> The EDI guidelines published in <i>the Education Gazette</i> . Development of the EDI process begins. Kura Kaupapa (Maori language immersion schools) begin. Dr Lockwood Smith becomes Minister of Education after November elections. |
| 1990’s | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The attempts by the so called ‘New Right’ to introduce the bulk funding of schools. • Review of Special Education Service. • Review of the Teacher Registration Board. • Review of the Education Review office. |
| 1991 | Education Amendment Act 1991 allowing schools to introduce enrolment schemes removes zoning. Educational Development Initiative guidelines published in November in an effort to rationalise the provision of education. Financial incentives offered. |
| 1993 | <i>Moving On, Education Development Initiatives</i> video from Ministry of Education. New Zealand’s National Educational Monitoring Project begins. Task to assess and report on the achievement of New Zealand primary school children in all areas of the school curriculum. |
| 1994 | <i>Education Gazette</i> , March 29, 1994, publication of “Education Development Initiative, Policy Framework, Redesigning Education at the Community Level” and introduction of the ‘area review’ approach. |
| 1995 | Ministry of Education introduced a socio-economic indicator for schools generating a 1–10 decile ranking derived from census data. |
| 1996 | Wyatt Creech appointed as Minister of Education. |

| | |
|------|---|
| 1997 | 15 schools closed. |
| 1998 | The code for school closures revised in October by the Ministry of Education 6 schools closed. |
| 1999 | The code for closures in the tertiary sector revised in May 1999. 35 schools closed. Wainuiomata area review begins as first formalised network review. |
| 2000 | Publication of <i>Educational Development Initiative Policy Framework: Redesigning Education at a Community Level</i> . By the Ministry of Education. The Network Review process begins. 5 Year Property (5YP) Programme Guidelines introduced. 24 schools close. Education Amendment Act requires all schools with enrolment schemes to specify a home zone and reinstates a ballot for selection of students outside the home zone. |
| 2001 | Introduction of the Network Reviews by Labour Government, Trevor Mallard, Minister of Education, 31 schools close. NCEA arrives, the biggest change in national educational assessment for a generation. |
| 2002 | EDI policy developed further, 21 schools close. |
| 2003 | MoE July 1, 15 schools close 2002-2003: 12 state and 2 integrated primary school closures and closure of 1 integrated secondary school. ERO evaluates Wainuiomata Network Review. Masterton and District Schools Review of Schooling Provisions Final Report published. |
| 2003 | Government funded Secondary Futures Project to explore future of secondary schooling established led by 4 guardians: Bernice Mene, Professor Mason Durie, Gillian Heald and Ian Taylor. |
| 2004 | MoE July 1, 2003–2004 reports 62 schools closed: 57 state schools closed, 36 as a result of mergers; 1 integrated and 4 private schools closed. Overall net decrease of 46 in number of schools. February 2004 Minister of Education, Hon. Trevor Mallard, announces a moratorium on Network Reviews for 5 years except for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about educational quality at a school (e.g. from ERO report). • Two or more schools request to be reviewed with the aim of strengthening the quality of education provided to students. • Where schools apply for a change in their structure. October 2004 Educational Institution Codebook (revised edition) published by Ministry of Education clarifies legal basis for school mergers and closures. National Education Monitoring Project <i>Reading and Speaking Assessment results 2004</i> published. |
| 2005 | Result of 135 schools reviewed in Northland, Auckland, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, Manawatu, Wellington, Greymouth, South Canterbury and Southland: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 63 schools closed • 35 schools 'closed' but then merged with one or two others • 14 voluntary closures state schools • 8 voluntary closures private schools • 1 voluntary closure of state integrated school • 3 forced state school closures School Trustees Association commissions Harris research which examines voluntary restructuring 1994–2000. |
| 2007 | 'super school' proposal for Hutt Valley Schools. REAP programme downsizing. Publication of Cycle 3 of the National Education Monitoring Project: 1995–1996: Listening and Viewing, Writing and Health and Physical Education. Three cycles of ongoing testing and assessment analysis in the core curriculum areas have produced 41 major reports so far. New Curriculum document published. |
| 2008 | Professional Development begins for the New Curriculum. |
| 2009 | Planning for implementation of the New Curriculum. Newly elected National Government introduces national standards in literacy and numeracy. Introduction of Community Initiated Education Plans. |
| 2010 | New Curriculum implemented in schools. Mandatory literacy and numeracy standards introduced in primary schools. |
| 2011 | Realignment of achievement standards on the National Qualifications Framework. |

| | |
|------|---|
| | 700 primary principals formally object to the mandatory literacy and numeracy standards at their annual conference. |
| 2012 | Review of Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975. |

A further important point to bear in mind when considering community reactions to school mergers and closures is that since the 1980s New Zealanders have been engaged in a wide ranging debate about how public education should be provided in a modern society. This debate was embedded in a wider ideological tug of war about economic management. Distilled to its essence it reflects a debate between a social democratic state based on egalitarianism, equity, economic rationalism and the collective or public good (usually associated with the Labour Party) versus a state based on personal liberty, self-reliance, user pays and free choice within a competitive environment ruled by market forces (usually associated with the National Party). These ideas are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but they do involve deciding which is more important in any given context.

The Report of the Taskforce to Review Education Administration, *Administering for Excellence: Effective Administration in Education*,⁴⁴ often referred to as the Picot Report, which led to *Tomorrow's Schools*⁴⁵ and then the 1989 Education Act, are particularly relevant to this thesis. Codd⁴⁶ and Wylie⁴⁷ point out that *Tomorrow's Schools* introduced the most radical restructuring of the New Zealand school system in one hundred years. The heavily centralised system of educational administration prior to *Tomorrow's Schools*, was decentralised by the Education Act 1989 and through the introduction of locally funded, self-managing schools governed by elected boards of trustees. The decentralisation of authority was reflected in the individual charter documents which all schools were required to construct and sign, which emphasised and formalised the nature of the partnership between the Ministry of Education and individual schools.

The change in the balance of power can be seen in changed school relationships. The Board of Trustees governs the school through its authority to establish and monitor the implementation of policy, and where necessary, to revise it. Within the school there is a clear distinction between governance and management. The Senior Management Team manages the day to day operations of the school and is accountable to the board for this task. Since the staff became employees of the board, the boards have become not only the employers, but also the gatekeepers to professional promotion. The Principal is employed on a contractual basis. For teachers seeking professional promotion the decision of the elected trustees from the school community is now decisive. Once this became experienced, PICOT became a popular acronym for 'Parents In Charge Of Teachers,' because many teachers had the feeling that 'Jack was as good as his master.' When the National Government proposed that the payment of teachers' salaries be transferred from central government to the boards of trustees, there was huge dissension within the teaching unions, between schools and between teachers and boards of trustees leading to industrial unrest. The only protection that teachers had left was their professional unions, NZEI and PPTA.

The Educational Review Office has the authority to determine whether or not the governance of the boards of elected trustees is stable, effective and compliant. In small schools, where it is more difficult to secure trustees with a range of the appropriate skills, the legislative requirements have sometimes proved much harder to achieve. Witten et al.⁴⁸ remind us, that although *Tomorrow's Schools* aimed to

produce self-governing schools, the Government still had a number of devices which enabled it to maintain power and control:

The new regulatory apparatus in state schooling is centred on four models of control – funding (fiscal restraint), the market (parental choice), the non-discretionary elements of school charters (the contract, complemented by audits) and the responsabilised community (the board of trustees and the discretionary elements of the charter)⁴⁹

Once parents became trustees in school governance however, they became used to having a say in what was happening in the school their child attended and expected to be consulted about what was happening. This was particularly so if the matter for consideration was the closure of their school or its merger with another.

Since *Tomorrow's Schools* an educational culture has developed which prioritises efficiency and accountability audited by a culture of compliance. School wide compliance is achieved through the triennial audit visits of the Educational Review Office (ERO). Curriculum leaders in schools must report to the Board of Trustees. The Teacher Registration Board has become the professional gatekeeper. In order to gain and maintain compulsory teacher registration a set of standards has to be met and maintained by each teacher applicant. This includes compulsory and regular appraisal. In the secondary sector, the culture of compliance in assessment by the national standards setting body, the New Zealand Qualifications Authority, is achieved by requiring schools, as educational providers and assessors, to have extensive quality assessment management systems which are checked through triennial audit visits. Mandatory literacy and numeracy standards for primary schools were introduced in 2010.

The public choice policies introduced after *Tomorrow's Schools* had a serious impact on the rolls and ultimately the viability of many schools. After the zoning policy for neighbourhood schools was lifted in 1991 by Education Minister, Dr Lockwood Smith, education became a marketable commodity and schools had to compete for students and market their 'product.' Parents and students became referred to as 'clients' and 'consumers.' Advertising what the school had to offer, producing a prospectus and organising open days to persuade parents to enrol their children became the norm. If schools did not meet parental expectations, then criticism was no longer directed at the Ministry of Education, but rather the local board of trustees. Dissatisfied parents could choose to move their child to another school. Many chose this option. Fisk⁵⁰ clarifies the underlying ideology:

The overall concept of an elected Board of Trustees springs from the commercial model of a Board of Directors with a vested interest in the success of the enterprise. Because Brian Picot, the architect of *Administering for Excellence*, was a businessman, it should not be surprising that the plan he drew for the administration of schools was a commercial design, rather than a communitarian one. The overall idea of accountability through competition arises from the concept of profit/loss in the market place.⁵¹

It is ironic that the Government believed that the subjection of schools to market forces and the removal of zoning would increase parental choice. Unlike the free market where choice is available but purchase is optional, education is a service which must be chosen because it is compulsory. Carrie Beaven⁵² is one of many researchers who show that the laws of supply and demand were disturbed after the implementation of *Tomorrow's Schools* leading to instability in rolls and staffing. While some parents had increased choice, many had less, Maori and Pasifika parents in particular. Beaven found that no decile 1-4 school in the Wellington region had enrolment schemes in place. The removal of zoning meant schools could no

longer plan for a future based on reasonably stable rolls. The Ministry of Education reported in *New Zealand Schools 98*⁵³ that over half low-decile secondary schools had lost more than ten per cent of their students since 1993.

Curriculum provision is an ever present issue for school governance and management. The on-going impact of the technological revolution creates huge pressures on schools to increase the range of curriculum resources at both primary and secondary schools. While the development of personal computer products and the establishment of the internet have provided huge educational opportunities, opportunities come with a cost. If boards of trustees are to provide the computer technology required to access increasingly sophisticated electronic information sources, they are faced with an on-going financial burden. Students in high decile schools are more likely have more advantages in this area than low decile schools. Schools have inescapable operational running costs. In the competition for scarce curriculum resources, small might be beautiful, but the Ministry viewpoint is that 'small' has become too expensive. On a cost per student basis, stakeholders in the 2003 Masterton Network Review were reminded that 1998 Ministry of Education figures showed the national average for primary schools was \$3,280 per student but in the small school of Boddytown, it was \$5,800 per student. For any, or all of these reasons, bigger can be argued as better.

TABLE 4

COMPARISONS OF SMALL SCHOOL SIZES IN NEW ZEALAND.

Table 5 compiled from data in *Rural schools and Government policy*.⁵⁴

| School Type | School Size | Large urban location | Small urban and rural areas |
|----------------------------|----------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| All schools | < 100 students | 24% | 76% |
| Area Schools | < 250 students | 42% | 58% |
| Form 1–7 secondary schools | < 250 students | 73% | 27% |

While it is usually accepted that educational restructuring has a clear economic rationale, the cases which provide the foci of this thesis, were much more complex. Whether it was Dr Lockwood Smith, Wyatt Creech or Anne Tolley, Ministers of Education in National led Governments, or Trevor Mallard, Minister of Education in a Labour led Government, EDI proposals, network reviews and CIEPs were based on the premise that, for whatever reasons, "The status quo is not an option."

A hundred EDI projects were completed between the introduction of the EDI policy in 1991 and September 30, 1999. In 2003 the Ministry of Education explained in *Rural Schools and Government Policy*⁵⁵ that it expected to involve 100 schools per year in network reviews in the medium term. Possibly twenty-five per cent would close.

It is important to examine the validity of the demographic rationale used for network reviews because the statistical predictions made by the Ministry resulted in many communities losing their neighbourhood school. Figures provided in the annual editions of *New Zealand in Profile*⁵⁶ from Statistics New Zealand show a net gain in population in the five years from 2003–2008 and also from 2004-2009. The following tables explore the demographic trends nationally and in the regions. For reference purposes, the Masterton District Network Review began in 2003.

TABLE 5

Components of New Zealand Population Change 2003-2008.

Data extracted from Statistics New Zealand, *New Zealand in Profile June 30 2009*.⁵⁷

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| Natural Increase | | + 158, 000 |
| Live Births | + 299, 000 | |
| Deaths | -141, 000 | |
| Net Migration | | + 56, 100 |
| Arrivals | + 411, 400 | |
| Departures | - 335, 300 | |

TABLE 6

Components of New Zealand Population Change 2004-2009.

Data extracted from Statistics New Zealand, *New Zealand in Profile June 30 2010*.⁵⁸

| | | |
|-------------------------|------------|------------|
| Natural Increase | | + 163, 100 |
| Live Births | + 305, 000 | |
| Deaths | - 141, 800 | |
| Net Migration | | + 46, 100 |
| Arrivals | + 415, 400 | |
| Departures | - 368, 800 | |

TABLE 7

New Zealand Population Statistics: Actual and Predicted Data 1998–2019.

Extracted from *New Zealand in Profile*, Statistics New Zealand 2009 and 2010.⁵⁹

| Year | Numbers | Year | Numbers |
|------------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| 1998 | 3, 815, 000 | 1999 | 3, 835, 100 |
| 2008 | 4, 268, 000 | 2009 | 4, 315, 800 |
| 2018 (projected) | 4, 663, 000 | 2019 (projected) | 4, 744, 600 |

The demographic trends in New Zealand are reflected in other developed countries with whom we are closely associated such as Australia, United Kingdom and USA where school mergers and closures are also a vexatious political issue.

TABLE 8

SELECTED INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS IN POPULATION STATISTICS.

Sources: OECD; United Nations; Labour Force Statistics 1985 – 2005.⁶⁰

| | Unit | Most common date | N Z | Australia | U K | USA |
|--------------------------------------|----------|------------------|------|-----------|-------|---------|
| Total population (est.) | Millions | 2004-06 | 4.14 | 20.11 | 59.78 | 293 .66 |
| Average rate of change of population | % | 2000-04 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 0.4 | 1 .0 |
| Population % under 15 years | % | 2000 | 21 | 21 | 19 | 21 |

TABLE 9

REASONS FOR SCHOOL CLOSURES.

Ministry of Education tables (2005).⁶¹

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| Integration agreement cancelled | 8 |
| Deregistered | 3 |
| Closed (Voluntarily) | 26 |
| Merged | 8 |
| Merged (Voluntarily) | 37 |

Table 10, compiled from larger population forecast tables available from the Ministry of Education website, provides more specific regional data about declining school rolls for comparative purposes.

TABLE 10

CHANGES IN REGIONAL SCHOOL ROLLS IN NEW ZEALAND 2002–2004.

<http://educationcounts.edcentre.govt.nz/themes/schooling/school-roll-summary-report>,
retrieved June 30, 2007.⁶²

| Region (listed from north to south) | % change in school rolls 2003–2004 | % change in school rolls 2002–2003 |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Northland | 0.3% | 0.8% |
| Auckland | 0.6% | 3.8% |
| Waikato | 0.7%p | 1.6% |
| Bay of Plenty | 1.3% | 2.2% |
| Gisborne | -0.1% | 0.2% |
| Hawke's Bay | -0.5% | 0.8% |
| Taranaki | -1.0% | 0.0% |
| Manawatu/Wanganui | -1.6% | -0.3% |
| Wellington | 0.3% | 1.3% |
| Nelson/Marlborough/Tasman | -0.7% | 0.5% |
| West Coast | 0.1% | -1.1% |
| Canterbury | 0.9% | 2.2% |
| Otago | -0.4% | 1.0% |
| Southland | -1.4% | -0.2% |

Table 11 shows the demographic predictions which explain why most school reviews occurred in small town and rural New Zealand.

TABLE 11

POPULATION FORECAST TABLES OF SCHOOLS NEEDED IN RURAL NZ.
Compiled from Ministry of Education tables 2005.⁶³

| DISTRICT | 2012 | 2025 |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|
| Horowhenua | - 25% | - 31% |
| Manawatu | - 19% | - 24% |
| New Plymouth | - 25% | - 36% |
| Palmerston North City | - 9% | - 11% |
| South Taranaki | - 28% | - 42% |
| South Wairarapa | - 25% | - 36% |
| Stratford District | - 26% | - 38% |
| Wanganui District | - 24% | - 32% |

By international standards, most New Zealand schools are small. Although the Ministry of Education predicted in 2003 that the primary school population would decline to an estimated 418,000 in 2020, Table 12 shows a significant increase from 1998–2005.

TABLE 12

FORMAL ENROLMENTS IN EDUCATION IN NEW ZEALAND.

Central Districts Future of Rural Schooling Demographics and Future Thinking
the Ministry of Education website.⁶⁴

| SECTOR | 1998 | 2000 | 2003 | 2005 |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Years 1 – 8 (primary) | 448, 085 | 484, 161 | 456, 782 | 485, 124 |
| Years 9 – 13 (secondary) | 274, 523 | 245, 528 | 302, 368 | 277, 666 |
| Tertiary | 337, 004 | 333,000 | 251, 100 | 504, 434 |

The population figures over a twenty year period published in the annual *New Zealand in Profile* documents from Statistics New Zealand, in 2009 and 2010⁶⁵ do not agree with the earlier Ministry predictions of population decline. From 1998–2008, the total number of births was ten per cent higher than the average for the previous decade of 58,300 births. In the year ending in June 2007 the New Zealand birth rate rose to 61,610, up 3,360, or 5.8 per cent on the previous year and the highest it had been since the early 1972 when 64,510 babies were born. This resulted in a natural increase of 33,150 in the number of births over deaths. The trend continued in 2008 when 64,340 births were registered, 2,730 more than the previous year. In its *New Zealand by the Numbers* series of articles published in the *Dominion Post* (June 2–7 2007)⁶⁶ Statistics New Zealand reported that New Zealand's population grew faster between 2001 and 2006 than in any five year period in the previous thirty years. However the spread of the increase was uneven and New Zealand would barely be growing if it were not for immigrants, who were most likely to settle in Auckland and least likely to settle in Southland. The population of the South Island has continued to decline, while the population north of the Bombay Hills has continued to increase. Given that where New Zealanders choose to live is a 'dynamic' factor, the population data available from Statistics New Zealand shows that the significant drop in student numbers predicted at the time of the network reviews is no longer happening. The widespread availability of reliable contraception has resulted in a dramatic decline in family size. The fertility rate shifted from 3.8 in 1960–65 to 1.95 in 1995–2000. In the same time frame net inward migration was 5,000 per annum. The median age shifted from 33 to 35.9 between 1996 and 2006. The Ministry used a declining school age population and surplus classroom space as key arguments to justify closure and merger proposals. It claimed that since the primary age population in New Zealand would decline to an estimated 418,000 in 2020, the need for classroom space would decrease, particularly in rural regions such as the Wairarapa and Tararua districts.

In October 2003, at the time of the network reviews, Trevor Mallard told David Fischer from the *Sunday Star Times*:⁶⁷

We will have 70,000 fewer primary pupils in 15 years – and simple maths says there will be too many schools. You are talking about 200-300 schools {closing}. I don't think it would be unreasonable to expect 300 over a 10 year period...If you wanted to save them," Mallard says, "you'd be encouraging parents to have babies."⁶⁸

As it happened official encouragement was not required. New Zealand's increasing birth rate was the focus for "A bit of a bump" by Kimberley Rothwell, in a feature article for 'Your Weekend',⁶⁹ a supplement of the *Dominion Post*. After investigating the serious shortage of midwives and day care centre places in New Zealand and estimating that 2012 would be the year that the baby blip children would start school she wrote:

Until last year, education officials expected roll numbers to fall 35,000 pupils by 2026 but now expect to see 70,000 more pupils in classrooms over the next 15 years.⁷⁰

These statistics contradict the predictions of Trevor Mallard and his officials in 2003. While deputy secretary for schooling at the Ministry of Education, Anne Jackson, assured Rothwell that the Ministry had a range of policies to cope with the extra staff, classrooms and equipment required for the increase in student numbers expected by 2012, it is pertinent to remember that many perfectly good classrooms and school facilities lost in the network reviews might have been used for some of these extra students for whom taxpayers must now fund new classroom accommodation.

Table 13 shows that school closures became an increasingly significant issue for New Zealand schools 1997-2005. When the moratorium on school network reviews was announced in 2004, some schools were already engaged in network reviews.

TABLE 13

DATA ON SCHOOL CLOSURES
Ministry of Education tables 2005.⁷¹

| YEAR | NUMBER OF SCHOOL CLOSURES |
|------|---|
| 1997 | 15 |
| 1998 | 16 |
| 1999 | 35 |
| 2000 | 24 the year that Mesopotamia School closed |
| 2001 | 31 the year of the 'Wainuiomata' review |
| 2002 | 21 |
| 2003 | 15 the year of the Masterton District Review |
| 2004 | 62 |
| 2005 | 67 Northland, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, Manawatu, Wellington, Greymouth, South Canterbury, Southland |

Table 14 is useful in illustrating the patterns and geography of closure after the announcement of the moratorium. In New Zealand, as also overseas, educational restructuring through school mergers and closures, has continued to affect the rural towns and districts in particular.

TABLE 14

SCHOOL CLOSURES AND MERGERS BY REGION: 2005.⁷²

| REGION | NUMBER REVIEWED | CLOSED | SCHOOLS REMAINING |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------|-------------------|
| Northland | 15 | 6 | 9 |
| Auckland | 1 | 1 | - |
| Hawke's Bay | 22 | 10 | 12 |
| Taranaki | 19 | 11 | 8 |
| Manawatu | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Wellington | 8 | 3 | 5 |
| Greymouth | 12 | 7 | 5 |
| South Canterbury` | 28 | 11 | 17 |
| Southland | 25 | 13 | 12 |
| TOTALS | 132 | 63 | 69 |

Twenty years after the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools*, the Chief Executive Officer of the New Zealand Catholic Education Office, Pat Lynch, reflected on its significance in *Lighting New Fires*,⁷³ the newsletter for integrated schools:

The self-managing school model was regarded as something of a revolution, since no other nation had been bold enough to do what the Lange Government inaugurated....While economic philosophies were part of the 1989 initiative, the active involvement of parents in the education process of their children was of greater significance. Teachers and parents working together was the genius of the reform....the self-managing school model has enabled a mosaic of diversity to evolve as local communities have put their own stamp on the education they provide for their young people.⁷⁴

In the Masterton District Review and the Bush District CIEP it became clear that educational communities placed a high value on the 'mosaic of diversity' that became possible after *Tomorrow's Schools*.

When the Masterton District Network Review began, most of the people deciding the outcomes had received the benefit of being educated in a New Zealand society strongly influenced by educational values which originated in the 1877 Education Act. One of its core values was that the provision of education by the state should be based on the socially democratic notions of social equity and social justice. Although it did not satisfy everybody, for over 100 years this Act had provided an educational system which produced a large degree of social cohesion because it was seen as being socially diverse and inclusive and perceived to be fundamentally fair. A free education was valued as a public good, provided by the state, to which all might have access. However the politics of social equity was giving way to the politics of “choice.” *Tomorrow’s Schools* was the turning point. Codd and Openshaw⁷⁵ describe this transition and distil the ideological essence of the conflict between the politics of social equity and the politics of choice in their contribution to *Education and Society in New Zealand*.

The beliefs the stakeholders have about their educational communities affect the way they respond to school closures and mergers. Some stakeholders believe that education is a public good, a social and professional service that they have a right to expect as New Zealand citizens. Others prefer to see education as a saleable commodity subject to the laws of supply and demand. Politicians find themselves assaulted with angry electors from all sides. Labour’s Paul Swain said that the Wainuiomata EDIs had been the most difficult issue he had encountered in his thirteen years as an electorate M.P. Teachers find themselves at the cutting edge of a highly stressful process not of their choosing with a strong possibility that it will have a significant effect on their careers. Principals do not have job protection. The aftermath of the process is a strategic management minefield. Peter Debney, retiring principal of Masterton’s newly merged Lakeview School, told the *Wairarapa Times Age* in 2006⁷⁶ that the EDI experience was the most stressful experience he had had in his forty-one year teaching career. The high stress levels experienced by the stakeholders in school merger and closure processes was confirmed by the overwhelming majority of the responses to the survey associated with this thesis.

Educationalists find themselves embroiled in debates about the relative merits of large versus small schools and whether or not school size affects student achievement. The goal of the National Educational Monitoring Project (NEMP), which began in 1993, was to obtain ‘a detailed national picture of the educational achievements and attitudes of New Zealand primary and intermediate school children at Years 4 and 8 and to provide high quality information to help inform policy making in the area of student achievement.’⁷⁷ This report provides a rich source of data about student achievement tested in fifteen curriculum subjects including reading, language, mathematics, music art and physical education over a period of time. The results, reported in 2002 and 2004, the same time as the network reviews were being undertaken, make a significant contribution to this debate because of the 144 schools participating, ninety per cent had a roll of less than 140.

School type (full primary or intermediate), school size, community size and geographic zone did not seem to be important factors predicting achievement in the reading and speaking tasks. The same was true in the 2000 and 1996 assessments.⁷⁸

The supporters of smaller schools felt vindicated by these results and were pleased to learn, usually through the media, that when the data for students in Years 4-8 was analysed, students in small schools performed as well as if not better than students in larger schools.

Ninety per cent of schools with rolls of fewer than fifty were rural schools. In *Rural Schools and Government Policy*,⁷⁹ Ministry of Education representative, Martin Connelly, confirmed that the NEMP showed few differences between large, medium or small schools and few differences related to community size or location. Rural Year 8 students scored lowest in two out of thirty-five tasks. If these figures are valid, then whatever the arguments are for closing or merging small schools, poor student achievement is not one of them. Although ERO research⁸⁰ has confirmed that with its population of over 4,000,000 New Zealand is one of the few Western educational systems in which small primary schools form the majority, there was a developing official preference for larger schools. Karen Sewell explained this preference in a 2003 interview with Michelle Quirke of *Dominion Post*.⁸¹

The ERO's chief review officer, Karen Sewell, says its work shows schools with fewer than 100 pupils are more "fragile" in terms of keeping good teachers and good governance. Larger schools can offer a wider range of opportunities and benefit from economies of scale as more teachers can work together and support each other in developing programmes.⁸²

The rationale for school closures and mergers was 'a sustainable future' based on a blend of political, economic, social and educational arguments and fiscal efficiency. High school maintenance costs and unused classrooms are not a prudent use of scarce educational resources or taxpayer dollars.

While some might argue that the 'power' exercised by trustees is largely illusory, one of the significant political outcomes of self-managing schools has been the increasing politicisation of education which can be seen at board of trustees level, in the local media, in e mails and on internet sites and willingness to engage in protest action against school closures and mergers. As a result, educational issues in the localities can easily assume national significance and be monitored by an international audience.

The children whose educational futures were being decided in the network reviews were a generation whose educational experiences were shaped by philosophies which viewed parents as 'consumers' in the free market education policies associated with *Tomorrow's Schools*. After 1988 the core value of individual choice became more important than the core value of equity and the collective good. Many of the conflicts that occurred in the Masterton District Review were connected to the debate about the core values of equity versus choice. The reason why this ideological conflict about the provision of education can be seen as a moral issue on which a community should have reason to reflect, is clearly and succinctly expressed by researchers Adams and Openshaw et al:⁸³

In education, political power is also about the distribution of life chances. Education is about identity and aspirations. It is about who we are and what we want to become.⁸⁴

As the evidence provided in this chapter clearly demonstrates, educational restructuring occurs within an historical context. The elected trustees, principals, staff and community leaders who were faced with the decision making about school closures and mergers in the network reviews were the products of a pre *Tomorrow's Schools* educational system which had equity as a core value. The children whose future they were deciding were receiving their schooling in a system which had shifted to having freedom of choice as a core value. The outcome of school closures and mergers usually removes freedom of choice from many stakeholders. To what

extent was it possible for educational communities faced with a network review to resist and contest this restriction of freedom?

In his 1998 *Listener* article "Close or be Closed"⁸⁵ Bruce Ansley alerted readers to the increasing social significance of EDIs, drew attention to the fact that eighty-five schools had closed and claimed that once a school was selected for closure by the Ministry of Education the outcome was inevitable because the power in the matter resided with the Minister. Ansley claimed that schools selected for an Educational Development Initiative were:

Like the lame duck of the regiment they are given a loaded pistol and left alone in the study. It is plain to the smallest community that when push soon turns to shove: if they don't decide to close and merge with another school, the Minister of Education will.⁸⁶

This claim raises the question which is the main focus of this thesis: to what extent can school closure and merger decisions be contested?

CHAPTER 2

SCHOOL CLOSURES AND MERGERS :

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM EXISTING RESEARCH?

The first thing any scholar discovers when researching this topic is that the existing literature on school closures and mergers in the New Zealand context is useful but not extensive. Furthermore it seems to cut across several bodies of scholarly literature: that on systemic change, school consolidation, specific historical or sociological studies and commissioned reports. Navigating a pathway through the literature is complicated because no one single body of literature forms an adequate basis for research of this kind. Literature, as it is commonly understood in a research context, denotes a body of literature about a particular literary genre, culture or specialist subject area recognised by scholars as an excellent exemplar of its type. If we restrict ourselves to this definition then valuable sources of research data directly relevant to this thesis would be excluded from critical consideration. Under the heading of “The Literature Review” I have reviewed valuable research data available from diverse sources: scholarly research, stakeholder theory, opinion pieces, commissioned research reports, two judicial reviews and the contribution made by media. Each of these sources has earned its right to be included given that it meets the definition of literature when considered as printed material giving a particular type of information.

Media coverage during the network review process provides a rich mine of information about the way in which communities and schools were responding to change as it happened. Newspapers have the permanency of print. They respond to matters of public concern, often concentrating on isolated images or ‘human interest’ angles, so in this respect they need to be treated with some caution by the researcher. However, since they are in the public domain they may be challenged and their content is open to dispute. Print media coverage can also be very valuable in recording the range of discourses which emerge about how education should be provided within the community. Local events are usually not reported on national television. The official point of view on any subject can become blurred so the media can play an important role in clarifying the debate for the community affected. Those who are committed to managing the implementation of change do not have an obvious interest in promoting the views of those who oppose it. The media can therefore also provide an opportunity for the community to attend to the voices of those who oppose the proposed changes and their reasons for doing so. While there is a risk that media information might be incorrect or biased, it is also true that the immediacy of the response and the frequency of the coverage allow us to appreciate the way a thing was perceived by those who experienced it at the time. Many newspaper readers have had personal or family connections with the schools affected. In this context each school is a micro community.

In *Mass Media and Society*¹ edited by Curran and Gurevitch, a range of contributors address the complexity of different issues related to the influence of the mass media and society. Whose perspective do we receive? How does the target audience affect the content? Some critics claim that journalists socially construct reality and that the news is what journalists make it. How is the news content affected by corporate competitors? Michael Schudson² in his chapter *Four Approaches to the Sociology of the News*, provides a particularly useful clarification of the relationship between journalists and the news they report and reminds us that reporters do not create events and they do not decide the way things happen, but they do report them when they happen:

It is simply not true that social, cultural, economic and political factors separately or together can explain why the news is the way it is. Social, cultural, economic and political sources do in fact structure news production. But they do not produce news out of nothing....The something they work on are events, happenings and occurrences in the world that impress journalists and their audiences with their importance or interest, their remarkableness, their newsworthiness. The forces of journalism act on these things but do not (necessarily) produce them.³

One of the roles of the media is to observe, record and sometimes attempt to interpret the social, political and cultural context in which internally generated and externally imposed change occurs within a community. One of the factors which must be taken into account is that the way the media interprets events can alter attitudes and perceptions both by what is included and what is left out. What is emphasised or overlooked may be deliberate or unintentional. While it can be argued that reporters can act as gatekeepers by deciding what gets published and what does not, that criticism could be made about editors and news organisations as well. Reporters are sometimes called 'newshounds.' Schudson⁴ provides a useful reflection about what constitutes the news:

Gaye Tuchman's observation on American journalists parallels Hall's on the British when she writes that '... 'news judgement' is the sacred knowledge, the secret ability of the newsman which differentiates him from other people... Getting an analytical grip on this sacred knowledge is difficult. The cultural knowledge that constitutes 'news judgement' is too complex and too implicit to label simply 'ideology' or the 'common sense' of a hegemonic system. News judgement is not so unified, intentional and functional a system as these terms suggest.⁵

For each case study in this thesis media coverage enabled a range of discourses to emerge within the community about how education should be provided.

The key New Zealand research on school closures and mergers includes official literature and academic literature, each written with different purposes and different audiences in mind. The significant research reviewed in this thesis consists of one policy, one book, six theses, two judicial reviews, three geographic studies and eight reports. I have presented the research findings in chronological order to show a clear link to the historical and educational contexts on which they are based and also to link them to the research objectives of this thesis.

The Consolidation of Rural Schools by George W. Parkyn⁶ deserves particular attention for its historical insights into school closures and mergers in New Zealand as well as the parallels that can be drawn with the issues that arose in the case studies in this thesis. Parkyn aimed, "...to find, sift and weigh up the evidence bearing on claims made in favour of consolidating or retaining small rural schools."⁷ He found that the most important single factor in the decline of small rural schools

was the consolidation policy applied from 1925-1950. When it was introduced, New Zealand's population was almost two million and it was not uncommon for one teacher to teach up to fifty students. Table 15 shows a rapid expansion of consolidation by 1938 and the halting of consolidation because of war time from 1942. The intention of consolidation was to save money, to give country children better schools and to provide wider opportunities by giving them access to educational facilities equal to those in the towns.

TABLE 15

HISTORY OF CONSOLIDATION IN NEW ZEALAND ACCORDING TO PARKYN.

Table based on data from Parkyn.⁸

| DATE | EVENT |
|------|--|
| 1877 | Education Act; 730 public primary schools. 420 (fifty-eight per cent) had only one teacher. 150 (twenty per cent) had only one teacher. Seventy-one per cent of schools, providing for almost fifty per cent of pupils, were one and two teacher schools. |
| 1878 | Ministry of Education takes control of education from provincial education boards. |
| 1889 | Wanganui Education Board reports unsuccessful attempt 'with a view to economy as well as increased efficiency in the teaching staff,' to amalgamate some of the small schools near Wanganui p 5. |
| 1896 | Otago Education Board transports pupils to Tapanui from Dalvey to avoid building school. |
| 1900 | Over 1,700 primary schools 1,040 (sixty-one per cent) had one teacher; 370 (twenty-two per cent) had two. |
| 1904 | Wellington inspectors Flemming and Blakewell first to refer to overseas consolidation practice, particularly in parts of USA and Victoria. |
| 1907 | North Canterbury inspectors advocate centralisation in their district. |
| 1912 | Cohen Commission hears much evidence in favour of consolidation and little against it. Report strongly recommends consolidation. Refers to Wisconsin report. |
| | For next twelve years consolidation appears in inspector reports and Education Department statements. |
| 1924 | Minister of Education C.J. Parr, 'this year a definite application of the policy has been made in Otorahanga (by conveying children to an existing school.) |
| 1925 | Piopio first to operate as a specifically established consolidated school. Consolidation becomes policy. Except for Depression years consolidation process applied all over NZ. |
| 1927 | 2,601 primary schools, 1,550 (sixty per cent) one teacher, 560 (twenty-one per cent) two teacher. Eighty-one per cent of the schools enrolled thirty per cent of 210,000 children. |
| 1938 | Labour Government elected 1935. Rapid expansion of consolidation, by 1938 7,500 children affected. |
| 1942 | Consolidation stops due to shortages arising from war conditions. |
| 1946 | After the war further proposals for consolidation began to be made countered by a considerable body of opinion which doubted whether consolidation was the best way of achieving the Education Department's aim of giving 'to every country child educational facilities as nearly as possible equal to those open to the city child, whilst still providing for rural areas a type of education that fits children for happy and useful life in the country.' |
| 1950 | Consolidation policies result in 693 less schools and 540 fewer teachers. 1,908 schools remain, with 6,320 teachers, compared with 2,601 schools with 7,860 teachers in 1927. |

Parkyn understood the complexity of the closure/merger process at a deeper level and the significance of the community within which educational change happens and from which it cannot be divorced:

The research could therefore not be confined simply and solely to classroom instruction, nor yet even to the immediate influence of the school on the child socially and emotionally as well as scholastically. It was equally necessary to examine the effect of the school on the community in which it exists and the effect that this in turn has on the children.⁹

In addition to analysing the arguments for and against consolidation, Parkyn alerts future researchers to the dangers of making invalid comparisons with the

consolidation policies in the United States and Australia given New Zealand's different size, population, history and social composition. He also reminds us that the way language is used can not only position the 'audience', but also confuse the process:

What is meant by 'consolidation' in New Zealand, then, is really only a measure of centralisation of rural primary schools without any change in the basic financial and administrative responsibilities of the education authorities. Much confusion of thought would have been saved if the word consolidation had never replaced the earlier term centralisation in the educational literature of New Zealand.¹⁰

Part of the theoretical debate associated with school closures and mergers involves arguing the relative virtues of small schools as opposed to larger schools. In New Zealand the most common form of schooling is the small school with less than 150 students. As we have already seen, at the time of the network reviews the Ministry of Education argued that 'bigger was better.' Similar arguments were used in support consolidation. Parkyn concluded¹¹ that children in small medium sized schools (three-six teachers and up to, say, one hundred and ninety pupils) were better off. He acknowledged that in larger schools students had access to wider opportunities in music and by virtue of numbers, larger schools also had the opportunity to organise classes into straight, streamed or composite groups and place students into whichever option it deemed best. Larger schools also had the opportunity to offer broader study options and the beneficial outcomes for social development brought about by having larger numbers of children gathered together.

However, Parkyn also found¹² that the large schools would need to have many times the space, materials and equipment than even the best of them had, before their pupils could get anything like the freedom of access to them that is found in the smaller schools. In some cases the outcome was worse than the problem it was intended to solve, thereby providing justification to reverse the consolidation decision. Sometimes population growth results in a roll increase at a school which then has more students on a site never intended to cope with a roll that size and does not have the necessary funding and resources to cope. A case in point is Otorohanga High School, developed after the closure of five small country schools. By 1952 it had a roll larger than the town in which it was located.

Education officials believed that although transport costs would be increased, maintenance, cleaning and building costs for a single large school would be lower than many scattered small schools, because economies of scale would apply to resourcing and the salary costs would be reduced as fewer teachers would be needed to teach the same number of children. However Parkyn shows that there are costs over and above the Ministry of Education estimates and too many variables in different districts and changing circumstances over time to produce precise figures. Official reports indicated that

...the total expenditure by the state appeared to be greater as a result of consolidation... an exact figure cannot in fact be obtained... State expenditure, moreover is not the same thing as the total cost of a service to the community.¹³

Promises made by education officials are not always promises kept. Parkyn noted that at the 1946 annual meeting of the New Zealand Educational Institute G D Warring moved that consolidation should be investigated because:

In many areas (parents) have been deceived into believing that their children would receive

better equipment, better accommodation....Building is hopelessly inadequate, playing space is deplorably small.¹⁴

Fifty years later the same sorts of issues were debated during the network reviews and continued to be issues afterwards. A significant difference was that whereas the consolidation policy mainly resulted in the closing of one teacher schools in rural areas, the network reviews from 1991–2004 included not only rural schools but many schools in urban areas as well.

A series of official reports commissioned by the Ministry of Education from 1991-1995 earn their place in this literature review because they disclose how the New Zealand and overseas research was influencing the policies developed by the officials in the Ministry of Education so soon after *Tomorrow's Schools*. *The Report of the Economic and Educational Viability of Small Schools Review* of 1992¹⁵ provides valuable insights about government thinking in relation to small schools and the response of the rural sector. This report resulted from a National Government Cabinet decision in December 1990¹⁶ in which the Ministry, in consultation with the Treasury and the State Services Commission, was directed to review and report on

- * the formula for schools' operational grants
- * bulk funding of teachers' salaries
- * the economic and educational viability of small schools
- * the provisions protecting surplus teachers
- * the State Service's Commission's role in wage bargaining in the education sector
- * the teacher pupil ratio.

The urgency of the situation is reflected in the unrealistically tight time frame within which the reviewers had to work, beginning in the school holidays (January 14, 1991) when organising meetings of teachers and parents was obviously going to be a difficult issue. The close off date was March 31. Virtually all of the 1,800 submissions from every province in New Zealand, opposed the closing of small schools, objected to the haste of the review and believed it to be a cost cutting exercise which ignored important educational factors. The most common complaint (twenty-six per cent of the submissions) related to the lack of teacher, parent and trustee representation on the review group. Respondents claimed that the lack of consultation contradicted the philosophy of partnership, consultation and choice introduced by *Tomorrow's Schools*. Such responses show that parents were starting to flex their political muscles:

We consider it wrong that the review team contains no representation of parents and teachers or their respective education organisations. This makes a mockery of the provisions of *'Tomorrow's Schools'* philosophy which was meant to give parents and communities a say in the decisions necessary to run our schools.¹⁷

The 1991 report recorded the same sort of issues that emerged in the Bush District CIEP in 2009. Forty-eight per cent confirmed the pivotal role of the school in providing the 'social cement' that keeps rural communities together and provided evidence of the efforts communities invest to support their schools.

It is the only thing our small community has to put their combined energy into outside our busy lives and to lose it would be like losing the heart of our valley where we live.¹⁸

Over the years many thousands of locally raised money and many thousands of hours of voluntary labour have gone into making our school what it is today.¹⁹

Respondents explained how rural school closures affect land values, prospective farm purchasers, labour recruitment, local morale and the local economy. It seemed then that the Ministry recognised that beyond their educational function, country schools represent essential social capital in the communities they serve, however by the time of the Bush District CIEP 2009 they seem to have forgotten this lesson about what constitutes the difference between ‘a reasonable quality of life and social subsistence’ as far as people who live in the country are concerned. In the introduction to *the Report of the Economic and Educational Viability of Small Schools*²⁰ the researchers found, (like Parkyn)²¹ that:

The overall impression from the submissions is that money allocated to purchase education for children in small rural schools in fact buys much more. In some districts it may also be ensuring a stable local economy, holding together the social infrastructure, and generally making the difference between a reasonable quality of life and economic and social subsistence.²²

Although the reviewers warn that detailed analysis of the staffing and roll structures of a school would be needed before the total salary bill could be used for any valid comparative purpose, the following table, compiled from the figures provided in Appendix CC of the report, is nevertheless very useful in showing that while smaller schools cost much more to fund than larger schools there is not a huge funding difference per student when a comparison is made between schools of 76-100 and schools of over 100 students.

TABLE 16

PRIMARY SCHOOLS: AVERAGE FUNDING PER PUPIL(1).

Introduction, “Report of the Economic and Educational Viability of Small Schools 1991 Review.”²³

| ROLL SIZE | AVERAGE FUNDING |
|---|-----------------|
| Under 21 | \$ 9500 |
| 22–50 | \$ 3900 |
| 51–75 | \$ 3000 |
| 76–100 | \$ 2600 |
| Over 100 | \$ 2500 |
| (1) Teacher Salaries Grant plus Operating Grant | |

The 1991 Educational Development Initiative policy²⁴ aimed to enable schools to deliver improved curriculum opportunities, to reflect the preferences of the community as shifts in population size and distribution occurred and to use education resources more effectively to improve educational provision. Between 1990 and 2002, 236 New Zealand schools were closed during the terms of both Labour and National Governments. Part of the rationale used to justify the closure of smaller schools continued to be that larger schools were more cost effective and provided improved curriculum opportunities for students. This fuelled the small schools versus larger schools debate.

The Ministry of Education commissioned David Stewart from the Educational Research and Development Centre at Massey University to research how the EDI policy was working. His three part report: *Education Development Initiative Evaluation Final Report*, Part 1, March 1992,²⁵ Part 2, August 1992,²⁶ and Part 3, February 1994,²⁷ provides important insights into the early stages of the EDI policy. Stewart found that the EDI worked well in contexts where the consolidation was voluntary and stakeholders were able to reach a consensus about the outcomes, however three of the four communities he researched were unable to resolve the difficulties that arose, so the proposed mergers did not happen:

The EDI process does not seem to be delivering a change which has wide community support, except in small rural areas where the major focus is consolidation.²⁸

Only in Southland was a merger concluded which provides process data linked to this thesis. When threatened with closure or merger one option is to co-operate and try to gain the best deal possible. Four small schools, Quarry Hills, Otara, Fortrose and Tokanui, amalgamated on the Tokanui site from 1993. Respondents believed some sort of school consolidation seemed inevitable and would result in an enhanced curriculum for their children, so it made sense to participate in the process and work to achieve the best outcomes possible. As a result of this approach the new school gained widespread acceptance. A fifth school, Waimahaka, had earlier decided that it no longer wished to be part of the EDI.

Stewart points out that since education is recognised as a public good there needs to be full participation in deciding how it should be distributed. He found that small districts overcome the difficulty of defining who the stakeholders are by including all who reside in the locality. This was also the case in the Bush District CIEP. The Southland stakeholders made a point of including all householders in their telephone networks. Overall Stewart concluded²⁹ (as have later researchers) that inclusivity and willingness to engage in the change process must be the first priority in an EDI:

...procedures need to be developed that allow all who wish to take part to do so, within a manageable format. Those who will be responsible for implementing any change need to be involved at every stage of the process. Agreement on, and an acceptance of, the need to change...is a condition that must be met as a first priority.³⁰

Stewart understands the critical importance of core values for stakeholders who are confronted with educational change:

The question of *core values* lies at the centre of the debate about how to effect change across school boundaries....Individual school discussions are a precursor to the wider across school discussions. Discussion about core values does not necessarily establish any commitment to a particular set.³¹

The *Review of Education Development Initiatives, a report prepared for the Ministry of Education*,³² by Dr Ruth Houghton examined how the basic principles of EDIs were being applied. Of the twenty-four EDI agreements signed off between January 1992 and August 1994, twenty-one resulted in the mergers of small rural schools with other local schools. Houghton interviewed principals, trustees, parents and children from four closed schools and five continuing schools in a variety of New Zealand locations to determine the impact of EDIs on children in relation to their social development, curriculum provision and educational changes within the school in order to gauge what impact the changes had had on the local communities. In the 'Executive Summary' of her report to the Ministry of Education she concluded:

...once an EDI was developed, there was goodwill for all parties for the negotiations and completion of the transfer of pupils, educational resources and buildings to the receiving schools.³³

In *Ten Years On: How Schools View Educational Reform*, Cathy Wylie³⁴ used the results of a national survey to provide a comprehensive analysis of the impact of *Tomorrow's Schools* on primary and intermediate schools. The results showed that in the ordinary course of events it was the resourcing issues of funding and property

that remained the two issues on which boards of trustees spent most of their time. Wylie also found that few schools showed any interest in merging with other schools.

TABLE 17
SCHOOLS SHOWING INTEREST IN MERGING WITH ANOTHER SCHOOL.
from Wylie, *Ten Years On*.³⁵

| Interest | Principals not interested = 262 % | Trustees N = 376 % |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Interested | 8 | 6 |
| Depends on funding | 7 | 8 |
| Not interested | 69 | 69 |
| Not sure | 10 | 12 |

The Education Act allows a board to take responsibility for four schools. Both Stewart³⁶ and Wylie³⁷ found that amalgamation did not appeal to principals of rural and small schools and that clusters appealed only if schools could maintain their own identity and governance structures. Wylie provides survey evidence to show³⁸ that given the distances between most rural schools, shared governance could create practical issues.

My 1999 thesis, *The Amalgamation of Secondary Schools*,³⁹ was based on a cluster of twenty-six closures and mergers in the New Zealand Catholic secondary school sector in 1970s and 1980s. The major focus was the culture shock experienced by the Masterton Catholic community when St Bride's College and St Joseph's College amalgamated to form Chanel College, the first Catholic college in New Zealand designed to be a co-educational college from its establishment in 1978. During this research I explored the process and consultation issues associated with school closures and mergers and the cultural effect of the three major paradigm shifts which had added to the complexity of this cluster of mergers. Catholic schools changed from being classified as independent private schools to being classified as state integrated schools, a third changed from being single sex schools to co-educational schools and within a few years after the mergers most of the colleges had a predominantly lay staff instead of staff mainly coming from the various founding religious orders. During the course of this research I also made comparisons with a school merger in the state secondary sector when Masterton Technical School amalgamated with Wairarapa High School to form Wairarapa College in 1938.

Taylor Baines and Associates provide the only New Zealand report about school closures/mergers commissioned by a local body that I could find. Their research, *Review of Timaru Schools Network: Scoping assessment of social and community impacts for Timaru District Rural Schools*,⁴⁰ was precipitated by the proposed closure of eleven out of its fourteen rural primary schools in 2003. The researchers condemn the Timaru Schools Network Review decisions as 'essentially irreversible actions' and an extreme case of "silo thinking." They express the same objections to the review which keep on being picked up in research elsewhere: inappropriate and/or inaccurate population projections by the Ministry of Education, lack of recognition for the non-educational functions of schools in their communities, unrealistic consultation timeframes and dissatisfaction with a process which was perceived as creating winners, losers and community divisiveness.

Witten et al. researchers from the Department of Geography and the Alcohol and Public Health Research Unit at Auckland University examined the far reaching

effects of school closures and mergers on the wider community. In their series of interview based narratives in 2001⁴¹ and 2002⁴² in Invercargill and in South Taranaki in 2008⁴³ they found that some of the significant negative outcomes of school network reviews were often overlooked, such as their socio-economic impact and the loss of social cohesion and social wellbeing:

We propose that beyond their educational function, schools can serve as catalysts for community participation, social cohesion and the vitality of neighbourhoods.⁴⁴

They define social cohesion as, “the extent of connectedness within a community, and transcends individual experiences of social ties and support.” The researchers analyse how schools play an important role as community institutions through their provision of informal meeting places outside of home and work, where social relationships can be formed and maintained which develop a common experience of place and a sense of belonging to a particular community. They point out the irony that Ministry policies can contradict researched evidence:

Tacit acknowledgement that schools may have a wider community role is evident in the following quote from an Educational Review Office report: “There may be other ways of contributing to social cohesion which are more effective than the provision of local schools.”
... For our informants, there appeared to be no substitute for the local school. Their subjective community voice, however, held no sway against the state’s position which was based on fiscal and spatial efficiency and the acquisitive individual.⁴⁵

It also seemed to the respondents that the parameters for consultation determined by the Ministry excluded matters of importance to the parents such as accumulated community goodwill and assets, the school community as a meeting place, natural community boundaries and choice and diversity. Ambiguity arising from different agendas and moving goalposts also caused conflict. This was expressed as the need for clear closure guidelines to remove ambiguity, distrust between the community and the MOE officials and resistance and protest.

Social cohesion is strengthened through the community goodwill accumulated over a number of generations. The closure of Surrey Park Primary School, Invercargill was justified with the familiar rationale that surplus classroom space at the school meant that students could be accommodated in schools elsewhere and demographic analysis which showed that there would be an on-going school age population decline in the Surrey Park zone. This school provided substantiating evidence to support the contention of Witten et al.⁴⁶ that:

The Surrey Park experience highlights the relationship between investment in social infrastructure and wellbeing. Social integration at the collective level was inextricably linked to the school, a state provided facility...the study also supports the contention that social cohesion is not something that a community generates for itself in isolation from government and regional policies. Rather it is the outcome of social investment.⁴⁷

The following responses from the same research clearly illustrate why stakeholders regard their schools as social and cultural ‘taonga,’ as parents describe a history of generous support through financial donations and voluntary community labour that had not only acquired assets for the benefit of the community, but also maintained them. Through this process the schools become a living symbol of the history of the people and the special characteristics of the place in which they live.

A lot of money was invested from the community into Surrey Park and that was what really hurt. Like the \$150 000 into the school hall...we had to raise our own money for the school

hall. The wharenui was built with our own money...and there are two special playgrounds that were paid for by the community.⁴⁸

I can still see my mother sitting at the sewing machine making dolls' clothes, making lollies for the end of the year school fair, all the time being put in.⁴⁹

In Masterton the use of the school facilities as a community resource could be seen in assembly halls being available as election polling booths, civil defence centres and for hire by clubs and for community social functions. School swimming pools were often available to families in the community for the payment of a season ticket and school grounds were available for the use of community sporting organisations and interschool competitions.

Witten et al.⁵⁰ also draw parallels between education and health by referring to Coster,⁵¹ who researched the impact of hospital closures on the communities of Dannevirke and Balclutha. Coster provides an insight into competing discourses in the process by comparing the viewpoint of the economic rationalisation planners in Wellington who perceived a hospital as a 'bricks and mortar' issue and the people in the affected communities who regarded the hospital as 'integral' to their sense of community wellbeing and belonging.

Witten et al. also noted that the Ministry of Education prescribed the parameters of consultation in the Surrey Park closure process. It was not particularly concerned about widening the debate to include issues of importance to the community such as accumulated community goodwill or addressing, recognising and accommodating the communities and the natural community boundaries that develop within a larger community, or the effects of restricting choice and limiting diversity or the socio-economic impact of closure. This was evident through what was included on the discussion list and what was excluded. Witten et al. found that beyond their educational function, schools are gateways to sets of social resources. Schools are information centres where the news of the neighbourhood is shared. Since the school grounds and buildings may be made available for community use they become community social centres and the pathway to a social network which provides access to a range of sources of support. They cite other researchers to support their position:

Warin et al.... concluded that without the presence of safe places that offer opportunities for social interaction, people's sense of belonging to a particular community and place would be diminished. The health benefits of community participation through the social ties and the social support they generate are well recognised at the individual level (Berkman et al.). At the collective level community and the density of voluntary networks have been associated with social capital indicators of social trust and perceptions of fairness and helpfulness (Kawachi et al.).⁵²

We will now refer to relevant research findings from four doctoral theses: O'Donnell,⁵³ Fisk,⁵⁴ Collins⁵⁵ and Savage,⁵⁶ which provide valuable insights into understanding different aspects of school closures and mergers, such as how culture shapes school communities and how they respond to challenges, the impact of *Tomorrow's Schools* in rural communities and, in particular, the importance of schools as social capital.

Susan O'Donnell's doctoral thesis, *The Phenomenon of Special Character in New Zealand State Integrated Schools*,⁵⁷ which focuses on two Catholic secondary schools, is a valuable ethnographic case study for its discussion of cultural theory

and its close reading of the importance of organisational culture and values in schools in a New Zealand context. Like Stewart,⁵⁸ O'Donnell understands that the management of change also involves the management of culture.

While schools have many things in common, each has its own distinctive cultural identity, which is the product of its history, community, shared experiences, values, problems, struggles and achievements. The school community may be described as a group of people who feel connected because they have a shared understanding of what it means to be part of the life of any particular school for better or worse and if that group of people place a high value on this shared meaning they will be much more likely to defend it from closure. As previously mentioned, long after they have left school, it is this feeling of connectedness to the shared meaning that leads former students and their families to invest a huge effort in organising school reunions. The feelings of connectedness are also seen in fundraising activities by former students to improve the educational experiences of present day students.

Fisk,⁵⁹ like Parkyn,⁶⁰ argues that schools should be funded for their function, not their size. Most closures and mergers occur in rural towns and rural districts. In "Threads of Inequity,"⁶¹ Fisk examines how *Tomorrow's Schools* has affected New Zealand area schools. Area schools, (composite schools providing both primary and secondary education on the one site) were established to provide secondary education in the remote areas of New Zealand in response to the demands of the politically influential rural sector who wanted their children to receive an education close to home that would allow them to be socially mobile and work in town if they chose.

Fisk describes some of the educational benefits provided by area schools such as their small size, their family atmosphere, a safe environment which enables a more personal approach, the fact that students do not have to change schools or uniforms every few years and the continuity and stability they offer because they provide a transition phase at age eleven where students have a homeroom teacher for most subjects before going on to a specialised timetable.

However, as a result of their function and their remote rural location, Fisk argues that area schools are marginalised and disadvantaged by the 'one size fits all' set of administrative policies associated with *Tomorrow's Schools*. He identifies five areas of inequity: attitudes, government policies (usually economic), funding and allocation of resources, staffing allowances, parental pressure in the local communities, and the constant pressure for consolidation or centralisation.

He argues that roll based funding and allocation for curriculum provision and curriculum resources is inequitable for New Zealand's thirty area schools because of their special status. A curriculum bias towards agricultural and home science based subjects no longer meets the requirements of parents who want their children to be prepared to be able to gain employment in town. In addition to this issue area schools cater for a high level of families dependent on social welfare benefits which is linked to the need for improved counselling services and remedial programmes.

Area schools have a higher cost of curriculum resourcing because of the lack of the economy of scale. If the school is under resourced, it is unable to meet reasonable parental expectations, parents criticise the school, then ERO criticises the school and attendance declines, particularly at secondary level where the parents who can

afford to do so, send their children to boarding school or send them off on long daily bus rides to the nearest town. If a school loses students it will also lose teachers. Such situations eventually lead to closure.

Fisk provides tabled evidence to develop his inequitable funding argument to show that the current staffing criteria, with separate criteria for primary and secondary schools, do not suit a composite school. The situation is complicated by the fact that area school teachers are not members of one union nor do they have a separate political organisation to press their views and present their case. Primary teachers join the New Zealand Educational Institute. Secondary teachers join the Post Primary Teachers' Association. Furthermore, apart from removing the Education Boards and the Education Department, *Tomorrow's Schools* also removed the inspectorate, which had often acted as a mediator in contentious situations, particularly in relation to the workload issues for middle and senior management. Many area schools lacked the management expertise required to realise the outcomes demanded by the Government and the Ministry of Education.

Fisk found that area schools feel that the Ministry of Education treats them as if they were overlarge primary schools and makes decisions without regard to local circumstances.⁶² He provides convincing evidence to show that *Tomorrow's Schools* has reduced the status and effectiveness of area schools. He claims that the government wants only two categories of schools, primary and secondary, thus decreasing costs by limiting diversity. Furthermore, he is convinced that the Educational Review Office complicates the issues by favouring larger schools at the expense of smaller schools, including area schools. He quotes from "Small schools perform at lower level: ERO report,"⁶³ a feature article in *Eduvac*, a newspaper available in most New Zealand staffrooms:

Children at small schools are getting an inferior education to those schools with more students. An Education Review Office report into the most common form of school in New Zealand - those with fewer than 150 pupils – says that in terms of curriculum management and delivery, they perform at a lower level than large schools. And the Office wants poorly performing schools that have no hope of improving their standards to be closed. The Chief Reviewer, Dr Judith Aitken, said a school should be shut if it could not be an effective education provider.⁶⁴

The politics of choice introduced by *Tomorrow's Schools* removed zoning and forced area schools to move into the market place to compete for enrolments. Fisk argues, as do many others including this researcher, that all schools are not equal in the market place. He provides evidence to show that there is no true marketplace for schools that are remote from centres of population. The issues are further complicated when students reach secondary age and area schools are unable to offer boarding bursaries and groups from the boarding schools in town come into the rural areas to recruit students for their boarding establishments.

Fisk argues that the function of a school and the geographical and social context in which it exists are essential factors to consider when deciding the funding to which it should be entitled. He refers to New Zealand educational history for evidence to confirm the relevance of the function argument and how it alters in different historical contexts. He cites the example of native schools, mostly small primary schools, which were established from 1867–1869. In 1900 there were 2,798 Maori in Native Schools and 2,522 in European schools for both races. Contemporary evidence that 'one size does not fit all' can be seen in recent high profile disputes about the

retention of residential special schools for students with special needs, such as Salisbury School, and in a growing number of small Maori language immersion schools. The function of Te Kura o Rerekohu schools is to offer a curriculum adapted to the cultural differences valued by Maori parents. The 'geographical and social function' argument is particularly relevant to the situations faced by the rural schools in the Bush District CIEP, Makoura College in Masterton and Aorangi School in Christchurch.

Catherine Savage⁶⁵ examines the process issues for schools involved in mergers and closures in *Amputation without anaesthetic, network review: school and community reorganisation*, through the case study of one school in a district involved with a Ministry of Education led Education Development Initiative. She found that:

...this reorganisation was far from realising the outcomes or benefits as predicted by the Ministry of Education. Student learning was not only jeopardised but student safety was also compromised in some settings indicating that there might be long term implications for students as they express a reluctance to attend the new school, an increased sense of anomie and a lack of interest in learning. The reorganisation and stress reported by the BoT and teachers is significant and took a toll on personal wellbeing. The responsibility and workload far exceeded the expectation of the board of trustees as unpaid volunteers.⁶⁶

Houghton, Stewart, Harris and Savage have conflicting views on EDIs. Navigating a pathway through this literature is tricky because it typically embraces vested interests and reflects strongly held viewpoints one way or another.

Savage,⁶⁷ like Collins,⁶⁸ argues that the EDI process sets schools against each other and promotes tension and competitiveness in the fight to survive. Her research participants (like the respondents to *The Viability of Small Schools Review*,⁶⁹) believed the lack of consultation was insulting and the result was predetermined. They also believed that space and property were compromised, the Ministry did not take into account the needs of the whole community, staff and student morale had been adversely affected and there were workload issues for staff and boards of trustees. Savage's respondents complained that there was insufficient support in the transition period and resources were not in place before the transition.

Dr Shirley Harris⁷⁰ in her 2005 report commissioned by the New Zealand School Trustees Association, "A Study of Educational Development Initiatives (EDIs): Their Impact in Boards of Trustees," aimed to gain an in depth understanding of the impact of the EDI policy for Boards of Trustees, in order to identify the resources and support systems that need to be in place for boards undertaking this process in the future. Twenty-three principals/staff and twenty board chairs who had been involved in the 1994-2000 EDIs participated. The Ministry network review documentation was analysed. Harris found that the Boards of Trustees which proactively sought school re-organisation achieved greater control over the process and a more successful outcome. She argues that future school network reviews will continue to alienate communities and jeopardise children's education unless boards of trustees are given the power to control the process and provided with greater process and transition support for the trustees:

During the decision making process prior to the merger, community consultation played a crucial role in community acceptance. Boards that allocated plenty of time for consultation and were positive about the proposed changes experienced a relatively smooth process. Negative community reaction to reorganisation was often premised on an inability to see the potential benefits of school reorganisation.⁷¹

Her recommendations emphasise the importance of regular, clear communication from the Ministry of Education before, during and after the school closure/merger process. Harris argues that the most important dimension of the change management is managing both the teaching and ancillary staff and the transition period for the children. She identifies the pressures placed on the personal lives of voluntary trustees upon whom the practicality of self-governing schools depend and recommends that in the initial stages of an EDI, boards of trustees and staff need to be provided with Ministry funded professional development on change management principles and practices.

It requires enormous commitment, time and energy and comes at a human cost to those involved....The number of extra meetings attended by Board members as part of the merger process was huge with one Board Chair stating that he had attended 120 meetings during the merger."⁷²

He reported that he was going to four to five meetings a week as Board Chair at some stages so that he hardly saw his family.

In order to assist keeping the focus on student achievement, additional support from the Ministry should be provided to newly merged schools to align the curriculum. She suggests that this role could be fulfilled by ERO who could undertake an in house curriculum focused review for the transitional board on the relative strengths of all schools prior to the merger.

Harris also recognises the impact of culture shock when she advocates that community consultation time should be extended to recognise that communities require sufficient time to grieve over what they have lost and to come to terms with the inevitability of change. Schools have been at the heart of communities from the earliest times in their history. Ever since the 1877 Education Act compulsory schooling has become a social rite of passage and even before that schools were some of the earliest buildings to be erected in any community. Like Stewart,⁷³ Harris⁷⁴ recognises the wisdom of including stakeholders in the wider community, especially senior citizens, as a part of any merger/closure communication strategy:

During the grieving process many communities tended to implode. The level of negativity that emerged as a result appeared to have a significant influence on the progress of the merger. Many of those who resist the merger process were not part of the current school community, but previous pupils or grandparents of children who were currently attending.⁷⁵

Respondents expressed concern about the length of time school buildings and grounds are left abandoned after closure. As soon as closure is announced options for local communities to buy them need to be investigated. Harris also urges a review of the closed school policy. These findings are directly relevant to this thesis as the abandoned schools after the 2003 Masterton District Review also became a blight on the community as targets for graffiti, vandalism and arson attacks.

Shirley Harris⁷⁶ also researched the Invercargill Network Review, however, whereas Witten et al focused on schools as catalysts for community participation, social cohesion and the vitality of the neighbourhood they serve, Harris provides insights into the issues of timeframes, consultation methods, and managing schools who do not wish to merge. The first phase of consultation did not produce a solution, the second phase produced revised proposals and the third round of consultation, starting in January 2004, included the findings from the second consultation round.

After a further 300 submissions a consensus was still not reached. Harris found, as had Wylie,⁷⁷ that most schools did not want to merge:

When responding to the consultation models, schools have tended to focus on protection of their own current position. An example of this is the fact that only four out of thirty-two schools were prepared to agree to a merger on a different site to their own and some of these would bypass a closer school in their proposed merger.⁷⁸

Such findings suggest that a longer time frame for consultation does not necessarily solve the problem. One of the respondents pointed out:

Board Chair

I think the Ministry has now decided that no matter how they do it they will upset some people so they might as well upset them over a shorter period of time rather than a longer period. If you ask me, if you had the choice of doing it over eighteen months versus eight years - short and sharp is preferable.⁷⁹

Although process issues are very important, the school closure merger problem involves other matters of fundamental importance. In the summary of her overall findings Harris found that:

The findings clearly indicate that the changes a school reorganisation inflicts on a school community are far reaching, not only in terms of the time and energy required, but also in regards to people's lives, their relationships and students' educational outcomes. Clear guidelines and high levels of support are required if such processes are to be successful, especially when imposed by a government agency.⁸⁰

Harris is another researcher with a clear understanding of the historical role played by schools as community identity markers and as a community resource. She observes that the outcomes of school closure and merger processes can sometimes seem to be like a form of social engineering in that the decisions made by the Ministry can create artificial social environments where the divided social groupings within a community are unwillingly brought together to form a new school in the hope, such as in the Stokes Valley Review, that the social outcome would be a greater understanding and acceptance of all community members for each other.

Graham Collins in *Principalship and Policy in Small New Zealand Primary Schools*⁸¹ analyses the impact of current support policy in New Zealand on small primary school principalship and evaluates the extent to which policy adjustment might be needed in future. He identifies two different types of policies: those designed to reduce or rationalise the network and those designed to enhance or strengthen the network. He is another researcher who argues that the introduction of self-managing schools has created 'a one-school, one-community mind-set,'⁸² in many districts and that a new policy needs to evolve which assists the enhancement of interactions between neighbouring schools, and extends the sense of community beyond the individual school. Collins revisited these concerns in *New Zealand Annual Review of Education 2003*⁸³ where he points out that the 1991 EDI guidelines were essentially voluntary, asking communities to offer themselves for the processes outlined. Despite the 'financial carrot' offered, few did so. In his doctoral thesis he argues that the description of the process in the EDI circular (2001) were ambiguous in some places. He cites page three in which the respective roles of the Ministry and local parties are described in some places as 'consultation' and in others as 'negotiation.' He points out that:

...in using the word 'negotiate' the EDI circular tries to give the impression that local interests have greater power in the exchange than in fact they have in law.⁸⁴

Collins argues that the present policy towards small schools in New Zealand has failed to achieve either of its current aims of the rationalising of some small schools or the strengthening of others and concludes that more innovative approaches are needed, rather than just merger and closure.

Innovative approaches to the closure/merger dilemma are happening. The school on two sites solution is a case in point. Monique O'Sullivan⁸⁵ researches the first merger of this kind in New Zealand which could have increasing relevance in the future for schools in the rural sector. In researching the options to school closure two South Island communities decided to follow an innovative alternative. The urban school was a full primary school located on the edge of an industrial area within a town, with a school roll of over 350 students and the rural school was a two teacher school a ten minutes' drive away. The basis of the merger was a consensual memorandum of agreement on a three year trial basis using 'a school on two sites model'. O'Sullivan's report focused on four key areas: how to create a model and develop a vision for the merger, staffing considerations, communication systems, and the lack of support structures which was also an underlying component of the first three themes. She summarises the journey towards a context specific dynamic and an evolving consensus of stakeholders in the Abstract:

...they operated under one name and one shared Board of Trustees, but continued to operate from the two original school sites with classes coming together for specific school wide events.⁸⁶

Leading a school on two sites poses particular leadership and management challenges. It is clear that in this case an open minded, practical and flexible approach was called for that accommodated "thinking on the hoof"⁸⁷ Although staff visited an Australian school that had established a merger on a similar basis, the differences between the Australian and the New Zealand context meant that the transferability of knowledge was limited. This once again confirms the importance of understanding that change management is context specific. O'Sullivan shows how the school community has crafted a viable school on two sites model which allows the unique nature of rural school sites and the traditional aspects of a rural education to be maintained for the rural communities for whom they are so crucial. Ashburton Borough School is now working well. Its existence provides further evidence that school communities can negotiate viable alternatives to school closures. O'Sullivan reports that while the Ministry of Education gave permission for the experiment to happen, it has adopted a 'watch and see' approach. It seemed to the Principal that Ministry of Education officials found it easier to present obstacles than to offer pathways:

Principal: In fact at times I think they have been less than spontaneous in the congratulatory cards on how well we've built the merger.⁸⁸

This merger joined two very different communities. In order to address the very real issues of cultural differences they adopted a 'same but different' approach. The teacher with leadership responsibility on the rural site is called the area leader. Her role resembles that of a site manager. Her viewpoint is valuable for tapping into the attitude of the rural community.

Area Leader: It's one school. We share the same name but we still have a country component which is quite unique and working well and we are happy with that. I think both parts of the school are happy with that. We've got a town culture and a country culture but they are both working together and accepting of each other now.⁸⁹

In her conclusion⁹⁰ O'Sullivan emphasises that all schools that have established or are considering a merger of this nature, should share their knowledge.

While the review of the literature provides valuable links between the New Zealand experience of school closures and mergers and the experience of school communities overseas, we need to be wary in making comparisons. Although many of the social, economic, political and educational challenges, issues and experiences are very similar, the context is quite different. It needs to be remembered that when talking about New Zealand we are talking about a country of just over four million people. As far back as 1952 Parkyn alerted future researchers to the dangers of making invalid comparisons with consolidation policies in the United States and Australia, given New Zealand's different size, population, history and social composition. Fifty years later Savage⁹¹ also questions the relevance to New Zealand of international literature about school closures and mergers:

Much of the international literature regarding the reorganisation of schooling networks may appear irrelevant to a New Zealand context as our distribution area of small schools over a sparsely populated geographic area is unique.⁹²

Collins⁹³ reminds us that half of New Zealand's schools have fewer than 200 students.

A review of the New Zealand research shows a consensus among researchers that the closure and merger of schools is a complex and socially painful phenomenon. They agree that the rationale used to justify school closures and mergers is strongly connected to fiscal efficiency and as Collins⁹⁴ and Witten⁹⁵ et al. point out, the problems related to the duplication of resources. The same rationale was used in USA, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. As governments wrestle with the task of trying to find a balance between economic and social goals they analyse how they can make best use of taxpayer dollars and also offer students an enriched curriculum to adequately prepare them for living in the twenty-first century. Smaller schools cost more. In a cost benefit analysis increased transport costs after school closures are balanced against perceived savings associated with building costs, school maintenance, cleaning, surplus classroom space, curriculum resourcing and lower salary costs because larger classes need fewer teachers. The official preference for larger schools rather than smaller schools noted by Parkyn⁹⁶ still holds.

Communities continue to resist school closures and mergers and are usually unwilling to engage in the school closure/merger process. Stewart,⁹⁷ Wylie,⁹⁸ Harris,⁹⁹ Fisk,¹⁰⁰ Collins,¹⁰¹ and Savage¹⁰² all agree that the instability of school rolls which followed the removal of zoning after the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools* has proved to be one of the significant contributing factors leading to the decision to close or merge schools. When the Ministry of Education decides to implement a network review policy most schools concentrate not on co-operation but on saving themselves in the battle for survival. Stewart,¹⁰³ Fisk¹⁰⁴ and Collins¹⁰⁵ all found that one of the adverse effects of *Tomorrow's Schools* has been the one school one community mind-set which sets schools against each other.

The various processes devised by the Ministry of Education over the years to manage the closure merger process have been politically contentious and personally stressful. As long ago as 1952 Parkyn noted how language can be used to confuse

the process. The continuing importance of clear and inclusive communication and transparent processes is emphasised by Stewart,¹⁰⁶ Hills,¹⁰⁷ Savage,¹⁰⁸ and Harris.¹⁰⁹ There has been a continuing pattern of unrealistic consultation time frames evident as far back as the *Report on the economic and educational viability of small schools 1990*.¹¹⁰ The huge extra workload for principals, teachers and volunteer boards of trustees has been reported by Savage¹¹¹ and Harris.¹¹² Since Harris strongly recommended that the Ministry of Education should provide greater process and transition support for schools involved in the closure/merger process, there has been some improvement in this area.

Strong community objections to the composition of groups chosen to review educational provision has been evident from the *Report on the economic and educational viability of small schools in 1990*¹¹³ to the community meetings during the Bush District CIEP 2009. Harris¹¹⁴ believed that the closure/merger process should be controlled by boards of trustees and stressed the importance of reviewing the closed school policy in order to prevent school buildings being abandoned.

The school is part of a community not apart from it. The importance of understanding the school in the social and cultural context of the community it serves is emphasised by Parkyn¹¹⁵, O'Donnell¹¹⁶ and O'Sullivan.¹¹⁷ The critical importance of being conversant with the theory related to the importance of school culture and recognising its impact on change management is recognised by O'Donnell¹¹⁸ and O'Sullivan.¹¹⁹

The recognition of schools as social and cultural capital in a community is increasingly recognised. Apart from their role as educational providers, schools perform a significant social role as community institutions. Stewart¹²⁰ described how the closure of schools in rural areas can mean the difference between quality of life and social subsistence. The importance of schools as crucial social capital is reported by Kearns et al.¹²¹ who also clearly explain why school closures bring about a loss of social cohesion which can become a community health issue because one size does not fit all and schools must serve communities with very different needs. Fisk¹²² strongly argues that schools should be funded according to their function not their size.

Over a period of time various researchers have reported that the Ministry has tried to tighten its control over the closure/merger process, through defining the parameters for discussion. (Kearns, Lewis, Coster, McCreanor,¹²³ Baines and Associates¹²⁴ and Harris.¹²⁵) Nevertheless, while the Ministry has increased its control since EDIs were introduced, *Tomorrow's Schools* has provided a window of opportunity for parents in the localities not only to resist and to contest school closures and mergers, but also to explore alternative pathways.

There are some things that the New Zealand research is not yet telling us. As far as I can determine the role played by the media in recording how people feel and respond to school closures and merger processes at the time they happen has not been closely examined. More importantly, again as far as I can determine, the available New Zealand research has not yet explored in depth the issue that gives rise to this thesis: in a post *Tomorrow's Schools* environment to what extent are school closures and mergers contestable and negotiable, how is this resistance expressed and to what extent is it successful?

School closures and mergers are a global issue. Having dealt with the available New Zealand literature it is time to explore relevant links with the international literature. Governments everywhere have the task of balancing political, economic educational and social goals. To what extent is the closure/merger experience in overseas communities similar to or markedly different from the New Zealand experience? Overseas, just as in New Zealand, the arguments of fiscal efficiency, enhanced curriculum provision and problems arising from the duplication of resources have been used to justify the policies which result in school closures and mergers. Overseas research evidence also documents the social costs of consolidation, its impact on the quality of life, the transport issues and the political issues. In the USA school closures and mergers go by the name of 'consolidation.' Parkyn,¹²⁶ as previously mentioned, confirms that this term was also used to describe school closures and mergers in twentieth century New Zealand. In USA researchers can trace the consolidation process back to 1874. More recently, the restructuring of rural schools began in 1935 in the years after the Great Depression. In "Reflections on one small school," Carolyn McCreight¹²⁷ reports that the number of school districts in America declined from 128,000 in 1930 to 16,000 in 1980 while in a similar time frame (1945-1980) the student enrolment doubled.

Richard Valencia¹²⁸ questions the theory that larger schools can offer a broader curriculum at lower costs than smaller schools and are therefore more cost effective. He found that most school closings only realise slight savings because seventy-five to eighty per cent of a school budget is for personnel costs which are only slightly affected by closings. He found that most consolidated districts were unable to document the amount of money saved. Furthermore when he investigated school closings in five major cities he found that schools with primarily low socio-economic status and minority students had suffered the brunt, if not the exclusive burden, of closings. He listed social costs as reduced parental involvement in their children's education and the flight to private schools.

Texan researchers, Deborah Jolly and Patricia Delony,¹²⁹ produced a comprehensive report, "Alternative Organizational Plans: options for Consideration," in which they researched common rural community problems, the effects of school size, the history and effects of the consolidation movement, partial reorganisation alternatives and distance education. While the American rural communities they describe differ significantly from those in New Zealand in terms of their economic, cultural and political characteristics, their findings could be directly transferable to rural contexts in New Zealand in two respects because their research showed:

Rural school district consolidation is still a viable strategy, the concept of partial reorganisation alternatives holds great promise as a means of improving educational programmes. Technological advances in distance education also offer much potential for improving rural education without total district reorganisation.¹³⁰

...not only...that larger schools do not necessarily guarantee improved quality or efficiency, it also suggests that small schools are positively associated with student achievement – especially that of disadvantaged and at-risk students.¹³¹

Jolly and Delony found, that the most visible problems after school closures were transportation costs, the hardships on students who were bussed long distances, the loss of community schools with a corresponding loss of a sense of community in schools as they were moved further and further from students' homes and communities.

Craig Cummins, Edward Chance and Carl Steinhoff,¹³² in “A Model for Rural School Reconstruction: Making Sense of the Inevitable Result of School Reform,” reflect upon the history of consolidation and cite the research of Schmuck and Schmuck et al.¹³³ who found that although America is no longer a predominantly rural nation, the majority of its school districts are located in very small towns and rural areas. Small districts, defined as those having fewer than 3,000 students, constitute approximately seventy-five per cent of districts but provide an education for only about thirty per cent of the primary and secondary school age population. Fifty-one per cent of all districts are both small and rural. In this context Cummins et al.¹³⁴ used a phenomenological approach based on semi-structured interviews of stakeholders involved in voluntary consolidations. They found that the nine strategies identified as enhancing the consolidation process for parents and the community were community meetings, newspaper articles, keeping all sites open, input on the consolidation plan and open transfer policies for the students. Other strategies included committee input, enhancement of the curriculum and student activities, and utilisation of opinion polls and surveys.¹³⁵ The strategies which enhanced the consolidation process for teachers included guaranteed job security, teacher reassignments, an enhanced curriculum, faculty meetings, consolidation plan input, teacher displacement compensation and community committee input.¹³⁶ The strong importance attached to clear communication and stakeholder consultation was common to both.

Unlike New Zealand where most schools are state funded, USA school systems depend on local property taxes for much of their revenue. It follows that lower socio-economic areas with lower property valuations generate less taxes. As a result many schools in these communities have on-going financial issues, especially in the rural districts and particularly in times of depression when property values shrink businesses close and the number of taxpayers dwindles. American rural education researcher, Dr Randy Dunn, chair of the Department of Educational Administration at Southern Illinois University, has valuable experience to offer as a former principal and superintendent of four rural districts in Illinois. In *The Rural Education Dichotomy: Disadvantaged Systems and School Strengths*,¹³⁷ Dunn advocates a curriculum based approach in deciding on whether or not to consolidate. The deciding factor should be whether or not more learning opportunities and more varied learning opportunities would be available for approximately the same amount of money in a consolidated school or in retaining the two or more weaker schools.

Dunn identifies the greatest educational advantages in rural schools at the classroom level as the personalisation of learning and the sense of community seen at the rural school site. He cites the research findings of Harvard University’s Vito Perrone,¹³⁸ who found that small schools that stay small provide richer educational opportunities for students and Chicago researcher, Viadero,¹³⁹ who found that students in smaller high schools outperform the city as a whole in both reading and mathematics. However, in the USA, as also in New Zealand, the arguments of economic efficiency and the ‘bigger is better’ philosophy dominate. In his Abstract Dunn predicted that:

The next wave of consolidation will be driven by the suburbanization or rurality, the homogenization of education resulting from the adoption of common academic standards and accountability structures and the pervasive influence of corporate mergers.¹⁴⁰

Since the introduction of national standards in New Zealand there are already signs that this could happen in the not too distant future.

School closures and mergers in large numbers result in widespread systemic change that is linked to the changing understanding about the role of schools in the twenty-first century. Patrick Jenlink, editor of *Systemic Change: Touchstones for the Future School*,¹⁴¹ argues for an entirely new educational system that leaves behind the agrarian and industrial age models and requires all stakeholders to confront their mind sets about schools and educational change. He illustrates the difference between the nature of educational change in the twentieth and the twenty-first century through contrasting paradigm summaries in table form:

TABLE 18

From Jenlink, Table 2, Comparing Two paradigms of School.¹⁴²

| 20 th CENTURY SCHOOL | 21 st CENTURY SCHOOL |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • factory model • learn what to learn • teaching as telling, information dissemination by teacher • closed boundaries for learning • individualism • teacher poses problems, defines learning context • convergent problem solving, one best way • competitive learning environment, win–lose • parent external to formal learning relationship and process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning community model • learn how to learn • teaching as facilitating, socially constructed knowledge by students and teacher • open boundaries for learning • collectivism and community • students co-join with peers and teachers to pose problems, co-responsibility for learning context • divergent and convergent problem solving, many ways • co-operative and collaborative learning environment, win, win • parent or guardian integral learning team member |

Michael Fullan in his foreword to *Systemic Change: Touchstones for the Future School* credits Jenlink and his colleagues with putting together the most comprehensive treatment available on the topic of systemic change in education and “a multilevel lens on the meaning of educational reform.” According to Jenlink, nothing less is required than embracing a fundamental change at the deepest level of purpose, values and beliefs about learning and all the corollary components that support learning, such as policy, curriculum, instruction and assessment. If Jenlink’s view is accepted, then it follows that there will be changes in how schools will be organised. This then raises the question about how efficient and effective it is to maintain small schools in the information/knowledge society when the curriculum is becoming increasingly complex and the infrastructure needed to deliver it is becoming increasingly sophisticated? Educational administrators in New Zealand and overseas have been wrestling with this difficult question for decades.

The internet provides a wide range of opportunities for stakeholders involved in closures and mergers to vent their frustration and rally support on everything from inadequate consultation processes to the vexed issues of the disposal of abandoned school sites. The internet also provides the opportunity to connect with current research. School closures and mergers are political issues internationally. In New Zealand, Deborah Coddington of the ACT party campaigned against the network review process through the website www.saveourschools.co.nz.¹⁴³ In Canada the problems are discussed on provincial political party and teacher union websites.

www.skcaucus.com/newsroom.html.¹⁴⁴ the website for the Saskatchewan Party, lists the twenty-five schools affected in the province in 2007–2008, contains its detailed policy on these matters and the views of its Learning Critic, Rod Gantefer:

Trustees need new tools to give communities the opportunity to keep their school open. Because of the NDP's failure to take leadership on this important issue, closure decisions have been made without communities receiving all of the information they need, exploring all other options and taking sufficient time to have a meaningful discussion about alternatives....These communities need to have discussions about complimentary uses for school buildings, whether as libraries, seniors' centres, town offices and medical centres. Trustees also need an enhanced set of standards and criteria for school closures, tools that are not yet available and will be provided.¹⁴⁵

The Saskatchewan Party lists sixty-two schools in the seven divisional districts that have so far expressed interest in creating a "Small Schools Rural Division," with the objective of retaining their neighbourhood schools.

The British Columbia Teachers Federation has been proactive in publicising the viewpoint of teachers in the disputes about school closures and mergers on its website. Between 2001–02 and 2005–06, 134 public schools have closed in British Columbia, resulting in the displacement of nearly 19,000 students. In 2007 another twenty-four schools in its eight districts faced closure. The seriousness of the issues is made very clear by contrasting British Columbia statistics with events in Ontario:

School District #27, Cariboo-Chilcotin, which closed a school in each of the years 2002–03, 2003–04, and 2004–05, is now dealing a report recommending the closure of an additional eight schools between 2007–2011. Currently the district only has twenty-eight schools, spread over a very large area with numerous small communities and significant geographical challenges. School District #43, Coquitlam, closed 4 schools between 2004 and 2006, is now threatening another eight schools with closure. School District 20, Kootenay Colombia, closed four schools in 2003, and another five in 2004, totally nearly half the schools serving Trail, Castlegar, Rossland and Fruitvale.

During the "Harris years" schools and school districts in Ontario experienced defunding, destabilization, and privatization of public education very similar to BC over the past few years... In 2005, people for Education reported that between 1999 and 2005, 311 public schools were lost to closures in Ontario, with another nineteen slated to close in 2006, bringing the total number of students affected to nearly 70,000.¹⁴⁶

School consolidations have been a particularly contentious political issue in West Virginia, Illinois, Kentucky, Nebraska, Oregon, Arkansas Oklahoma and Texas. Since the passage of its education reform bill in 1989, Oklahoma has had fifty-one school consolidations. Only nine were voluntary. In her Abstract, *Reflections on one small school*, Carolyn McCreight,¹⁴⁷ former Texan school superintendent and later Assistant Professor at Texas A and M International University, after focusing on a case study from rural Texas concluded:

When facilities, teachers and instructional programs are inadequate, alternative schooling arrangements should be sought. School consolidation is one option, but communities often resist consolidation. Other options include shared superintendent services, bulk purchases of supplies and materials, inter-district collaboration, and establishment of a countrywide school board.¹⁴⁸

McCreight reports that many American rural schools encounter chronic problems, also experienced in New Zealand, such as the attraction and retention of appropriately qualified good quality staff due to workload issues:

...several teachers drove school buses morning and afternoon; all were asked to take a turn at selling tickets at the weekly football or basketball games. All teachers were involved in the sponsorship of a school club or organisation. Some teachers were able to accomplish all duties assigned with excellence, but some just cannot keep up with the demands, particularly if they have families. Students may or may not receive quality instruction, depending on the demands placed on teachers and the willingness of teachers to take work home after a long work day.¹⁴⁹

While accepting that the school is the centre of social and cultural life in a rural community, she states that, “schools do not exist merely to provide community members with a social life.”¹⁵⁰ This belief would suggest that McCreight does not have the same depth of understanding of the importance of schools as social capital as is to be found in the work of the New Zealand researchers previously cited. She proposes that options to consolidation include shared superintendent services, bulk purchases of supplies and materials, interdistrict collaboration and the establishment of a countrywide school board, suggestions which do not fit the New Zealand context.

Little Rock researcher Truett Goatcher from the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators disputes claims that consolidation policies result in financial savings in “School District Consolidation Will Save Millions of Dollars: Fact or Myth? A Special Report,”¹⁵¹ which is accessible from the ERIC website. From July 1965 to 1994–95 school year, 218 Arkansas school districts were involved in school consolidations. From 1983–1999, the number of Arkansas school districts declined from 370 to 310. This report contains twelve pages of financial data analysis related to all of the school districts which have consolidated since 1965. Goatcher reported that his study and the research conducted by others in recent years, contrary to expectations, confirmed that in most instances consolidations have not resulted in savings. Savings in one area often offset expenses in other areas. Notwithstanding research findings such as these, Arkansas passed contentious legislation in 2004 authorising consolidation for any district with fewer than 350 students.

Some American researchers describe a social loss that administrators and policy makers can easily overlook – the loss of quality of life which cannot be measured on a balance sheet or by educational assessment achievement criteria, but it is none the less real and just as important.¹⁵² Consolidation research usually involves weighing more than what is won and what is lost, in fiscal and educational terms. The British Columbia Teachers’ Federation uses its website to highlight some of the social consequences of school closures, particularly in rural areas, that are often underestimated by governments and the general public:

The loss of a school has significant implications for the broader community as well. In addition to the impact of losing the public space and the social connections provided by the school, school closures are a deterrent to families staying in the community or moving to it. School closures affect property values, businesses and community viability overall.¹⁵³

Similar social consequences were observed in Invercargill and the Taranaki region in New Zealand by Witten, Lewis, Coster and McCreanor.¹⁵⁴

One of the most important leadership tasks in school mergers is the integration of school cultures that are often widely different. On their website the Canberra based Save Our Schools organisation¹⁵⁵ argues that:

School mergers are not merely a matter of logistics and infrastructure; they are a blend of potentially divergent cultures, ambitions and communities. As such, effective leadership, founded on honest communication, is essential. Above all, however, the processes of team

building, visioning, role design and communication must take place quickly so that the senior leadership team can turn its attention outwards again¹⁵⁶.

One by product of consolidation, the increased transportation issues for students, is usually not given the consideration it deserves. The bus issue has become an on-going issue for parents and their children who ride the buses, the focus for public hearings and the focus of a growing body of research by American researchers. The negative consequences of long bus rides for everyday family life and academic achievement are often underestimated, particularly if students live in a rural area.

The findings of Beth Spence, “Long School Bus Rides; Stealing the Joy of Childhood”¹⁵⁷ are sufficiently important to warrant being quoted in some detail, because they could become directly relevant to New Zealand rural contexts. There has been a huge increase in bussing systems in the United States since consolidation. Spence quotes figures available from the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration to show that annually, 23.5 million children travel approximately 4.3 billion miles on 440,000 buses and that almost sixty per cent of all school age children across the country are transported by bus to and from school every day.¹⁵⁸ She found that the transport issues in West Virginian rural areas following consolidation caused serious family stress. In the 1990s more than twenty-five per cent of West Virginia’s 323 public schools were closed because state officials believed they were not efficient to operate. Whatever financial savings they may have won by downsizing the number of schools has been eroded by the increased transportation costs. The State of West Virginia now operates the most expensive transportation system in the nation based on cost per student and cost per mile. Transportation costs are a huge drain on the annual budget. The 1997–98 cost was \$130 .4 million.

The West Virginia Department of Education commissioned an independent study in 1998 which disclosed unexpected extra costs as a result of 513 accidents involving school transportation in 1997–1998. The serious social costs of the consolidation policy go beyond administrative efficiency into the harsh impact on the daily lives of the students:

Parents and children alike described wasted time, huge wasted portions of human lives spent on school buses. They told of children who got sick, children who were so tired they couldn’t perform well at school, children, who avoided higher level classes because they didn’t have the energy to do the required work.

They spoke of children who didn’t have the opportunity to develop teamwork skills that are a by-product of extra-curricular activities, children who simply felt left out because they couldn’t participate in sports or band or dances.

They spoke of children who awoke before dawn and arrived home after dark, as if referring to a throwback to the early industrial era when children worked long hours in factories and coal mines. They spoke of the loss of family time, the inability to eat together or work together on the family farm. They spoke of relationships that suffered because of long hours eaten up by transportation times.

They spoke of childhoods lost and dreams aborted as their children grew wearier and wearier of the tedious and sometimes dangerous trips they face day after day on yellow school buses.¹⁵⁹

Spence followed up this research with “Long Bus Rides—their effects on School Budgets”¹⁶⁰ in which she found that the cost of transportation was the most understudied issue in the consolidation debate, that rural children are affected most

through transport systems affecting their ability to fully participate in the school experience and that no economic value is put on their time and how long bus rides affect their educational opportunities and family.

In “Long Rides, Tough Hides: Enduring Long School Bus Rides,” Belle Zars¹⁶¹ also points to the huge increase in school bussing systems that has followed consolidation and, how this has negatively impacted on the central enterprise of schools, which is student learning. She describes the negative impact of bus issues on the physical, social and emotional health of the children in Arizona, Montana, Colorado and West Virginia:

What is the effect of spending so many hours of a young life riding on a bus? Children, whose lively little bodies have been sitting in school all day, are also sitting for hours on a bus. This is not time when they can stand up, run, play, or otherwise exercise. One source speculated that long rides contributed to overweight and obese students.¹⁶²

As I was driving down long country roads during my research into the Bush District CIEP the findings of Zars and Spence about the transport issues for children were very clearly brought to mind.

David Reynolds¹⁶³ in “Rural School Consolidation in Early Twentieth Century Iowa: lessons for the Early Twenty-First Century,” found that school consolidation had failed in Iowa because rural Iowans felt that the loss of the country school ensured the demise of the rural neighbourhood and that consolidation simply delivered education in a different, not necessarily better, manner. He advocates rethinking the kind of place a rural school is and what kind of place it could become. He believes that even in the age of telecommunications, the concept of school as a place where people learn about themselves in relation to their community retains its relevance.

Alexander Russo¹⁶⁴ a free-lance education writer in Chicago, has a different viewpoint. In his article, *Mergers, Annexations, Dissolutions*¹⁶⁵ he argues that since there is no conclusive research evidence either for or against consolidation, each case must be analysed in its own context.

Examples of the content available from internet sites earn their place in the literature review because they show one of the strategies that stakeholders use to protest against school mergers and their attempts to negotiate the outcomes. The internet provides an international dimension to the protest movement against school closures and mergers. I was surprised to find that the overwhelming majority of the respondents to my thesis survey had not used internet sites during their own closure and merger processes. Nevertheless the electronic media provides a growing number of websites in UK, USA, Canada and Australia, for example, from which information is disseminated and parental and professional protest to schools closures and mergers is expressed and organised. Such web sites not only define the conflict, organise the campaigns and publish the latest research findings, but they also provide network links to other sites of interest. Such networking increases the speed with which stakeholders in school mergers and closures can link with and assist each other both locally and internationally.

www.schoolparents.canberra.net.au,¹⁶⁶ the internet address of ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations in Canberra Australia, is just one example of a website used to organise and inform active parent protest. The council

commissioned and publicised an independent report which identified specific deficiencies in the Government's plans to close thirty-nine schools in ACT.

The Canberra based web site of 'Save our Schools' is a further case in point. This organisation¹⁶⁷ established links with other countries where school closures and mergers are becoming an increasingly thorny political issue entangling everybody from concerned parents to educational 'experts.' The following e mail published on June 8, 2007 reflects the international nature of the school closure and merger movement at grass roots level:

I found your website during a search for Save our Schools. I am from Saskatchewan, Canada, and we are fighting the very same battle here, and have formed a group here also called Save Our Schools. Our website is www.soslobby.ca. The issues and arguments are almost exactly the same.....perhaps we can help each other? Is this a global problem?¹⁶⁸

SOS Canberra objects to the Australian Government's 'Towards 2020.' policy and its processes. In the case where thirty-nine schools were threatened with closure it exposed contradictory messages from the Minister and criticised the Government's consultation processes as not reflecting community aspirations and concerns besides criticising the process as fundamentally flawed because not until after the decisions were made would stakeholders know if their views had been taken into account. On June 5, 2007 it also opposed the Government using the 2006-7 deficit and a projected deficit in 2008 as a justification for rejecting the concept of the neighbourhood school as a key feature of education in the ACT.

Now we find that there will actually be a \$40 million surplus in 2006–2007 – a turnaround of \$120 million from last year.....We have had financial surpluses in each of the last six years.....the Government simply invented a deficit that enabled it to ignore major education and other community needs and justify its pre-determined school closure policy.¹⁶⁹

When schools close, websites like that of the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, <http://www.bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx>,¹⁷⁰ record the cultural grief for the community:

Trustees will report that decisions about school closures are among the most difficult they have to make. The loss of a neighbourhood school to closure has a profound impact on children, parents, teachers and communities.¹⁷¹

Given that Denmark, like New Zealand, is a small country, the insight into the Scandinavian situation provided by Niels Eglund and Helen Laustsen¹⁷² is particularly useful. In the 1930s there were over 5,500 Danish schools of all types. By 2002, the year before the Masterton Review, only 1667 remained. After having researched thirty Danish school closures 1990–1999 Eglund and Laustsen found that school closure in itself does not have the devastating results that communities fear. They believe the main problem for local societies is a lack of people and thus lack of human capital in remote areas and on small islands means that school closure is a sign of a community in the final stages of the death process, not a cause. Most of the 4,000 school closures were in rural areas. Most went unnoticed as they involved one to two teacher schools being consolidated into a seven roomed school with housing accommodation provided for three or four teachers and their families. Later special rooms for science and gymnastics were added. These schools were a great source of community pride. However, as in New Zealand, rural depopulation occurred for a similar range of reasons including the industrialisation of farming. Many Danish schools had been consolidated in 1950s and 1960s as a result of migration from the rural areas to the towns. This resulted in the depopulation and decay of small towns compounded by the "merging" of 1,360

municipalities until only 277 remained. When local governments decided to close schools from the middle of 1970s this led to heated debate and riots on the part of the grass-root movements, sometimes resulting in heads of local governments losing their seats in the following elections. Eglund and Laustsen have found more than one hundred references to school closures. But few are concerned with the effects on the local community.

American researcher, Gail Furman, has an established reputation in researching the nature of school community, and the role of school leadership in public schools. The three quotes selected for inclusion from *School as Community: from Promise to Practice*¹⁷³ reflect her research findings. Although she warns that the idea of community may be used unwittingly as a tool of social control because it includes values that might well serve the interests of the status quo, she remains convinced of the fundamental importance of the community whose needs are served by the school. Each of the following findings also link very clearly to my own experience in researching this thesis:

Finally, I am convinced that 'community' is not another fad or 'hot topic' in education. Rather, the interest in community is more like a sea change in how we think about schools and their place in society.¹⁷⁴

We are aware as never before that there are multiple ways of living, thinking and believing in our world, all with claims to legitimacy, and none with a valid claim to superiority or hegemony.¹⁷⁵

Constructive postmodernism offers a new metaphor for community – a global community that community – acceptance of otherness and co-operation within difference.¹⁷⁶

Furman's conviction about the fundamental importance of community and the need for the acceptance of difference and co-operation within difference and Fisk's plea that schools be funded according to their function are both very important insights to keep in mind as we proceed to the separate case studies. Whether in New Zealand or overseas it is clear that educational restructuring brought about by consolidation, amalgamation, school closures, mergers or EDIs – call them what you will – is a radical educational change of increasing complexity. It is only to be expected that some parents, and in certain cases whole communities, will protest against and then contest such proposals.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Tomorrow's Schools changed the nature of the relationship between the Ministry of Education and school communities. The literature review showed that there were gaps in our knowledge about the ability of New Zealand stakeholders to successfully negotiate, resist, and contest school mergers and closures and how the communities in which they occur are affected. This thesis began as a single case study. When I began my research in 2007 I intended to focus on the Masterton District Network Review and then to use a contrastive analysis process to examine contestability issues in different network reviews throughout New Zealand. However, when the Makoura College closure crisis occurred in 2008, followed soon after by the Bush District Community Initiated Education Plan in 2009, a special opportunity presented itself to research to what extent the closure/merger dilemma is contestable in distinctly different case settings within a region. It was for these reasons that I changed focus and decided to approach the issue of contestability through researching and then comparing and contrasting school closures and mergers in three distinctively different Wairarapa case study contexts:

- 1 the Masterton District Network Review of primary schools in an urban setting, instigated by the Ministry of Education in 2003
- 2 the Makoura College closure crisis 2008 where the decision made by its Board of Trustees to close the college was later reversed after a groundswell of community opposition
- 3 the Bush District Community Initiated Education Plan 2009: an unsuccessful attempt by the Ministry of Education to implement a regional review of schools in the rural Tararua District using its newly developed Community Initiated Education Plan strategy.

In the same year as the Bush District CIEP Aorangi School in Christchurch challenged the Minister of Education's decision to close the school in a Judicial Review. The review findings and their implications will be included in the penultimate chapter. As far as I know this comprehensive case study approach has not yet been attempted in the New Zealand literature on school closures and mergers and therefore has the potential to make a worthwhile contribution to educational research as well as assisting in the recording of regional history.

The next step was to decide on an appropriate methodology. Despite an apparently clear cut topic, the first research problem was where to start. I realised that I needed to differentiate between methodology and methods. Methodology might be described as the recipe for the research, the overview that produces the desired outcome. The methods or tools used in achieving the desired outcome are like the way the ingredients are combined in a research recipe. I soon discovered that there were many ingredients in the qualitative research I was undertaking.

At the beginning it felt as if I was in the middle of a huge educational jigsaw puzzle where I had to find what the pieces were before I could determine how they fitted into the big picture. No one single body of literature or methodology seemed to form an adequate basis for research of this kind. Taylor and Bogdan¹ explain that unlike a quantitative approach, one of the underlying assumptions of qualitative research is that there is no single construct of reality waiting to be observed and measured. I found this to be true. As the research proceeded I found that I needed to use a diverse range of methods to describe the perspective of the participants and how they experienced and understood the process.

I found valuable research information from scholarly research, opinion pieces, commissioned research reports, two judicial reviews and the media. As time progressed I discovered that the subject of school closures and mergers seems to cut across several bodies of literature: that on systemic change, school consolidation, one off historical or sociological studies and commissioned reports. As a result I used a variety of approaches to gain insight into the nature of the review process and the outcomes of school closures and mergers for schools and their communities. This escalation reflects the fact that school mergers cannot be divorced from the complexity of the social context in which they occur.

All research methods have advantages and limitations of one kind or another. Creswell and Plano Clark in *Designing and Conducting Mixed Method Research*², provide a useful distinction between methodology, design and methods. They describe methodology as ‘the philosophical framework and the fundamental assumptions that relate to the entire process of research, research design as the plan of action that links the philosophical assumptions to specific methods and methods as the specific techniques of data collection and analysis used. The benefits of the mixed methods approach is the flexibility it offers in integrating qualitative and quantitative data. Their central premise is that “The use of quantitative and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone.”³

Robert Bogden and Sari Knopp Biklen⁴ offer useful advice about the design issues that need to be considered in different forms of case study research. However, for the purposes of my study, which involved describing, analysing and interpreting what happened, it became increasingly clear that I required a methodology that was appropriate for the different research contexts and allowed for maximum flexibility. Joy Higgs⁵ pointed out that in qualitative research, the interpretative paradigm, (which includes hermeneutics, constructivism, phenomenology, grounded theory and ethnography) is grounded in humanistic philosophy. Annette Crosbie Walshe⁶ referred to social science research as a mix of primary, secondary, qualitative and quantitative data and the need for valid, reliable, objective and credible research findings. Bogdan and Knopp Biklen⁷ referred to research that was “interdisciplinary” or “transdisciplinary” and alerted me to the feminist belief that feminist research should include multi-disciplinary links. However Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln’s description of the bricolage research method⁸, cited by Rob Watling and Veronica James⁹ came closest to describing what I noticed was happening as the research developed over time and named a methodology appropriate to my research task:

Denzin and Lincoln describe this collection of processes as bricolage – ‘a pieced together, close-knit set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a complex situation.’ ... and

go on to look at some of the key skills of the bricoleur – the flexible, creative, intuitive qualitative researcher who seeks to produce an in depth understanding of complex social phenomena.”¹⁰

Denzin and Lincoln¹¹ describe the bricoleur as:

... adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interviewing to observing, to interpreting personal and historical documents, to intensive self reflection and introspection. The bricoleur reads widely and is knowledgeable about the many paradigms that can be brought to any particular problem. The bricoleur understands that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting. The bricoleur knows that all research findings have political implications. The bricoleur also knows that researchers all tell stories about the worlds they have studied... The product of the bricoleur’s labour is a complex, quilt like bricolage...a reflexive collage or montage - a set of fluid, interconnected images and representation...connecting all parts to the whole.¹²

The combination of all these research ingredients enables the development of a research narrative which not only explores what happens but also how and why it happens. Exploring ‘What happens?’ can be a pathway to facts and information. Exploring ‘Why and how it happens?’ and ‘What does it mean?’ are question pathways that can lead to the generation of greater and/or new knowledge in the understanding of a very complex situation. Since bricolage is by its nature, a complex, multi layered methodology, it can accommodate this challenge. The result of my research resembles the ‘quilt like bricolage’ described by Denzin and Lincoln and Briggs and Coleman.¹³ I found that bricolage was a methodology that offered me the maximum flexibility I needed. Denzin and Lincoln¹⁴ also appreciate that the bricoleur must be adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks that might be used in a specific research context and the reality that the choice of which strategies might be used are not necessarily set in advance. They show an understanding of research as a dynamic process in which the researcher is not only collecting data that is context specific, but also interpreting its significance and reflecting upon how it connects with data already collected and where it leads. They describe bricolage as ‘a pieced together set of representations that are fitted to the specifics of a situation.’¹⁵ Although many texts on research offer helpful advice about a wide range of issues, most do not refer to bricolage specifically as a possible research method, for example, Bouma,¹⁶ Higgs,¹⁷ Bogdan and Knopp Biklen,¹⁸ Rugg and Petre.¹⁹

Previous research on school mergers and closures in my 1999 masterate thesis, already mentioned in Chapter 2, was very helpful in getting started, although the focus of this thesis is significantly different. A series of mergers of single sex secondary schools over a number of years in a national network of Catholic schools in different localities is quite different from a network review of a cluster of primary schools in the same locality or a CIEP in a rural region scheduled to be achieved within a very limited time frame against a background of shifting loyalties and changing proposals. Whereas the radical restructuring of Catholic secondary schooling in New Zealand was linked to the passing of the Conditional Integration Act 1975, this thesis examines mergers and closures occurring in a range of contexts, mostly state primary schools, after *Tomorrows’ Schools* 1989. A further difference was that primary schools have different resourcing needs and different practical issues to consider in comparison with secondary schools. Furthermore the influence of the media in this instance was much more significant in reporting and interpreting the process and shaping public opinion than was the role of the media in the 1970s and 1980s. However as the doctoral research proceeded I found that the Catholic secondary schools and the state primary schools had a number of things in

common. In both cases stakeholders were convinced of the critical importance of a transparent and consultative process. In each case power and control issues created huge stress between the stakeholders and those in authority. This could be seen in working through issues such as 'who decides why, when, how and where the merger shall occur and how the politics associated with the choice of school site should be resolved. In both cases the stakeholders experienced deep cultural grief if their beloved school was closed.

There are issues of epistemology in this thesis that need to be addressed. My previous research experience in school closures and mergers raises the issue of subjectivity and the issue of 'the researcher's presence in the text.' Most of the thesis is written in the third person narrative. On the occasions where I needed to use the first person singular I found the advice of Bogdan and Knopp Biklen²⁰ very useful and have followed it:

In the last ten years there has been a shift in preference of pronouns authors use to refer to themselves when writing qualitative research reports...the use of "I" is more honest and direct... Using "the researcher" is thought in many circles to be pretentious...and connotes an objectivity that does not really exist.²¹

I have disclosed my educational background and my previous work on school mergers and closures in "Notes on the Researcher" at the beginning of the thesis in order to assist the reader to understand the range of educational experiences in my history which have contributed to my connection with the thesis topic and the regions in which the closures and mergers happened.

In 2007, using key words such as mergers, closures and EDIs, I accessed 182 internet sites which had material on school closures, school mergers, and education development initiatives. For analysis purposes I selected those which were relevant to the focus of this thesis. In September 2008 I discovered another 452 sites when I used consolidation as the key search word. This illustrates the diversity and continually expanding range of available web based material on this topic and also the need to be aware that different countries and different researchers use different terms for the same process. Electronic data sources provide a valuable source of information because not only do they allow access to contemporary research on the subject, but also they allow the reader an opportunity to connect with how school communities experience and respond to school closures and mergers in a range of different international settings.

Surveys allow access to similar sets of information in local settings so I constructed a survey related to the Masterton District Network Review 2003 to record and analyse how a range of key stakeholders, had experienced interpreted and understood the process and the outcomes. I offered the survey to a representative group of forty-five stakeholders from the different schools involved in the network review. After having read their responses and discerned the emerging patterns in the answers received, I contacted a number of respondents who agreed to participate in semi-structured interviews based on answers they gave that were of particular interest. Copies of the survey and the letters of disclosure and consent are included in the Appendix. While this thesis is not dependent on the survey, the responses of the respondents in retrospect add to the body of knowledge about what happened through recording how trustees, principals, staff and parents experienced, interpreted and responded to what happened. In order to assess the depth and breadth of opinion in the community I contacted chairpersons of boards of trustees,

trustees, principals, teachers, office staff, caretakers, teacher aides and parents. Respondents were contacted by phone to talk about the thesis before the surveys were sent out. This provided them with an opportunity to discuss how the survey fitted into the research and to ask any questions they wished before they agreed to participate. With the exception of two people, those approached were very willing to contribute to the study and often gave the name of another person who might be interested in participating. In an interview with *Wairarapa News* I invited any member of the community who would like to answer the survey or share their experience of the network review to contact me. While only three people did so, this opportunity to respond provided through the media was an attempt on my part to provide a pathway to inclusion for any stakeholder who might have something that they particularly wanted to say.

To address any issues in the survey that might arise in relation to Treaty of Waitangi I took the survey to Jim Rimene, respected Kaumatua of Rangitane o Wairarapa. Mr Rimene has spent many years researching the land claims of his iwi and was awarded the New Zealand Order of Merit in the 2007 New Zealand Honours List for his services to the community. He took the survey to a leading kaumatua of Ngati Kahungunu, the other tangata whenua iwi of the Wairarapa. Neither kaumatua identified any issues with the survey. Once I had finalised the survey and interview proposal documents I was required to make a 'Low Risk Notification' application to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. Permission to proceed with the survey was received on January 14, 2009. The committee gave permission for a survey that was designed to apply to the 2003 Masterton District network review of primary schools. Makoura College was a secondary school. Its closure crisis did not happen until 2008. The Bush District CIEP did not happen until 2009. The context and the process for each was different and therefore the survey was not applicable in these cases.

A researcher has to accept that survey responses are what the respondents have chosen to say and certainly not all that might have been said. Surveys are nevertheless a valuable source of information because they allow us an opportunity to reflect on how people remember their experience of school closures and reviews. Surveys also assist researchers to monitor their own research behaviour. Since I have personally experienced a school closure and merger both as a parent and as a teacher and researched the group of Catholic closures and mergers in the secondary sector, previously described, I had the benefit of added knowledge, insights and empathy to bring to the construction of the survey. Such factors are very useful in conducting qualitative research. The survey answers became an important tool in testing and/or confirming my assumptions and, given that I am a secondary school teacher, keeping me grounded in the primary school context.

The survey answers allowed me to build up a more comprehensive picture about how school closures and mergers affect school communities and the wider community. The answers often confirmed previous research so they could be used later for contrastive analysis purposes and they also allowed the opportunity to test for possible congruency with the other case studies in this thesis. Initially I sorted the answers into categories by question number and stakeholder type, such as board chairs, trustees, principals, teachers and ancillary staff for analysis purposes. Distinct patterns of agreement and disagreement emerged as the responses to each question were collated and reviewed. I discussed my findings with my supervisors. The collected data were refined as themes connected with the purpose of the

research. Responses that were particularly useful for illustrating some of the issues involved were integrated in the thesis research. I was only able to use a few of the many valuable responses I received. For some questions I have provided a number of responses. I agree with Bill Gillam²² that:

Sometimes you would want to convey the force of people's feelings by giving several quotations that do say essentially the same thing: it drives the point home.²³

The answers of the respondents to the survey questions provided me with the opportunity to ask them further questions at greater depth in semi-structured interviews at a later time based on their survey answers. As Gillam also points out:

People have a great deal to tell us: appreciating this means attempting to enter someone else's world – the world as they see it...real world research is not only untidy and complicated it constitutes a theoretical challenge, namely how to make sense of what may appear to be discrepant or discordant elements. Therein lies the fascination of this style of research.²⁴

The follow up semi-structured interviews were a complement to the survey. Most were conducted face to face and occasionally by telephone. An additional purpose of the survey and the interviews was to give the stakeholders an opportunity to be heard and a vehicle which they could use to assist them to organise their thoughts and experiences as they reflected upon and reviewed their personal experience during the closure/merger process. The semi-structured interviews focussed on the answers respondents had already given in the survey and provided them with the opportunity to expand upon their answers if they wished. The telephone interviews conducted were usually with survey respondents who had shifted from the district or people in the other research contexts who lived some distance away, (for example the South Island or in the Tararua District).

Other telephone 'interviews' usually took the form of voluntary conversations of varying lengths based on discussions related to various exemplars of research data that non survey respondents had either made available or research which they believed merited investigation or they wished to discuss. In such instances telephone interviews were also very useful because of the geographical distances involved. Gillam²⁵ alerts researchers to the fact that the main disadvantage of telephone interviewing is that you cannot see the person (and vice versa). However in this instance the validity of the research was not dependent on the telephone interviews. Rather it was the case that the telephone interviews were very valuable conversational pathways to deeper reflection and review.

At various times throughout the thesis I have used the term 'cultural taonga' (cultural treasure) to describe the way in which many New Zealand people view their school communities. As far as I know this is a term of my own devising. I devised it because I could not find a specific term in the research literature which accurately described the deep emotional connectedness that so many New Zealanders feel for their schools, to the extent that they are willing to fight to preserve them. The word 'treasure' in English, defined by the *Collins English Dictionary*, denotes material wealth and riches, usually hoarded, especially in the form of money, precious metals or gems. It may also denote a highly valued thing or a person. The meaning of the word taonga in Te Reo, one of the official languages of New Zealand, is not blurred by the denotation of material riches and seemed to me to more appropriately capture the emotional attachment to and the relationship of the person with the person or thing that is so highly prized.

I visited the Ministry of Education office in Market Grove Lower Hutt on September 17, 2007 in order to listen to the viewpoint of the Ministry officials involved in the Masterton Network Review. I was told that the main people involved in the 2003 network review had since moved elsewhere. On October 3, 2007 I received an email from Diana Tucker who had been instructed by Bill Barrett, Acting Manager Student Support, to advise me that he was sorry to say that he would be “unable to help in this matter.”

I visited the Ministry of Education office in Wellington and spoke with Martin Connolly who presented “Rural Schools and Government Policy” at the 2003 seminar at Massey University and discussed the points he made in his presentation. I also spoke with Trish Gavin, Property Disposal Manager, National Operations, in order to understand the process issues involved in the management and disposal of closed schools.

When I visited the Wellington office of the School Trustees Association they kindly gave me a copy of the report they had commissioned written by Shirley Harris.

The radical restructuring of education in New Zealand took place against a backdrop of Government restructuring in health and local government which also involved closures and mergers. Education, health and local government touch everybody’s lives. They are particularly significant issues for people living in rural towns. In the restructuring of health, towns throughout the Wairarapa lost four maternity annexes, the Greytown and Pahiatua hospitals and the Masterton Hospital was threatened with closure. The community outrage and organised protest succeeded in saving Masterton Hospital. Garry and Lindy Daniell gave me access to their comprehensive media clippings file²⁶ which documented the development of the Wairarapa campaigns from 1991 onwards against Government restructuring in health. Garry Daniell, who was one of the leaders of the Hands Around Our Hospital campaign, was elected Mayor of Masterton in 2007. Soon after his election he found himself in the position of assisting MP John Hayes in the campaign to keep Makoura College open when it was threatened with closure.

It became apparent that the local media coverage of mergers and closures would play a major role in my research for several reasons which I will now outline. The media coverage, which captures the community response to school mergers and closures allows us to realise how deeply people feel about their schools. The ways in which a community adapts to change or opposes it through its responses can affect the final outcome. In the process it is inevitable that social relationships and cultural understandings will be tested and altered because once the change management process is completed things will never be the same as they were before it started. One of the roles of the media is to observe and record the social, political and cultural context in which change occurs in a community. In doing so, the media can play a very important role in forming, shaping and/or reinforcing the attitudes and perceptions of the communities in its circulation area. Graphic images alone can affect how a reader feels about an issue. Media coverage can also provide an insight into how government policies are being received in the localities. Media reports, feature articles, photographs, editorials, letters to the editor and editorial features are very useful for picking up the pulse of the community values that underpin the debate. This was certainly the case in this research. While my survey respondents rated school newsletters more highly than the media as important information sources, for the members of the wider community no longer

directly involved in schools, the media was perhaps their most significant information source.

Reference to the wide variety of media resources from 1995-2012 in the reference section will confirm the importance of school closure and merger issues in the rural towns in which they happened. The dominant pattern, and a sign of their importance, is the frequency of front page coverage. In order to enable an understanding of how the local media sources tracked the developing stories of each of the case studies, the references have been organised in chronological order, instead of author order, and then organised into separate files: newspaper editorials, reports, letters to the editor and advertisements. This decision allows readers to monitor how communities were responding to the processes and the debates as they occurred, as well as assisting me to monitor the response of school stakeholders. Most media reports were attributed but some were not. I have provided the reporter's name where known. This decision allows an opportunity to notice gender employment patterns which become apparent in the reporting of educational issues in rural communities.

The newspapers referred to in this thesis are: *Bush Telegraph*, (Pahiatua), *Dannevirke News*, *Dominion Post* (Wellington), *Manawatu Standard*, (Palmerston North), *Wairarapa News* (Masterton) and *Wairarapa Times Age* (Masterton). Although the material published in newspapers is in the public domain, I wrote to the editors of all the newspapers listed as a matter of courtesy to describe the focus of the thesis, to advise them that I would be using media reports, that they would be acknowledged and asking that in the event that they had any concerns that they should contact me. The editor of the *Bush Telegraph* was the only one who replied and kindly offered further support if I should find it useful.

The thirty-four statistical and historical tables in this thesis have been designed to summarise and simplify key events, developments and to probe timeframes for the reader. Tables are also useful in assisting readers to understand the relevant contemporary historical, social and educational contexts in which the events occurred and from which they cannot be divorced.

I also researched various archival sources. The *Wairarapa Times Age* Archive is now closed to the public. I was therefore very pleased that I had maintained a personal media clippings file on most of the schools in the Masterton district for a number of years before I began this thesis. In 2009, as a research courtesy, I visited Dave Saunders, editor of the *Wairarapa Times Age* at the time and Piers Fuller of the *Wairarapa News* to let them know about my doctoral studies and how I would be recognising the importance of newspaper coverage in assisting the community to understand the issues involved in the closure/merger process. I showed them the extensive list of newspaper references which were playing an important role in achieving my research objectives and advised them that a selection would feature in the doctorate. Dave Saunders kindly offered to make the *Wairarapa Times Age* Archive available to me should I need to use it, which I did.

When I visited the *Wairarapa* Archive, the archivist, Gareth Winter, accessed the minutes of the meetings held by the trustees of Lansdowne School, Harley Street and Totara Drive School. The trustees at the other schools which were closed in the 2003 network review have not lodged their minutes with the archive. The Archive also holds a selection of histories of most schools that were published when significant milestones were celebrated such as their fiftieth, seventy-fifth, centennial

and one hundred and twenty-fifth jubilees. The Archive stores a collection of photographs of Wairarapa schools at various stages of their history. Only Cornwall Street School gave the Archive a collection of photographs for historical purposes which recorded details of the school and its grounds before closure.

I also used a range of official documents such as newsletters, policy documents, news releases and pamphlets. These are useful because they are written for public consumption so they provide evidence of the 'official' position on a range of issues for various target audiences. They also often contain rich sources of quantitative data.

I will be using a significant number of photographs throughout the thesis, and in the penultimate chapter in particular, for descriptive and contrastive analysis purposes. While it is a cliché to say that 'a picture is worth a thousand words', it is nevertheless true. I used photographs successfully in my previous thesis so needed no convincing to use them again. I accessed significant photos and also took hundreds of photographs myself as a simple, fast way to communicate facts and to illustrate a number of important points I wished to make. Some years into the research I discovered researchers who recognise the importance of photographs as a rich source of descriptive data. Bogden and Knopp Biklen²⁷ provide a valuable measuring rod for deciding whether or not to use photographs as part of research:

...most social scientists neither accept or reject photography outright; they ask, "What value does it have for me and how can I make use of it in my own work?" They ask these questions in relation to specific research problems and with particular photographs in mind.²⁸

Bogden and Knopp Biklen²⁹ see photographs as part of the wider research context:

While photos may not be able to prove anything conclusively, when used in conjunction with other data, they can add to a growing pile of evidence.³⁰

They also alert researchers to the drawbacks of using photographs such as the need to gain the written permission of each recognisable individual prior to publication. Unless the written releases are obtained the photographic data cannot be used. In the case of photographs that are already in the public domain as they have already been published in the media, the permission of the publisher is required.

I used photographs to illustrate particular points I wish to make. I have only used a fraction of the collection of photographs at my disposal. Sometimes a photograph can tell a story about school closures/mergers that no written words can possibly convey. For instance I used a number of aerial photographs of schools involved in the Masterton District Review, mostly taken by Peter Nikolaison. An aerial photograph can illustrate better than any written description, the geographical proximity of two sites selected for closure and the surrounding population distribution or the proximity of a school to valuable local facilities that can be used to assist the education of children. Photographs are also useful for judging the extent to which a school could reasonably be expected to cope with a merger with another school. Other photographs, for example in Chapter 8, show schools in their prime, which are then contrasted with post closure photographs of abandoned school sites taken over a two year period which provide factual evidence of the collateral damage for the community which had to live with the progressive deterioration of school buildings, vandalism and arson attacks. I accessed photographs of the arson attacks and vandalism published by *Wairarapa Times Age* and *Wairarapa News* and visited abandoned school sites. I photographed the sites of the schools which remained

after the Masterton Network Review to assist in the analysis of the emerging cultures in the continuing schools. I also visited and photographed all of the schools that were part of the Bush District CIEP. The photographs taken of all these schools and the photographs showing how people react when schools are closed, abandoned and arsoned all strengthen my argument that schools are cultural taonga and social capital for their communities and that communities experience cultural grief when they close.

I used maps as reference points for the reader to show the distribution and location of schools before and after the Masterton District Network Review and the location of schools in the Tararua Review.

Since the sources consulted for this thesis were extensive, I have chosen to organise them under major headings in the Bibliography. Under unpublished primary material I included unpublished letters and archival material, Media Sources, such as newspapers and magazines have been organised in a separate section. In this thesis the newspaper sources cover a period of twenty-five years. These sources are very important, extensive and usually have clear links to different chapters. The most important newspapers were: *Bush Telegraph*, (Pahiatua) *Dannevirke News*, *Dominion Post* (Wellington), *Manawatu Standard*, (Palmerston North), *Wairarapa News* (Masterton) and *Wairarapa Times Age* (Masterton). Since this thesis has a distinctly regional anchor, the newspapers have been listed separately in alphabetical order and the reports and feature articles listed in chronological order for ease of reference. Some reports were attributed, some not. I have provided the reporter's name where known. This method allows the reader the opportunity to easily discern patterns of community issues within and across regions, such as the Wairarapa, Tararua District and beyond, in the coverage of school closures and mergers. The secondary sources section includes published material such as books, journal articles, research reports and scholarly research, both printed and on the internet, organised into subsections. In the Ephemera section I have included such documents as annual reports and occasional publications together with photographic material, all of which make a valuable contribution to our understanding of the context in which school closures and mergers occur.

The scaffolded process for doctoral students required by the Massey University Graduate Research School required me to provide six monthly progress reports and also an oral presentation in order that full doctoral registration could be achieved. The opportunity to present the developments in my research at doctoral symposiums at Massey University in 2007 and 2008 provided further valuable opportunities for reflection and review.

The existing literature on school closures and mergers in New Zealand is very useful, but not extensive. Some of the significant reports, the two judicial reviews and the few theses took some time to access. The Internet provides many useful articles and examples of overseas research as well as links to stakeholder protest organisations. I consulted educational journals produced in New Zealand, Australia, Australia, United Kingdom and USA, both those on computerised data bases and those available at the Massey University libraries, in order to keep up to date with current research and theory related to the aims and objectives of my research and to find to what extent they were relevant. I used the Massey University Library, Turitea Campus; Massey University Library, Hokowhitu Campus; Te Puna Matauranga o

Aotearoa, National Library of New Zealand and the School Trustees Association Library.

Educational research cannot be divorced from the context in which it occurs. For this reason, Chapter 1 describes the social, historical, cultural and educational context in New Zealand in which school mergers and closures occur. Over the last twenty years radical restructuring has happened in all areas of education. The consequences of policies introduced by various governments which are relevant to the discussion will be explained.

The literature review is covered in Chapter 2 because it was the literature review that led to the decision to use the bricolage methodology. The bricolage methodology will be discussed in Chapter 3.

The first case study, 2003 Masterton District Network Review, provides the research focus for Chapter 4. The decisions about school mergers and closures are among the most difficult decisions that school trustees will ever have to make. If they decide to resist and contest the shifting proposals for closures and mergers they must be both determined and politically astute if they are to win the battle for survival.

Chapter 5 deals with the aftermath of the 2008 decision by the Makoura College Board of Trustees to close the college and the forms of community protest that resulted in the reversal of the decision.

Chapter 6 examines the Bush District Community Initiated Education Plan and the unsuccessful attempt by the Ministry of Education to use this new strategy in a regional review of schooling soon after the five year moratorium on network reviews was lifted in 2009. After writing draft chapters for the Bush District CIEP I submitted them to eight of the principals, three teachers, BOTs, the organiser of the Woodville protest march and a member of the working party for triangulation purposes. The feedback was that the draft chapters were a fair representation of what had happened. Minor errors of fact were drawn to my attention and addressed and extra insights were offered.

The penultimate chapter reports and reflects on the research findings of the thesis. It also offers some recommendations for policy makers in the future.

Chapter 8 reflects on the aftermath of school closure and merger decisions: the challenge of creating a new school culture and the community issues which arise as a result of the prolonged procedure involved in the disposal of abandoned schools.

Tomorrow's Schools changed the nature of the relationship between the Ministry of Education and school communities. The literature review showed that there were gaps in our knowledge about the ability of New Zealand stakeholders to successfully negotiate, resist, and contest school mergers and closures and how the communities in which they occur are affected. Where does the power lie?

CHAPTER 4

'THE STATUS QUO IS NOT AN OPTION:'

THE MASTERTON DISTRICT NETWORK REVIEW 2003

Trustees will report that decisions about school closures are among the most difficult they have to make. The loss of a neighbourhood school to closure has a profound impact on children, parents, teachers and communities.¹

Finally, I am convinced that 'community' is not another fad or "hot topic" in education. Rather, the interest in community is more like a sea change in how we think about schools and their place in society.²

When faced with a network review school stakeholders have a number of options: they can volunteer to close, they can seek a merger with a suitable partner, they can seek a stay of action by seeking more time, they can invest effort in negotiating an alternative outcome or they can resist closure by fighting to survive as a stand-alone school. Contesting school closures and mergers involves some form of protest as an individual, as a school, as a group or as a community.

In this chapter we will examine the Masterton District Network Review process 2003 which resulted in the closure of five state primary schools. Closures and mergers expose the raw nerves of a community. The rising tension in Masterton was evident in the strained relations between town and country schools and schools on the east side and the west side of town. Masterton turned its back on the opportunity to regain a new school on the east side of town after the closure of East School in 1999. The review process was punctuated by racial tension, arguments about earthquake fault lines, integrated schools, the relative merits of smaller versus bigger schools, the alleged use of school buses for student poaching purposes, and the call to restrict parental choice of schools in the post *Tomorrow's Schools* environment.

Cornwall Street School and West School accepted the ministry mantra that 'the status quo was not an option' and volunteered to merge. Although some schools, like Lansdowne, Harley Street and Miki Miki resisted in the early stages they reluctantly resigned themselves to accepting merger or closure later in the process. The standout example of a school which, against the odds, successfully fought against closure or merger was Solway Primary School. One school which arguably deserved to survive and did not was Totara Drive. Why were some schools more successful at contesting closure than others? The examination of the post *Tomorrow's Schools* environment and the review process itself will provide some of the answers.

The Impact of *Tomorrow's Schools*

The long period of stability in educational provision in Masterton ended soon after the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools* in 1989 while Labour Prime Minister David Lange was Minister of Education. The removal of zoning in 1991 by Dr Lockwood Smith, Minister of Education in the National Government complicated matters even further. Regardless of which political party was in power, once schools became marketable commodities they had to produce a prospectus, plan an advertising campaign, a recruiting strategy and a successful open day. ERO reports were often front page news and the way the media reported school activities shaped parental perceptions for better or worse. Parental choice in state schools was only restricted if the school had an enrolment scheme. The InterLEAD consultants reported:

Without doubt the single greatest issue encountered during the Review is that of the historical division between the East and West sides of Masterton. Whatever its origins many years ago the division seems to be deeply seated and perpetuated by common practice. New arrivals buying a house are openly advised not to purchase in the East.³

The impact of school choice on property values has been reported by researchers in New Zealand such as Beaven⁴ and Richardson⁵ and overseas such as Waslander and Thrupp:⁶

Regardless of ethnicity, families that are (or aspire to be) better off, make decisions based on the perceived socio-economic status (SES) of students attending the school, choosing to bypass low decile schools that may be closer.⁷

The community preference for Masterton west side schools or schools on the rural/urban fringe was often reflected in valuation reports and real estate advertisements with phrases such as, “zoned for popular west side schools.” By the time of the review thirty per cent of Masterton children did not attend their neighbourhood school. The shifting pattern of enrolments, shown in selected schools in Tables 17 and 18, left some schools with declining rolls and empty class rooms. This became a prime cause of the 2003 Masterton District Network Review. In the ten year time period of 1991–1999 after *Tomorrow's Schools*, the enrolment at country schools increased by over 100 students.

It became clear before, during and after the review that racial issues were influencing school enrolments and destabilising schooling provision. The survey that was part of this thesis offered a valuable opportunity to consider the perceptions of parents, teachers, principals and trustees about a range of issues as they reflected later on how they experienced the network review at the time. Question 24 of the survey asked: ‘In some merger/closure processes racial issues were alleged to have influenced the outcomes. East School, Hiona Intermediate and Makoura College all had a high proportion of non-European students. Did you notice any issues that arose that were related to racial issues of any sort? Please comment.’ The respondents who did not notice the presence of any racial issues came from schools which did not close, however most respondents were aware of the east/west divide that has long been part of Masterton’s history:

Masterton is separated into East (less favourable) and West (more favourable). Everyone knows this, and the reasons why - mostly related to race and wealth. At one meeting I attended, parents talked about not wanting the “no moneys” zoned for their school.⁸

Hiona Intermediate site had a bad reputation “don’t want my little five year old mixing with those big black kids from the block.” – East side wrong side of town.⁹

Yet despite these negative perceptions every school in the area had earned a favourable ERO report. When asked in the thesis survey if they knew of any evidence before the review which suggested that their school was dysfunctional or failing, principals, teachers, trustees and parents all referred to positive experiences with their school and good ERO reports which referred to sound financial management, sound leadership, healthy staff morale and happy children. Two replies from principals are typical:

No. The ERO review of April 2001 stated 'The BOT, principal and staff are committed to providing quality experiences suited to the learning needs of students.... Settled classrooms, productive learning environments and appropriate levels of on task behaviour are evident' an excellent report on a school which was functioning extremely well.¹⁰

No. Increasing roll. Positive ERO report. Positive parental support. Student achievement levels. Staff morale.¹¹

Most stakeholders were therefore confused and upset when their school was selected for closure. One respondent said that he had accessed and read the ERO reports just to be sure that there was no such motive.¹² Only one principal expressed concerns about falling rolls, reduced staffing and managing finances.

Falling School Rolls

Since the National Government Cabinet guidelines indicated that a roll of 300 was the desired norm for primary schools, schools with rolls of less than 300 children could immediately be seen to be at risk. Although the Totara Drive roll had reached 306 in 2001, only Masterton Intermediate exceeded that figure in 2003. Survey respondents believed that the preference for smaller or bigger schools is largely a personal matter and that reliable and valid research makes no case for one being better than the other. Many respondents emphasised that the quality of teaching and the commitment of the staff were more important than school size. At the time of the review, the average size of a Wairarapa primary school was 148.8 pupils, less than half the size desired. However it is important to remember that thirty-seven per cent of New Zealand schools had less than one hundred students and thirteen per cent had less than fifty. Moreover, as far as small schools are concerned there are also community expectations to consider. In the thesis survey, using the Ministry of Education definition of a small school as one with less than 150 pupils, only a small number of respondents preferred the greater opportunities in larger schools. The vast majority preferred smaller schools for a variety of reasons. While some preferred a school of 300–400, others thought 180-280 is ideal. They thought that the quality of a school was determined not by its size but by the quality of its governance and management and that the development of a “team culture” and “getting everybody to pull in the same direction” was easier in a school with a staff of eight to fourteen. Smaller schools meant fewer problem students, who were therefore easier to manage, easier decision making and a greater sense of belonging and community spirit.

Before *Tomorrow's Schools* school closures were decided by the Department of Education inspectorate. After 1989 a school with a roll below eight could be closed. Both Te Wharau and Bideford schools found themselves in this situation. When Te Wharau School closed in 1998, the remaining five students went to Gladstone. The fluctuating rolls for the schools in Masterton are illustrated in Tables 19 and 20. The complete tables are provided in Appendices A and B on pages 206 and 207.

TABLE 19: FALLING ROLLS IN MASTERTON SCHOOLS 1991–2000.

Data extracted from Directory of New Zealand Schools and Tertiary Institutions, prepared by the Data Management Unit and the Data Analysis Section Ministry of Education 1991– 2000.¹³

| School Rolls | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Cornwall Street | 197 | 174 | 173 | 158 | 153 | 169 | 176 | 162 | 157 | 143 |
| Fernridge | 95 | 89 | 91 | 100 | 143 | 104 | 115 | 123 | 137 | 133 |
| Harley Street | 183 | 177 | 177 | 174 | 190 | 180 | 182 | 191 | 184 | 196 |
| Lansdowne | 300 | 291 | 271 | 237 | 236 | 192 | 201 | 207 | 211 | 174 |
| Masterton Central | 248 | 255 | 237 | 239 | 269 | 268 | 299 | 297 | 271 | 264 |
| Masterton East | 191 | 180 | 183 | 194 | 170 | 166 | 157 | 139 | 129 | 100 |
| Masterton West | 221 | 201 | 194 | 203 | 231 | 194 | 222 | 216 | 192 | 176 |
| Solway | 98 | 95 | 95 | 127 | 132 | 121 | 145 | 153 | 180 | 173 |
| Totara Drive | 256 | 285 | 301 | 289 | 299 | 274 | 297 | 290 | 275 | 282 |
| Opaki | 107 | 113 | 110 | 110 | 105 | 115 | 126 | 126 | 127 | 143 |
| Intermediates | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
| Hiona | 196 | 213 | 225 | 197 | 197 | 168 | 157 | 149 | 127 | 115 |
| MIS | 344 | 354 | 361 | 356 | 365 | 421 | 439 | 432 | 438 | 433 |

TABLE 20: FALLING ROLLS IN WAIRARAPA 2001-2010.

July 1 Headcount roll data for cluster schools, Ministry of Education 2001–2010.¹⁴

| School Rolls | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Cornwall Street | 149 | 141 | 148 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Fernridge | 140 | 135 | 138 | 184 | 164 | 163 | 162 | 169 | 187 | 200 |
| Harley Street | 204 | 211 | 202 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Lansdowne | 178 | 172 | 192 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Masterton Central | 267 | 278 | 234 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Masterton East | 67 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Masterton West | 164 | 169 | 163 | Closed | Closed | Closed | closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Solway | 155 | 168 | 182 | 198 | 208 | 205 | 210 | 208 | 200 | 190 |
| Totara Drive | 306 | 293 | 295 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Opaki | 136 | 130 | 138 | 149 | 162 | 164 | 162 | 163 | 156 | 160 |
| New Merged schools | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
| Douglas Park | – | – | – | 315 | 290 | 327 | 343 | 319 | 331 | 350 |
| Lakeview | – | – | – | 485 | 466 | 492 | 468 | 446 | 461 | 441 |
| Masterton Primary | – | – | – | 398 | 324 | 259 | 253 | 205 | 205 | 232 |
| Intermediates | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
| Hiona | 113 | 100 | 103 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| MIS | 475 | 475 | 479 | 479 | 404 | 382 | 412 | 412 | 407 | 361 |

The Background to the Masterton District Network Review

In the years leading up to the network review, several schools in the Masterton district closed in storms of public acrimony. The most notable example was East School, established in 1937, at one point, the largest primary school in Masterton. Coming so soon after the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools*, the East School case provides a valuable insight into how staff and parents were exploring contestability issues in the new governance and management context and discovering what they could and could not do. East School parents became publicly vocal and politically active in challenging the new decision making authority of their board to co-opt trustees and to appoint staff and challenged them to be accountable for their actions.

Small is beautiful

Teachers expect to be able to do a better job of teaching in small schools than in large ones and are being encouraged to do so by the Minister of Education. One of the reasons for this is that small schools are more likely to be able to provide a better quality of education for their students. This is because small schools are more likely to be able to provide a more personalized education for their students. This is because small schools are more likely to be able to provide a more personalized education for their students. This is because small schools are more likely to be able to provide a more personalized education for their students.

The Education Ministry claims big schools are best. Yet New Zealand research shows that small schools, perform just as well, if not better, than larger schools, writes Noel O'Hare, communications officer for New Zealand Educational Institute.

Six Masterton schools may go

TARA KATTENS
SIX schools in Masterton will disappear through a merger of primary schools, announced by the Minister of Education. The schools are: St. Mary's, St. Peter's, St. John's, St. James', St. Michael's and St. Anne's.

AGENTS
FREE
LEGAL
When MUSTIZI RESTAURANT

Axe to swing on 300 schools

DAVID FISHER
THREE HUNDRED schools are expected to be closed in the next few years, says the Minister of Education. The schools are: St. Mary's, St. Peter's, St. John's, St. James', St. Michael's and St. Anne's.

School roll crisis

Miki Miki vows to keep going
Miki Miki, Mayor of Masterton, has vowed to keep the city's schools open despite a predicted drop in the school roll. He says that the city's schools are an important part of the community and that he will do everything in his power to keep them open.

Mayor told to butt out

TARA KATTENS
THE debate over possible Masterton school closures has turned angry today with one headmaster telling the Mayor to butt out. The headmaster says that the Mayor's interference in the school's affairs is causing a great deal of confusion and that the school's future should be decided by the school's staff and parents.

School merger details leaked

KERRI BOWLING
SOLWAY Primary School Board of Trustees chairman has leaked details of a proposed merger of schools in Masterton. The merger would involve the merging of St. Mary's, St. Peter's, St. John's, St. James', St. Michael's and St. Anne's into a single school.

School vovs to fight

KERRI BOWLING
Miki Miki School board chairman has vowed to fight the proposed merger of schools in Masterton. He says that the merger would result in the loss of jobs and the closure of the school's facilities.

Ferridge wins in school review

ALASTAIR CAMPBELL
FERRIDGE is the big winner and Torara Drive loser in the Minister of Education's latest verdict on the review of Masterton's primary schools. The review found that Ferridge is a high performing school and that Torara Drive is a low performing school.

Teachers' jobs may go

ROS BROWN
MASTERTON schools have bought a month's grace to make decisions on their fate at the hands of the controversial Ministry of Education review. The review is expected to result in the closure of several schools and the loss of many teaching jobs.

School not ready till fourth term

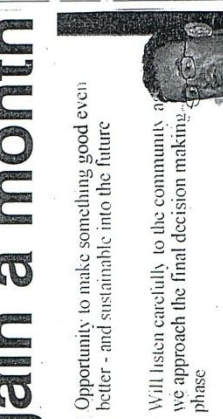
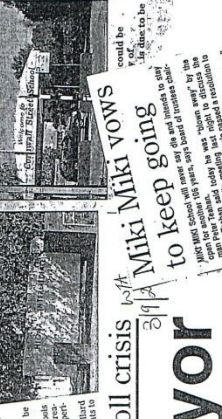
WARWARRA
Being taught from the old Lansdowne two months ago to ensure that through those months the children between the two schools are not separated for assembly and other school events. The school is not ready to start the fourth term until the end of the year.

Opportunity to make something good even better - and sustainable into the future

ROS BROWN
There's still a community approach to the final decision making. The community is being encouraged to get involved in the decision making process and to make sure that the schools that remain are sustainable into the future.

Will listen carefully to the community as we approach the final decision making phase

ROS BROWN
The Minister of Education has promised to listen carefully to the community as they approach the final decision making phase. He says that the community's views are an important part of the decision making process.



The tangled politics which eventually led to its merger with the Kura Kaupapa, established in 1994, was plagued with parental protest, angry complaints about inadequate communication, cultural dissension, white flight, brown flight and front page media coverage.

The appointment of Marama Tuuta as the new principal of East School in May 1990, ahead of acting Principal Tony Hogg, deeply divided both the staff and the parent community. The East School Parents' Support Group of seventy-seven parents fought the decision. They petitioned the Labour Minister of Education, Phil Goff, to dismiss their Board of Trustees on the grounds of disharmony, lack of action and incompetence. They laid a complaint with the Ombudsman requesting that he investigate the board's operations and their appointment procedures. They questioned whether Mrs Tuuta would have been appointed in the days before *Tomorrow's Schools*. The East School Board of Trustees elected in 1989 comprised five elected parent representatives and a staff representative. Before Mrs Tuuta's appointment the board co-opted three new members: Rose Steward, Grant Maranui and Dawn Aporo. The parent protest group knew that permission had been given to appoint one kaumatua representative to the board but was unaware of any permission having been granted to appoint Rose Steward and Grant Maranui. Since five trustees were perceived as representing the two bilingual classes in the school, they believed the extra appointments resulted in a 'stacked' board.

During the crisis *Wairarapa Times Age* played an important role in highlighting the new managerial and governance issues facing school communities:

Mrs Waters said today parents want the board dissolved because it won't answer questions about Mrs Tuuta's qualifications or experience. The group only knows that Mrs Tuuta is a junior school teacher for the Correspondence School. This leads us to believe she has no first hand knowledge of running a school. If Mrs Tuuta does not have the qualifications parents want to know if she got the job because she was a Maori.¹⁵

The lack of clear and transparent communication with parents led to further public dissension. On July 4, 1990, five days before Mrs Tuuta was due to take up her position as principal, *Wairarapa Times Age* readers learnt¹⁶ that seventeen of the twenty-two members of staff had signed a letter asking the board of trustees to explain why they had appointed Marama Tuuta ahead of Acting Principal Tony Hogg. When the board met the staff, it cited Part 1 Section 7 of the Official Information and Meetings Act to justify not disclosing the information that they sought. Karen Waters strongly objected on the basis that in self-governing schools parents had the right to know.

By 1995 the school was functioning with a total immersion Maori programme, a bilingual Maori unit and a mainstream unit. The confirmed ERO assurance audit reported that the national curriculum was being effectively delivered in each unit and identifying barriers to student learning and overcoming them was an outstanding strength. However racial tension deepened in 1996 after the board of trustees decided that East School would become a school where only Te Reo Maori was spoken without consulting the parents beforehand. The resignation of trustees Karen Waters and Janette Graham in April 1997 made front page headlines:

They even want the children to only speak Maori in the playground, Mrs Graham said, The choice is being taken away from them. It is racist. We have empty classrooms and others could be added if they wanted to have a section of the school for whole immersion. But to exclude children from the school because they want to speak a language other than Maori is not on....A lot of the parents don't

understand what a charter is and don't realise that it dictates how a school will be governed. All that was said in the school newsletter about this huge change was that there would be a meeting to discuss the charter and total immersion to Form 7. There was no letter sent to parents and no discussion with the community.¹⁷

In the letters to the editor that soon followed¹⁸ Te Reo Maori was described by one correspondent as 'a stone age language' with "a narrow insignificant literature" and that as a result of the new policy the children would be "denied by default, all the wealth of literature and knowledge that is available in our public libraries." Before her resignation in May 1997 after seven years as principal, Marama Tuuta defended her decision to proceed with implementing the new policy on the grounds that staff needed to have the flexibility to reorganise classes in the best interests of the children. "This was the determining factor in the decision to reorganise the five classes but was not publicised in order to protect the children."¹⁹

The board's decision to introduce an immersion unit fuelled the white flight and brown flight to schools elsewhere, including brown flight to the Kura Kaupapa. A critical ERO review in 1999 was followed by a second review six months later. The 2000 ERO report highlighted unstable and poor governance, lack of management and poor planning and found that there could be no assurances that students were receiving programmes which covered all essential learning areas. It doubted that the board and management had the knowledge and the skills to ensure the development that was needed to meet their obligations. In the six months between the first two ERO reports, the East School roll dropped dramatically from 136 students in 1999 to ninety-nine in 2000. By 2001 the roll had dropped to sixty-seven. A further review was held. By March 2002 only twenty students remained. Masterton East School closed on April 14, 2002. Its merger the following day with Kura Kaupapa Maori on the East School site left the East side without a neighbourhood school. This issue was to affect the outcomes of the 2003 network review and to become a powerful undercurrent in the 2008 Makoura College closure crisis.

The Masterton District Network Review 2003

As the 2003 Masterton District Network Review approached, citizens were reminded that ten years earlier Robin Carlyon, Principal of Cornwall Street School at the time, had noticed that at least four schools in the Masterton District were suffering roll decline, concluded that schools with rolls of under 150 faced a bleak future and proposed a voluntary school merger.²⁰ The Cornwall Street School Board of Trustees took the initiative and organised two meetings with schools on the west side of town. He told *Wairarapa Times Age* reporter Tanya Katterns, "We were prepared to close. Someone had to do it."²¹ However once the schools were told that there would have to be an Educational Development Initiative where the Ministry would work with all schools and communities to decide who should close and who should merge, the debate was shut down. Nevertheless soon afterwards the National Government allowed schools on the rural periphery such as Fernridge and Solway Primary to move more classrooms on site despite the empty classrooms in town.

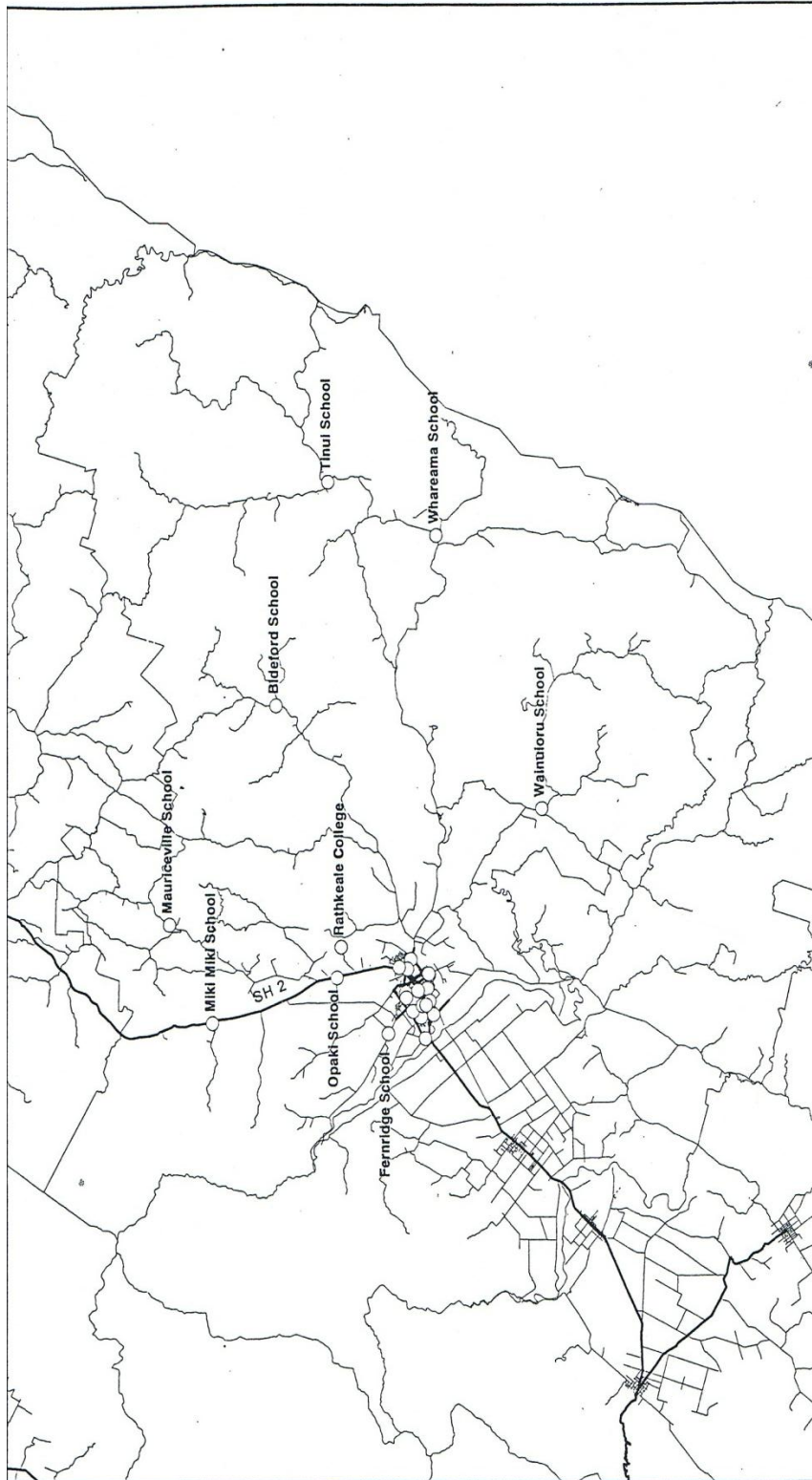
A year before the 2003 network review started, the *Wairarapa Times Age* alerted the community in "Writing on the Wall for Schools"²² on January 5, 2002. Ministry officials had held meetings with local principals in 1999 to explain the implications of roll drops for the provision of schooling in the district. Six of the major schools in Masterton had at least twenty students below the worst predictions made in 1998.

Low decile schools were the worst affected. Ministry of Education figures predicted a fourteen per cent roll drop of 400 pupils in the following decade.

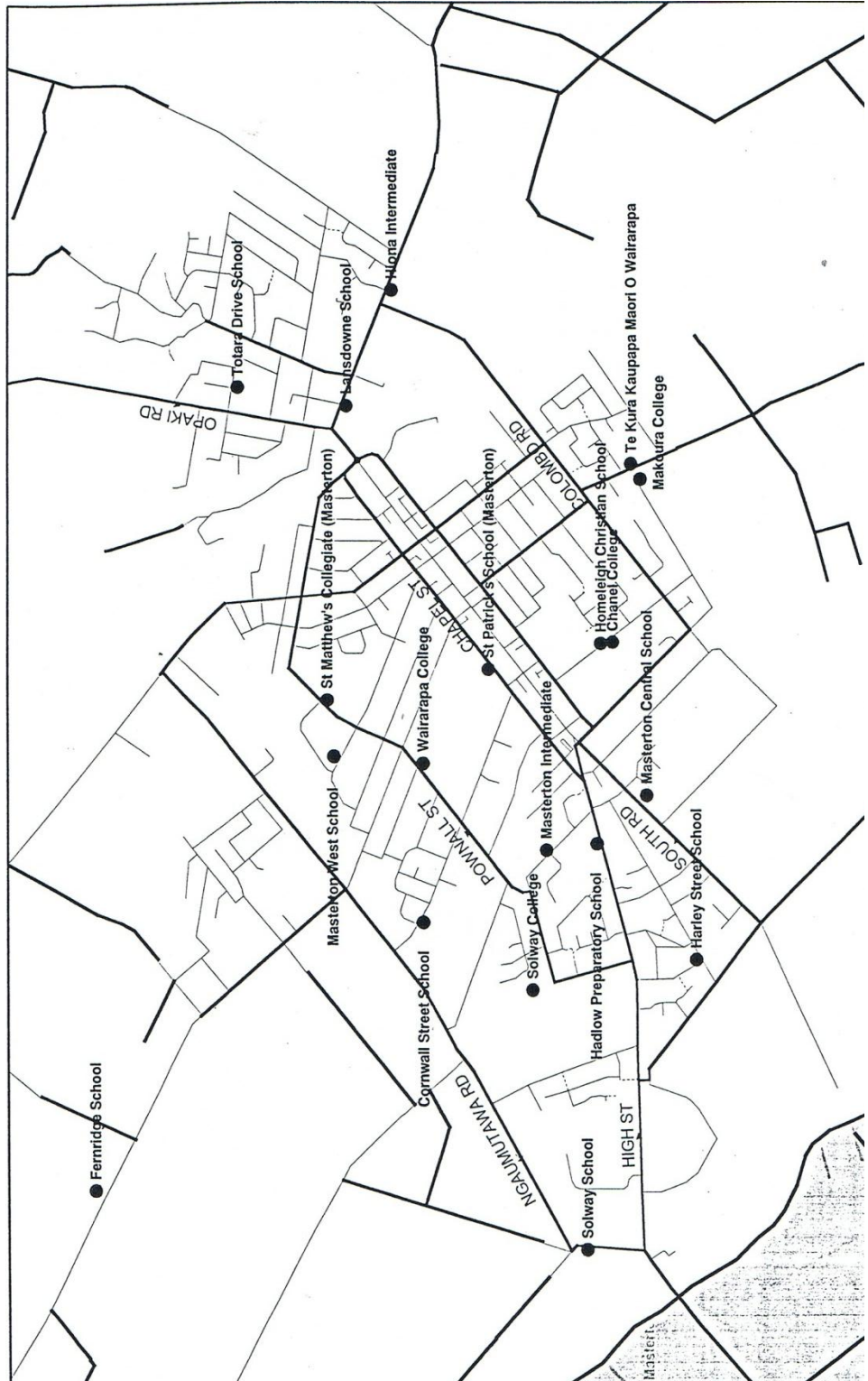
As revealed in the East School episode, school closures and mergers have a catalyst of some sort. Some respondents believed that Hiona Intermediate was the catalyst for the Masterton network review because of its falling roll and unfavourable ERO reviews in 1996 and 1998 followed by an accountability review report in January 1999. After the appointment of Peter Debney as Principal a discretionary audit in June 1999 reported that teaching had improved and good quality teaching practices were evident. Hiona was also the area provider for technology and home economics for rural schools. However, by 2002, despite its good ERO report, very good facilities and outstanding setting, Hiona was one of the smallest intermediate schools in the country. Whereas the roll of Masterton Intermediate School had increased by 131 to 475, Hiona's roll fluctuated between 106 and 113 in the same period. To counteract a *Wairarapa Times Age* report which represented Hiona as "bleeding to death,"²³ Peter Debney hastened to reassure the community that the school was in good heart and that \$225,000 of recent refurbishments to the school was a vote of confidence by the Ministry in its future.²⁴ He told me, "I had negotiated a five year period of grace on my appointment to swing the Hiona roll around." However he, like another principal new to the district, agreed with the Ministry of Education that, based on its demographic data projections of population and roll decline, there was a need to review the number of schools in Masterton.

Given the social and educational importance of the network review, and knowing that there would be only a four month window of opportunity to respond to the proposals in the draft report and to attempt renegotiation, Mayor Bob Francis, in response to the Ministry's call for a community led discussion, called for a public forum so that members of the public could contribute to the discussions about the future of education in Masterton. Graeme Lind, Principal of Central School and Phil Robertson, Principal of West School, were vehemently opposed to any "outside involvement." The tension was reflected in the response from one principal which made front page headlines: "Mayor told to butt out."²⁵ The mayor's proposal for a broad community discussion drew a terse response from Graeme Lind, who advised the mayor that he had much more serious issues to consider, "...such as the rapidly rising crime rate... Our educational system is in collectively sound hands and we do not need this outside meddling."²⁶ He subsequently used the school newsletter to continue his criticism of the mayor's position. Bob Francis labelled Graeme Lind's comments as, 'pathetic and offensive.'²⁷ Phil Robertson also strongly opposed any outside involvement.

Trevor Mallard wrote to all schools in the Masterton District in October 2002 to announce a network review to be concluded by July 2003 (later revised to September 2003). The Ministry forecast a roll drop of 530 students in the following five years. Most thesis respondents knew about the Ministry rationale for the review. In reply to Question 20, with one exception, all staff said they were consulted from the beginning of the process. On a scale of 1–10, with 1 representing complete disagreement and 10 representing full agreement, most respondents strongly disagreed with the official reasons given to justify the closures and mergers. Those who circled 1 and 2 were usually closest to the process, such as principals, teachers and the chairs of boards of trustees. They believed that the review was unnecessary as all schools had good ERO reports. Other reasons included the lack of academic literature to support the move to bigger schools, steadily rising birth rates, the social



Map of the schools within Masterton prepared by InterLEAD Consultants for the Masterton District Schools Network Review 2003



Map of the schools in the wider Masterton District prepared by InterLEAD Consultants for the Masterton District Schools Network Review 2003

consequences, the absence of a clear selection criteria, and resentment that successful schools were sacrificed because of the predicament of Hiona Intermediate, described as 'the failing school.' One respondent argued that:

It is not for the mayor or anyone else outside our school community to decide who should close... Principals are responsible for their own school communities and communities jealously guard their schools.²⁸

I was totally opposed to the closing (Minister did not use this term) of a successful, large (320+) school to prop up its neighbours who were failing.²⁹

One teacher observed that her school of about 240 students had recently been refurbished and was doing well so she could not see any benefits in closing her school and moving to a lesser site and a lesser school. The few responses in the middle or the upper range provided less specific reasons such as, "Clearly there was a need for some rationalisation of resources."³⁰ Several respondents simply circled a mid-range number and provided no comment.

The Education Amendment Act 1989 requires that when closures and mergers are proposed, the Ministry must consult boards of trustees who must then consult their school communities. Rod Garden, the manager of Wairarapa REAP, a former teacher, deputy principal and principal, with wide experience of schools throughout the region, was selected to convene a Reference Group to manage consultations with the community. Key educational stakeholders and community groups such as businesses, the Masterton District Council, school principals, trustees, and teachers were invited to nominate representatives. Richard Williams, Principal of Lansdowne and former principal of Harley Street and Solway Primary was the principals' representative. The Reference group appointed InterLEAD consultants (funded by the Ministry) to facilitate the review consultation and to produce two review reports: a draft report in March 2003 at the end of the initial consultation in Phase One and the final report in May at the end of the community meetings in Phase Two. The consultants attended community consultation meetings with school stakeholders Mondays to Thursdays. Based on constituent feedback Wairarapa electorate M.P., Georgina Beyer, believed that many issues could have been avoided if the Ministry had allowed more time for the process and given more guidance to the reference groups. She told *Wairarapa Times Age* that she had had "to request meetings with Ministry of Education representatives in her office to find out what was going on." She strongly criticised the process for a lack of communication and transparency.³¹

Although the network review attracted regular front page coverage in the local media, the majority of my survey respondents did not rate it highly as an information source. This might be explained by the fact that most respondents were closely involved in the review process and therefore had access to alternative information sources such as boards of trustees, principals and school newsletters, all of which were rated highly. However, for people in the wider community without access to the same sources, the media provided the main source of information about what was happening. The vast majority of respondents rated the Ministry of Education near the bottom of the scale with 1–2. The internet was rated lowest or, more often than not, simply did not rate at all. However there are internet sites such as <http://www.bctf.ca/IssuesInEducation.aspx?id=10408>³² which provide a range of resistance strategies to school closures that stakeholders might use.

TABLE 21

2003 TIMELINE FOR THE REFERENCE GROUP AND THE MINISTRY.

Table based on data from InterLEAD *Masterton Schools Network Review*,³³ and the Masterton Schools Network Review Terms of Reference from the Minister of Education.

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Phase 1 January 16 | Briefing meeting of Facilitator and the Reference Group. Facilitator prepares background paper. |
| February 18 | Briefing meeting of Facilitator and the Reference Group to check early findings. Initial round of meetings with schools and designated groups of people suggested by the Reference Group, e.g. iwi and Masterton District Council etc. |
| March 4 | Meeting of Facilitator and the Reference Group to check early findings. |
| Phase 2 April 7- May 7 | April 2, presentation of first draft report. The second round of consultation specifically targeted at the options generated by the consultation and agreed to by the Reference Group. |
| May 23 | Facilitators' final report to Reference Group (confidential to Reference Group until Monday May 29). |
| May 26 | Reference Group meets to discuss any inaccuracies in the report. |
| June 4 | Facilitators' final report released at midday and forwarded to the Minister of Education. |
| June 9 | Minister's Interim announcement, followed by three weeks of Ministry consultation with the community ending on June 30. |
| June 20 June 24 | "Masterton and District Network Review Schooling Reorganisation Options Executive Summary" sent from the Ministry to the Minister. Minister's letter to schools announces his closure and merger proposals. Formal consultation ends. |
| July 4 | Further recommendation by the Ministry of Education to the Minister. |
| July 11 | BOTs consult with their communities on June 24, proposals from the Minister and new options that resulted. Minister's second interim announcement (the public have 28 days from July 11, to comment, object, etc.). |
| 31 July | "Masterton and District Network Review Schooling Reorganisation Options Executive Summary" published. The responses of the boards of trustees and school communities collated and summarised. |
| August 8 | 28 day public response period ends. |
| August 15 | Ministry of Education makes further recommendations to the Minister |
| August 19 | Minister's final decision. |

Although some survey respondents claimed Trevor Mallard never visited Masterton during the review, principals, teachers and members of boards of trustees were given an opportunity to ask questions of the Minister, receive feedback from the facilitators about the first report and discuss the future shape of schooling in Masterton at a meeting in the Town Hall held on April 10. Since the Town Hall has a seating capacity of 650 it seems surprising how few people attended. Several respondents who were present, as well as Rod Garden who was Chairman of the Reference Group at the time, told me that this meeting was primarily for principals, teachers and school trustees, referred to by one respondent as "the in group." Although the Town Hall meeting produced "an almost unanimous rejection of the review and its parameters,"³⁴ Trevor Mallard told the ninety-five principals, trustees and teachers that, "It was crunch time," and he was committed to the new schools being in place by January 2004.

Trevor Mallard was willing to face angry stakeholders in meetings throughout the country during the reviews. While at Kawakawa during the Northland network review of eighteen schools he pointed out, "Previous ministers would never front up to



Hiona Intermediate School, the catalyst for the Masterton District Network Review. Aerial photograph Peter Nikolaison.

communities. They'd send some departmental lackey out to the regions."³⁵

Rod Garden resigned soon after the Masterton Town Hall meeting as a result of "a growing suspicion that the whole issue of community consultation was a farce," and that the participants were simply involved in rubber stamping a decision that had already been made. Luther Taloa, a local detective and former Chairperson of the Harley Street School Board of Trustees was selected as his replacement.

In the *Masterton and District Schools Review of Schooling Provisions May 2003: Final Report Prepared for the Review Reference Group and the Ministry of Education Lower Hutt*³⁶ the InterLEAD consultants reported that although the Masterton District community clearly preferred the notion that 'small is beautiful' in relation to school size, nevertheless:

The community began to accept the notion that Masterton is 'over schooled.' There is a sense that people have become accustomed to exercising a supermarket choice which ultimately comes to a point of extravagance, unsustainable when a population declines.³⁷

The consultants reported that their recommendations had been significantly reshaped as a result of reviewing the submissions arising from consultation with the Masterton community. They reported that stakeholders wanted two state secondary schools, one intermediate school, a further option for Year 7 and 8 education, the retention of rural schools, which by their location make access to alternative schooling difficult, sufficient contributing schools (Year 1–6) within the town to enable accessibility and choice, the retention of an urban fringe full primary school, the avoidance of primary schools which are considered to be 'too large for Masterton' and the availability of Kaupapa Maori schooling. The consultants proposed that the number of Masterton primary schools would be reduced to five, three on existing sites and two to be constructed on new sites. In deciding on school sites the consultants needed to consider whether an existing site would allow for an expanded roll which would require not only the provision of adequate classroom accommodation space but also enough space for the development of suitable playground areas in different weathers. Some sites were more challenging than others.³⁸

The complexity of school mergers often involves the more fraught issues of cultural compatibility. The facilitators were clear that the most important issue they encountered was the deeply embedded division between East side and West side which was expressed in uninhibited ways in the public arena of community meetings. The facilitators were taken aback by the strong views that were expressed and the derogatory terms used, "without any regard for the feelings of any of the parents present who may have been resident in the Eastern suburbs." They noted that the site of the old East School in particular was seen as having "bad karma" and that any school that was built there would be seen by the community as a ghetto school. This led them to conclude that any plan by the Ministry to distribute students evenly in strategic areas around Masterton would not only have had very little chance of success, it would be "disastrous."

As a result of the lack of Maori on boards of trustees, Rangitane and Ngati Kahungunu, the Tangata Whenua in the Wairarapa, were under-represented on the key decision making bodies during the process. The review team pointed out that thirty-eight per cent of school students in Masterton are Maori and that this number would rise. While the reviewers found that there was goodwill on the part of

principals and teachers to encourage and support Maori achievement, in their meeting with iwi there was an “ominous mood of dissatisfaction”³⁹ among Maori with mainstream education. If Maori parents wanted total immersion or bilingual units then their only choice was the Kura Kaupapa. Those schools which had attempted bilingual units reported to the reviewers that the classes had folded either through lack of demand, or in the case of East School, bi-lingual units together with the introduction of immersion programmes, were blamed for pupil flight from the school. The provision of bilingual units requires that the teachers must not only be trained, qualified, and registered teachers but also fluent in Te Reo.

After East School closed there was no longer a neighbourhood school on the east side so most parents chose to transport their children to either Lansdowne in the north east or Central in the south east. The reviewers initially proposed that the first of the five remaining schools would be built on a new site to serve the east and central areas of town to accommodate pupils from Lansdowne and Central Schools, creating a potential starting roll of 450. However they noted that such a merger would require not only the commitment of both partners, but also the decision by the ministry to acquire a suitable site and “the ambition to design a state of the art school that will be attractive to students from all across Masterton.”⁴⁰ The proposal for school one would have been feasible if a suitable site was earmarked. One principal told me that a suitable site was available in former market garden land, located between a cluster of streets named after native birds, known locally as the ‘bird sanctuary,’ and Sussex Street but this proposal would have required support and funding that the ministry was not willing to offer.

Despite the hopes of its ardent supporters there were a number of reasons why Lansdowne School did not survive. Of all Masterton primary schools, it had suffered most severely from population decline. Although the school organised a bus service to assist families with transport the school’s roll dropped from 271 in 1993 to 172 in 2002. As far back as July 4, 1907⁴¹ residents had used the newspaper to criticise the site and to argue that Lansdowne School should have been established on a site quite close to where Totara Drive was later built. Instead of being surrounded by houses with families, Lansdowne was surrounded by large spaces taken up by the very facilities that were educational assets within easy walking distance of the school: the Colin Pugh Sports Bowl, Queen Elizabeth Park, the Waipoua River, the skate park, the Genesis Energy Recreation Centre, the hospital, the fire station and Aratoi, Wairarapa Museum of Arts and History. Some of these advantages are well illustrated in the aerial photograph included in this thesis in Chapter 8. The location of these facilities meant that the children came from different spaces on each side of the Waipoua River. Further arguments against Lansdowne continuing as a separate school included its location on a very busy highway and the age and maintenance cost of the buildings constructed in hardwood native timbers and corrugated iron.

In March 2003 Lansdowne was largely opposed to restructuring. When a merger of Lansdowne and Central was proposed, although it was their least preferred option because it would mean a merger of two low decile schools, they were prepared to support it if they had an assurance that the ministry would build a totally new school. Once it became clear that this would not happen, at its community meeting in April there was unanimous support for a Lansdowne/Totara Drive merger on the Lansdowne site in preference to a full primary option based at Hiona.

The proposal for School 2 was to merge Solway Primary, Cornwall Street and

Masterton West, with a projected roll of about 480, on a new site, to serve part of the west and the south. There was not sufficient space on the Solway School site for such a redevelopment. An alternative option to merge Cornwall Street, West and Fernridge was also ruled out by the Ministry early in the process. The majority of the land on the Cornwall Street School site was owned by the Masterton Trust Lands Trust, the remainder was owned by the Ministry of Education. The aerial photographs taken by Peter Nikolaison at the time show this site would have been a very attractive midpoint location for a new school on the rural urban fringe, with plenty of room for off street parking, however, once again, without the required support of the Ministry, the consultants did not proceed with this option. The rejection of the proposals to build two new schools on the east and west of town created increasing distrust related to the real reasons behind the review.

Totara Drive School (School 3) was deemed 'safe,' in the first two reports, however by May the grounds of consultation had shifted. Harley Street was to be School 4, School 5 would result from the decision about Hiona and it was proposed that Totara Drive School would stay where it was with extra classrooms provided as needed for a merger with Lansdowne. This was confirmed in Trevor Mallard's June 24 letter to boards of trustees which also named Lansdowne as the continuing school. Fernridge, Cornwall Street and West School would merge on the West School site with Cornwall Street as the continuing school. Harley Street would now merge with Central School with Harley Street as the continuing school, Miki Miki would merge with Opaki and Hiona would merge with an expanded Year 7-13 Makoura College.

As the debate grew in intensity the Hiona Board of Trustees presented the Lakeview proposal, a merger of Hiona, Lansdowne and Totara Drive on the Hiona site, which would bring together all the primary schools in the Lansdowne area. Hiona Board chair, David Lee, told *Wairarapa Times Age* that whatever happened, the intermediate schooling option needed to be preserved at the northern end of town. Of all the school sites Hiona had the greatest potential for development and its site adjacent to Henley Lake and the school farm made it an ideal site for a school. By the end of the review fifty per cent of Lansdowne parents stated their preference for the Lakeview proposal.

The Henley School option, proposed by the Makoura College Board of Trustees later in the process, put forward a solution of some complexity that would have resulted in creating a second Year 7–13 college in Masterton. The reviewers reported:

Proposal: Combine Totara Drive, Lansdowne, Hiona Intermediate and Makoura College into a single school entity operating on at least two and possibly three sites. Use the name Henley to identify the school.⁴²

Henley advocates believed that the distance between campuses was insignificant and that such a solution, if adopted, would bury once and for all feelings over the East side of town. It was hoped that such a school would be robust enough to compete with Wairarapa College, Masterton Intermediate and the integrated schools. The nature and location of the Hiona site would make it possible to develop an outdoor recreation centre and to provide specialist Technology, Art and Music based on the current facilities available at Hiona. Henley supporters claimed that their three site proposal would result in great administrative savings. The suggestions for the three site proposal were Henley Primary School (at Totara Drive), Henley Junior High (at Lansdowne) and Henley College (at Hiona). The outcome would result in an abandoned Makoura College site. Exactly how the



The Cornwall Street School site, proposed as a suitable site for a brand new school on the west side of Masterton for a possible merger of Solway Primary School, Cornwall Street School and West School.



Aerial photograph of West School by Peter Nikolaison. Douglas Park School resulted from the voluntary merger of West School and Cornwall Street School. No extra playground space was provided for its expanded roll.



Douglas Park School. Photographs by Claire Hills.

administrative savings were to be made was not convincingly explained. It was envisaged that the campus principals, together with middle managers as appropriate, would take overall responsibility for curriculum delivery, assessment, the pastoral care of students and teacher performance management. The Principal would be like a CEO who would act like an administration manager in such areas as relations with the Ministry of Education, property and plant issues, personnel issues, finance, capital developments, support staff, buses, ICT and relations with other services such as RTLB, the Teen Parent Unit and Alternative Education.

During the review the InterLEAD consultants became aware that a number of strongly held beliefs were proving to be obstacles to progress. Since the consultants were funded by the Ministry of Education they would have been understandably anxious to label any community resistance to school closures as largely unjustified. Given that they were faced with an almost unanimous rejection of the review and its parameters by those who attended the April 10, Town Hall information evening, it is not surprising that the reviewers took the opportunity in their final report to examine the validity of several raw educational nerves in the community with the objective of setting them to rest. They euphemistically labelled these four raw nerves as powerful local educational “myths.” It seems that it was their hope that by disempowering the “myths” they might disempower the anti-merger sentiment and the local resistance to the review. All of these “myths” had grown out of the thorny issue of parental choice after the introduction of *Tomorrow’s Schools* and proved to be significant issues in the community consultations. Given the Masterton educational context explained in Chapter 1, it is easy to see why the “myths” were significant. Beliefs and common perceptions shape attitudes, which, in turn, can be used to legitimise positions and influence choices about educational provision. These “myths” continued to fuel educational debates in Masterton, as the Makoura College crisis 2008 in Chapter 5 will again demonstrate.

The first “myth,” which reflected the tensions between the town and country schools, was the belief that some schools organised bus runs to remove numbers of pupils from the territory of a number of urban schools and even subsidised such runs from operational funding. The reviewers showed this to be untrue and pointed out that part of exercising the right to choose the school their child shall attend involves some parents in choosing to pay for them to travel to their school by bus:

The view of the facilitators, given the exceptional mobility of Masterton school goers, is that every school ‘takes’ pupils from areas that logically appear to be the natural zone of another school. That this happens is inevitable, indeed a desirable function of the high value placed by *Tomorrow’s Schools* philosophy on parental choice. It seems to be unfair to criticise any school for being attractive to pupils and parents. It may well be another matter, as some criticism puts it, if the government allows some schools to grow “at the taxpayers’ expense.”⁴³

The second “myth” was the belief that parent choice should be limited in order to ensure the best use of available facilities and that the Ministry should make no further allowances for schools to add further buildings as a result of parent choice. Despite the fact that all the schools in the district had favourable ERO reports, it seemed to the consultants that some schools had become “fashionable,” and it was this perception that contributed to their expansion. The “fashionable” schools (not identified by the consultants) were commonly perceived to be Totara Drive and the schools on the rural urban fringe, Solway, Fernridge, Opaki, Wainuioru and Gladstone, as enrolment data in Table 18 confirms. The consultants pointed out:

The policies which came into being through *Tomorrow's Schools* encouraged a climate of competition in the belief that parents would determine the best schools for their children based on the quality of education being provided.⁴⁴

The consultants found that parents believed that it was essential to preserve parental choice of school.

In times of educational tension integrated schools can become an easy target upon which to vent frustration. The Private Schools Conditional Integration Act was passed in 1975. The Ministry of Education 2003 statistics available from the New Zealand Directory of Schools and Tertiary Institutions⁴⁵ recorded that eighty-five per cent of New Zealand students attend state schools, ten and a half per cent attend state integrated schools, three point eight per cent attend private schools and that the rolls in private and integrated schools were increasing at a faster rate than rolls in state schools.

The InterLEAD consultants labelled the third “myth” as the belief that integrated schools were draining Masterton state schools of pupils and would do so in the future as state school rolls declined. This myth was not closely analysed in the report. Graeme Lind and Allen Hair were two educationalists who allegedly fuelled it. In a series of editorial feature articles on the network review for the *Wairarapa Times Age*, Allen Hair, a retired teacher, school administrator, policy advisor to three ministers and a national programme administrator, took the opportunity to criticise integrated schools:

The state is prepared to pay a premium for integrated education while it seeks to reduce the number of small state schools. No questions, it seems, are asked about the viability of Chanel Intermediate, at roll total 86, while Hiona Intermediate at 100 is clearly seen as non viable.⁴⁶

The reasons why the comparison between Hiona and ‘Chanel Intermediate’ is invalid go beyond roll numbers. In law there was no such entity as Chanel Intermediate. The 1981 integration agreement for Chanel College described it as Chanel College with an attached Intermediate Department. The term ‘attached intermediate department’ was coined by the Ministry to address the fact that when a significant number of Catholic colleges integrated, they were already functioning as Year 7–13 colleges but there was no neat administrative slot into which they could fit. In later years this matter was addressed and the term ‘attached intermediate department’ was discarded. Unlike the other three integrated colleges in Masterton with decile ratings of ten and eight and access to a wider range of funding options, Chanel College, with a decile rating of five to six has continued to cater for a cross section of society. There is a significant difference between four classrooms dedicated to the education of Year 7–8 students functioning as a department within a college, and a purpose built intermediate school, with buildings and facilities totally dedicated to meeting the needs of Year 7 and 8 pupils, as was the case with Hiona and Masterton Intermediate. However, when the *Wairarapa Times Age* published Allen Hair’s article, it was these comments about Chanel that it highlighted in bold print, thereby fuelling the “myth” to which the reviewers referred.

The antipathy to integrated schools surfaced again at the conclusion of the public meeting in the town hall. The Masterton Schools Network Review Report records that after criticising the review process Allen Hair put a resolution to the meeting, which was passed, which included specific reference to the Integration Act:

“That this meeting of the Masterton community requests that the Minister, the Ministry of Education and the Reference Group work together to

- * extend the geographic parameters to include the area from Mt Bruce to Palliser
- * convert the Ministry of Education review to a community driven review
- * review and amend the Integration Act (*for which purpose was not stated*)
- * consider ways in which a co-operative model might replace a competitive model
- * return the focus of education onto the child and not the dollar.⁴⁷

A significant problem associated with the issue of choice links to the dominant view in New Zealand society that education should be secular. A significant number of parents however, believe a truly holistic education is one which addresses the intellectual, physical, social, emotional and spiritual dimensions of being human. State schools are secular. Both the history and culture handed down from the New Zealand Education Act 1877, mean that they may not espouse the values of any religious faith. The 1877 legislators did not think that state funding of denominational schools was possible because of the often bitter sectarianism of the time. As a result different Christian denominations established their own schools which allowed them to incorporate the spiritual dimension in the curriculum, which explains why Masterton has six colleges. Using the principle of social justice, the parents of these students argued that their children should benefit from the part of their tax dollar allocated to the provision of a compulsory education. The 1975 integration legislation has, to a large extent, enabled this part of their tax dollar to fund schools with a ‘special character’ which is particularly important to them. In return, integrated schools must be compliant with the relevant Ministry of Education requirements that apply to all schools, be quality assured by visits from ERO, and NZQA in the secondary sector, and their staff must meet the professional standards required by the Teachers’ Registration Board. It would seem inequitable if a holistic education which includes the spiritual dimension is a privilege reserved for the wealthy. Such a notion would be unacceptable to the Catholic position. In most Catholic schools the students come from all socio economic and ethnic groupings in society.

Identifying integration policies as a cause of educational woes in Masterton surfaced yet again in 2008. At the public meeting during the Makoura College closure crisis, Allen Hair blamed its plummeting roll on past integration policies and *Tomorrow’s Schools*. In Masterton there are only two integrated primary schools. In 2001, just prior to the network review, the Catholic integrated primary school, St Patrick’s, established in 1886, decile six, had a roll of 282, while Hadlow School, decile ten, of Anglican origin, established in 1929, had a roll of 198.

Masterton’s state secondary schools are Wairarapa College, established in 1938 by the merger of Wairarapa High School established in 1923 and Masterton Technical School, and Makoura College established in 1968. The four integrated secondary schools all have histories dating back well before *Tomorrow’s Schools*. Chanel College, established in 1978, is a co-educational Catholic Year 7–13 college resulting from the merger of St Joseph’s College for boys established in 1945 and St Bride’s College for girls, established in 1898. Solway College for girls, Year 7–13, decile eight, of Presbyterian origin, was founded in 1916. St Mathews College, Years 7–13, decile ten, an Anglican college for girls was established in 1914. Rathkeale College, an Anglican college for boys, Years 9–13, was established in 1964. From 1988 the Year 11–13 students at Rathkeale and St Matthews, known as Trinity Senior College, have combined for classes on the Rathkeale site. With the exception of Makoura College and Chanel College, all the colleges previously mentioned offer

boarding facilities. The integrated schools pointed out to the consultants that a considerable amount of money is poured into the Masterton economy as a result of their existence, especially from the boarding students who comprise the larger part of their rolls.

Unless they are boarding pupils from rural communities, almost all boarding pupils come from outside the Review area, with many coming from greater Wellington and the Manawatu.⁴⁸

As Furman⁴⁹ points out, we live in a post-modern world where we are aware, as never before, that there are multiple ways of living, thinking and believing all with claims to legitimacy, and none with a valid claim to superiority or hegemony.

The last local educational 'myth' addressed by the facilitators was the belief that rural education is better because class sizes are smaller and that there are greater class numbers in urban and larger schools.

Facilitators were obliged to those principals who put the record straight by explaining that schools are staffed according to a standard formula based on roll numbers. It is up to the individual schools to manage the distribution and workloads of teachers in order to arrive at the number of classes and the number of pupils within each class.⁵⁰

The final decision announced by Trevor Mallard released to the media on August 1, 2003 contained a number of significant changes. This provides further evidence that while it is sometimes possible to negotiate the outcomes of closure and merger proposals, it is also wiser to take nothing for granted.

"After considering feedback from the community, I have changed my original proposal to better match the desires of individual schools and their communities."⁵¹

While the number of schools was still reduced to five, there had been a change in the recipe. Cornwall Street and Douglas Park would merge on the West School site to form Douglas Park School. Miki Miki would merge with Opaki School. Harley Street would merge with Central School on the Central site to form Masterton Primary School. Totara Drive and Lansdowne would close and merge with Hiona on the Hiona site to form Lakeview School. Fernridge and Solway Primary on the rural urban fringe would remain as stand-alone schools.

The merger between Cornwall Street and West School was voluntary. The final network review report recorded that the Cornwall Street School parents voted unanimously for a merger with West School on the West School site. The West School Board of Trustees agreed to this outcome thereby reducing their network review stress. Several respondents commented:

My observation of Cornwall Street staff was: very confident and reassured, up for it and ready to rock, relishing the opportunities, pro-active and energetic. As a consequence all staff except one, won comfortable jobs with leadership team taking up same roles at Douglas Park School.⁵²

West School had an assembly hall, a swimming pool, a special needs facility, some room for future growth, \$260,000 had been invested in its infrastructure in 2002 and it was a Civil Defence Headquarters site. More children however, had to fit the same space.

Miki Miki School was over 100 years old. Its roll had dwindled to eleven. When the reviewers made it clear that its future was "precarious," they met passionate

opposition from the school community. Opaki School, sensitive to Miki Miki's predicament confirmed to the reviewers that it was willing to accommodate Miki Miki pupils if the Minister decided on a merger. Unlike Miki Miki, Opaki was located on the rural urban fringe, five kms north of Masterton on State Highway 2. With a roll of 140 in 2003, it was another example of a rural school with rock solid community support. Pupils arrived by bus or parent provided transport. At the community meeting with the review team, of the fifty-one people who attended, over half lived on lifestyle blocks and at least one parent from most families worked in town. The school has a rugby ground, tennis courts, a large swimming pool and enough space for additional pupils. The Principal, Dave Finlayson, believes the merger was successful because the integration process started six months before the merger when the eleven Miki Miki students came into the Opaki environment and shared school activities, through which they had opportunities to encounter and adapt to a different school culture.

Harley Street School accepted that change was inevitable. Its roll had dropped from 500 in the 1960s to just over 200 in 2003. Since it had been recently refurbished it was not convinced of the benefits of a merger with a run down Central School to form a primary school in the south east. When it was proposed in April that Harley Street remain as a stand-alone school it had to sit out the first consultation round. Once it became clear that the Ministry would not support the merger of Central and Lansdowne on a new site, it was proposed that Harley Street School would stay where it was with extra classrooms being provided if needed. This was supported by the Harley Street community as "...there was no immediately apparent merging partner." The Ministry received eighty-nine letters to support the proposal. Although Harley Street shared some of its catchment area with Solway and Central it saw itself as, "the southern town school," as distinct from Solway which they saw as "semi-rural." However there was a feeling that if a merger was imposed, Harley Street would "make the best of the situation." The reviewers found this attitude "consistent with the view of Harley Street as progressive, innovative, and open to change." The final decision was that Harley Street School would close and merge as the continuing school with Central School on the Central School site to form Masterton Primary School (MPS). One respondent pointed out that since the principal's husband was terminally ill this would have affected any will to protest. In retrospect respondent reflections on the final decision ranged from resigned to angry:

I believe that they had already made their decision to merge. The 'consultation process' was a mere window dressing or PR so they could say they had consulted.⁵³

Fight to the end for what you believe in. Band together. Seek assistance from outside professionals. Question decisions, especially made by the management in your school. Don't give up.⁵⁴

The Central School Board of Trustees supported the Minister's proposal to merge Central with Harley Street on the Central School site. If Central School was closed the continuing educational link back to the earliest times in the European settlement of Masterton would have been broken. Although Central School's official history began in 1865, it had a direct link back to Masterton's first school, established in 1856 just one year after the 1855 Education Act and two years after Masterton was founded in 1854. In 1865 this school split in two with Central School becoming the main town school. As such it was very closely linked with the early history of the town, as most families sent their children there.

The Minister had promised that the outcomes of the closures and mergers would be better for the students however the inferior accommodation at Central shocked the Harley Street staff who were used to good conditions. One remembered:

We taught in freezing and poorly insulated, small classrooms. I had holes in my floor and had to work around fixed furniture.⁵⁵

Soon after the merger, Ray Dawson, chairman of the Harley Street Board of Trustees and the first Masterton Primary School Board of Trustees, in an interview with the *Wairarapa Times Age*, complained that the EDI budget had been inadequate:

...the staffroom and toilet blocks, and more money would have to be spent bringing them up to standard. He said that \$370 000 had already been spent moving a classroom on site but it was already apparent that there would not be enough to do everything the school management wanted to achieve. The school is asking the ministry to make additional money above the \$1.1 million already allocated.⁵⁶

The Harley Street building which had been shifted and parked on the Central site was vandalised before it was secured on foundations. One teacher believed they could have bussed the students to Harley Street as an interim measure.⁵⁷

It was clear that the Ministry had underestimated the cost of the merger. It was not part of its plan to build a new school on the site. It had already rejected the proposal from InterLEAD consultants for a brand new state of the art school to be built in the south east. At the insistence of the Principal an independent assessor was appointed to examine the school facilities. She had been assured that school facilities would be better. The assessor confirmed that the physical outcomes were seriously worse. In the end the Ministry had to fund a \$2.7 million makeover of the school throughout 2004-2005, which included removing the old buildings and constructing new classroom blocks, administration buildings and a library. For two years the Principal and staff had to face the challenge of trying to establish a new school and a new culture and integrating two very different school cultures, while at the same time surrounded by the daily noise, management issues and safety issues for the students. On-going property issues caused huge stress. Too much was expected in unrealistic time frames, there were constant delays, everything took longer than estimated. Principal Fiona Marrett resigned in September 2005 before the improvements were completed in 2006. Some years later she recalled:

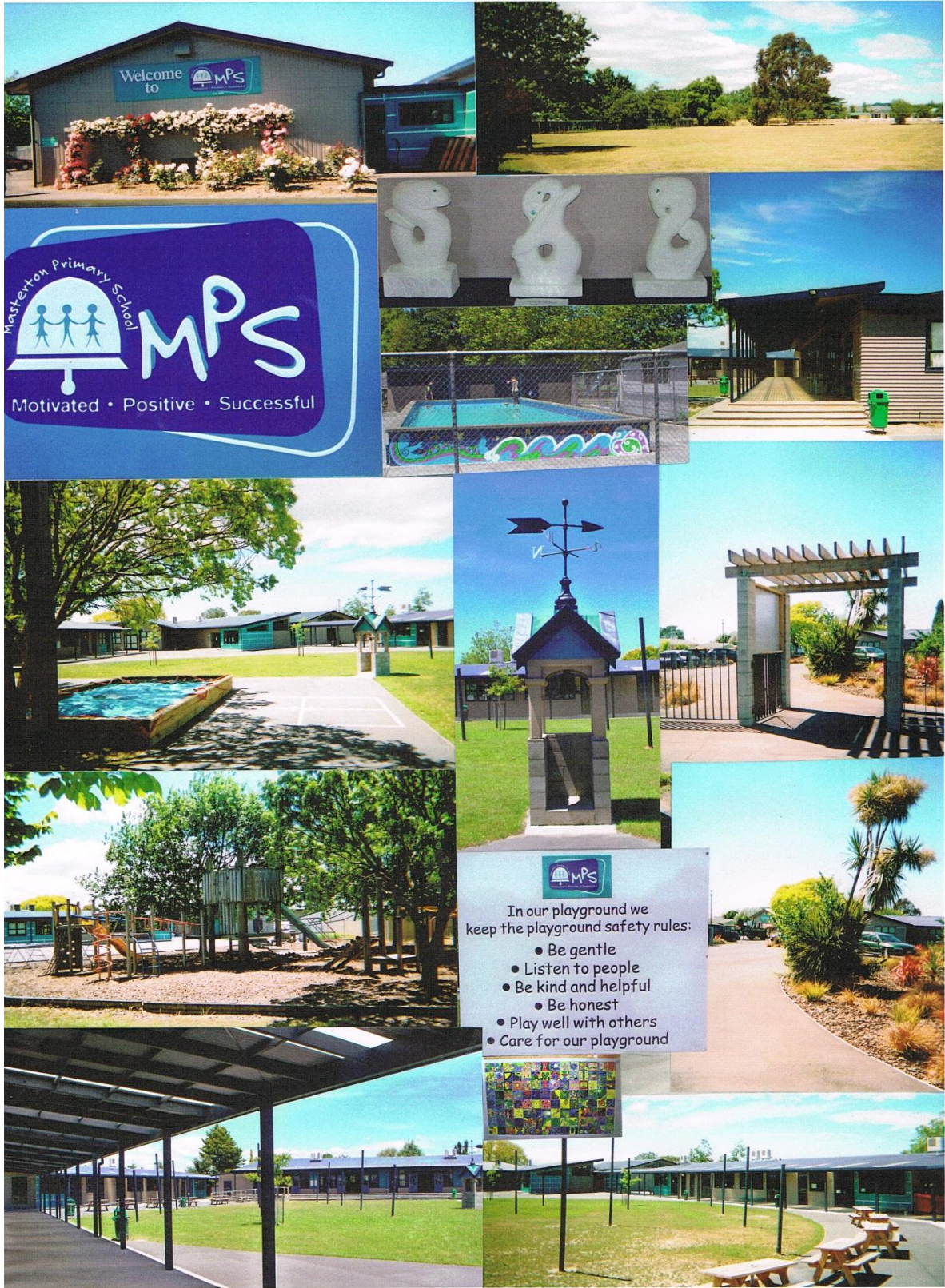
Not enough EDI money was available and we had to fight for a whole year to get the money to build a much needed new school.... I found the building of the new school physically and culturally very trying. I believe I was exhausted at the end of the first two years and very stressed but did not realise this until much later.⁵⁸

Although InterLEAD Consultants had initially recommended that Fernridge be retained as a stand-alone school, the grounds of consultation changed. When Fernridge found itself included in a proposed merger with West and Cornwall Street it decided at its April community meeting to remain as a stand-alone school.

Located close to the Tararua foothills, just five minutes out of town, Fernridge was established in 1865 when the original Masterton School split in two. It is the only Masterton school left on its original site. Its principal, Daniel Melville, told a *Wairarapa Times Age* reporter that he intended to keep a close eye on the review process but adopt a low profile because, "The show's not over until the fat lady sings."



Central School Masterton which became Masterton Primary School. Aerial photograph Peter Nikolaison



Masterton Primary School after its redevelopment. Photographs Claire Hills
The Central School site had problems with the state of the classrooms, playgrounds and, access.

Fernridge however was one of the schools heavily criticised for its political ineptitude in a *Wairarapa Times Age* editorial⁵⁹ shortly before the Minister announced his decision:

Fernridge is another school feeling anxious. Left untouched by the first reorganisation and then lumped in with West and Cornwall Street, their belated effort to change the Minister's mind could end up backfiring, badly. Their submission challenged the Government's honesty and the ministry's competence. The Fernridge Fawly Towers approach to making friends and influencing people probably hasn't been helped either by the spirited efforts of one enthusiastic staffer. She sent a long, rambling, spelling mistake ridden, insult-sprinkled e-mail direct to Mr Mallard's personal address. His response was quick and to the point. He considered the e-mail abusive and defamatory. Diplomatic blue number 2 was their invitation to the National education spokesman to attend their protest meeting. Perhaps someone should have offered Masterton primary schools remedial lessons in the forgotten art of effective politics.⁶⁰

The July 31, network review report recorded that the Ministry received forty-six letters in favour of the retention of Fernridge as a stand-alone school supported by twenty-four reasons such as the quality education it provided with a strong rural dimension, its projected roll growth, its history and its strong community involvement.

The stand out example of a school which fought effectively to escape the threat of closure was Solway Primary School. Several respondents told me that it was still a mystery to them how Solway Primary School survived. It is not a mystery. Solway accepted from the beginning that it would have to fight for its survival. At its April 16, community meeting, after receiving the draft InterLEAD report, it resoundingly rejected a merger with West and Cornwall St. As one respondent said, "If you can justify standing alone then do so and take the hardest possible line at the earliest possible opportunity."⁶¹

Although the reviewers had initially considered Solway as a possible merger partner for West and Cornwall Street, they discovered that there was no natural linkage or close association of the key catchments from which the pupils were sourced. However they expressed serious reservations about Solway which included the location of the school in the hazard zone of a major active fault line, questions over traffic safety and the close proximity of industrially zoned land:

Under existing regulations an industrialist must meet performance standards for such things as emissions and disposals. Nevertheless it is quite incongruous to have a school next to an industrial zone. Given the developing awareness of chemical residue from wood processing, it is worth also questioning if any environmental risk to the school is posed by a timber plant long established near the school boundary.⁶²

Solway Primary School did not rely on carefully worded letters to the Minister. When it met the review team it was ready to present a clearly argued case against closure or merger based on carefully researched demographic and seismological evidence and a very good ERO report. One Solway respondent recalled:

The case was based on the growth of our school catchment and the rebuttal of the supposed justifications. The organised protest took place in the school hall and in community meetings attended by Ministry reps and other potentially influential participants. Also a correspondence campaign by the community to the Ministry of Education.⁶³

The fact that the reviewers listened was evident on page 30 of the report:⁶⁴

The educational effectiveness was reconfirmed by a favourable ERO report dated April 2003. Parental satisfaction with the school and commitment to its continued existence was made

emphatically clear...The Board, 'to correct some imbalances,' presented some additional information to facilitators and undertook to re-examine the reservations expressed.⁶⁵

Mark Davis, a concerned parent, the Principal, Gail Marshall, and the Solway School Board of Trustees did their homework to prove the viability of the school. In response to concerns about the location of Solway beside a heavy traffic bypass route which runs past the school's main entrance, parents pointed out that other schools in the review were also near main highways. Solway added a circular drive onto the school property to make it easier for parents to drop off their children safely and later successfully petitioned for an eighty kilometre speed limit in the school zone.

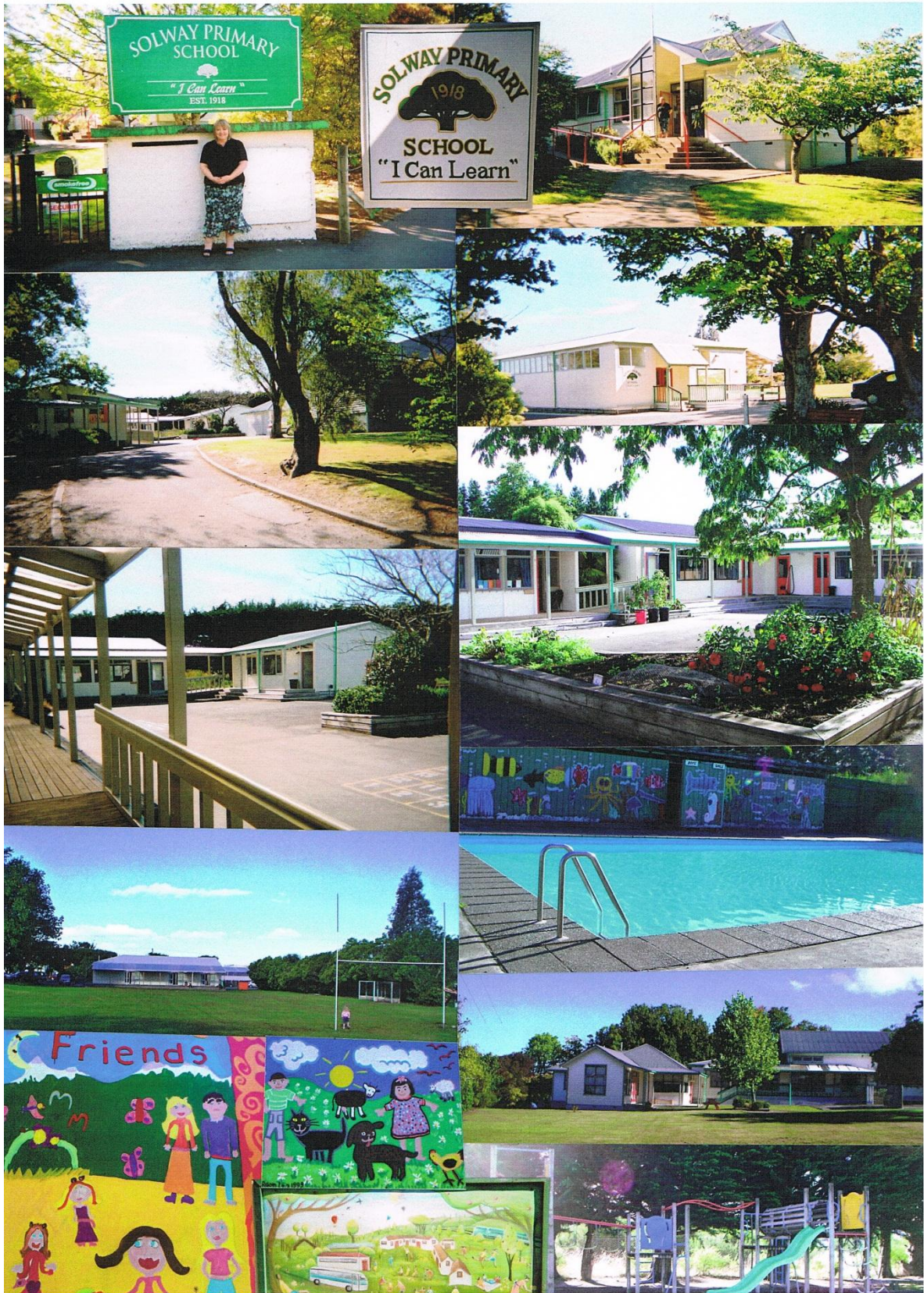
In response to concerns about its location close to an earthquake fault line the school consulted the experts. The Masterton earthquake fault runs from Chester Road along the back of the old Waingawa Freezing works, crosses the river near the railway bridge, runs near Solway Primary School, between Solway Show grounds and Solway College and fades out of sight near Wairarapa College. The 1987 Geological Survey report to the Masterton Borough Council from the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research said that Masterton is in zone A of the Standards Association of New Zealand code of practice for general structural design and design loadings for buildings. Zone A is the most earthquake prone zoning in New Zealand.

Ross Annabell produced an extensive editorial feature based on this report for readers of *Wairarapa Times Age*, on March 24, 1987.⁶⁶ The report classified the Masterton borough as seismic risk zone one, defined as "destruction possible in several parts of the zone in any period of 100 years" and therefore recommended that the Masterton Borough Council should carry out detailed site investigations for any large or vital structures to determine if site materials are soft and the water table high. Sites with an unstable base such as water and gravel can cause serious slumping or building foundation failure in an earthquake. A further recommendation was that a full evaluation of seismotectonic hazards should be contemplated before the final site selection and design of any major or vital buildings.

The Solway Primary School Board of Trustees organised geologist Steven Courtney to be present at the consultation meeting. He noted that there had been no sign of movement in the Masterton fault for at least 700 years. (The earthquake risk was also a point of concern when the Lakeview proposal was being investigated.) Registered engineer G. W. Butcher pointed out that:

...the significant seismic risk covering communities in the Wairarapa comes from possible movement on any one of a number of active faults....and not necessarily from a single fault such as the Masterton site.⁶⁷

The Board produced an analysis of the roll which showed that forty-five per cent of the current pupils lived in addresses outside the urban boundary. Of these, fifty-seven pupils came from south of the Waingawa bridge (the southern Masterton boundary) and twenty-three to the northwest of the school. The Solway bus, operated by the Ministry of Education, serviced the block bounded by Norfolk, Chester, East Taratahi and Cornwall Roads. The Board also pointed to William Donald Drive, a new subdivision off High Street, which in 2010 was identified as Masterton's most expensive street. Since the 2003 review significant new housing has also been built in the Solway Crescent area. The reviewers concluded:



Solway Primary School, a popular school on the rural/urban periphery, fought against closure and won.
Photographs by Claire Hills

Solway School does indeed serve a discrete rural area which is demonstrably growing in school age population and for which Solway is the school of choice. Judging from its roll history it seems likely that the school could attain the 225–250 that it considers its optimum rollThe best outcome could see the successful Solway culture, together with some of its buildings, translated to a new location either alone, or in alliance with another school.⁶⁸

In November 2004, one year after the review, when a *Wairarapa Times Age* reporter asked about Solway's enrolment scheme, Mark Davis, chairman of the Solway School Board of Trustees said:

We had a hell of a lot of enrolment enquiries when the mergers were announced, but we have a rigidly enforced enrolment scheme.⁶⁹

The 2008 roll for Solway School was 200. When asked to list any benefits received from the review in Question 20 respondents replied:

The benefit was that we successfully resisted, there was no merger. We did benefit indirectly though as enrolments from disillusioned parents from merged school catchments were so numerous that an enrolment scheme became necessary.⁷⁰

Yes. The public perceived that Solway was the school to be at.⁷¹

The fight put up by Solway Primary School is similar to 90 year old Mangaroa School in the Hutt Network Review 2003, another school which beat the odds. With a roll of ninety-five pupils, it survived the plan to merge it with Plateau School, an option which was rejected by its parents. Such was the faith of parents in Mangaroa that Rosemary McLennan of *the Upper Hutt Leader* was told in February 2004⁷² that one had pre-enrolled her child at two weeks old, one mother had pre-enrolled her daughter Olivia Anderson at the age of one and Vicki Hanley had pre-enrolled her son, Caleb, aged three:

Jubilation has replaced quiet optimism in the school community....Caleb's mother, Vicki Hanley told the Leader she was so excited by the school's news her neighbour thought she had won Lotto. Her children attended Montessori pre-school and she appreciates being able to bring Caleb when she is visiting her five year old at school. Mangaroa is very family oriented and the extended family is welcomed with open arms she says. There is no bullying and older children help the younger ones. I'd be gutted if it went.⁷³

The factors that were significant in persuading the Minister to change his mind in this case appear to be that once again the parents did their research and presented future roll predictions based on census data, recent subdivisions in the near proximity, and the roll growth they had experienced over recent years. A recent subdivision of rural land close to the school and very strong community support were also contributing factors. Parents had the means and made the effort to fund raise to lower the teacher pupil ratio from 1:27 to 1:20 and the fund raising for an assembly hall was well advanced.

A striking English example of politicised parent power in action cited by Ted Wragg⁷⁴ was the Plymtree campaign. Like Solway Primary School parents, the Plymtree village school parents were well organised, did their research and knew how to fight because they understood how the power structure worked. When the school was threatened with closure the parents interviewed every family with children under five in the region and found that the LEA had underestimated their numbers:

Next they invited the key members of the Education Committee to the school to see the children at their work, on the grounds that it is psychologically more difficult to close a school you have actually seen than one that is merely a name on a list. They also wrote individual

letters to councillors and their MP. Finally they attended the actual meeting of the Education Committee at which the future of their school was to be decided. Not only was this shrewd campaign successful but it whetted the appetite of the Plymtree parents for more battles with the local authority. When numbers began to increase, as they had predicted, they needed a third classroom. The LEA protested that no money was available, so the parents identified a school with a surplus portable classroom and struck a deal with the authority that they themselves would erect it if the LEA provided the transport.⁷⁵

Totara Drive School, named as a 'safe,' continuing school in the first two reports, had every reason to expect to survive but did not. It was officially regarded by Massey University as one of New Zealand's top twenty schools and recognised by the reviewers as a successful, "robust and viable" neighbourhood school in all respects. In 2001 Michael Dixon, Principal of Totara Drive, had an optimum roll of 300, an enrolment scheme introduced in 1992 and a waiting list. A brand new computer suite had recently been added to the end of the library. Parents and staff expressed their satisfaction with the school to the reviewers in comments such as:

Successful, well resourced, safe community with a good rural-urban and socio-economic mix," a wide source of programmes including sports and cultural activities, excellent facilities and relationships, and an 'ideal' size.⁷⁶

Another survey respondent commented:

...a happy school, a great family atmosphere – great staff – great kids – only few problem children (who generally fell into line through peer influence). Then my working life became filled with shock, disbelief, uncertainty although I tend to 'roll with the punches' and try to look at the positive aspects of any change. It was a major upheaval.⁷⁷

Right from the beginning Totara Drive wanted to remain as a stand-alone school. It seemed to be lulled into a false sense of security because it thought that since it clearly deserved to survive it would be safe. In the early stage of the review it seemed as if this would be the case, however the grounds of consultation shifted. Totara Drive had hoped for a north, south, east, west outcome to the review in which it would be the northern school. Its desired outcome was no longer possible once the Ministry rejected the proposal to build a brand new school to service the south east. The minutes of the Totara Drive Board of Trustees in 2002 and 2003 record school community meetings, consultation meetings with InterLEAD facilitators, telephone campaigns to every parent to advise them of meetings, the organisation of crèches and transport to get them there, meetings with the other principals meetings with NZEI representatives to discuss the industrial ramifications, written submissions, a letter writing campaign to the Minister and a visit to the Ministry of Education office in Lower Hutt. They did a lot of talking to each other and recording their concerns.

The April 4, 2003 minutes of the Lansdowne Board of Trustees record that it was only interested in a merger with Central School if a new school was guaranteed, although, based on the available research they had serious reservations about the wisdom the merger of two low decile schools. Fifty-two per cent of Lansdowne students were Maori. At its April community meeting Lansdowne School parents had voted unanimously to merge with Totara Drive on the Lansdowne site. By May a merger of Totara Drive and Lansdowne was proposed on the Totara Drive site with extra classrooms provided as needed. By June 20 the Ministry was recommending the merger and preliminary plans were drawn up to this effect.⁷⁸ Some stakeholders pointed out that the Totara Drive site was designed to accommodate about 320 students and there was not enough space for 500. However this problem was not insurmountable. One survey respondent told me that two properties adjacent to the

Totara Drive entrance were on the market at the time and their purchase could easily have provided the extra space required for the best outcome. However the grounds of consultation shifted. The July 31, 2003 report to the Minister records that the Totara Drive community was strongly opposed to a merger with Lansdowne and argued for Totara Drive to continue unchanged as the neighbourhood school. However once the Lakeview option of establishing a full primary school from the merger of Lansdowne, Hiona and Totara Drive on the Hiona site gained momentum, loyalties shifted yet again. The preference of the Lansdowne parents became a significant factor in the equation. Lansdowne stakeholders were well aware that Totara Drive did not wish to merge with their school:

Question 24 Agreed. Lansdowne School families were the poorer families, often Maori or Pacific Islanders. Unfortunately some children knew that 'they were not wanted' by the richer white families attending the other school. Something no child should hear.⁷⁹

The July 31 report to the Minister stated that instead of a merger with Totara Drive on the Totara Drive site the Lansdowne Board of Trustees preferred a Lansdowne/Totara Drive merger on the Hiona site to enable a fresh start for both schools, however they also advanced the possibility of a merger of Lansdowne, Totara Drive and Hiona on the Hiona site. By the end of the review fifty per cent of Lansdowne parents stated their preference for the full primary proposal at Lakeview. Seventy per cent of Lansdowne Year 6 students intended to proceed to Lakeview.

It was no secret that a triple merger would be Totara Drive's worst nightmare because not only would it result in its closure, but also there was insufficient time to mount an effective rear guard action. When it became clear that Totara Drive would not be able to continue as a stand-alone school two community protest meetings were organised by the Board of Trustees prior to the final decision. Sixty-three letters were sent to the Ministry. The staff and parents were encouraged to make individual submissions:

Protests - Hell yeah!!! Meetings and letters, continuously looking for alternatives to merging. The entire school community organised the protest – BOT, staff, everyone by word of mouth, letters and telephone calls.⁸⁰

It should not be forgotten that at the same time Lansdowne was going through its own grief because it too was staring down the barrel of closure. Lansdowne survey respondents referred to school community protest meetings.

I found it very stressful and unnecessary. Our principal kept us in touch at all times about meetings and developments but I honestly believed right until the last minute, that such a stupid decision would never take place. To close the grand old school that was Lansdowne was like losing part of my soul. The beautiful grounds, the gracious buildings, proximity to everything that Masterton had to offer (sports bowl, baths, library, park, hospital etc. etc.) is now forever lost to the children of the future. I enjoyed being on school Committee then BOT member, having two children attend for their primary years, but mostly a teacher there for twenty years. For 13 of those years I went to school every day to feed my classroom cat who brought such joy into so many children's lives. She died two days before the school closed. That was the final sadness for me.⁸¹

Whereas most schools knew the results in July, three schools had to wait. The Lakeview decision was not made until September 12 when Trevor Mallard announced that Hiona Intermediate, Lansdowne and Totara Drive would merge with Totara Drive being the continuing school. Even then the confirmation of the site had to be deferred until the Masterton District Council completed investigations on a reported fault line on the Hiona site. Just before the Minister announced his final



Totara Drive School, a popular town school, deserved to survive but was closed. Aerial photograph Peter Nikolaison

criticised Totara Drive for prejudice and Fernridge for political incompetence as they jockeyed for survival:

Totara Drive has been told they will merge with Lansdowne. They don't like this at all. Their submission talked about preserving the school's culture of high achievement. That's a none too subtle code for not wanting too many brown faces from the impoverished east side in Totara Drive classrooms. To that end they are fighting against a merger with low decile Lansdowne and the even more frightening prospect of a merger with Lansdowne and Hiona on the Hiona site. It's a risky approach. By not offering the Minister an alternative they could end up with their worst nightmare.⁸²

Respondents from closing schools referred to a time consuming and personally draining consultation process that involved meetings both at day and night, followed by having to deal with closure and merger issues at the same time, a deep sadness that their efforts to save their school were going to be unsuccessful and sometimes a sense that they were failing their school communities. A number of respondents from different schools felt strongly that their school was the victim of "a failing school elsewhere."⁸³ Most were angry about the review and its outcomes:

Get POLITICAL. No holds barred. Use posters, billboards, radio, media to drum up support. DON'T sit back and believe MOE will make the right or best decision. They DON'T so make as much noise as possible.⁸⁴

Grief. A feeling of bitterness and frustration that our school was paying the price for the falling roll of Hiona Intermediate. The workload was huge. While trying to run good classroom programmes the emotional and physical energy required to close down a successful school was heart breaking. Right until the last day I hoped the decision may be reversed.⁸⁵

I believe that the merger of Totara Drive, Hiona and Lansdowne was a social experiment. Totara drive decile 7. Hiona Decile 2. Lansdowne decile 2-3. What is the decile of Lakeview now? 1-2!!!. Did the experiment work? NO.⁸⁶

Silent protest can be a powerful method that parents can use to demonstrate opposition to closure/merger decisions. This becomes evident in their refusal to enrol their children in the remaining schools and their decision to pursue alternative options. Soon after the Lakeview decision was confirmed respondents noticed that a significant number of Totara Drive parents took matters into their own hands and enrolled their children in schools on the rural urban periphery before the school year ended in order to avoid the enrolment restrictions they anticipated would be put in place in their preferred schools in 2004. One respondent objected to such parental actions because, "They were altering the roll projections and the funding entitlements for the continuing schools before they had even started."⁸⁷ Several respondents pointed out that the decision by the Ministry to set the beginning of term one 2004 as the date when enrolment schemes would apply simply allowed time for people to shift their children before the enrolment scheme began.⁸⁸ It was seen to be unfair that these children took EDI funding with them that should have gone to the town schools and ironic that the parents of these children were in fact being rewarded for not supporting the merger.

Respondents argued that for enrolment schemes to have any proper effect they should have been put in place as soon as the closure and merger decisions were announced. Others questioned why the Ministry wanted to close down schools as a result of surplus classroom space then agree to build new classrooms such as at Opaki and Fernridge. In 2012, eight years after the network review, all the urban/rural periphery schools (Fernridge, Opaki, Wainuioru and Solway Primary) continue

to need enrolment schemes to cope with the demand for places as reference to the post-merger table 20 on page 67 will confirm. One respondent pointed out that the rolls for Ferridge and Solway used to be capped at eighty.⁸⁹

The parents and staff of Totara Drive voted with their feet. 3 or 4 senior staff took severance (plus two teachers). I estimate, of 320 at Totara Drive at the beginning of Term 4, (i.e. straight after the decision) 120–130 changed schools (most to Opaki and Ferridge) leaving 170–200 to go to Lakeview. MOE predicted opening roll (2004) of Lakeview at 650 plus. Opening roll 400 or less?⁹⁰

A significant number of thesis respondents also described, ‘white flight’ issues which benefited the rural fringe schools. Several believed that, “racial and socio-economic factors were equal drivers of this.”⁹¹

At its last meeting, when the Lansdowne Board of Trustees reviewed the network review process, it recorded its concerns in a letter sent to Trevor Mallard dated December 24, 2003.⁹² Trustees criticised the unrealistic time frame for the review and criticised the outcome which resulted in the Masterton urban fringe schools remaining intact while their urban neighbours, despite having similar rolls, did not. The trustees argued that the criteria that would determine the outcome of the review should have been known in advance and applied consistently. They recommended that a handbook to explain what should happen step by step at each stage of the process should be available so that those involved in the process clearly understood the issues and different roles and lines of responsibility. Without this clarity stakeholders were often flying blind. The trustees argued for a clear and transparent process in which all the options were on the table.

When asked in Question 14 to comment on how the school merger/closure had been handled by the Minister of Education, three respondents expressed satisfaction, but most respondents were very critical as the following replies indicate. Some clearly believed that Trevor Mallard had not visited Masterton. Others were upset that he had not attended the community meetings or visited the schools that were to be closed either to inform himself before the decision or afterwards to support them:

Very poor. Had no guts to front up. Mallard wasn't at any of the meetings.⁹³

Very badly. He hid in Wellington. Not once did the Minister even visit the Masterton area. He had no idea what the involved school communities were going through.⁹⁴

Poorly. They never visited to see what was happening in our school. We never saw anyone until crunch time with the community consultation meeting.⁹⁵

They discussed options with me up till the decision then they were not seen around schools for a long period.⁹⁶

Harris⁹⁷ argues that the most important dimension of change management is managing the staff (both teaching and ancillary) and the transition period for the children. In order to assist the newly merged school to keep the focus on student achievement, merged schools should be provided with additional support to align the curriculum in the newly merged school. She suggests that this role could be fulfilled by ERO who could undertake a review for the transitional board on the relative strengths (with a focus on the curriculum) of all schools prior to the merger. This document would not be a public document. Because of the combined importance of these change management issues Harris recommended that the Ministry of

Education should appoint from its staff a specific liaison person responsible for supporting the affected boards of trustees throughout the EDI process. She highlights the huge pressures placed on the personal lives of voluntary trustees upon whom the practicality of self-governing schools depends and recommends Ministry funded professional development on change management principles and practices for boards and staff to assist the management of the huge cultural shift that closures and mergers require:⁹⁸

It requires enormous commitment, time and energy and comes at a human cost to those involved....The number of extra meetings attended by Board members as part of the merger process was huge with one Board Chair stating that he had attended 120 meetings during the merger.

Board Chair:

As a chair we were going to four or five meetings a week at some stages. I hardly saw my family for a long time. That is just what you had to do.⁹⁹

Harris argues for community consultation time to be extended to recognise that communities require sufficient time to grieve over what they have lost and to come to terms with the inevitability of change. Stakeholders in the wider community, especially senior citizens, need to be considered as a part of any communication strategy:

During the grieving process many communities tended to implode. The level of negativity that emerged as a result appeared to have a significant influence on the progress of the merger. Many of those who resist the merger process were not part of the current school community, but previous pupils or grandparents of children who were currently attending.¹⁰⁰

There is a lot of heavy lifting and shifting involved in packing up a school. It is pertinent to remember that seventy-five per cent of primary teachers in New Zealand are female. The Ministry allowed one day for such a huge task as moving from one school to another and did not provide sufficient workers to assist the teachers in the physically demanding lifting and moving tasks:

I vividly recall shifting our classrooms in wet weather - one building was being relocated to the new school while we were expected to teach the children. The power/water supply was cut and we had to carry on!! There was one removal truck and two to three males helping us lift and shift 8 to 9 classrooms, furniture and all!¹⁰¹

In my 1999 thesis I recommended that stakeholders need to be aware that problems may occur if the contributions and sacrifices made are overlooked by those in authority. It is important to make a special effort to both publicly and personally thank the people involved in the closure/merger process for the work they have done. They have been caught up in an exceptionally stressful process, usually not of their choosing, which has been life changing, and involved a huge extra voluntary workload. They have found themselves not only at the cutting edge of educational change, but also on the receiving end of other people's stress. The Principal, Richard Williams and the Board of Trustees of Lansdowne School expressed their deep dissatisfaction about issues in the network review process that needed to be addressed in their letter to Trevor Mallard on December 24, 2003:

Lastly, we find it appalling that no one from the Ministry has contacted or visited our school to show an understanding of what it means to close a 95 year old place of learning. At the very least a letter acknowledging the work of the Board and staff and of the community should have been sent..¹⁰²



Opaki School – one of the popular schools on the rural urban periphery. Photographs Claire Hills



School resulted from the triple merger of Totara Drive, Lansdowne and Hiona Intermediate. It has a beautiful location with excellent facilities and many educational opportunities available in the surrounding environment. Decile 2. Photograph Peter Nikolaison. Lakeview

In his May 12 reply over four months later, the Minister accepted the criticism, justified network reviews and EDIs, referred to the moratorium and concluded with an acknowledgement

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for the intense effort that has been required of you, other Board members and staff as the review and reorganisation process has proceeded. Thank you too, to you and to all your predecessors for the stewardship of Lansdowne School's affairs and educational provision over nearly one hundred years.¹⁰³

This exchange raises a number of issues. Firstly, giving people the dignity of appreciation and acknowledgement of services rendered is a matter of professional courtesy at a basic level. Secondly, the expression of ministerial appreciation needed to have happened at the time of the event, not over four months later, and then only when this breach of professional courtesy was raised as an issue. Finally, the letter of reply caused further irritation because, by inference, the Minister delegated to the former principal the job of expressing appreciation to the trustees and staff. Individual letters of appreciation to the trustees and staff are preferable to a second hand message. In a network review both initiated and concluded by the Minister, it should be his/her job to attend to this matter. Witten et al. encountered similar anger from stakeholders in the Invercargill Network Review where parents also criticised the Minister and the Ministry for not delivering the closure message in person.

They needed to know and they still need to know why their school is the one. Because, as far as they can see, they feel their school is picked on. Picked out of a hat and that was it - boom - they lost their school. And not only that they've lost their sense of belonging, they've got to start again now. (Annie).¹⁰⁴

Table 21 summarises the schools in the Masterton District lost to closure in the six year period between 1998 and 2004. The figures in Table 23 show that between 2002 and 2009 the overall average number of students in the district has been 5,336 with a variance of 360 students between 5,486 in 2004 and 5,126 in 2009. There has been a decrease of 455 primary school students listed under full primary, contributing and intermediate categories however in the same time frame there has been a steady increase in the numbers attending schools in the Year 7 -15 category, such as Solway, St Matthews and Chanel College which have increased by 147 from 696 in 2002 to 843 in 2009. Even if one takes the 147 increase in Table 21 and only counts it as 100 for conservative estimation purposes and subtracts that from 455 the overall roll drop falls to 355. This roll drop is therefore 150 less than the 500 roll drop predicted by the Ministry of Education.

TABLE 22
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS CLOSED IN MASTERTON & SURROUNDING DISTRICT
1998 – 2004.¹⁰⁵

| YEAR | SCHOOL | SCHOOL TYPE | OVERALL TOTALS |
|------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|
| 1998 | Te Wharau | Rural | 1 |
| 1999 | Castlepoint | Rural | 1 |
| 2002 | Bideford | Rural | |
| | East School | Urban | 2 |
| 2003 | Cornwall Street | Urban | |
| | Harley Street | Urban | |
| | Lansdowne | Urban | |
| | Totara Drive | Urban | |
| | Miki Miki | Rural | 5 |
| | | | 9 schools overall |

TABLE 23

SCHOOL ROLL BY SCHOOL TYPE 1 MARCH 2001 – 2010.

Indicators and Reporting
Unit, Ministry of Education, Wellington, 2009.¹⁰⁶

| Masterton District | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|--------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Full Primary | | 634 | 638 | 1121 | 1007 | 1015 | 990 | 977 | 1000 | 385 |
| Contributing | | 1831 | 1807 | 1374 | 1235 | 1186 | 1199 | 1147 | 1179 | 459 |
| Intermediate | | 576 | 582 | 479 | 429 | 404 | 382 | 412 | 407 | 277 |
| Yr 7 – 15 | | 696 | 697 | 748 | 785 | 806 | 843 | 865 | 843 | 265 |
| Secondary | | 1692 | 1707 | 1731 | 1723 | 1767 | 1684 | 1639 | 1611 | 335 |
| Composite | | 29 | 25 | 14 | 122 | 138 | 109 | 82 | 62 | 137 |
| Teen Parent Unit | | | | 19 | 19 | 21 | 25 | 24 | 24 | 19 |
| TOTALS | | 5458 | 5475 | 5486 | 5342 | 5321 | 5337 | 5146 | 5126 | 2952 |

During Trevor Mallard's term as Minister, the Ministry planned to review 1000 schools over a ten year period in the hope of reducing them by about a third. Between the Wainuiomata Review in 2000 and the moratorium in 2004 Trevor Mallard had closed or foreshadowed the closure of about 100 state schools. Although some believed he was moving too far too fast, he did not. In February 2004, soon after the increasing community opposition to school reviews was reflected in successive political polls showing that Labour had lost the lead to National, a moratorium on school reviews was announced. It was deemed politically prudent by Helen Clark and her advisors to reassign Trevor Mallard elsewhere.

Trevor Mallard was replaced as Minister of Education by Steve Maharey. Trevor Mallard found the moratorium personally and politically difficult because he had to back down on something he believed in. Soon after the conclusion of the Masterton District Network Review he told a *Wairarapa Times Age* reporter¹⁰⁷ that he regretted that he had been unable to persuade communities that school closures were a good use of education resources and reiterated this two months later in an interview with Virginia Larsen in her 'North and South' feature article: *Mad Machiavellian Trevor Mallard or plain Misunderstood?*¹⁰⁸

It's fair to say that I'm disappointed that I've been unable to sell the advantages of doing these reviews more quickly than would otherwise happen. I take responsibility for biting off more than I could chew.¹⁰⁹

Most thesis survey respondents however, did not share his perceptions:

When the Minister of Education was told to drop the merger process by Prime Minister Helen Clarke he did so immediately. If the mergers were so needed and important, surely they should have continued instead of suddenly curtailed.¹¹⁰

Tomorrow's Schools set up self-managing schools – so how come the Ministry of Education suddenly had the power to shut them? Was this the beginning of the end of "Tomorrow's Schools?"¹¹¹

The *North and South* feature article provides valuable insights about Trevor Mallard's perceptions. He insisted that the network reviews were never about saving money as the dollars saved would always go back to the chalk face through improved teaching resources and equipment.

Mallard has never been afraid of fronting up in a hall bristling with hostile parents. And he was shrewd enough to start his turbo charged network review process in 2000 in his home

patch of Wainuiomata. Nearly four years on he claims that the closures and mergers in the valley have produced significantly better resourced and managed schools.¹¹²

The *Sunday Star Times* October 12, 2003¹¹³ noted that it was to his credit that Trevor Mallard visited communities and braved the criticism, for example when he fronted up to howls of outrage from 700 people at the Ascot Hotel in Invercargill where he proposed that twenty-three existing primary schools become ten. Virginia Larsen checked Trevor Mallard's perceptions about the reviews with key stakeholders in Wainuiomata where he was living when the reviews started in 2000. Rob Mill, former Principal of Wainuiomata College, which had merged with Parkway College on the Parkway site to form Wainuiomata College, agreed that the merger was very stressful at the beginning, but was convinced the outcomes had been positive. The college roll had increased from 800 to 1000 students. Instead of bussing them out of the valley to colleges elsewhere more parents were choosing to send them to the new neighbourhood college which had vastly improved buildings and teaching resources. Rob Mill endorsed the review outcomes:

Trevor took a huge amount of flak from the community when he first started this process... I don't think there is too much flak flying around now. People are pretty satisfied with the quality of education that's come out of the review.¹¹⁴

Conclusion

The Masterton District Network Review process provided the illusion of consultation. While it is true that stakeholders had the opportunity to state their preferences and prejudices, if the preferences cost money, such as the construction of two new state of the art schools on the eastern and western side of town, they sank without trace. This was a false economy. The merger of Central School and Harley Street School to form Masterton Primary School in the south east proved unworkable because the run down Central School facilities were not appropriate for a merger. The Ministry had to build a new school in the end. This showed that the Ministry had seriously underestimated the cost of the review. Two former EDI project managers explained their roles to the media. Ian Robertson believed that an EDI was an opportunity for local people to have control over change which was virtually inevitable, (the status quo is not an option argument)¹¹⁵ while Gay Turner was reported as saying, "I don't tell them who to amalgamate with, they tell me. We don't have a plan."¹¹⁶ This lack of a clearly structured process 'muddied the waters' and caused confusion to stakeholders. As one survey respondent noted, "There was no policy or booklet on the process. We learnt the importance of each step as we went through it."¹¹⁷

Before the network review began several primary school principals publicly rejected the attempts of Mayor Bob Francis to include the wider community in the discussions about future educational provision in the district. The consultation process largely took place at organised meetings within the school communities and with the Inter-LEAD facilitators, therefore it could be argued that stakeholders spent a lot of time talking to themselves. While the Masterton Town Hall can accommodate 650 people, the April 2003 meeting attended by Trevor Mallard for the 'in crowd' was attended by only ninety-five principals, trustees, teachers and a sprinkling of parents and community members.

A deeply flawed process inevitably produces negative social outcomes. The outcome of the review divided the community along clear lines. It set schools against one another. It accentuated the east west divide. Many parents who disagreed with the review outcomes contested them by staging a silent protest through voting with

their feet and enrolling their children in the smaller schools on the rural/urban periphery, thereby destabilising the projected rolls in the remaining town schools. As a result all of the remaining state primary schools in the town have a decile rating of four or less.

TABLE 24.

**DECILE DATA FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE MASTERTON DISTRICT.
Indicators and Reporting Unit, Ministry of Education, Wellington, 2009.¹¹⁸**

| SCHOOL | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Cornwall Street | 6 | 6 | 5 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Douglas Park | n/a | n/a | n/a | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 |
| Fernridge | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 4 | 4 |
| Hadlow | 9 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 8 |
| Harley Street | 3 | 3 | 3 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Kura Kaupapa | 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 |
| Lakeview | n/a | n/a | n/a | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 2 |
| Lansdowne | 2 | 2 | 2 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Masterton Central | 3 | 3 | 3 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Masterton East | 1 | 1 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Masterton Primary | n/a | n/a | n/a | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Masterton West | 3 | 3 | 4 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| St Patrick's | 4 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Solway | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 6 |
| Totara Drive | 7 | 7 | 8 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Rural Schools in Masterton District | | | | | | | | | |
| Bideford | 10 | 10 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Gladstone | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 7 | 7 |
| Mauriceville | 5 | 5 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| Miki Miki | 10 | 10 | 10 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Opaki | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 10 |
| Tinui | 7 | 7 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 6 | 6 |
| Wainuiouru | 9 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 9 | 9 |
| Whareama | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 10 | 10 |
| INTERMEDIATES | | | | | | | | | |
| Hiona | | | | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| MIS | | | | | | | | | |

The changes between the original proposals and the final decisions in the Masterton Network Review show that school closures and mergers are contestable. However, once the proposals shifted some schools were caught out, such as Totara Drive, which had every reason to believe itself safe but suddenly found it was targeted for closure in a situation where any rear-guard action would have been too late. Solway Primary School was the standout example of a school who never took things for granted, who realised from the beginning that they would have to fight to survive and discovered how to fight effectively. Their realpolitik approach worked.

The Masterton District Network Review also left some with a sense of foreboding. One principal said to me:

I warned the Minister at the time that if we didn't get it right we would be going through the whole process again with Makoura in five years' time.¹¹⁹

CHAPTER 5

THE MAKOURA COLLEGE CLOSURE CRISIS 2008

IT'S NOT OVER UNTIL IT'S OVER:

Emotions ran high during the press conference yesterday and at one point Mr Gribben held back tears as he spoke of waking up in the morning and realising that it was decision day.¹

“DEATH OF A SCHOOL.”² On July 5, 2008, in the same year as its fortieth jubilee, bold page wide *Wairarapa Times Age* banner headlines announced the decision by the Makoura College Board of Trustees to close the College at the end of the year. A large photograph of glum faced Board Chair, Lindsay Gribben, Principal Chris Scott and Ministry of Education limited statutory manager, Andy Matthews, emphasised the gravity of the situation. It was a double blow for Lindsay Gribben. He had been Chairperson of the Hiona Intermediate Board of Trustees when it closed in the 2003 network review. A number of Makoura College students had also experienced the trauma of the closure of the primary school they attended as a result of the same review. Mr Gribben told the press that although all possible options had been exhausted, the community had until July 28, to respond to its report recommending closure.

The Makoura College case provides the opportunity to show how community opposition overturned a closure decision after it had been made. Time was of the essence. Unless Makoura was saved in this four week window of opportunity, the option of choice in state secondary education in Masterton would end. In the Masterton District Network Review 2003, stakeholders had four months to accept, negotiate or contest the outcomes before the final decision. Since then the community had become more politicised. The vandalised, graffitied, arson-attacked, abandoned school buildings provided daily reminders of the bruising network review experience and what happens to schools after they are closed. Since it was an experience they did not wish to repeat, it was easier to decide early in the process to support the efforts of the Makoura community to contest and reverse the closure decision.

The community response to the decision to close the college was a resounding “No!” Makoura students organised a Wairarapa wide protest petition and demanded that the college be kept open. The community rallied to support the school in such a groundswell of opposition and organised protest that the board changed its mind a month later. The Ministry of Education retreated, appointed a new principal and a Commissioner and granted the college a reprieve. Three years later the increased roll growth, the implementation of new modes of curriculum delivery and improved academic outcomes saw the school able to elect a new board of trustees in 2011 to take up the challenge of taking the college into the future.

Wairarapa Times-Age

YOUR REGION, YOUR PAPER.

MASTERTON, NEW ZEALAND

61 TOWN SUBSCRIBERS BCC

STREET TALK | Do you think Makoura College should close?
WTA 24/10/17 p.6

Is Makoura closing? Makoura board should be replaced, says Hayes

Speculation mounts, after a 'confidential' meeting between the chairs of the Makoura College and Wairarapa College boards of trustees and the Ministry of Education, that something's afoot at Makoura. Anonymous comment, other than a statement confirming a "meeting" between the two boards, has been received by the Times-Age to say Makoura is closing, but not when.

Makoura board should be replaced, says Hayes

Wairarapa MP John Hayes has called for the Makoura College board of trustees to be replaced, following a meeting with the board's chairman, John Hayes, on Monday.

CAN OTHER SCHOOLS HELP?

Wairarapa MP John Hayes has called for other schools to help Makoura College in its current financial crisis.

When all else fails blame 'the media'

Wairarapa MP John Hayes has called for the media to be held responsible for the Makoura College crisis.

An open letter from Wairarapa MP John Hayes to the people of Masterton.

Dear people of Masterton, I am writing to you today to express my concern about the future of Makoura College.

WaiCol: It's Makoura's decision to make

Wairarapa College (WaiCol) is facing a decision on whether to merge with Makoura College.

Pupils sad and angry

Makoura College pupils are sad and angry about the prospect of their school's closure.

WTA Saturday August 24th, 2017

NEWS SHEET
New Streamers

Part of the reporter's research

Makoura College History

Established in 1968, Makoura College was intended to provide for a roll of 600 students. Before its construction there was a vigorous debate over where Masterton's second state secondary school should be located. The site available on land near the hospital on the east side of Lansdowne close to a state housing area and near where many up market homes were being built was rejected in favour of the Makora Road site opposite the Cameron Block where about 400 state houses had been built in the 1950s. It was to prove an unfortunate decision. As time passed the Cameron Block became known in local parlance as "the reservation" or simply "the block."

Twenty years after the establishment of Makoura College, George Groombridge, Masterton's recently retired senior social worker, later a leader in the "Hands Around Our Hospital" protest campaign and a Makoura College guidance counsellor, was interviewed by Shane Cave from *The New Zealand Listener*³ after the 1988 protest march which saw 3,000 people rally to support the police. He criticised both the way public money was being spent in Masterton and the short sighted government decision to abandon its former 'pepper potting' approach in spreading state housing throughout the community in favour of building a large block of housing for 400 households in the Cameron Block because it resulted in concentrating many of the town's problems in one suburb:

It is on the damp downhill side of town by the river, by the rubbish dump and now by the cemetery to add insult to injury. And the planners failed to set aside land for a pub or a dairy, while the section for a church cannot physically accommodate a church. Now they've cut their bus service off... We financed a library, an absolutely outstanding amenity, but most of these people on the east side have not got the ability to get there, and I would say as a retired social worker, that many of them can't read.⁴

As previously mentioned in Chapter 4, it is well known in the real estate business that the location of a property is a very important factor in relation to how it is perceived and valued by a prospective purchaser. When Noel Preston, founding Deputy Principal and former Principal of Makoura College for twelve years wrote its fortieth jubilee book he commented to a *Wairarapa Times Age* reporter:

Back in the 1960s the idea was to have two state schools with each having about 800 students but that isn't how it worked out... No doubt the first mistake was the location. It's easy to be wise after the event but there has been no development with any of the houses in the area since the college was built and it doesn't help having a dump just down the road. The college has always laboured under the problem of being in the wrong area.... The most recent mistake was during the primary school mergers four years ago. That was the opportunity for the education department to make a move but they shied away from joining Makoura with Hiona Intermediate.⁵

The Makoura College Closure Crisis: The Masterton community lives the result of its choices after *Tomorrow's Schools*

In common with a number of schools in the Masterton District Network Review, the Makoura College crisis was brought about by declining rolls over a number of years following the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools* and the removal of zoning in 1990. It was further complicated by the issues identified in several ERO reports.

One year after the Masterton District Network Review the *Wairarapa Times Age* signalled early signs of trouble at Makoura College when it published the full Makoura College ERO report on December 3, 2004⁶. The ERO reported that it would return in twelve months for a supplementary review to evaluate the progress made in bringing about the required improvements identified in its report. In its 2005 report the ERO reported that although there had been improvements in several aspects of the school's performance there had been little progress in continuing areas of concern which included literacy, numeracy and leadership. There were also debt issues linked to having too many buildings for the size of the roll. A Limited Statutory Manager, Graeme Oldershaw, was appointed for the 2006 school year. The Ministry of Education Schools' Manager for the southern central region, Margaret-Anne Barnett, explained to editor Nick McDonald in November 23, 2005 issue of the *Wairarapa News*⁷ that the LSM would take on all the board's powers in relation to employment, including ensuring that all job descriptions, employment agreements and performance management systems fitted together to support the work being done by teachers in their classrooms. In addition the board had also been in contact with an education consultant about assistance for its teachers. In November 2006, a year later, the ERO found that there had been an improvement in academic achievement, particularly numeracy, literacy, the NCEA results, communication within the school community and teaching and learning practices in the school.

However in April 2008 the news became ominous. Despite the support strategies put in place and the help of a ministry appointed accountant, the Makoura College roll dropped from 399 students in 2004 to 300 students in October 2006. By 2008 the Year 9 intake had dropped to 50-60 students. There was increasing media speculation that Makoura College might close.⁸ For example a front page report in *Wairarapa Times Age* on April 9⁹ "Is Makoura closing?" disclosed that a secret meeting had been held on April at REAP House between the chairs of the Makoura College and Wairarapa College boards of trustees and the Ministry of Education at which Makoura Principal, Chris Scott, was not present and signalled that leadership issues were playing a significant role in the unfolding drama. Some Makoura stakeholders believed that Wairarapa College had leaked the news of the confidential meeting to the media and that the Ministry would not let the Board of Trustees tell the staff.

When the closure of Makoura College was announced on July 5, Board Chair, Lindsay Gribben explained to the media¹⁰ that the board had considered four options: to preserve Makoura on its present site, a merger with Wairarapa College, (which was rejected by Wairarapa College), a secondary-tertiary merger with UCOL or Wel TEC, (for which funding was unavailable), or the resignation of the Board of Trustees to, "...let someone else come in. Essentially, at the end of the day the college has run out of money and without an increase in its enrolments the college is not sustainable."¹¹

Opposition Wairarapa MP, John Hayes, soon achieved a high media profile early in the process through taking a hard line approach, whereas in the 2003 review Wairarapa MP Georgina Beyer, a member of the Labour led Government at the time, attracted little media coverage. A month before the closure announcement *Wairarapa Times Age* reported on June 7, 2008¹² that the Makoura College Board of Trustees had accepted an offer of help from John Hayes to help it to address the issues it was facing. In a bid to delay any decision relating to closure or merger. John Hayes organised a taskforce group headed by Sir Brian Lochore, former all

Black Captain and a former commissioner for Kuranui College, Masterton Mayor, Garry Daniell, long serving former Masterton Mayor, Bob Francis, ex Wairarapa College Principal, Alwyn Williams, Jean McCombie, former Principal of Wairarapa Polytechnic, Paora Ammumson, representative of local iwi, and Masterton Trust Lands Trust Chairman, Alan Sadler.

Throughout Makoura's roller coaster ride from terminal meltdown to educational health, the local media played an important role in keeping the wider community well informed about developments and the significant issues that needed to be addressed. It is a sign of the importance of schools in small towns that the *Wairarapa Times Age*, which had already provided frequent front page coverage of the 2003 network review and its aftermath, did so again in the Makoura College closure crisis. This played a significant role in assisting stakeholders to decide that the survival of the college was an important issue for the future of education in the town. As American researchers Gallagher, Bagin and Moore point out,¹³ mass communication makes it possible to deliver an important story and have it read by a fairly high percentage of citizens in the circulation area the same day it is printed, thereby raising public awareness. Another advantage is that each reader receives the story in an identical form which minimises the element of distortion that can occur when messages are distributed on a person to person basis. They argue that:

Each person who is independently viewing such a program, reading a news magazine, or hearing a radio broadcast, and so on is connected to various groups in the community such as family, close friends, fellow workers, members of a lodge, or a religious congregation. The fact is important in mass communication because the real impact of messages transmitted by means of the media is produced through the dissemination of ideas and information by individual receivers in small group situations.¹⁴

Wairarapa Times Age defended criticism of its coverage of the crisis with an unrepentant editorial on the front page of its July 5, edition.¹⁵

When the Times Age broke the news on this story back in April it was met with disbelief by some, and anger by others who felt this was an example of the newspaper scaremongering. It clearly wasn't, but it did come as a surprise to many who were unaware of the precarious future facing Makoura.

Makoura has suffered unfairly for years because of its geography and undoubtedly this has played a part in its falling rolls over the years. Barring some last minute miracle, Makoura is going to close and we should all share a tear about that.¹⁶

As Gallagher, Bagin and Moore¹⁷ point out:

Controversy is news....People enjoy reading about controversy, and if readers want it, newspapers will print it.¹⁸

The fight to preserve Makoura College continued to attract on-going attention in both the national and local media. Dave Saunders' *Wairarapa Times Age* editorial on July 12,¹⁹ urged readers to read the full Makoura College report which was published in its entirety so that they could see for themselves that the board had not simply shelved its responsibilities and taken the easy option, particularly given its preferred option:

If there is any possibility that Makoura can be saved then that is good news, but firing missiles at the board is neither helpful nor warranted.²⁰

If Wairarapa College had agreed to a merger, given that it had negotiated a maximum roll of 1,300 with the Ministry, then the staff of both schools would have

had to resign their positions and to re-apply for the positions available in the merged college. The principal of Wairarapa College, Mike Schwass, supported by Karen Barbour, Chairwoman of the Wairarapa College Board of Trustees, told *Wairarapa Times Age* on July 5²¹ that he saw no reason to volunteer to subject his staff to such a process or to accept any responsibility for people choosing Wairarapa College as their preferred school. It was the unanimous decision of the Wairarapa College board that “any decision regarding the future of Makoura College was the responsibility of the Makoura College Board of Trustees.”²²

M.P. John Hayes used the Official Information Act to access information about the educational and leadership issues facing Makoura College and then used the media on a regular basis to keep the Makoura crisis at the forefront of public attention. His personal position soon became clear. In a *Wairarapa Times Age* interview on July 9,²⁸ he took a hard line about what should happen next:

The Minister needs to suspend the board and appoint a commissioner. ...Makoura College is already in its coffin and the Ministry of Education advisers are only there to bury it.²³

Just over a week later on July 18, he followed up his first attack by claiming that the ministry had been aware of problems at Makoura for nine years and criticised its consultation processes as slow and inappropriate.

The Ministry of Education has moved with stealth and confidentiality to begin and manage a process that will see Makoura College close in December 2008. The ministry needs to back off this track, respect the community's wishes and address the leadership issues at the school. No other outcome is acceptable to the people of Masterton. They do not want their young people disenfranchised by bureaucrats in Wellington.²⁴

He challenged Minister of Education, Chris Carter, to address “the leadership issues” at the school and provide the necessary support over a five year period to enable Makoura to operate as a “viable, well led and well managed school.” He reinforced his position by referring to excerpts from a report given to Chris Carter and his Associate Minister Parekura Horomia a month after the November 2007 report to support his stance:

....The Principal and senior management team were not functioning with the breakdown of relationships within the team, between the management team and the staff and between the Principal and the limited statutory manager....There is currently low staff morale throughout the college.²⁵

John Hayes pressed his hard line attitude again on July 23, in his fortnightly column in the *Wairarapa News*²⁶ by referring to the two reports about Makoura College which he had accessed under the Official Information Act which itemised issues that needed to be addressed. He said that in an internal report dated November 13, 2007, the Ministry had recommended that urgent action be taken to address a widespread lack of staff confidence in the senior management team, the loss of several established and key staff members, a lack of follow through with the implementation of key systems and processes leading to reactive behaviour and reduced staff commitment to collective aims, staff concerns regarding health and safety, a significant drop in student satisfaction and the emergence of strong student “counter cultures” in some classes.²⁷

The NCEA qualification statistics of Makoura College were used by different stakeholders in the on-going tug of war for community support. MP John Hayes used the below average 2004-2006 NCEA statistics in his *Wairarapa News* column July

23, 2008²⁸ to support his market driven argument that the school management and leadership were not delivering the outcomes they were being paid for, that parents had “voted with their feet,” and this had resulted in the roll drop from 425 students in 2002 to 272 students in 2007.

TABLE 25

Makoura Students achieving typical or above level or above qualifications 2004 – 2006.²⁹

| | Makoura National 2004 | | Makoura National 2005 | | Makoura National 2006 | |
|---------|--------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|--------------------------|-----|
| Year 11 | 31% | 61% | 32% | 63% | 49% | 65% |
| Year 12 | 32% | 64% | 48% | 66% | 36% | 68% |
| Year 13 | 40% | 51% | 40% | 54% | 22% | 57% |

To redress the balance, Joanne Edwards, retiring Makoura College Board of Trustees parent representative, published a table of the 2007 results in “Letters/Opinion on August 13, 2008³⁰” which showed that not only had the Makoura College Level 1 NCEA academic outcomes substantially improved, but also that they were higher than those of Wairarapa College

TABLE 26

2007 NCEA Results for Year 11 Makoura Students.³¹

| | Makoura College | Wairarapa College | Other NZ Decile 3 schools |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| Level 1 | 67.4% | 57.6% | 51.4% |
| Level 1 Merit | 9.3% | 12.6% | 9.9% |
| Level 1 Excellence | 2.3% | 2.5% | 1.4% |
| Level 2 | 9.3% | 0% | 0.4% |
| | One Year 10 student achieved Level 1. | No Year 10 students achieved Level 1. | |
| | One Year 12 student achieved Level 3. | No students achieved any level earlier than the usual year. | |

As events unfolded various avenues of support for Makoura emerged. In addition to the Friends of Makoura Group of community leaders organised by John Hayes, the supportmakoura website established by teacher and former student Andrew Hutchby, was used to rally support for his old college. He included links to the Makoura College website and email links to the Minister of Education, Chris Carter and Wairarapa M.P. John Hayes. Former Makoura students used internet pathways to rally support. As already explained in the literature review in Chapter 2, schools overseas threatened with closure have often used the internet as a strategy to gain support. On July 28, reports in both the *Wairarapa Times Age*³² and the *Wairarapa News*³³ publicised the supportmakoura website and its contact details for their readers. Former Makoura student, Jemaine Clement, member of the internationally famous Flight of the Conchords, challenged popular community conceptions in an e mail to the supportmakoura website which was published in *Wairarapa Times Age* on July 17:

No gangs of 13 year old thugs terrorised the science block. You couldn't get whisky with your salad at the school canteen. Not one knife fight ever erupted during our sustained silent reading class. In fact it was a pleasure to attend. Students were taught respect for each other. There is no old fashioned prefect system that teaches pupils that some kids are important and others aren't or gives some students power over others. Rather students are taught to value and respect their fellow students, help them with their problems and listen to their

opinions. When a young person learns that people are valuable, they learn that they themselves are valuable. I believe it is a great school....if Makoura closes, it will be a great loss for the Wairarapa.³⁴

Several months later the Flight of the Conchords flew in to perform a concert that raised over \$70,000 to help the college in its fight for survival.

Garry Daniell, Mayor of Masterton, said that it was the unanimous view of the Masterton District Council that Makoura should stay open to give options to Masterton's parents. The community protest meeting organised in response to the draft consultation document issued by the Makoura College Board of Trustees recommending closure attracted well over 300 people. When the submission period closed over 300 submissions had been received.

As the crisis intensified an increasing gulf developed between the Makoura College Board of Trustees and the community. As Chapter 4 has already demonstrated, stakeholders in school closures attach a high priority to clear and appropriately timed communication from those in authority. There were frequent criticisms about a lack of consultation with the stakeholders during the Makoura crisis. Labour Party candidate Denise MacKenzie drew public attention to some inconsistencies in the process when she alerted *Wairarapa News* readers on July 16³⁵ to the fact that the board seemed willing to co-operate with an elite taskforce group selected by John Hayes, yet neither the staff nor the families of the students had been given a formal opportunity to have an input into the decisions that affected the school's future:

After months of secret meetings and half-finished sentences, the report has recommended closing the school at the end of 2008 without any real community input, up until this point. This was the first public document that community members have been able to comment on, and it seems that the Board has already made up its mind.³⁶

One parent who was outside the college to collect her child on July 4, the day the closure was announced, complained to *Wairarapa Times Age* reporter, Nathan Crombie:

Why did I have to wait to find out so late, like this? There are a lot of questions that have to be answered. The community should have been asked for ideas and help and now even if that's done, it's too late.³⁷

Some upset students learnt by cell phone that their college was closing. Year 10 student Nic Groves was a case in point:

I got a text and then someone on my course said my school was closing. I was heartbroken. He said it was frustrating that Wairarapa College says that it was our choice to go to Makoura. It wasn't our choice at all. We had to go there because of where we live but now I don't want to be anywhere but Makoura. I'm really angry.³⁸

Concerned Makoura parents, Vaea and Trin Peterson, who were very satisfied with the education Makoura College was providing, told *Wairarapa Times Age* that they:

...were unaware of the "east-west division" in the town when they chose Makoura College for their children, whom they found had all thrived in their time at school. The prospect of closure and the decisions looming in its wake "are devastating..."³⁹

Two days later Jo Moir reported that the decision that their school was going to close had reduced some students to tears. Michael Preston, a Year 12 student, said:

I was really looking forward to next year, but now everything is uncertain. It means having to get used to a new environment, new teachers, and making new friends. That's a whole lot of uncertainty and it's pretty crappy actually.⁴⁰

It was paradoxical that despite the fact that Masterton has six secondary schools it was not possible for the remaining five colleges to provide sufficient places for the Makoura students who would need them if their college were to close. Willie Kersten, Principal of Rathkeale (decile ten) told *Wairarapa Times Age*⁴¹ that anyone who came into his school had to accept the integrated system (Anglican), "...because we are who we are and we can't accept students who cannot afford it."⁴² Beth Rogerson, Principal of Solway College, (decile 8) said students who attend Solway have to meet the special character requirements (Christian) and, "At the moment we don't have any day school spaces available at the college but we do have boarding room available."⁴³ Erik Pedersen, Principal of St Matthew's, (decile 10) said that there was no room at St Matthew's, " because St Matthew's roll for 2009 is currently full. St Matthew's is a state integrated school and we have a fee structure and I don't think there's anything the ministry could do to help pay for Makoura College students to attend the school."⁴⁴

Jo Matthews, Principal of Chanel College, (decile 5) was not approached for comment. Regardless of any comment she might have made, Catholic schools may only accept five per cent of non-Catholics on their roll, a restriction imposed on them by the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act 1975. This restriction was not lifted in the Education Act of 1989. Unlike other schools which, in fact, are not restricted in relation to accepting students from different faith backgrounds, Catholic schools can only market their school to Catholic families. These legal constraints automatically restricted Chanel's ability to accept Makoura students.

Therefore when the Makoura College closure crisis arrived, apart from enrolling in Wairarapa College, which could not accommodate the numbers required, the only other option for the remaining Makoura students was Kuranui College in Greytown. Principal, Geoff Shepherd said:

Yes, we could absorb some...and we will make an approach to Makoura to offer places to students, especially senior students so they can finish their schooling.⁴⁵

One of the many issues associated with closures and mergers is, "Who decides?" Secondly, if school closure decisions are to be contested then this raises the question, "Contested by whom?" The Picot Taskforce in 1988 believed:

The social consequences of our proposals will also be significant for local communities. In many instances the learning institution acts as the central meeting place for the diverse groups within a particular community. We are proposing a system that emphasises local autonomy and participation – this can only make the learning institution even more a focal point for community than it is now.⁴⁶

If such a vision is to be realised, people from all sectors of the community need to be willing to serve in governance as trustees to support their community schools and be voted in by the electors. Although *Tomorrow's Schools* provides the opportunity for New Zealand parents to use the democratic process to elect the candidates of their choice as school trustees, the outcome of the process does not necessarily produce a group of people who can be clearly shown as truly representative of the society and the community they serve. Any group of people who are a minority in a given population will usually find it much more difficult to get elected.

Eight years before *Tomorrow's Schools* Wally Penetito delivered a research paper at the New Zealand Association for Research in Education seminar at Massey University,⁴⁷ where he noted the reluctance of Maori to volunteer to serve in governance roles:

Most Maori parents are reluctant participants in the formal schooling of their children. That is, teachers generally find it difficult to persuade these parents into their classrooms and principals have similar difficulty in getting Maori parents to volunteer for service on controlling bodies such as school committees and boards of governors.⁴⁸

Penetito found that while Maori parents do participate in the activities of the school at a classroom level, the most influential factor in determining whether they will volunteer their services or not, is whether the principal demonstrates a basic commitment to the local district and especially to that section which is Maori:

Maori parents in general, are reluctant participants in the attempts that schools make to involve them in activities officially sanctioned by schools. Where Maori parents do participate, it is usually in the field of Maori oriented activities. Maori parents of a middle class background are likely to show a concern for education that approximates a similar concern expressed by middle class Pakeha parents.⁴⁹

Cathy Wylie in her NZCER report *Ten Years On: How Schools View Educational Reform*,⁵⁰ reported that seventy-nine per cent of the trustees in her survey gave their ethnic group as European/Pakeha, eleven per cent Maori, four per cent "New Zealander" and two per cent Pacific Islander, figures that were comparable to Ministry of Education figures for trustees at the end of 1998. In the case of Makoura College the situation was worse.

As the crisis developed the community had the opportunity to reflect upon the Maori perspective on July 23, through the regular column in *Wairarapa News* written, by Paora Ammunson, Chairman of Kahungunu ki Wairarapa.⁵¹ The kaumatua pointed out that the local iwi, Ngati Kahungunu and Rangitane, are virtually excluded from community leadership in schools. In the two decades since *Tomorrow's Schools* Maori have served as trustees in only a minority of schools in the Wairarapa and in the small minority where there are Maori on the board of trustees only a handful were from the local iwi. He stated that he was aware of only one local iwi person on any school board in the whole Wairarapa.⁵²

The absence of elected Maori leadership on boards of trustees is also evident in local bodies. In 2008 there was only one person of Maori descent on the Masterton District Council and only one person of Maori descent on the Wairarapa Health Board. This situation is relevant to this thesis because when a district health authority or an educational organisation is confronted with a crisis or the requirement to engage in a significant change process, the people with the authority to participate close up in the decision making process are those who have been democratically elected. If there is a pattern of Maori not having been elected, then Maori are excluded from community decision making processes that affect them directly. Such was the case in the Makoura College crisis. As kaumatua Paora Ammunson observed, new models and approaches to Maori community engagement were needed because there was no strong leadership in Wairarapa schools with respect to Maori education. He believed that Makoura College just happened to be where this lack of leadership came to the fore.⁵³

If the situation is to change, given that Maori parents are a minority, the number of Maori parents willing to stand needs to increase as does the number of parents willing to vote for them. One alternative that might be worth considering is to dilute

the democratic process by providing for appointed trustees selected by the Maori members of the school community. This might be justified on an argument derived from the concept of treaty partnership. While this raises the question 'appointed by whom?' this alternative might well be better than the status quo in which Maori parents are seriously underrepresented on Boards of Trustees. In this regard a comparison with Catholic schools might be useful. In order to preserve the Catholicity of the school, which is specified in the Private Schools Conditional Integration Act, and the fundamental reason for its existence, the Integration Agreement provided for two pathways to governance for trustees. Four trustees are appointed by the 'Proprietor,' who is usually whoever happens to be the bishop of the Diocese, and the rest of the trustees are democratically elected. Just as a bishop is recognised as the regional leader of his people, so also are kaumatua the recognised leaders of their iwi and therefore likely to be able to make sensible recommendations of people who would be appropriate choices as trustees.

Mena Antonio, Ministry of Education consultant for decile one schools and Pasifika Wairarapa board member articulated the Pasifika concerns:

The closure of Makoura College will strip some Maori and Pacific Island families of choice and an educational culture more appropriate to our needs....There are a lot of voiceless parents out there and there is a particular group whose needs are met at Makoura who are struggling just to put their next meal on the table. With only one state school in the town, their choice is no choice at all because every other option is financially out of their reach.⁵⁴

At the July 16, community protest meeting, another Pasifika leader, Tere Torea, recalled the Hands Around our Hospital campaign, and urged the community to lobby parliament.

The Makoura crisis demonstrated once again, that in times of educational tension, integrated schools can become a target of blame. As already mentioned in Chapter 4, the 2003 network reviewers refuted the validity of several local 'raw nerves' which they labelled as 'myths.' These included the belief that integrated schools were draining Masterton state schools of students and would do so in a proportionately greater degree in the future as state school rolls decline.

Allen Hair, one of the educationalists who fuelled this "myth" in 2003 did so again in 2008. *Wairarapa Times Age* of July 18⁵⁵ reported that at the public meeting he had moved a motion with several parts which asked that a moratorium be placed on any attempt to close Makoura College and that it should be fully funded until December 2009. The next part of the motion asked the Ministry to provide the funding and machinery to enable a Wairarapa wide review of secondary education provision, that the Ministry should initiate a review of the effects of the Integration Act and the 1988 Education Act on the equitable provision of secondary education in Wairarapa. The motion was supported by a show of hands and applause. Hair claimed that the Private Schools Integration Act of 1975 and the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms of 1989 were responsible for 'the dearth of educational opportunities for students in the south and east of Masterton.' He also questioned why state integrated schools, Solway, Chanel and Rathkeale, which have similar secondary roll sizes to Makoura, were not under the same scrutiny.

These three schools are fully funded by the state apart from the ownership and maintenance of their property. Why is nobody asking questions about their ability to deliver an adequate curriculum? If you take Makoura out you deprive the whole south east of a state secondary school.⁵⁶

One response to this question might be that the schools he named at the time were not under review because they had received successful ERO audits, successful NZQA audits, had relatively stable rolls and above average academic results. All of the colleges in the Wairarapa have an educational history that predates the establishment of Makoura College. St Matthew's College was established in 1914, Solway College was established in 1916. Wairarapa College, established in 1938, was the result of a merger between Masterton Technical School and Wairarapa High School, which had its foundation in Masterton District High school, 1884–85 and 1902–1922. Kuranui College was established in 1960 Rathkeale College was established in 1964. Chanel College, although established in 1978, brought together St Bride's College established in 1898 and St Joseph's College established in 1945.

For those who do believe that the Private Schools Integration Act of 1975 and the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms of 1989 were responsible for "the dearth of educational opportunities for students in the south and east of Masterton,"⁵⁷ then the fact is that the only integrated school in the south east is Chanel College. The legal restrictions on its capacity to accept enrolments were described as discrimination by former Chanel College Principal, Michael O'Loughlin, to *Wairarapa Times Age* reporter, Ann McRae, in a post *Tomorrow's Schools* interview:

New enrolment policies for state secondary schools discriminate against integrated schools. All schools have to launch marketing campaigns to attract prospective pupils in the new era of open enrolments and free choice for state school pupils. Despite a growing interest from state school parents in Chanel, the school can only enrol five per cent of non-Catholic students. State schools can take unlimited numbers of Catholics but Catholics cannot take state students.⁵⁸

The Makoura College situation received nationwide coverage of a different kind when Robin Duff, President of the NZPPTA which represents 18,000 secondary teachers, also referred to Makoura College and integration matters in "Save Our Schools" in 'President's Viewpoint' in the July 2008 issue of *PPTA News*.⁵⁹ After expanding upon the causes for the 'roll haemorrhage' and 'the spiral of decline,' Robin Duff moved on to make generalisations about integrated schools which upset many teachers in Masterton integrated schools who were very supportive about the situation faced by their professional colleagues at Makoura:

While this may look like Masterton's problem it actually belongs to all of us....The local state school has the skids put under it while the government "winks at the hand" constantly expanding both the number of designer integrated schools and approving increases in their maximum rolls. In the end those parents who asked for nothing more than the right to send their kids to the nearest school will be betrayed in order to provide the panoply of choice for parents who can afford to pay \$5000 a year for schooling (plus \$250 enrolment fee).⁶⁰

In a second reference to school fee charges of \$5,000 he claimed that it allowed integrated schools to avoid the funding and staffing crisis that, "would befall a normal state school."⁶¹ Quoting the figure of \$5,000 overlooks the fact that most integrated schools in New Zealand are not decile ten schools with a fee structure that makes them inaccessible to the majority. The figures available for 2010⁶² show that twenty-three per cent of Catholic schools are in deciles one to three compared to state schools at thirty per cent, forty-four per cent are in deciles four to seven compared with forty per cent of state schools and thirty-three per cent are in deciles eight to ten compared with all state schools at thirty per cent. Chanel College, for example, has long had a decile rating of five to six. Robin Duff stated that three of the four integrated schools were below the 250 roll threshold. This again is misleading

because the purpose of three of the four integrated schools is to provide education for students from Year 7–13. Any sensible discussion of their roll numbers therefore, needs to proceed either by quoting the total roll or by quoting the Year 7 and 8 and the secondary rolls separately as part of the total roll.

Along with many other schools throughout New Zealand, Makoura College was disadvantaged by the public choice policies associated with *Tomorrow's Schools*. Prior to 1990 an enrolment scheme existed for ten years between Wairarapa College and Makoura College which allowed each college to receive a fair quota of the available students. After school zoning was removed in 1991 by Minister of Education Dr Lockwood Smith, the Wairarapa College roll increased and the Makoura College roll declined. A significant number of students from the higher socio-economic area of Lansdowne had been formerly zoned for Makoura College. After the removal of zoning there was a steady seepage of these students to other schools. In 1990 *Wairarapa Times Age* reported:

Last night the Wairarapa College board accepted the ministry's proposed maximum roll of 1300 for the school. The acceptance of the figure means that the college will not need an enrolment scheme to operate by. According to the Ministry's rules enrolment schemes are required only where the maximum roll is likely to be exceeded.⁶³

After *Tomorrow's Schools* the options for Maori parents were extended. In 1992 Masterton Maori immersion schooling became available from the Kura Kaupapa, to which a secondary department was later added. Widening the options for Maori parents had knock on effects for Makoura College. East School, located opposite, was one of its main feeder schools. As already explained in Chapter 4, once East School decided to provide a mainstream unit and a bi-lingual unit followed by a total immersion Maori programme, it suffered a drastic roll drop that led to its closure. The merger of East School with the Kura Kaupapa in 2001 was plagued with cultural dissension and white flight. Many East School students moved to Lansdowne or Central. Some Maori parents sent their children to the Kura. Wylie (1999)⁶⁴ found that one of the unintended outcomes of *Tomorrow's Schools* was that increased parental choice has resulted in a preference for schools with low or very low Maori enrolment. At the public meeting on July 17, Andrew Hutchby drew attention to the 'white flight' issue, "It's about the haves and have nots and, dare I say it, whether you are pink or brown."⁶⁵

Tables 25 and 26 enable a data based discussion about Masterton secondary school rolls 1990–2010. They clearly show that three of the four integrated schools under discussion have rolls above "the 250 roll threshold." Furthermore three of them have boarding facilities which accommodate a large number of students from outside the region. St Matthew's and Rathkeale students combine Year 12 and 13 classes on the Rathkeale site. In 1990 The Wairarapa College roll was 893, well below the 1300 maximum. In the eighteen year period between 1990, the year after the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools* and 2008 the Makoura College roll dropped by 371 students from 630 to 259.

Wylie⁶⁶ points to some of the issues resulting from 'white flight' and increasing ethnic polarisation in both primary and secondary schools following the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools* when she found:

Low decile and high Maori enrolment schools are more likely to have gained least from the reforms, and may even have gone backwards, suffering from falling rolls at a time when primary rolls were generally rising.⁶⁷

TABLE 27

WAIRARAPA SECONDARY SCHOOL ROLLS 1990 – 1999.

Data extracted from the Directory of New Zealand Schools and Tertiary Institutions, prepared by the Data Management Unit and the Data Analysis Section, Ministry of Education 1990–1999.⁶⁸

| SCHOOL | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| CHANEL | 377 | 398 | 422 | 413 | 428 | 387 | 346 | 330 | 301 | 275 |
| KURANUI | 798 | 684 | 643 | 619 | 573 | 552 | 551 | 565 | 549 | 579 |
| MAKOURA | 630 | 622 | 569 | 554 | 532 | 486 | 455 | 420 | 415 | 393 |
| RATHKEALE | 382 | 335 | 196 | 198 | 178 | 202 | 215 | 231 | 248 | 243 |
| ST MATTHEWS | 164 | 159 | 211 | 217 | 237 | 246 | 266 | 292 | 283 | 297 |
| SOLWAY | 77 | 83 | 100 | 134 | 125 | 145 | 136 | 157 | 138 | 112 |
| WAIRARAPA | 893 | 897 | 1004 | 1074 | 1080 | 1082 | 1113 | 1091 | 1117 | 1104 |
| TOTALS | 3321 | 3178 | 3145 | 3209 | 3153 | 3100 | 3082 | 3086 | 3041 | 3003 |

TABLE 28

WAIRARAPA SECONDARY SCHOOL ROLLS 2000–2010.

1 March FTE roll data for cluster schools prepared by the Data Management Unit and the Data Analysis Section Ministry of Education 2000–2009.⁶⁹

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| CHANEL | 250 | 273 | 275 | 254 | 279 | 330 | 346 | 386 | 391 | 386 | 385 |
| KURANUI | 565 | 551 | 515 | 489 | 484 | 491 | 472 | 459 | 467 | 475 | 459 |
| MAKOURA | 374 | 382 | 421 | 430 | 382 | 325 | 318 | 277 | 259 | 256 | 277 |
| RATHKEALE | 238 | 239 | 234 | 271 | 280 | 294 | 288 | 289 | 260 | 271 | 265 |
| STMATTHEWS | 310 | 312 | 320 | 329 | 331 | 336 | 333 | 329 | 335 | 328 | 335 |
| SOLWAY | 110 | 100 | 110 | 121 | 139 | 126 | 133 | 134 | 147 | 135 | 137 |
| WAIRARAPA | 1076 | 1052 | 1083 | 1064 | 1136 | 1157 | 1195 | 1174 | 1169 | 1124 | 1094 |
| TOTALS | 2923 | 2909 | 2958 | 2958 | 3031 | 3059 | 3085 | 3048 | 3028 | 2975 | 2952 |

Carrie Beaven⁷⁰ confirms that enrolment schemes allow increased choice for some parents but restricted or no choice for others. Since school funding is roll based, a school with a declining roll faces staff redundancies and financial difficulties.

The decile descriptor attached to schools is a strong indicator of the socio-economic background of the families whose children attend them and affects community perceptions for better or worse. Beaven⁷¹ found that both New Zealand and overseas research studies showed that low decile schools were the most disadvantaged by the removal of zoning and that a number of these schools went into a spiral of decline. School rolls affect planning and staffing:

This review shows a clear trend for increased socio-economic and ethnic segregation after the publication of the Picot Report and the *Tomorrow's Schools* documents... The data suggest that greater parental choice was *not* achieved after the removal of zoning.⁷²

Low levels of parental involvement in schools by any socio-economic or ethnic group have long been known to have academic consequences. *Successful Home School Partnerships*:⁷³

The research literature is unequivocal in showing that parental involvement makes a significant difference to educational achievement.⁷⁴

Makoura College Board of Trustees Chairman, Lindsay Gribben confronted the Masterton community with the raw political reality that it was living the result of its choices after *Tomorrow's Schools*:

If a solution is to be found, the community needs to face up to the fact that increasingly, the desire for choice is based on the option of not sending their children to Makoura, to the extent

that the college is teetering on the brink of educational viability.⁷⁵

In its August 6, 2008 edition *Wairarapa Times Age*⁷⁶ devoted a whole page to the perspective of Room 7 Masterton Intermediate School students on the Makoura College crisis. Underneath a seven column wide photograph of the class was a selection of signed letters from its students. The majority of the letters affirmed Makoura College as a school, were sympathetic about the effect of its proposed closure on staff and students, expressed strong disapproval of vandalised schools and commented on their understanding of the cultural significance of Makoura. Despite their many supportive comments, community perceptions and prejudices were clearly filtering through in the comments of its children as the following quotes demonstrate:

There are lots of memories there as it is the only Maori college in Masterton.⁷⁷

Makoura College should not close down because it will turn into a messy place like Harley Street, Totara Drive and Lansdowne Schools. They all have boards over the windows. It will make the school look yuck because of three schools shut down. The grass will grow long and the same with the weeds.⁷⁸

Just like Harley Street School, Makoura College will end up as a real dump and it will turn into a pig sty.⁷⁹

This is a huge loss to the schooling system in the Wairarapa. We will be losing teams to compete against and the cultural experience they provide.⁸⁰

Where will all the teachers go when they cannot teach Te Reo? Where will all the students go when they're unwanted?⁸¹

Students that are currently at Wairarapa College should have a say if the Makoura students come to Wairarapa College or not.⁸²

The last thing Masterton needs is another vandal magnet like Harley Street School and Lansdowne School.⁸³

The people of Makoura should stay at Makoura. If they shut down people will tag or pollute the school like other schools that have been closed. It will be better if they don't shut down the school because gangs will do all sorts of stuff to Makoura. All of the schools that have been shut down are Harley Street, Lansdowne and Totara Drive. All of these schools have been polluted and have been tagged.⁸⁴

It is of interest that no reference was made to Cornwall Street School which had also closed during the network review. Talk is cheap. In an age when students often advise their parents where they wish to enrol, instead of the other way round, only three of the twenty-six students who expressed such strong support for Makoura College enrolled there the following year.

Makoura students use the democratic process to contest the closure decision

The dissatisfaction of the Makoura students with the closure decision, their unwillingness to accept it and the action they took in organising a protest petition to Parliament within an extremely tight time frame were significant factors in getting the closure decision reversed. In the network reviews of primary schools any student organised petition would have been fraught with difficulties. Once students become young adults the situation is different. It is of interest to note that it was the second time that the student petition leaders had been involved in the restructuring of

schools through mergers and closures. They had experienced the 2003 Masterton District Review in their final year of primary education as Year 6 students and had found the process very unsettling.

The petition target of 10,000 signatures in nine days was ‘a big ask.’ The Year 12 leaders, Sophie Brenkley, Jen Snee, Josh Greig, Robyn Lucas and their student supporters worked tirelessly throughout their holidays to attract 7,512 signatures from throughout the Wairarapa from Eketahuna to Martinborough. M.P. John Hayes supported their efforts. Sophie Brenkley, the petition organiser, told Matt Stewart from the *Wairarapa Times Age* on July 18:⁸⁵

If they're (the board of trustees) not going to listen to the students or the teachers they might listen to the people of the Wairarapa.⁸⁶

Referring to the petition Nicky Lucas insisted, “You can’t look at that and say we don’t have support – it’s kind of like with this petition we woke the town.”⁸⁷

A public meeting of well over 300 people was held on August 6 to consider the draft consultation document issued by the Makoura College Board of Trustees recommending closure. Those present voted by show of hands for the motion moved by Allen Hair that a moratorium be placed on any proposal to close Makoura College. The entire document about the submissions against closure was published by the *Wairarapa Times Age*.⁸⁸ This was in keeping with its on-going policy that the community had a right to be carefully informed about the issues that affected it. The report content was divided into seventy-nine sections, which contained detailed analysis of the 229 submissions the board had received.

The major finding was that the overwhelming majority of the submissions wanted Makoura to remain open. The submissions were organised under seven key headings. Fifty-nine submitters used the form letter that John Hayes had published in the media which asked for Makoura to remain open so that choice of state secondary education in Masterton continued and so that Maori and Pacific Island families could continue to have access to an educational culture described as ‘more appropriate to their needs.’ The form letter advocated a change of leadership and management and recommended that a commissioner be appointed. Fifty-six submissions strongly supported the Makoura College philosophy and educational practices which the report described as, ‘the Makoura Way.’ This group of students, teachers and parents, who identified themselves, supported the choice that Makoura offered as a direct contrast to the educational philosophy and practices of Wairarapa College. While 105 submissions (including the fifty-nine form letter submissions) supported keeping Makoura open in order to preserve choice of secondary education in Masterton, only seven supported Makoura’s historical educational philosophy and practices. What emerged strongly from the submissions was the view of Maori and Pacific Island students and parents that their children are not well catered for at Wairarapa College. Ten respondents offered to assist the Board personally by making their professional skills and expertise available to support any effort to keep Makoura open. These offers and proposed initiatives focused on marketing, promotion, branding and curriculum redesign.

Chris Carter decided not to accept the petition organised by the Makoura students. The group who wished to present the petition to him included not only the student organisers but also Wairarapa M.P., John Hayes, Mayor of Masterton, Garry Daniell, former Mayor of Masterton, Bob Francis, as well as some past and present

principals in the town and other Makoura supporters. Ministry officials had apparently advised the Minister that if, at a later stage, he was subject to a judicial review, his acceptance of the petition might be construed as biased.⁸⁹

If this is the case, then the advice given to the Minister was legally flawed. The Aorangi judicial review in December 2009 would soon confirm that all a judicial review can do is to determine whether or not the Minister has met his/her statutory obligation to consult. In the Aorangi case the judge ruled that it was not the task of a judicial review to judge the merits of the case, only to determine the legality of the process. The New Zealand legal system does not yet provide an opportunity to legally test and contest the merits of such an important decision as a school closure. The current law does not set down how much consultation should occur, nor is it required to judge its quality. It only requires that the Minister is able to prove that sufficient consultation has occurred.

If the Minister's advisors did clearly understand the legal niceties then another interpretation of Chris Carter's decision is worth considering. The Makoura College closure process had not developed as expected. It is possible that the Minister's advisors believed that he might have been at risk in a judicial review because he had not met the standard required for sufficient consultation. John Hayes had already publicly criticised the ministry for having known of the problems at Makoura for nine years and criticised its consultation processes as slow and inappropriate. He provided evidence that in 2007 Chris Carter and Associate Minister Parekura Horomia had been given a report which specified the problems experienced at Makoura as urgent, therefore they had been advised about the issues involved.

A little known pathway emerged through the impasse. The student protesters and supporters presented the petition to their M.P. John Hayes, who accepted the petition that he had also signed, and presented it to parliament on July 30, 2008. Parliament referred petition 2005/180 of Sophie Brinkley, Nicky Lucas and 7,150 others to the Education and Science Select Committee of Parliament. John Hayes pointed out to *Wairarapa Times Age* readers on September 10:⁹⁰

While we have got to first base with the appointment of a commissioner, we do not yet have the guarantee that the school will stay open. The next crucial step is to set out our reasons to parliamentarians why the school is so important to our community and to the future of Masterton....We are going to need the goodwill of a cross section of politicians to turn the school around. It's a job which might take several years, so this meeting with members of all political parties will provide a reference point, from which future members of Parliament, no matter which party or government they belong to, can help get the college to where it wants to go.⁹¹

Allan Peachy, National Party Spokesman on Education at the time and a former secondary school principal, placed the petition on the agenda of September 25 meeting of the Education and Science Select Committee thus enabling it to be discussed. Four of the committee members, had previously been secondary school principals. Anne Tolley, Minister of Education, and Paula Bennett, Minister of Social Welfare, in the following government, were also members of this committee. The students and their supporters and representatives from the Ministry of Education were invited to make direct representations at the meeting.

One respondent described what happened as, "a good piece of theatre".⁹² The young people were passionate and very well prepared and supported by their parents. For those who oppose students being involved in protest action it is useful

to note that the Select Committee was very impressed with the demeanour of the Makoura College students:

We were very impressed by the quality of presentation by the Makoura students and the energy shown by the students in collecting 7,510 signatures for the petition.⁹³

The Ministry however was on the receiving end of criticism. The committee reported that it was important that the problems and issues that threatened the school's closure were fully communicated to the local community. In order to allay the prevailing uncertainty about the college's future the committee recommended that the ministry and the commissioner should provide a clear explanation of how the college had reached its current state, what was being done to improve the situation and what would happen if the expected improvements were not made. It was the Select Committee who made the decision to recommend to parliament that the Government should increase and continue its support for Makoura College. As one educationally influential respondent told me, the political reality is, "If the Select Committee says a school is to stay it will stay open. If the Select Committee says to close the school then the school gets closed."⁹⁴

A large red page one banner headline in the *Wairarapa Times Age* on Friday August 8, announced "SAVED!"⁹⁵ Not only had the Makoura College Board of Trustees reversed its closure decision, but also it announced that it would resign and ask the Minister of Education to appoint a commissioner. Principal, Chris Scott described it this way:

The board have done a huge amount of work – they've been like forwards pushing the ball up the field and getting Makoura into a winning position. Now they're passing the ball to the backs and the commissioner's going to score a try.⁹⁶

Six weeks later the *Wairarapa Times Age*⁹⁷ reported that Makoura College had published a new prospectus which would be promoted at its contributing schools. By the end of the following week the Makoura College Board of Trustees had resigned, Tim White was appointed as the commissioner and the Principal, Chris Scott, announced his resignation to take effect after the senior prize giving in November. The Minister of Education, Chris Carter was widely reported as being keen to see the ministry working closely with the commissioner to chart a brighter future for the school.

Under section 78 N of the Education Act, the Minister of Education is given authority to direct the Secretary of Education to appoint a commissioner if he has reasonable grounds to believe that the complexity of the problems facing a particular board of trustees is beyond the capacity of the board to solve. Once appointed, the commissioner takes on all the functions, powers and duties of the board until such time as the Secretary of Education is convinced that a commissioner is no longer needed. Tim White, an independent education consultant, was appointed as Commissioner to Makoura College. He brought to his task a background as a principal of schools in Dannevirke, Palmerston North and Murupara and work as a former associate director of the New Zealand Principal and Leadership Centre. He had also previously worked in Masterton in 2006 and 2007 supporting schools after the Masterton network review. He told *Wairarapa Times Age*.⁹⁸

As commissioner, I am excited about the potential for Makoura to dramatically change – to improve its standing in the community, the support it provides its teachers, and the outcomes it achieves for its students. There is good cause for optimism.⁹⁹

Always looking calm and confident, Tim White kept the community informed through the media about the progress being made at Makoura College. In November 2008 he reassured the community that despite the resignation of a third of its staff, all but one of the vacancies for 2009 had been filled with “quality permanent teachers” and that over fifty applications had been received for the positions available.¹⁰⁰ On November 27, *Wairarapa Times Age* reported that ‘hometown hero’ and ‘veteran educator and retired high order sportsman Tom Hullena had beaten seven other hopefuls from across New Zealand to win appointment as the new principal of Makoura College.’¹⁰¹ His many representative sporting and academic achievements were listed. After spending time as a military officer he taught at a number of colleges before becoming HOD Physical Education at Kuranui College, then Deputy Principal of Chanel College before being appointed as a lecturer, researcher and teacher training advisor with Victoria University.

In the three years following his appointment, the partnership between the Principal and the Commissioner gave Makoura College a new lease on life. A long term strategic plan produced multifaceted improvements. The roll increased by forty students in 2010. The school day has been divided into three periods instead of five or six. A primary school paradigm has been chosen for Year 9 and 10 students who are educated for seventeen to nineteen hours in a classroom with a homeroom teacher instead having many different teachers.

The introduction of hands on courses such as hospitality, catering, building, rugby and Maori performing arts have proved popular. A highlight of 2010 was the house project led by Technology teacher Bill Taylor and built by ten senior students. The costs were the permit fees, materials worth \$58,000 provided on credit by ITM Tumu and the services provided by a plumber and an electrician. Hireworld provided free rental of boards and trestles. In November, 2010 the house was sold for \$85,000.

A restorative justice approach has been adopted to cope with discipline issues and breakdowns in human relationships. Deputy Principal Kellas Bennett and Guidance Counsellor, Debbie Te Whaiti work with students in this process, which is further strengthened by the opportunity to take time out with the facilitator in the restorative justice room. Trust House has supported this initiative by providing funding for the facilitator from its community grants scheme. If students apply themselves and keep up to date with their work they may leave school at 2.30 pm. Students with unfinished work have to remain with their home room teacher until their work has been completed. Senior students stay at school right through their exam period instead of being granted study leave. The rugby option introduced as an option in the Physical Education and Health Department has proved popular. Both the Commissioner Tim White and Principal, Tom Hullena, have had representative rugby experience.

At the end of 2010 the Ministry of Education agreed to provide over \$2 million for the refurbishment of classrooms. A new school uniform which includes a blazer and a new school motto (Kia Manawanui: Courage and Compassion) have been introduced. When his appointment as Principal was announced, Tom Hullena told *Wairarapa Times Age* reporter Nathan Crombie:

All schools have their challenges....It's like the world share market – it's all about confidence, Makoura has a tradition of serving the community very successfully and I aim to ensure that

tradition is upheld and acknowledged....the heart of education is the heart of the person. We may change some things we do after I've settled in but I will be taking a positive look ahead and a positive approach to our future.¹⁰²

By April 2011 Commissioner Tim White could confidently reassure the community through a *Wairarapa Times Age* report that:

There is absolutely no chance the college will now close I would not have advised the Ministry that we're ready to move toward a standard model of governance if I could see any risk of that at all.¹⁰³

In a scaffolded return to the standard form of governance the Minister of Education approved an alternative constitution for the Board of Trustees of Makoura College elected on June 23, 2011. This strategy was designed to produce a staged transition from Commissioner to a standard elected Board based on an original proposal and the consultation feedback from the College community. The transitional Board, based on the 'Alternative Governance Model,' consisted of the Principal, three trustees appointed by the Minister of Education, two parent representatives, a staff representative, a student representative and up to two trustees either co-opted by the Board or appointed by bodies corporate approved by the Board for the purpose. Once the board was elected, Tim White's role as Commissioner ended, however his services were retained in his new role as Specialist Adviser for the Board.

The Makoura College case is an example of a school surviving against the odds after the closure decision has been announced. The causes of its dilemma were both national and local. Like many other schools throughout the country Makoura College was seriously disadvantaged from its beginning by socially short sighted, penny pinching government spending policies which decided its site location. While zoning was in place Makoura could sustain a survivable roll. As soon as *Tomorrow's Schools* arrived and zoning was removed Makoura College was in trouble. The longstanding local divisions between the east side and the west side of town coupled with subjecting schools to market forces and the politics associated with parental choice of school accelerated the rate of the roll drop and put the school at risk.

Two years after the closure crisis Tanya Katterns wrote an extended news feature article for the *Dominion Post*, headlined. "The school on the wrong side of the tracks comes right"¹⁰⁴ in which Lindsay Gribben, former Chair of the Board of Trustees recalled his shock at some of the racism that emerged in the submissions against closure:

Some said, 'We want the Maori students to stay at Makoura and leave Wairarapa College for the Pakeha.' I knew there was a socio-economic gap but I didn't realise the racist attitudes were that vicious.¹⁰⁵

The improvements at Makoura College have been noted in ERO reports in 2009 and 2010 which in turn have been reported in the media and been the subject of favourable editorial comment. The community has been periodically reminded that the academic outcomes at Makoura have significantly improved. Whereas twenty-two per cent of Makoura students passed NCEA Level 1 in 2003, the 2010 pass rate was seventy-five per cent. The 2003 thirty-nine per cent pass rate at NCEA Level 2 has risen to sixty-two per cent. These statistics have an added importance because they also represent a significant improvement in academic outcomes for Maori students, given that fifty-five per cent of Makoura students are Maori. The roll has increased. Whereas the Ministry had predicted forty to forty-five new entrants in

2010, seventy-five students enrolled. Instead of a suspension rate that averaged “more than one for every ten pupils,”¹⁰⁶ stand downs and detentions have been replaced by a relationship based restorative justice system which Tom Hullena believes has transformed the attitudes of both students and teachers to the discipline system. Tom Hullena prefers to reshape the future rather than to dwell in the past. His vision is clear:

There will be no east west divide. I want to have a point of difference that is attractive to everybody everywhere in Masterton. To be the school that allows our children to lift the lid off their waka huia [treasure box] and find the amazing person with a wonderful future that lies within.¹⁰⁷

When the community rallied to contest the closure of Makoura College the tactics used were multifaceted and their use more sophisticated than seen in the Masterton District Network Review in 2003. The unusual combination of ingredients in the mixture which saved Makoura College against the odds included: the high profile, proactive approach of the local member of Parliament, the unanimous support of the Mayor and the Masterton District Council, the work of the Friends of Makoura Group of community leaders, the support of the local media evidenced in the responsible and regular reporting of the issues involved for the community, the actions of a politicised community who wanted to avoid having yet another abandoned, vandalised and arson attacked school building in the town, the community protest meetings and resulting submissions, the use of the internet to rally support with the supportmakoura website, the energetic work of the students who collected over 7,500 signatures in a protest petition presented to the Education and Science Select Committee at Parliament, the donated concert by the Flight of the Conchords and the financial support of Trust House for the restorative justice scheme. The fact that Makoura College was able to elect a new board of trustees in 2011 and make plans for its future is also a tribute to the sound leadership partnership exercised by Principal Tom Hullena and Commissioner Tim White and the support received by the staff and Makoura community in the three years since the reversal of the closure decision. The \$2.7 million redevelopment project started in 2012 is regarded as the official seal of approval on its recovery and will enable a college designed for 650 students to adapt to its current roll of approximately 290. This multi-faceted and more sophisticated community response was successful in leading to a reversal of the Makoura College closure decision. This case also shows that when the level of community concern reaches the intense level of community-wide outrage, then the politicians may decide to back down. On the roller coaster ride from a closure decision back to educational health Makoura College is a clear case of “Never Give Up.” and “It’s not over until it’s over.”

TABLE 29

MAKOURA COLLEGE 1968–2009.

| DATE | EVENT |
|---|---|
| 1968 | Makoura College established. |
| 2005 | Ministry of Education appoints a Statutory Manager to take on the powers of the Board in matters of employment and human resources. |
| 2005 | New Design and Technology Centre opened. |
| 2008 | Makoura College roll 250. |
| 2008 | April 9, "Is Makoura closing?" Front page report by <i>Wairarapa Times Age</i> . |
| May 14, 2008 WTA p1 | Ministry of Education facilitator provides report outlining future options to Makoura College Board of Trustees. Ministry of Education Regional Manager, Murray Williams, 'The Board may decide to keep Makoura open, which means no public consultation would be needed. If they decide otherwise the ministry will make suggestions of how best to proceed with their decision.' |
| May 19, 2008 | Meeting convened between Makoura College and Wairarapa College staff over the future of secondary education in Masterton. Wairarapa Board Chair, Karen Barbour, says the two worst case scenarios facing Makoura are "a merger or closure." |
| June 4, 2008. Wai News June,7, 2008. WTA | A Friends of Makoura taskforce group of local leaders, set up by Wairarapa MP John Hayes, meets with Makoura College Board of Trustees June 4, 2008 and offers assistance. |
| 14 June 2008. WTA p1 | Community speculation continues. Media seeks details about progress in discussions about Makoura's future. Makoura College Board of Trustees Chair, Lindsay Gribben asks the community to be patient. Discussions with local education community continue but details not disclosed. |
| July 5, 2008 | Makoura College Board of Trustees announces that the college will close at the end of 2008. |
| 7 July, 2008 | Ministry of Education announces that space will be made available at other schools to accommodate Makoura's roll in 2009. |
| July 9, 2008 | Three long term relieving positions are advertised at Makoura in Music, Science and Hard Materials Technology. |
| July 9, 2008 | "Makoura College is already in its coffin and the Ministry of Education advisers are only there to bury it.....the ministry clearly doesn't like Makoura College and is pushing for a merger and in Masterton, a town of 22 000 people there needs to be more than one state secondary school. Wairarapa." MP , John Hayes. |
| July 10, 2008. | Andrew Hutchby, teacher and Makoura College old boy, launches the supportmakoura.googlepages.com website. |
| July 16, 2008. | Makoura College public meeting held in assembly hall |
| July 26, 2008. | MP John Hayes calls on Minister of Education, Chris Carter, to replace the Makoura College Board of Trustees with a Commissioner if there is a strong show of support to keep the school open. |
| July 28, 2008. | Submission period closes. 225 submissions received. Students gathered 7,512 signatures for Sophie Brenkley's petition. |
| July 29, 2008. | Chris Carter refuses to meet Masterton mayoral delegation and John Hayes taskforce, based on legal advice that it might compromise his neutrality should he be subject to judicial review at a later date. |
| July 30, 2008. | Students and supporters present petition opposing closure to MP John Hayes to present to Parliament. |
| July 6, 2008. | Public meeting convened in response to the draft consultation document issued by the Makoura College Board of Trustees recommending closure. 400 people present voted for the motion moved by Allen Hair that a moratorium be placed on any proposal to close Makoura College. |
| August 7, 2008. | Makoura College Board of Trustees announces its resignation, inviting Minister of Education to appoint a commissioner. |
| August 8, 2008. | The community learns that its efforts to save the college have been successful. <i>Wairarapa Times Age</i> headline 'SAVED!' |
| August 28, 2008. | Tim White from Palmerston North appointed as Commissioner. |

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| August 29, 2008. | Makoura College Principal, Chris Scott resigns. |
| September, 2008 | Makoura student petitioners and supporters, including Mayor of Masterton Garry Daniell and Wairarapa MP John Hayes invited to make direct representations to Education and Science Select Committee of Parliament. |
| November 27, 2008. | Tom Hullena announced as new Principal for Makoura College. |
| February 3, 2009. | Fifty new students arrive at Makoura. |
| April 5, 2009. | Flight of the Conchords concert (Ex-student Jemaine Clement and Bret McKenzie) raises \$70,000. |
| July 2, 2009. | Bad publicity. <i>Wairarapa Times Age</i> reports that bullies laugh as burning pupil screams: Dyslexic student sprayed with deodorant and set alight and students laughed as he screamed and burned. |
| July 2009. | Positive ERO report |
| August 2009 | Prime Minister John Key guest speaker at a special assembly at Makoura. |
| November, 2009 | Minister of Education, Anne Tolley, visited Makoura College. Appointment of Kellas Bennett as deputy principal. Tim White reassures community that Makoura is continuing. New BOT to be chosen April 2010 later delayed to May 2011. |
| February, 2010 | Roll increase to 270, four deputy principals. |
| February 2011 | Roll increase to 291. Ministry roll forecast had been 200-220. Roll 38% European, 56% Maori, 5% Pasifika, other ethnicities 1%. |
| March 18, 2011 | Minister of Education approved a constitution for a new Makoura College Board of Trustees. |
| 2011 | June 23 Election of Board of Trustees based on the Alternative Governance Model. Tim White steps down as Commissioner and is appointed as statutory advisor to the transitional Board of Trustees on a monthly basis. Board: the principal, Tom Hullena, staff representative, Clare Colville, student representative, two elected parent representatives, Vaea Peterson and Sarah Lysaght, up to three trustees with governance experience appointed by the Ministry and up to two trustees either co-opted by the Board or appointed by bodies corporate approved by the Board for that purpose. \$2.7 million redevelopment plans announced. |
| 2013 | Makoura College returned to standard model of school governance in triennial board of trustees' elections. |

CHAPTER 6

‘RURAL COMMUNITIES DON’T NEED SCHOOLS - YEAH RIGHT!’

THE BUSH DISTRICT COMMUNITY INITIATED EDUCATION PLAN

In summary, the community functions and the physical infrastructure of rural schools embody a very substantial element of the social capital of rural communities. This social capital may have been built up over generations and is vital to the health of the community.¹

Get POLITICAL, No holds barred. Use posters, billboards, radio, media to drum up support. DON’T sit back and believe MOE will make the right or best decision. They DON’T so make as much noise as possible.²

The Bush District Community Initiated Education Plan provides an opportunity to examine to what extent school closures are contestable in a rural regional review in contrast to a network review in an urban context, such as Masterton. It also shows how a cluster of New Zealand rural communities learnt how to fight the threat of school closures more effectively both individually and collectively. Just as in the Makoura College case, so also here, a determined, multi-faceted and more sophisticated response was instrumental in persuading the Minister of Education to stop the CIEP process. This decision provides another case to show that, when community concern reaches the intense level of community-wide outrage, the politicians may decide to back down.

What factors were shaping the thinking of Ministry officials about school closures and mergers at the time? In his doctoral research involving sixteen small schools in the Central Districts of North Island New Zealand, Collins³ found that changing demographic patterns and predictions of falling rolls played a key role in shaping the thinking of the officials from the Ministry whose job it was to implement the small school policy.

New Zealand is one of the few Western educational systems in which the majority of primary schools are small. In “Small New Zealand Primary Schools,” his contribution to the *New Zealand Annual Review of Education 2003*,⁴ Collins pointed out that sixty per cent of all New Zealand primary schools had a roll of less than 200 (that is, they are “small” schools), twenty per cent had a roll of less than fifty and that education in a school with a roll of twenty-five was twice as expensive per head on average as in a school with a roll of fifty.

At the beginning of the 2003 Masterton review Noel O’Hare, communications officer for the NZEI, shared some research statistics with *Wairarapa News* readers: “Thirty-seven per cent of our schools have less than 100 students and thirteen per cent have less than fifty.”⁵ However ‘small’ does not necessarily mean inferior. O’Hare referred to the 1999 ERO report, *Small Primary Schools* and cited performance indicators which showed that schools with roll ranges of 1–25 and 1–49 were very

close to the norm in such areas as the provision of a balanced curriculum, effective curriculum delivery and effective professional leadership. In other areas such as the relationships between board/principal/ and staff/students, small schools actually did better.

The EDI guidelines recognise that smaller schools are more expensive. The 1999 ERO report to the Ministry⁶ noted that the number of discretionary audits required for small schools was higher proportionally than those required for larger schools. The workload pressures on the principals and boards of trustees increased after the introduction of self-managing schools and its accompanying culture of administrative and management compliance. The ERO report also expressed concerns about governance issues and attracting and retaining competent staff which in turn led to a high turnover of staff, thereby compromising effective curriculum delivery.

When Trevor Mallard announced a five year moratorium on school closures and mergers through network review in February 2004, the Ministry had a five year window of opportunity to review its existing policies and to develop new ones. In October 2003 I noticed Vacancy 11296 advertised in the *Dominion Post*⁷ for a senior advisor in National Operations, in the Ministry of Education's National Office. The job specifications required the successful applicant to work to support the review of schooling regions in order to improve the match between the provision of schooling and future demand and to examine ways of supporting review regions to strengthen educational outcomes. The appointee would work as part of a team to refine processes and outcomes for reviews and provide high-level input to recommendations to the Minister. Given some of Anne Tolley's claims during the Bush District CIEP, this last point is worth remembering.

In December 2005, almost two years after the Masterton District Review many North and South Wairarapa parents were shocked to discover that the school their child attended had been selected by the Ministry of Education for review and possible closure or merger before the moratorium was announced. The northern Wairarapa schools listed by *Wairarapa Times Age*⁸ were Alfredton, Ballance, Eketahuna, Hillcrest, Kohinui, Kumeroa-Hopelands, Makuri, Mangamairie, Mangatainoka, Pahiatua, Papatawa, Pongaroa, St Anthony's School Pahiatua, Tiraumea, Woodville and Tararua College. By the time this report was published Steve Maharey had become Minister of Education. He said that the list was an historical document and that the schools were not being closed. He gave an assurance that future reviews would only be initiated in response to a request by a community or the recommendation of the ERO. These remarks already seem to foreshadow the development of the CIEP approach.

At the time of the area network reviews the National and Act opposition parties severely criticised Minister of Education Trevor Mallard for 'ripping the heart out of rural communities' with network reviews. Five years later, as soon as the moratorium was lifted in 2009, these two parties were in the coalition government which introduced the new CIEP policy to deal with the school closure dilemma. Just like the term Educational Development Initiative, associated with the network reviews, the term chosen for the new process, a 'Community Initiated Educational Plan,' was carefully chosen to sound attractive. The underlying rationale for the educational restructuring involved however did not change. The Ministry mantra that "The status quo is not an option," used in the South Taranaki Review⁹ and elsewhere, was used once again. The justification for review, once again, was demographic data analysis.

“The status quo is not an option” argument is being frequently used in the Wairarapa which is currently engaged in another local body restructuring process.

The first schools in New Zealand to participate in a CIEP were in the rural areas of Kaikoura, Murupara and Tararua. The new approach to the closure/merger dilemma was based on a partnership model in which the Ministry of Education and the educational communities concerned would work together with the intention of reaching a consensus about a sustainable educational future that each could accept.

The Ministry of Education defines a rural district as having a population of less than 10,000. Almost a third of New Zealand schools are located in settlements with less than 1,000, like Eketahuna or in a rural area where there is no settlement (like Makuri, Ballance and Mangatainoka. The Tararua District includes the towns of Dannevirke, Woodville, Pahiatua and Eketahuna. The schools which became part of the Bush District CIEP in 2009 were the contributing schools for Tararua College: Ballance, Eketahuna, Hillcrest, Kumeroa-Hopelands, Mangatainoka, Makuri, Mangamaire, Pahiatua, Papatawa and Woodville. The reason why this review was called the “Bush District CIEP” might well have been because immediately before the Masterton District Network Review, schooling in Dannevirke, which is part of the Tararua District, had already been reviewed in 2003 based on the contributing schools for Dannevirke High School.

During the Dannevirke review Minister Trevor Mallard proposed a triple merger of Dannevirke North, Dannevirke South and Hillcrest into one school with a combined roll of 720 pupils. Peter Barnett, Principal of Dannevirke South Primary School, told *Wairarapa Times Age* that Mr Mallard’s decision was “hare-brained” and “A real bombshell for the community and has created an uproar.”¹⁰ He criticised the review as “a travesty, nobody’s opinion had been listened to and the process was a huge waste of time and money.” When the Dannevirke review was finalised Dannevirke North and Hillcrest merged and Dannevirke South remained as a standalone school, with a zoning policy. One parent told me:

They created two schools: the one you wanted to send your kids to and the one you didn’t.¹¹

While this remark is the perception of just one parent, it is useful in identifying the problem of having two schools in a community based on a north south model: it risks polarising the community into a “them and us” situation.

Helen Trainor, a Year 8 student at Rua Roa School situated close to the Ruahine Ranges on the outskirts of Dannevirke, sent an article in June 2003 to *The Auckland Herald, College Herald*¹² to protest against the proposed closure of her school which would have celebrated its 100th jubilee five years later. Her article provides the opportunity to reflect upon the response of an articulate student stakeholder. After describing the many benefits of her rural school and why rural schools are attractive to town parents she noted that almost half of Rua Roa’s students came from town:

A few years ago another classroom was added to fit the extra Dannevirke students who had heard how great Rua Roa was. After the classroom came, so did a new adventure playground, generously built and set up by the fathers of some students... The Ministry of Education wants to integrate the schools of Dannevirke and close Rua Roa for one reason only: money.¹³

There were, however, some local advocates for the merger of small schools. Six years later in an interview with *Dannevirke News*¹⁴ during the CIEP process, Chris

Beetham, Principal of Weber School, endorsed the mergers which occurred when Trevor Mallard was Minister of Education:

The winners when schools like Motea closed out here, were the children. Yes, initially everyone wanted the school in their own little patch, but you've got to be positive about closures ...and the merger worked. In fact it's been fantastic. The children are thriving, they made new friends, we've got more parents to help at our school and in that way we've all been winners.¹⁵

Unlike the Masterton District Review, which was town based, the Bush District CIEP endeavoured to lead the town and rural areas in the Tararua district to consider a regional approach to constructing a sustainable educational future in partnership with the Ministry of Education. The strong resistance of the Bush District as a whole resulted in stopping the process so that not a single school was lost. Anne Tolley, the new Minister of Education, not only gained politically bruising personal experience of community resistance to school closure proposals during the Bush District CIEP, she also, unwittingly, played a critical role in its final outcome.

When appointed as Minister of Education by the National led government after the 2008 elections, Anne Tolley was the first woman to hold the position. By the beginning of 2009 school year media reports suggested that the new minister wanted to establish a reputation as a tough taskmistress. She put dysfunctional boards of trustees and schools whose academic outcomes did not meet ministry standards on notice. "Time's up for failing schools: incompetent boards will be sacked," announced the front page headline on February 2, *Dominion Post*¹⁶ headlines. As a compliance incentive, schools with good ERO reports might not be visited for five years. Education funding cuts were announced in 2009 Budget. The New Curriculum strongly advocates the importance of lifelong learning. In 2009 200,000 people were attending subsidised night classes. The financial support for adult learning in community evening classes was slashed by \$13.1 million. There were only 25,000 subsidised places available in 2010. More than 100 of 212 schools offering continuing education in 2009 had pulled out by 2010. No National Party members of parliament raised any objections.

The most controversial new initiative was the decision to introduce national standards of educational achievement for children of primary school age from 2010 to enable parents to assess their children's progress against national norms. It was announced that the ERO would audit the schools and report on progress made and any compliance issues that needed to be addressed. The Principals' Federation and the NZEI were strongly opposed to this policy. Quite apart from national standards, teachers were very busy with the tasks associated with the introduction of the New Curriculum, also set down for implementation in 2010.

The Thompson White Consortium was appointed by the Ministry of Education to provide independent facilitation and administration services for the Working Group for the Bush District CIEP. Richard Thompson, based in Whanganui was named as the Facilitator of the Working Group. Tim White had been working in the district for a number of years. In 2004 he had been involved in discussions with Pahiataua schools in relation to clustering. In 2006 he was involved in the early stages of a review about educational provision in the Bush District where he was contracted to engage in a consultation process with schools. The meetings were stopped early in the process as a result of community opposition and lack of progress. Based in Palmerston North, Tim White was a former principal of schools in Dannevirke, Palmerston North and Murupara. He worked in Masterton in 2006 and 2007

supporting schools after the Masterton District Review. He had also been a former associate director of the New Zealand Principals and Leadership Centre at Massey University and in 2008 was appointed by the Ministry of Education as Commissioner at Makoura College.

As previously mentioned in the 2003 Masterton Network Review and the 2008 Makoura closure crisis, closures and mergers expose raw nerves in a community. The first raw nerve to become apparent early in the CIEP process was the community need to know who had instigated it. This was reflected in a *Dominion Post* interview on July 30, 2009¹⁷ when Kirsty Silvester, Principal of Mangamaire Country School, said “No one can even tell me who initiated this review and why.”¹⁸

The need to know who had initiated the CIEP was a separate issue from who had been invited to the initial CIEP consultation meeting held in Pahiatua attended by the board chairs and the principals at the time. At the Pahiatua meeting all the schools in the Bush District agreed to be involved in the CIEP, except Ballance and Kumeroa-Hopelands. One respondent remembered that Ray Cannon, Board Chair of Kumeroa-Hopelands School, had warned the other schools as he left the initial CIEP consultation meeting, “You’ll be sorry. This is about closures.”¹⁹

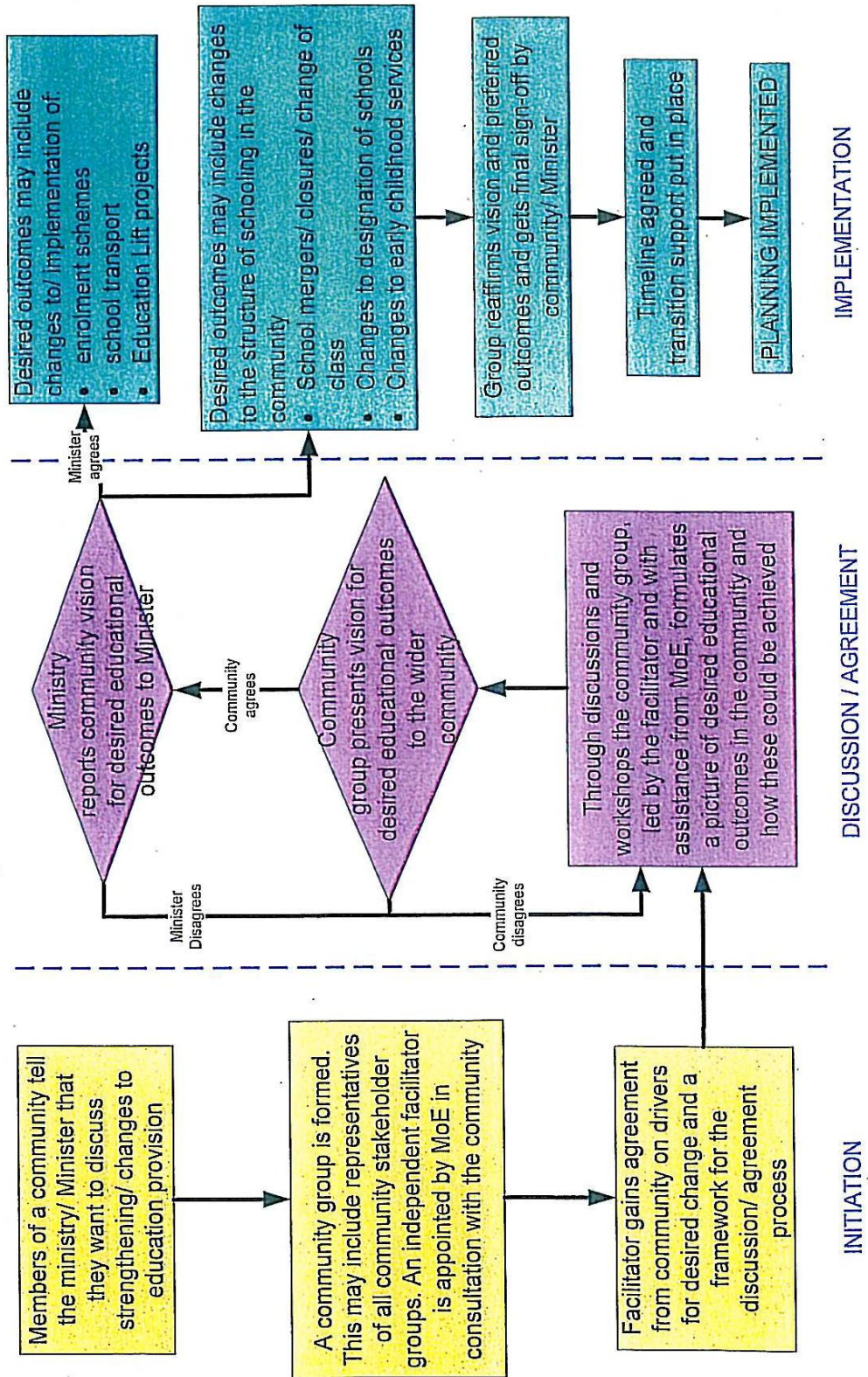
It appears that it was the intention of the Ministry that the Bush District volunteer working group should offer a balance of education sector knowledge and experience throughout region. Maureen Reynolds from Dannevirke was the Tararua District Mayor and senior community person on the working group. Carolyn Barrell, a resident of Woodville, was a Pahiatua Community Services Manager, a former SIPS worker and active in pre-school education in Pahiatua. Annette Castles from Woodville was an Education consultant and former Principal of Kumeroa-Hopelands School. Diana Eagle from Eketahuna was a former staff member of Tararua College, an Education contractor and an NZQA Technology Moderator. George Ross, a farmer from Makuri was also a Federated Farmers representative. Hiria Tua, a former Chairperson of Tararua College Board of Trustees, had a background in social issues. Gary Nation, a businessman and community stalwart from Pahiatua, died in 2009 in the early stages of the CIEP. Roger Marshall, a Schools Development Officer from Lower Hutt represented the Ministry of Education. Soon after the community consultation started Roger Marshall was no longer able to attend meetings of the working group. A replacement was not appointed. This created issues because it meant the working group did not have a Ministry representative who could answer questions at their meetings.

The schools were provided with a list of people who might be suitable as members of a working group and had the opportunity of veto but this was not known at the time. This was another raw nerve for the community. They wanted to know about the selection process for the working group, its formal terms of reference and who decided. These matters seemed shrouded in mystery to many. A number of stakeholders made it clear to me that if the CIEP process was clear and transparent it should have been possible to find out its formal terms of reference and the process through which the members of the Working Group had been appointed or elected. They believed it was a reasonable expectation that the records, dates, agendas and minutes of meetings of the working group would have been kept so that they could find a list of those who attended and trace the options that had been considered.

**TABLE 30
BUSH DISTRICT CIEP CONSULTATION PROCESS.**

| DATE | PEOPLE | TYPE |
|-------------------|--|--|
| October 6, 2008 | From MoE to Principals & Board Chairs | Letter from the Ministry: CIEP facilitation contract given to Thompson White Consortium, (Richard Thompson and Tim White) and appointment of Roger Marshall to provide guidance on MoE policy. |
| October 28, 2008 | From MoE to Principals and Board Chairs Meeting at Pahiatua School staffroom | The initial schools meeting with the facilitator. Richard Thompson presents document from the Ministry entitled 'Key Messages re participation in the Education Bush District process.' Nowhere do the words closure or merger appear. It says 'The outcome may include changes that impact on school rolls, bus routes, enrolment schemes, governance structures, professional development opportunities and provision for immersion/bilingual learning. |
| November 17 2008 | | The working group had its first meeting on November 17. |
| December 1, 2008 | From Richard Thompson | E mail to board chairs named the volunteer members of the Working Group which met a further two times before the end of the year. |
| February 16, 2009 | Principals, Board Chairs, BOTs, parents and Richard Thompson | Bush District community consultation meeting 7–9pm, Bush Sports Park lounge, Pahiatua. Each school gave a three minute presentation on current issues followed by an open forum with the Working Group. Discussion begins about what an education vision might look like which could lead to a strategic plan for the district. Agenda and data questionnaire distributed. |
| February 19, 2009 | Richard Thompson to principals and boards of trustees | A document Bush District Schools – Current Issues (February 2009) summarising the issues identified by various schools: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * sustainability of rolls * sustainability of boards of trustees * property hassles * economy of scale and operations grant issues * attracting and retaining staff * relief teachers and release teachers hard to get * the school is the centre of community: concern about impact on community if school closed expressed by Ballance, Kumeroa Hopelands and Mangatainoka. |
| March 12, 2009 | Boards of trustees, the public and Roger Marshall, Schools Development Officer | Public information meeting at Pahiatua Town Hall with Rob Hewitt as guest speaker. As an ex-Navy diver who survived being lost at sea for seventy-five hours in February 2006, he became a national symbol of survival in unexpected adversity. Facilitated centre meetings in Eketahuna, Pahiatua and Woodville. Additional community meetings available on request. |
| March 23, 2009 | Meeting | Roger Marshall and the Working Group. |
| April 6, 2009 | Meeting | Roger Marshall and the Working Group. |
| July 27 2009 | Plan published | Bush District Education Plan published. Meeting of Board chairs and principals in Sports Stadium, Pahiatua. |
| August 2009 | Community consultation | Public meetings: August 5, Eketahuna, August 12, Pahiatua, August 13, Woodville. |
| August 6, 2009. | 'Close Up' TV 1 | Minister of Education Anne Tolley said that schools would not close if the parents did not want them to close. |
| August 7, 2009 | Protesters | Woodville protest march organised by Anglican vicar, Rev Rosie McMillan. |
| August 12, 2009 | Tararua District Council | Resolution to oppose the Working Group proposal and submission to the Working Group, MP John Hayes and Minister Anne Tolley. |
| August 17, 2009. | | Closure and merger and proposals withdrawn. |

Community Initiated Education Planning



CIEP Diagram

They wanted to know how and way the decisions were made. Several respondents said they were told that this was not possible because the Working Group did not keep a set of minutes. This caused anger and incredulity. One principal labelled it “unprofessional.”²⁰

The announcements made by the working group came as a shock to some of the principals in particular. In an interview with the *Dominion Post* on July 30, 2009 Jo Gibbs, Principal of Kumeroa-Hopelands School said:

This is a total bombshell. We are a school whose roll is actually growing (67 students compared to 40 two years ago.) We will...fight this tooth and nail.²¹

The government has been accused of “duping communities” into reassessing the education needs of their children, only to get a foot in the door to shut schools.²²

Makuri School Principal, Keryl Lee-Kelleher, also objected. “They said it was not about school closures. We have been lied to.”²³

Although all three principals had been recently appointed and might have missed out on some of the communications in the early stages, their beliefs were symptomatic of another raw nerve, the communication breakdown with the community that was an on-going issue throughout the CIEP. After one Kumeroa Hopelands parent contacted a member of the Working Group in August 2009 to clarify matters for herself, she e mailed her concerns to Ray Cannon, the board chair. As far as she could determine the Ministry of Education had not informed the Working Group who had instigated the review either. She found that they had not undertaken any formal research or looked into any data collected by the Ministry of Education with regard to the community impact of the closure of rural schools. On the basis of these two findings she came to believe that the working group were being used as pawns in some sort of political agenda being outworked by the Ministry of Education and that therefore the CIEP working group should stop meeting.

The answer to the “Who instigated it?” question was difficult to find. Despite frequent requests the Ministry of Education refused to disclose who had instigated the CIEP as the *Dominion Post* discovered when it tried to find out on July 31.²⁴

Education officials would not say last night who had initially suggested the review. A spokesman for Education Minister Anne Tolley said, “As far as she is concerned and from the advice she has been given, this is a community initiated review.”²⁵

Education Ministry spokeswoman Joanne Allen said that in the previous three years principals and boards of Tararua schools had met the ministry to discuss the process, “with a clear view to developing a shared vision of what education in the area could be for children.”²⁶ The Ministry and the Minister resisted deeper probing. The answer to the ‘Who instigated it?’ question was finally revealed at the end of the process by Tanya Katterns in the *Dominion Post* on August 19:²⁷

The review was instigated by Michael Pound, a former chairman of Pahiatua School’s board of trustees, who told the ministry of concerns over leadership at the district’s schools and the quality of education children were receiving. “I was not alone in seeking the ministry’s advice in 2007 and when they suggested a community initiated review, I and the other few schools involved said ‘Yes, that is us.’ We knew the review could lead to closures but it should never have been about patch protection but about improving what was a very bad state of education in some areas and making a real difference. Change still needs to happen.”²⁸

Tanya Katterns report, unacknowledged, was also published the same day on page 5 in *Manawatu Standard*.²⁹ It appears that the genesis of the Bush District CIEP arose from discussions between several principals, the Board of Trustees of Pahiatua School and the Ministry of Education about educational concerns in the district, such as teacher retention, staffing issues, the high turnover of principals in small schools, falling rolls, 'white flight' and the difficulties in forming and retaining boards of trustees in rural areas, which in turn led to governance issues. When I contacted Michael Pound in order to understand his viewpoint in greater depth he declined the opportunity to discuss the matter.

In July 2009 the Bush Education Plan Working Group produced the *Bush District Education Plan: Proposals for Consultation*,³⁰ a draft report in the form of a strategic plan which it had started to develop in November 2008. In the introduction the way in which members of the public could access the report, be consulted and comment was made clear. To reassure communities about consultation it was emphasised right at the beginning that the proposals might change as a result of the consultation, that what eventually happened would depend on the final report of the Working Group and the ultimate decision of the Minister of Education.

Given that the combined school rolls had fallen by more than thirty-one per cent over a ten year period and, since "the status quo was not an option," what would a network of sustainable schools serviced by effective and efficient transport systems look like that would produce a good outcome for students in the future? The *Summary of the Interim Report of the Bush Education Plan Working Group*³¹ provided Ministry of Education figures to show that in the ten year period between 1999 and 2009 the overall roll drops in the Tararua District went from 1695 pupils to 1,160, a roll drop of 535 pupils or over thirty-one per cent. The Ministry calculated by 2021 the district would have twelve per cent fewer, or 107 less, 0–14 year olds. Faced with this demographic information the Working Group concluded that the status quo of ten primary schools was not an option for the future. It proposed that the best solution was to have three strong state full primary schools located in Eketahuna, Pahiatua and Woodville. As the continuing schools, it was calculated that they would receive approximately \$1.88 million of EDI funding. Richard Thompson and Tim White wrote the report. The working group agreed with it.

TABLE 31

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN SCHOOL AGE CHILDREN IN BUSH DISTRICT.
*Bush District Education Plan: Proposals for Consultation.*³²

| | March 1999 | March 2009 | Change |
|--------------------|------------|------------|--------|
| Primary Students | 1104 | 758 | -346 |
| Secondary Students | 591 | 402 | -189 |
| TOTAL | 1695 | 1160 | -535 |

The report was a community consultation document. If the proposal was adopted it would mean the closure of eight schools: Ballance, Hillcrest, Kumeroa-Hopelands, Makuri, Papatawa, Mangatainoka, Mangamairie and Woodville. It was proposed that after Kumeroa-Hopelands and Papatawa schools closed their students could go to the Woodville School site to form a new school which would be renamed. This proposal was seen as inferring that Woodville School had a reputation issue and needed a fresh start. Once Hillcrest School closed, its students could enrol at Pahiatua School. Makuri School, which had seven students, would be closed. Eketahuna School would remain open. Students attending Mangatainoka and

Mangamairie schools could decide whether they wanted to go to Eketahuna or Pahiatua schools. Pahiatua School would need to adapt its culture so that the incoming students from the rural schools could be successfully integrated. The nature of the cultural adaptation was not specified.

In the month that followed the publication of the Bush District Educational Plan both the Ministry of Education and the Minister came in for intense media scrutiny. Anne Tolley told *Manawatu Evening Standard* on July 30³³ that the report was a community initiative, that it was still in the consultation stage and that the community had until August 17 to provide feedback. If a substantial change was mooted then a very clear, legally prescribed consultation process would be followed as set down in Education Act 1989.

In “Principalship and Policy in Small New Zealand Primary Schools”³⁴ and “Small New Zealand Primary Schools”³⁵ Collins argues that officials in the Ministry of Education made two key assumptions about small school behaviour neither of which was necessarily true. The first was that stronger small schools (in demographic terms) would willingly consolidate with the weakest schools in their neighbourhood to rationalise the network as a whole and the second was that weaker small schools (in demographic terms) would willingly consolidate with the weakest schools in their neighbourhood to rationalise the network as a whole. Collins³⁶ found that neither the principals of “strong” schools or “weaker” schools exhibited particular loyalty to the local network of schools, nor the inclination to work collaboratively to strengthen the local network as a whole.

... “strong” school principals in this study saw it as a Ministry responsibility to initiate interventions or supports that might assist “weaker” schools. “Weaker” school principals in my study were no more likely than their “stronger” colleagues to collaborate with their weak neighbours. Instead they were much more likely to compete vigorously with these neighbours for the declining total student pool in the local area.³⁷

Collins’ finding was confirmed when the Working Group proposals were announced at the end of July 2009.

As had happened elsewhere, school communities were once again in an uproar. There is nothing like a crisis to assist people to clarify what is important. This case clearly shows how rural people feel and experience their daily lives in schools and provides a valuable opportunity to examine the struggle between the perceived ‘national interests’ and the interests and values of rural school communities in the localities.

The growing gulf in values between the members of the Working Group and the people in rural districts was evident when the report identified the three main reasons to explain why communities wished to retain the small country school option: as an escape option from another school, to avoid excessive travel and to provide a rural character option. The “rural character” option was interpreted as an educational choice issue rather than a basic social capital issue. An “escape option from another school” has the connotation of minimising the importance of one size does not fit all, and even more importantly, overlooks the fact that when students are excluded from one school it is very difficult for parents if there is no alternative school within a reasonable distance to which they might be sent. The claim that the Bush District is small enough so that in extreme situations it is feasible for a child to move from one school and enrol at another overlooks the fact that if all the country

schools were to close the situation would become particularly difficult for parents because of transport issues. The difference between town schools and country schools and issues of social capital was conveniently blurred by statements such as:

...however there are disadvantages too, as described above. The group noted that all schools in the district have a rural character – the Bush District is essentially a rural district – and concluded that this is not a reason on its own to retain a small country school option.³⁸

Because a number of principals had had previous experience of school closures or mergers they understood the importance of a transparent consultation process and were familiar with the pain of cultural upheaval for the communities affected. Jo Emerson from Hillcrest had experienced the closure of Parihauhau and Santoft.

We invited the Working Party to come to Hillcrest but they never came. Why not? They could have come, even in the holidays, but they never showed.³⁹

Kirsty Silvester from Mangamaire had experienced the Marton Review.

If it had been closure I would have recognised it. I knew how to recognise one, how it happened and what it felt like. The Working Group didn't visit Mangamaire School. They never came. The process was not transparent. There was a hidden agenda. Never at any stage was student achievement information requested, but they wanted maps.⁴⁰

After the proposal was published a combined rural schools board of trustees meeting was held. Kumeroa–Hopelands parents produced a five page submission “Questions for the Working Party”⁴¹ which emphasised the importance of country schools as social capital, and raised some issues that still remained to be answered at the end of the CIEP process. Their questions summarised the collective raw nerves of parents in the Tararua district. They wanted to know how the Working Group could prove that its proposals reflected the community's wishes. Where, or from whom, did the Working Group get their information to inform its decisions? Why was the proposed plan in the North different from what was suggested for the Central region? Why did they decide to close Woodville and then open a new school on the same site when the same proposal was not suggested for Pahiatua and Eketahuna? What was the Working Party's definition of a “viable” school? Why was the time frame so tight? They wanted to know if facilitators were paid on an “outcome” basis or whether they were contracted to a set timeframe.

As the review of the overseas literature has already shown, school closures and mergers in rural areas involve contentious transport issues. The Working Group recommended the bussing of students from the closed country schools to the three remaining schools at Eketahuna, Pahiatua and Woodville. It believed that the travel times would be reasonable: the Ballance to Woodville trip takes about fifteen minutes, the time between Pahiatua and Woodville is about ten minutes, Mangamaire to Pahiatua takes ten minutes. Some distances are shorter, other journeys are longer. Jo Gibbs, Principal of Kumeroa Hopelands disputed the Ministry assurance that no child would have to travel more than forty minutes by bus to the continuing schools. She told the *Manawatu Standard* on July 30⁴² that by the time stops and deviations were taken into account the trip would stretch out to more than an hour, much too long for five year olds. On the same day the *Dominion Post*⁴³ was highlighting the plight of five year old Luke Brown from Mangamaire Country School who spent half an hour at least on the bus in the morning to get to school and up to an hour on the return journey.

If Mangamaire Country School closes, Luke could spend up to two and a half hours a day on the bus to go to school in Pahiatua 26 kilometres away.⁴⁴

Luke's predicament is a very good example of parents, schools and the media taking advantage of local knowledge and understanding and using the power of personalising an issue when there is an important message to communicate. When some people did their sums they said it would only take that long if he was on the secondary bus or that Eketahuna School would be closer. While it is true that in some instances the parental choice of school bus affects travel times, parents can have valid reasons for their bus choice. One respondent pointed out that there are also practical issues to consider. Many parents are anxious about issues their child might face on a bus with secondary students. Dairy farmers, who usually farm on flat land close to a high way, have more transport options, whereas sheep and beef farming properties are often down long, hilly roads, like the road to Makuri, which means long bus rides for country children. School rolls in country schools are also cyclical. The average age of sheep and beef farmers is fifty-eight whereas, the average age of dairy farmers is forty-four. These factors are also linked to patterns in the numbers of school age children.

In his editorial of July 30 the editor of the *Manawatu Standard* showed he clearly understood the social capital issue of rural schools for their communities:

A proposal to close up to eight rural primary schools in Tararua is a death sentence for most of the communities that will almost certainly wither away to nothing without them....what is not so quantifiable is the intrinsic value of a school to its community. In most rural communities its the school – no matter how small – is what binds it together....More so than in larger areas, a school in a remote rural area is the community's nucleus. Remove it and the sense of community breaks down. The Bush Education Plan can put up all the well researched, common sense proposals it likes, but if it thinks it can easily overcome the passion of people who care deeply about their community, it's likely to receive a lesson of its own.⁴⁵

Apart from Anne Tolley, the politician with the highest media profile during the CIEP was Wairarapa Member of Parliament, John Hayes. Just as he had done in the Makoura College crisis, he used his regular opinion piece, 'From the House' in the August 5 issue of the *Wairarapa News*⁴⁶ to encourage readers to communicate their concerns to the working group and provided addresses he thought would be useful.

Over the past four years as your MP, many of you will have heard me say that when a school is closed the heart is ripped out of the community. There is no mention in the report of the community impact of losing eight schools.⁴⁷

He invited readers to copy their submissions to him as a back-up precaution so he could double check that readers' submissions had been received by the task force and also get a feel for the pulse of the communities affected. This offer indicated to at least one member of the working group that a trust issue existed which she described as 'mischievous.'

The notions of 'social capital' and 'cultural taonga' help us to understand why it is that rural communities are so attached to their schools and why they are ready to fight to preserve them. Schools are both social capital and social markers of community. Such concepts became visible when I visited each school in the Tararua review during the course of this research. Most schools have a history that dates back over one hundred years, during which time they have become a focal point for their local communities in many different ways. This can be seen in the committed

fundraising and voluntary effort to provide facilities that can be used by both the school and the community alike. It can be seen when local people turn up on Saturdays to assist in their on-going maintenance and/or development. I experienced this pattern a number of times during this research. It can be seen in the decision to erect their community halls close to the school so that the school, which would be too small to have an assembly hall, has the benefit of access to a performance, physical education and an assembly space for the children and the community has a social meeting place. It can be seen in the use of community halls and any surplus classroom space to provide pre-school education. It can be seen in the provision of swimming pools and tennis courts that can be used by school and community alike in areas far away from such facilities in the towns.

Rural schools and their community halls provide a socially convenient place to remember community history. The sons and grandsons of families who still farm in the district who died in two world wars are remembered in the memorial entrance gates at Mangamairie School and the memorial board in its community hall. The American marines who lived in the district in World War II presented the school a commemorative bell which is mounted on the wall immediately behind the side entrance. Previous mergers with Hamua, Kakariki, Marima, Hukanui, Konini and Nikau schools are remembered on the 1997 centennial plaque by the student entrance gates by the centennial car park. At Kumeroa Hopelands School memorials to earlier school closures and mergers can also be seen in the tiled mosaic wall for Hopelands School and the flagstaff for Kohinui School closed in 2008. The main entrance to Makuri School is through its memorial archway.

Memorial stones and plaques commemorate educational milestones such as the openings of the original buildings, newer buildings and school jubilees. Community history can also be seen in the retention and display of old school bells and school memorabilia as well as the planting of commemorative trees to mark special occasions. Jubilees are remembered at Eketahuna School, Hillcrest School and Makuri School. A monument in the Ballance School grounds remembers Hon. John Ballance, Minister of Land and later Prime Minister, after whom the school was named, and all the pioneer settlers of the area.

In some districts an interconnection between three key community buildings is evident. In the early days the local church was built in close proximity to the community hall and the school at Ballance, Kumeroa-Hopelands and Makuri where the community hall has also been available for the social functions of the church community. In more recent times signs advertise that rural schools are the Civil Defence headquarters for their communities in times of emergency. In general elections schools provide polling places. Evidence of community commitment to the education of its young can be seen in the pre-schools organised in the community halls at Mangamairie and Kumeroa-Hopelands, and in a surplus classroom at Makuri School. For all these reasons it is clear that if a rural school closes the community loses the key component of its social capital.

Kumeroa-Hopelands School is an example of a rural school which knows its community. Its name is a daily reminder to the community that the school is the result of a merger between Kumeroa School and Hopelands School. In 2009 it had a roll of sixty-seven, three classrooms, four teachers, a teacher aide and a decile rating of four. By car it is thirteen minutes to Woodville. Like Ballance School, the school newsletter is distributed to all homes in the school district. The first of two large maps on the office wall shows where each school family lives and the second

shows where each of the pre-schoolers live and when they will turn five. The school has a Bus Society which owns three buses. The third bus was donated to the school by the Kohinui Bus Society when Kohinui School closed. The school does not have school fees but families pay a bus donation of \$50 a year to support the door to door service that the school offers to ensure that each child is picked up and returned safely to its home, a point of particular importance to farming families. When the Working Party visited Kumeroa-Hopelands the principal was surprised that they did not want to look at student achievement or take into account that for future planning purposes the school already knew that there were forty-two preschool age children in the district, none of whom were from Woodville.

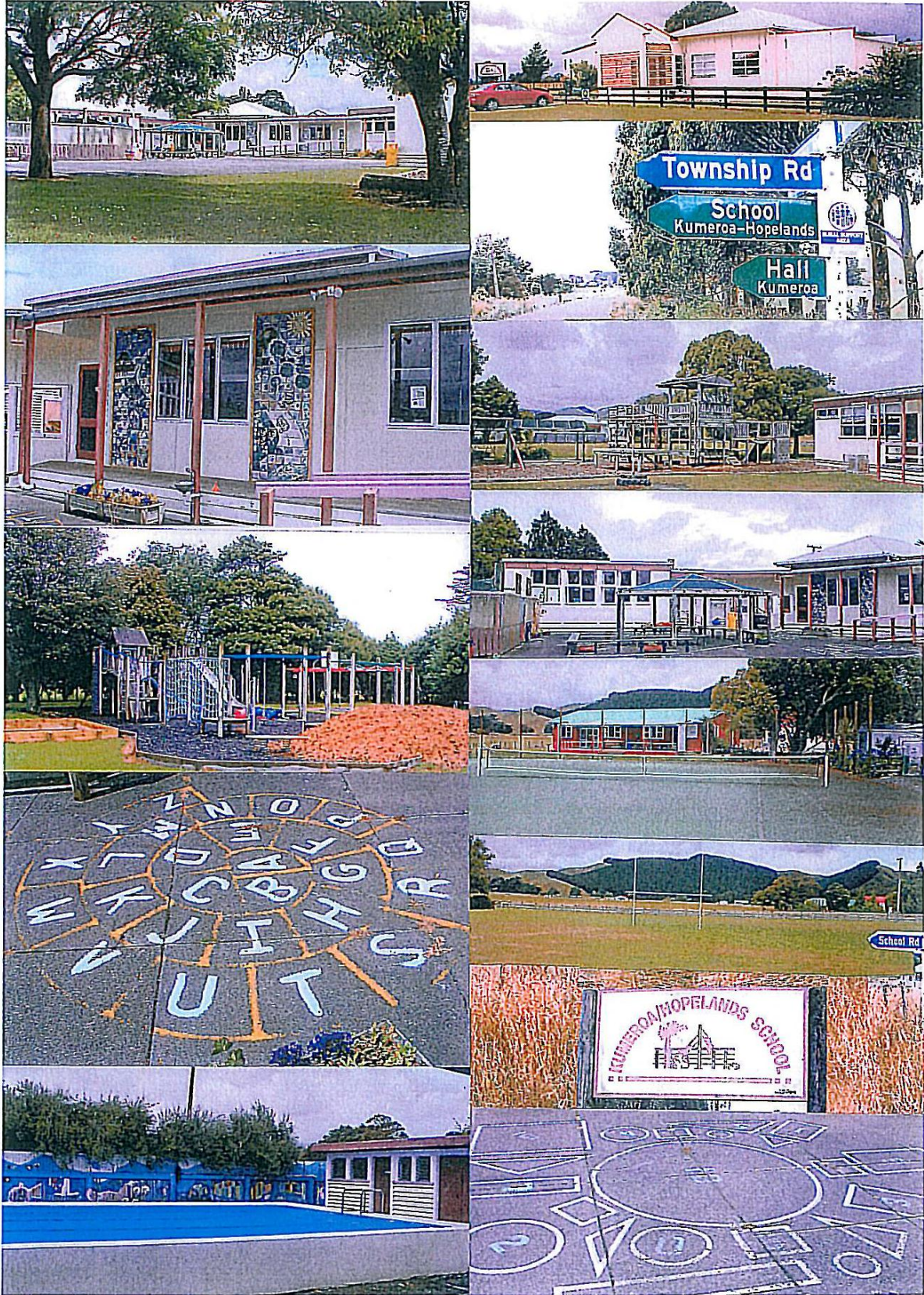
We definitely have not gone out canvassing. Parents choose to come to us. They can't take away that parental choice. We are the backbone of the country.⁴⁸

One outcome has been that Kumeroa-Hopelands has moved from a decile eight to a decile four school. Twenty-seven per cent of its students are now of Maori descent and most of these come from Woodville. If the proposal to reduce ten schools to three became reality they would lose their opportunity to exercise this choice. The response of Jo Gibbs, Principal of Kumeroa-Hopelands School to a *Manawatu Standard* reporter reflects how this 'right to choose' has become culturally embedded since the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools*.

School closures and mergers can become a mental health issue. In 2003 Brian Coffey, psychologist and regional manager of special education for the South Island sent a letter to schools, reported in December 7, *Sunday Star Times*⁴⁹ in which he warned that when children are drawn into adult disputes the risk of "potential psychological damage" is well documented and that the "ability to adjust to later change" can be compromised. He advised principals that it could be damaging for students to be involved in protests against school closures. In response to requests from public health nurses and other support people in schools, the Mental Health Foundation and the Community and Public Health unit of the Canterbury District Health Board, in consultation with the Ministry of Education, teamed up to provide an on line support pack for teachers, parents and children who might be affected by school closures and mergers throughout New Zealand. This was promoted in a front page article in *The Education Weekly* of June 14, 2004.⁵⁰

By the time of the Bush District CIEP primary school pupils, with the approval of their parents, were involved in expressing their protest to the closure of their schools by speaking and singing at community meetings and joining the Woodville protest march. The involvement of Kumeroa-Hopelands children in the resistance to the proposed closure of their school was a decision made by the Principal, Jo Gibbs, and supported by the parents. The principal took the view that since it was their school, the students should be kept informed and be given the opportunity to participate. Many students joined parents and staff at the Kumeroa-Hopelands community meeting on July 29 where there was standing room only.

When I visited Kumeroa-Hopelands School at the beginning of 2010 a bold student created banner in the school foyer announced to visitors "We Helped to Save Our School." Student research work was based on two key questions: "Why is the Working Party wanting to close our school?" and "What can we do to keep Kumeroa-Hopelands School open?" Their research learning activities clearly demonstrated 'enquiry learning' with age appropriate levels of critical thinking and the Key Competencies that students are expected to develop in the *New Curriculum*.



Kumeroa-Hopelands School. Photographs Claire Hills

The presentation of the research process and outcomes covered a whole wall. By the end of the process students were able to list their thinking processes and to record the reasons why “We feel we contributed to our school staying open.” In their submissions to the Working Party and the Minister of Education the students decided to refute key points in favour of closure with academic and sporting evidence from their own experience. They spoke to the media. They composed a seven verse protest song to be sung to ABBA’s “*Mama Mia*” and performed it at the Woodville community meetings. Some of the lyrics said:

We’ve been cheated by you
‘cos you’re closing our school.
Why do you have to do
something that’s so cruel?
Rural schools, they’re really cool
Rural schools
Our community won’t give in
And throw our education in the bin...⁵¹

Although some cynics believed the lyrics were really written by adults and that the children were being manipulated, the students had written all but one line. They also joined the Woodville protest march. After the announcement that the Working Party had disbanded the children recorded that the community had held a barbecue to celebrate success. They decided to display their own enquiry, to send thank you letters and to enjoy their school.

Another unusual feature of the Bush District CIEP was the support received from the corporate sector. Tui, one of the most popular brands of New Zealand beer, is brewed in the small settlement of Mangatainoka south of Woodville. When Mangatainoka School found itself as one of eight schools selected for closure, the issue directly affected the staff at the brewery whose children attend the school. They persuaded their employers to support the school.

For several years Tui beer has been noted throughout New Zealand for memorable corporate branding. The 2010 Super 14 pre-season grass roots rugby game between the Hurricanes and the Blues attracted 10,000 spectators to Skin Symonds’ farm in Mangatainoka even though it was pouring with rain. The annual pop concert in Mangatainoka draws huge crowds. The sexually attractive “Tui girls” have a large fan base. Throughout the year Tui billboards make humorous, ironic or sarcastic topical comments about life in New Zealand, followed by the sceptical, dry humoured Kiwi colloquialism ‘Yeah right.’ Sometimes the billboard statements make reference to a matter of intense local interest.

Tui Brewery became a powerful ally not only of Mangatainoka School but also the other rural schools in the region. It displayed a huge billboard attached to a container truck parked on the famous Mangatainoka rugby paddock on State Highway 2. To publicise the issue and to make its ‘homeland’ position clear to those who might never see the billboard, Tui sent a folksy e mail to the 20,000 people on its data base urging them to link to a one line e mail of protest to key people in Wellington and giving them the contacts to make it easy. One educationally influential respondent criticised this action as:

a self-serving, clever marketing opportunity in a controversial educational area about which they don’t really care.⁵²

However, given stakeholders knew that the days were ticking down to the August 17 deadline for submissions to the Ministry, the timing and the tactics were inspired. The *Wairarapa Times Age* published the complete e mail in its August 14 edition⁵³:

Here at our beloved home of Tui in Mangatainoka, we protect what is important to us. And sometimes that goes beyond simply guarding our precious amber liquid from you fellas.

Some bureaucrat in Wellington is proposing the closure of Mangatainoka School – just a stone’s throw away from our front door and we want to do something about it. Our brewery folk went there, their kids go there, and now we need your help to rally together to keep it open!

Those of you who have been to Mangatainoka know that our community is small. We have a brewery (God Bless), a river, a rugby ground, a school, a pub and 27 houses. All of these are important to our (and your) future. The school may only have 42 pupils, but if you want to protect the future generation...show your support for keeping the Mangatainoka School open.⁵⁴

As far as I can determine this is the first time a strong corporate stand has been taken against a school closure or merger in New Zealand. It is also notable for the advantage it took of the protest possibilities offered by the application of computer technology.

A versatile Mangatainoka parent followed up by creating large fabric banners in the Tui colours and tied them to the netball court wire netting for all school visitors to see: “Big schools get better results: Yeah Right;” “One size school fits all: Yeah Right;” “It’s what’s best for the kids: Yeah Right.” After the CIEP, in recognition of Tui’s support, she superimposed a selection of happy, cartoon type children and adapted the advertisement on the truck to read, “Rural communities do need schools. You’re right. Thank you.”

As the strength of community opposition to the closure and merger proposals intensified the determination to protest became increasingly evident at the daytime and evening public consultation meetings. The Eketahuna meeting was held in the Community Centre on August 5. On August 12 over 200 angry, vocal protesters packed the Pahiatua Town Hall. Ballance school students formed a protest line outside the meeting, Hillcrest students showed their feelings through a rousing kapahaka on the side of the path leading to the meeting. Jo Emerson, former Hillcrest Principal remembered:

They wanted to send a challenge to the Working Group and they wanted to be allowed to express their feelings. We joined with the kids from Ballance School.⁵⁵

Two normally shy Mangatainoka School students asked to speak at the meeting. When they stood up, their principal, Anne Corkran, offered to stand beside them as they proceeded to give an unrehearsed speech in front of hundreds of people. When two members of the Working Group arrived late and stood up the back parents told them they should be up the front listening to what the parents were saying. Various stakeholders told me that the atmosphere was “electric.” Anne Corkran, observed:

Very poor communication added to the confusion and the frustration so that people felt disrespected and manipulated. There was an information gap. There were no accessible records of the decision making. We couldn’t find out how they reached their decisions ... At the Pahiatua meeting we were told that they didn’t take minutes. How professional is that?⁵⁶

Her concerns were confirmed by Jo Emmerson, Principal of Hillcrest, “We asked for the minutes but were fobbed off.”⁵⁷

A scathing editorial by Steve Carle of the Pahiatua *Bush Telegraph* criticised what was supposed to be a question and answer session with the Working Party as 'a question and no answer session from the self-appointed group' who failed to allow scrutiny of its submissions and would not allow a chairman to be elected from the meeting where there was standing room only.

There was silence when it was asked which schools inside and outside the district they had visited. Every time a Makuri School supporter spoke, a block of about fifty adults stood up in solidarity. Such was the mood of unity that when the meeting was challenged by the *Bush Telegraph's* Editor to stand up if they wanted rural schools to stay open, an overwhelming majority rose to the occasion.⁵⁸

The caption to the photograph recording this action in the August 17 *Bush Telegraph* read, "A picture is worth a thousand words."⁵⁹ A counterbalance to the editorial was a half-page four column wide letter to the editor from Lynne Huddleston, Principal of Pahiatua School. She argued that a halt to the proposed closures would only delay their inevitability and that it was better to take the opportunity to work together as a community to come up with a solution that would be in the best interests of the children that would have the backing of the Ministry of Education. She praised the Working Group as people who undertook their task in good faith, had made rational decisions, had the courage to put the interests of the children before all else and regretted that as a result they had been treated very badly.⁶⁰ Julie Brooking from Mangamaire, expressed a different point of view in her letter to the editor:

Another amusing part of the show was Pahiatua School opening their arms to the rest of us, welcoming us into their school, which is in sharp contrast to a couple of years ago when they announced in the *Bush Telegraph* that they were considering zoning to keep the rest of us out of their school because they were full.⁶¹

Once a Government process has started it is very difficult to bring it to a halt. Early in the CIEP the community had been told that the community could pull out of the process at any stage. After the Pahiatua meeting Mangatainoka Principal, Anne Corkran, checked with Working Group Facilitator, Richard Thompson, to see if this message was still correct, only to be told that the community could not pull out of the process and that apart from the Minister stopping it the only way the process could stop was if the Working Group pulled out. Acting on this clarification, Anne Corkran organised a protest petition specifically to the Working Group asking it to disband. She knew that different schools were organising their own meetings and petitions against their own school being closed but understood that this would simply put individual schools in competition with each other while not addressing the underlying issue which was to stop the Working Group meeting. In order to achieve this end she initiated a petition which she asked stakeholders from all the schools to sign and attached a copy of the CIEP planning sheet for reference purposes.

Petition for the Bush Schools Community Initiated Education Plan process to stop!! We want the working group to write to the Minister of Education and request that the Bush Schools CIEP process stops and the committee be disbanded.⁶²

Anne Corkran's petition was well underway before the Ministry of Education announced that the process had stopped so the petition of over 300 signatures from Woodville to Eketahuna was still sent. In the accompanying e mail to the Minister, she expressed dissatisfaction with the consultation process and asked once again for the terms of reference of the working group.



Mangatainoka School, located very close to the Tui Brewery. Photographs Claire Hills.



Photo supplied to *Wairarapa Times Age* of Tui advertisement on a container truck to support rural schools is reflected in banners developed by a Mangatainoka mother and tied onto the walls of the netball court and photographed by her.

She pointed out that all the schools in the Bush District had been reviewed by the ERO in late 2006 or early 2007. Since Michael Pound, a former chairperson of the Pahiatua School Board of Trustees, had acknowledged that he instigated the CIEP due to concerns about achievement and lack of leadership in many of the local schools, she asked the Minister:

Surely if there were concerns in this area then the ERO would have identified them!! How can the concerns of a person with no educational qualifications override the review outcomes of ERO?⁶³

Since it seemed that a CIEP process could be started by an individual, she wanted to know if the same thing could happen again. The thought of another CIEP being initiated on a regular basis would be very unsettling for the community so she asked for a review of the manner in which a CIEP could be initiated. When the petition was sent she mailed it to the Minister, M. P. John Hayes and the Working Group “just to be sure.”

At the Woodville community meetings the protest movement hardened yet further. The morning meeting on Wednesday August 12 attracted about one hundred people and was also attended by all the pupils from Kumeroa-Hopelands who sang their protest song and recited messages they had prepared. Some people perceived that teachers and principals were leading the protests and encouraging students to participate. About 150 people were present at the evening meeting in Woodville on August 13 where Rev Rosie McMillan, the Anglican minister of Holy Trinity Church, decided to organise a protest march to support Woodville School. She told me that she had seen the school closure issues “rip the community apart” and this led her decision to organise a protest march.

Rev McMillan spoke about the number of community facilities that Woodville had lost in recent years. In common with other towns in the Wairarapa region, the Tararua region had also experienced Government rationing of health provision when their general hospitals at Dannevirke and Pahiatua were closed and the maternity hospitals at Eketahuna and Pahiatua were redeveloped to provide various modes of care for the elderly. Woodville has no banks. The people have a money machine only because of the support of the local Four Square operator. They do not have a chemist. Locals must take their prescriptions to a chemist depot, which must then be faxed to a Palmerston North chemist who sends them back next day by courier. There is no resident doctor. There is a part time doctor from Dannevirke who visits once a week and a doctor who practises mainly in Pahiatua but works in Woodville two days a week. Rev McMillan was very concerned by the loss of identity and loss of history that would be the inevitable outcome if Woodville School was to close.

Such was the strength of community opposition to the proposals of the Working Group that other schools asked if they could join the protest march. When Rev McMillan spoke to the media she expressed her belief that the level of anger in the community was unprecedented:

The Government has really pulled the wool over our eyes....No one was ever told it could mean closure....It is time as a community we all stood up together to be counted. We are sick and tired of being pushed around. It's time our voice resounded.⁶⁴

Led by Rev Rosie McMillan, over 300 people took over one side of a state highway after school on August 7 for a Save Our Schools protest march from the Woodville rugby grounds to Woodville School, with the police present in front and behind.

Passing motorists tooted and waved. Many protesters waved home-made placards with personal messages. "Save our school." "Close Woodville School? Yeah right!" "Keep us here." "We like our school." Some older protestors were riding on motor scooters. Students, teachers, parents, grandparents and members of the Woodville community joined people from Kumeroa-Hopelands, Ballance and Mangatainoka schools, all united in their determination to resist closure threats. The protest march received wide media coverage. It was front page news in the *Manawatu Evening Standard*, *Dominion Post*, *Wairarapa Times Age* and featured on television. The *Dominion Post* reported that although Education Minister, Anne Tolley, had been invited to attend the protest, she would not be available.

The turning point happened on the eve of the protest march. In a much publicised and frequently quoted interview on TV 1's *Close Up* programme on August 9⁶⁵ Anne Tolley said the review was set up by the previous government and denied any knowledge of the process the working group had followed. If that statement was true, then it would appear that the appointee to job 11296 advertised in the *Dominion Post* in October 2003 (previously mentioned) was not meeting his/her job specifications which specifically required that the Minister be kept informed about such matters. The most important statement Mrs Tolley made and repeated in the TV One interview was that she had no intention to close the schools:

It's up to these communities to decide how best to educate their children. If they want the schools to stay open then I will not be closing them. If they do not want them closed I will not be closing them....If the community doesn't want the schools to close I'm not going to close them.⁶⁶

One respondent reported that Mark Sainsbury was expecting a vigorous interview. It didn't happen. Was it because, unknown to the TV audience, the Cabinet had met that morning, and the negative and increasingly evident political fallout from the Bush District CIEP was raised for discussion? It would have been known that the Minister was due to appear on *Close Up*. Since the Tararua District is blue ribbon National territory the party would have been reluctant to alienate its own supporters. However it happened, given the combination of these ingredients, it is not surprising that the decision was taken to soft pedal on the CIEP. The widespread community response to the Minister's comments is reflected in the comments of Jo Gibbs, Principal of Kumeroa-Hopelands, "She's going to listen to the mums and dads instead of the working party."⁶⁷ However the Minister's statements were interpreted negatively by others to mean that the voices of the parents would be given more weight than the carefully considered recommendations of the working group.

The Minister's assurance on the *Close Up* programme did not stop the planned protest action. Rev Rosie McMillan's reaction was quoted in *Manawatu Evening Standard*, *Wairarapa Times Age*, and the *Dominion Post* on August 10:

If she sticks to it. It will be worth all the upheaval if we have this good result. It has caused a huge amount of stress. We have to keep going and put in submissions.⁶⁸

Anne Corkran, Principal of Mangatainoka School, was even more cautious in her comments to the *Wairarapa Times Age* on the same day:

...so far, any trust in this whole process has long gone. You'd hope you could take her at face value, but then you know the process is very politically driven. She is still basically a new kid on the block and I don't know how far you can trust her.⁶⁹

On August 14, in the same week as the protest march, in response to the rising tide of opposition to the CIEP, Anne Tolley, advised:

I would urge all those involved to make their voices heard to the working group, the schools and the Ministry of Education.⁷⁰

In a feature article in *Wairarapa Times Age*, on August 8,⁷¹ fourth generation Mangamairie farmer Alan Bisset, and former chairman of the board of trustees of Mangamairie Country School, criticised the Ministry of Education, the Minister and the review process on three counts: lack of common sense about the basic realities of life lived on farms and ambiguous, one might even argue, deliberately devious communication and inaccurate responses to media questions. He disputed Mrs Tolley's claim that the CIEP process was community driven because the Ministry had picked lambing and calving time, the busiest time of the year in a rural community. This fact in itself compromised community feedback:

My biggest concern is the lack of knowledge within the community on what was going on. There had been advertisements in the local paper but very generalised, saying such things as "What do you want for your future?" "What goals and objectives have you got for your schools?" and "What is your vision for education in this area?" and such like. And of course very few people attended this meeting because they were unaware of what was really going on behind them.⁷²

After the Minister's nationwide comments on television the principals of the Tararua schools were determined that she should keep her promise. At 8 30 a.m. Monday August 17, 2009 Richard Thompson, Facilitator of the Bush District CIEP Working Group, announced that the proposal for a cluster of closures was withdrawn:

To Bush District schools and early childhood education providers. Following the completions of the Bush District Education Plan public meetings the Working Group has met and made the decision to immediately withdraw its Proposals for Consultation. Submissions will continue to be received until August 24 and then all submissions will be forwarded in their entirety to the Minister of Education, the Honourable Anne Tolley.⁷³

The one way communication channels continued. It was originally intended that the group would process these submissions before making a final recommendation to the minister. On August 18, the *Manawatu Evening Standard* reported:⁷⁴

Mr Thompson declined to comment on the issue last night saying that he had been told that the ministry would make any comments. The ministry could not be reached.⁷⁵

A week later, Richard Thompson told the *Manawatu Standard*⁷⁶ that "...about 200 submissions" had been received about the proposal to close eight rural Tararua schools. The ministry would not say how much the "botched" CIEP had cost.

A blame game then developed. In his August 19 *Wairarapa News* column 'From the House'⁷⁷ Wairarapa MP John Hayes blamed Ministry of Education officials for what he termed, "the rural school hangover from the last government." He made no mention of any role Minister Anne Tolley might have played in how events developed. He chose to blame manipulative public servants for the process:⁷⁸

Thanks to all who stood firm in this campaign. It is really important that we remain ready to draw a line in the sand and refuse to allow ourselves to be manipulated by public servants who don't live in our communities, and don't have to live with the outcomes of their bright ideas.⁷⁹

Given that Roger Marshall, the Ministry representative, did not attend most of the meetings of the Working Group his targets appear to have been Richard Thompson and Tim White. If this is the case then it is curious that while it would appear that Tim

White's role was not acceptable in the Bush District CIEP, his role as Commissioner in the rescue package for Makoura College appears to have been most acceptable to Mr Hayes.

Two members of the Working Party were prepared to go public with their frustrations. Tararua District Mayor, Maureen Reynolds, had agreed to become a member of the Working Party on the understanding that the terms of reference were about achieving 'sustainable futures' for the delivery of education in the Tararua District. After eight months as a member of the working party, she told *Dominion Post* on August 22:⁸⁰

It was a very unfortunate experience for us all and I wish never to repeat it again. I feel we have been set up by the ministry and after such a bitter experience we have no wish to ever repeat this exercise and work with the ministry ever again.⁸¹

She told me that she thought that the working group proposal was severe. One of the results was that people in the district were very rude to her. She was unhappy with the way John Hayes "interfered in the process," believing him to be "naïve" when he advised *Wairarapa News* readers to send submissions to her rather than to Richard Thompson.

Annette Castles, another member of the working party vented her frustration in the *Wairarapa Times Age and Dominion Post*.⁸² As a volunteer member of the working group she said that she found the process a "waste of time." She found herself trapped between the 'slings and arrows' of outraged communities, confusing and conflicting messages and the lack of communication from the minister and the ministry during the process as well as finding herself the victim of personal attacks:

We spent eight months to come up with a set of ideas that could really make a difference. Education Minister Anne Tolley then comes out publicly when we are three quarters the way through, saying no schools would close if the community was against it. It blew us away. Why were we even doing this process? Why weren't the Education Ministry, who was working with us, and the minister on the same page?⁸³

On the other hand, the Kumeroa-Hopelands community were finding it very difficult to understand how Annette Castles could be member of a group which sought to close the school she had formerly led as principal. Annette Castles herself highlighted the on-going communication issues to the *Wairarapa Times Age*⁸⁴ when she referred to the fact that Maureen Reynolds and Diana Eagle from the working group had met with Anne Tolley:

What does this say? If there's a school out there with maybe two children left but the community doesn't want it to close. I just think she's made a statement for every school in New Zealand... Until the ministry and the minister know what each other is doing community members like ourselves shouldn't be drawn in. It appears Mrs Tolley has caved in to public pressure... We're still in the dark. Is this National policy or is this Mrs Tolley's opinion? It looked to me on the 'Close Up' programme that it was just something you would say to keep the multitudes happy really... Two members of the panel had gone to see Mrs Tolley so the recommendations should not have been a surprise... If she was not prepared to let the proposal include recommendations for any school closures she should have told the working group people there and then. There was a window of opportunity to make adjustments to the proposal.⁸⁵

Mrs Tolley did not respond to a request for comment.

Communities have very strong feelings about their schools. The rising emotional temperature in the Bush District could be seen in the emotive language used at community meetings, in personal and professional relationships, on blog sites and in media reports. The following quotes not only tell their own story but also reflect the depth of stakeholder feeling about their schools and the proposals:

The threat of closure.
The news sent shock waves through the district.
Hell will freeze over before this happens.
I read the report twice. It is myopic.
They said it was not about school closures. We have been lied to.
Educationalist speak.
Rural review underhanded.
Outraged parents, teachers and students.
If this was about improvement for the children why didn't they ask us to show them their levels of achievement?
We had 42 pre-schoolers in the district. They didn't even want to know.
There's no way this school is closing – that will be over my dead body.
The Working Group didn't visit us. They were invited to visit Hillcrest but didn't go.
The facilitators...fronted up to locals and got a barrage of questions and abuse.
You should be sacked!
You're just a glorified scone maker!
A lynch mob mentality. The only thing missing was pitchforks and burning crosses. The meeting quickly deteriorated into a circus show with professionals from the small rural schools acting unethical and downright stupid.
The hilly billy blog page upset a huge amount of people.
August is the worst month to hold meetings.
You get bullying everywhere. You're bullying us right now to close our schools.
Enraged Tararua parents and principals swore and yelled at the men who are threatening to close eight of the district's rural schools.
John Key came to the electorate. He visited Yummy Mummy's in Woodville but not the schools.
John Hayes wasn't seen in Eketahuna. He could have visited but he didn't. In my last school Darren Hughes visited us a couple of times a year.
What we really want is to get this headache away and concentrate on what we do so well, and that's educating our children.
The Working Group were volunteers. They were hammered by the communities.
At the community meetings there was no Ministry of Education rep. The Working Group was hung out to dry.
Held up as a scapegoat.
Never again vow after rural schools botch up. Schools' review panel quits.
Tararua schools avoid the axe.
Absolutely ecstatic.⁸⁶

The community reaction to the Bush District Education Plan proposals was also a catalyst for the Ministry of Education and the Minister to reflect and to review the new Community Initiated Education Plan strategy. They waited several months before Anne Tolley and several Ministry of Education officials met a selection of Bush District stakeholders in Pahiatua on October 27, 2009. The Minister said she had come to listen. It was decided that it would be impolitic to have the Working Group, boards of trustees and principals in the same space at the same time so the Minister met with them separately. Maureen Reynolds was not present. One principal commented:

It was poorly handled. One meeting was followed immediately by the other. We walked down the corridor as the Working Group walked out – it was very tense walking past each other.⁸⁷

For the officials in the Ministry of Education the negative outcomes of the 2009 Bush District CIEP clearly showed the critical importance of clear and transparent

processes. The Ministry's deputy secretary Rawiri Bell told the *Dominion Post* on August 22⁸⁸ that: the Community Initiated Education Plan was a new process and that the Bush District experience could lead to change:

Review and evaluation is an important part of any new process. When this has been completed we will make any changes that seem appropriate.⁸⁹

One positive outcome of the Bush District CIEP was that it became a catalyst for generating a huge amount of community discussion about the local and regional educational needs in the Bush District in a way that had not happened before. Many people who reacted against the CIEP did not come up with alternatives. One respondent observed:

People were so parochial. What was good enough for my parents and me is good enough for my kids sort of thing. This review was about seeing the future not hanging on to the past.⁹⁰

Several principals believed that the Bush District CIEP did produce some positive outcomes for the communities involved. Jo Gibbs told the *Wairarapa Times Age*:

...the scrapping of the proposal had won through the schools fighting together and not individually... If there is one thing it's all taught us is that we have to share our strength – and we'll be working together more closely in the future.⁹¹

There were a number of elements in stakeholder response to the CIEP closely linked to the research literature on closures and mergers. The Bush District Working Group's decision to disband after Anne Tolley's statements on the *Close Up* programme has a precedent. Stewart⁹² reports a working group impasse in Flaxmere and Hastings where the purpose was to examine the provision of education generally across the wider community. This review group also found itself unable to continue. After the establishment of Flaxmere College, the Minister created a new advisory group to continue the process with an altered focus. The EDI concluded with majority support for the status quo. The appointment of a new working group in the Bush District after the CIEP would however, be regarded as politically inflammatory.

Based on the evidence from petitions, community meetings, the protest march, media reports and thesis interviews it is clear that principals, parents and trustees were highly dissatisfied with the quality of communication, the lack of transparency in the decision making and the lack of consultation. Despite reassurances they perceived that there were hidden agendas and that the Ministry outcomes were predetermined. The critical importance of consultation and communication issues have already been documented by respondents to the Viability of Small Schools Review (1992)⁹³ and the twenty-three principals/staff and twenty board chairs involved in the EDIs 1994–2000 who participated in Savage's research.⁹⁴ Harris in her *Study of EDIs: Their Impact on School Boards of Trustees* found:

During the decision making process prior to the merger, community consultation played a crucial role in community acceptance. Boards that allocated plenty of time for consultation and were positive about the proposed changes experienced a relatively smooth process. Negative community reaction to reorganisation was often premised on an inability to see the potential benefits of school reorganisation.⁹⁵

Both Parkyn⁹⁶ and Fisk⁹⁷ understand the importance of country schools as social capital. This can be seen in Fisk's argument that the function of a school and the

geographical and social context in which it exists are essential factors to consider when deciding the funding to which it should be entitled.

However Witten, et al.⁹⁸ found that it also seemed to their respondents that the parameters for consultation were determined by the Ministry of Education which was unwilling to acknowledge and debate the matters of importance to the parents. The excluded debates related to accumulated community goodwill and assets, the school community as a meeting place, natural community boundaries and choice and diversity. Ambiguity arising from different agendas and moving goalposts caused conflict. This was expressed as the need for clear closure guidelines to remove ambiguity, distrust between the community and the MOE officials and resistance and protest.

The importance of a rural school as social capital is reflected in the research findings of Stewart and Clay⁹⁹ and Taylor Baines and Associates¹⁰⁰ in *Review of Timaru Schools Network: Scoping Assessment of Social and Community Impacts for Timaru District Rural Schools* in December 2003. While the following comments refer to Seadown School, they note that the pattern was also observable elsewhere:

Ancillary staff at the school – bus driver, secretary, cleaner, lawn-mowing contractor – all live locally and the employment contributes to local livelihoods. The school is the central meeting place in this farming locality, and the frequent exchanges between parents at school are important for sustaining friendships, social networks, and the familiarity and trust amongst school families that enables them to support each other with, for example, shared social care of their children at certain times. As with Claremont and Fairview schools, Seadown School has facilities which the local community has contributed to in terms of finance and maintenance. Here, the local tennis club maintains the tennis courts and has added its own pavilion....Seadown School is used as a polling booth location during elections. It is also the locally designated headquarters for Civil Defence in times of emergencies.¹⁰¹

The community damage caused by the Bush District CIEP was summarised on the front page of the *Dannevirke News* on August 20¹⁰² by Carole Rivers, a Dannevirke grandmother of children attending Kumeroa-Hopelands School:

I cannot help but feel that a well-known, respected group of local people from our community, with very good intentions – invited by the Ministry of Education to form the Bush Education Plan working group – were taken advantage of by the ministry, which tried once again to devalue and destroy a rural community. The group were not voted in by the community and this process has caused so much damage between friends, families and neighbours and communities in the Tararua District. It'll take some time to repair and for trust to be restored. Some of the damage will be permanent. I have to say that last Thursday's protest meeting in Woodville was the saddest meeting I have ever been to. With such personal attacks on members of the working party and the pleas of desperate families and people in tears, I hope such a process is never allowed to happen again.¹⁰³

Over a year later the community pulse about the CIEP could still be felt. One principal reflected:

The community has been wounded and the healing will take a long time. We see it on the side lines at sporting encounters. When country school teams defeat Pahiatua we hear comments like, "See! They wanted to close us!" "They said we don't play sport," "And they said we couldn't play sport!" Comments like these are called out by both kids and parents.¹⁰⁴

Even though the Bush District CIEP was a set of proposals framed in a consultation document, people read it as if it was already a decision. If the proposals were implemented only three of its ten schools would remain. The ingredients of stakeholder response were very similar to the stakeholders involved in network

reviews. The deep emotional attachment of people to their schools could be seen in bitter community infighting and the expressions of anger and grief evident in private conversations, e mails, blogs, written submissions, public meetings, protest meetings, letters to the editor, protest marches, overt hostility to visiting officials from the Ministry of Education and widespread media coverage. Contentious debates developed around a number of key issues: the right to choose the most suitable school for one's child conferred by *Tomorrow's Schools*, the right of parents to have a clear and transparent communication process, objections to the perceived lack of consultation, transport issues, white flight issues, the virtues of smaller schools versus larger schools and how core communities would be destroyed. In rural schools in particular, the role of the school goes far beyond its educational function into the understanding that the school is the nucleus of the social capital of the community. The combination of these ingredients fuelled the rising levels of community anger that led to a variety of protest actions which taken collectively, were successful in leading to the decision of the Working Group to disband and the consequent collapse of the Bush District CIEP.

Recent research by Adsit, which focuses on providing strategies to address the educational and community issues of rural America, in *Small Schools, Education and the Community*,¹⁰⁵ confirms the New Zealand experience:

The creation of a vision should be inclusive – a vision created by a few will have buy-in by a few.¹⁰⁶

Sustainable futures need community consensus. The Bush District CIEP provides a valuable example in the New Zealand rural context about what happened when the importance of achieving a community consensus about future educational provision within the region and how it might be achieved was not sufficiently thought through.

In a situation where “the status quo’ may no longer be an option,” neither are school closures and mergers the only option to be considered, as the following chapter will illustrate.

CHAPTER 7

CREATING SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

I have a very clear impression from the evidence that there is overwhelming support in the local community for the school to remain open and that those associated with the school, especially its teaching staff and Board can be justifiably proud of what they have achieved at the school. I gained a real sense of people feeling they have created something precious, which they understandably do not want to lose. (Hon Justice French, High Court Christchurch. 2009)¹

The focus of this thesis was to explore the extent to which school closure and merger decisions can be contested and negotiated in a post *Tomorrow's Schools* early twenty-first century New Zealand context. The question was explored using three case studies in rural New Zealand in both the primary and secondary sectors. It has been shown that some schools were more successful in contesting closure and/or merger than others. This chapter will explore the insights into the contestability of school mergers and/or closures that these case studies provide. Just as the essence of drama is conflict, so also the change drama involved in the school closure/merger process arises from conflicting values and a conflict between the forces of continuity and the forces of change that are played out in a particular school, with a particular history in a particular place.

While there are no quick fix solutions, the fuel that energises the efforts of researchers in educational administration is a desire to make a contribution to their field of enquiry that will result in usable knowledge that will assist improvement in the quality of leadership and management in and of schools, while at the same time recognising that, as with any field of enquiry, this matter is in a continuous stage of evolution so insights are more valuable than absolutes.

At the heart of the school closure/merger dilemma is the power struggle between national interests and the local interests of schools. This could clearly be seen in each of the case studies in this thesis. Educational administration, by its very nature, involves issues about how power over others and the power to do things is understood and exercised. It involves sorting out what is significant and what is peripheral.

The schools which provided the focus for this thesis were located in rural New Zealand communities. A central contention of my thesis is that, if and when the level of community concern about closures and/or mergers reaches the level of intense community-wide outrage, then politicians may back down so that the status quo is maintained or a community negotiated adjustment is enabled. This could be seen on a nationwide basis when the cluster of network reviews in largely rural areas became so politically unpopular during the Labour led Government of Helen Clark that she acted to stop them in 2004 through the introduction of a five year moratorium. It could be seen in Masterton in 2008 when community pressure caused the Ministry of Education to relent and grant Makoura College a reprieve. The

Makoura College closure decision by its board of trustees was reversed, a commissioner was appointed and under new leadership the college has responded to the challenge of creating a new future. A reversal of policy could also be seen in 2009 when the outrage expressed by rural communities in the Bush District resulted in the back down by Minister of Education, Anne Tolley, the resignation of the working group, the withdrawing of the Community Initiated Education Plan proposals and the retention of the status quo.

The research literature reviewed in Chapter 2 shows that school closures and mergers are a global issue, usually politically divisive and have a deep impact on communities. In other developed countries with whom we are closely associated, such as Australia, United Kingdom and USA, this is also the case. Overseas, as in New Zealand, fiscal efficiency, enhanced curriculum provision and addressing problems arising from the duplication of resources are the familiar arguments used to justify the policies which lead to the consolidation of schools. However, as previously explained, Parkyn,² Collins,³ Savage⁴ and Harker⁵ have warned of the dangers of making comparisons with countries overseas given New Zealand's different size, population, history and social composition. In the last thirty years, as Table 3 in Chapter 1 makes clear, New Zealand schools have lived through a series of restructuring earthquakes that have transformed the educational landscape in which they operate. If any theory about educational administration is to be relevant it must be grounded in the social, political and cultural reality of those who teach, manage and lead.

The introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools* in 1989 and the removal of school zoning in 1991 restructured and decentralised education through the introduction of site based governance and management. In this power shift parents were no longer limited to their traditional roles associated with fund raising and the provision of hospitality. New opportunities arose to shape education policy and practice. The increasing politicisation of parents could be seen in the large number of complaints from parents and teachers recorded in *The Report of the Economic and Educational Viability of Small Schools Review 1992*.⁶ Respondents objected to the constitution of the review group which excluded representatives from parents, teachers or their respective education organisations. Virtually all of the 1800 submissions from every region in New Zealand opposed the closing of small schools and objected to the haste in which the review was being held, its unrealistic time frame and the lack of consultation which respondents saw as contradicting the philosophy of partnership, consultation and choice introduced by *Tomorrow's Schools*. Forty-eight per cent of the 1800 submissions received confirmed the pivotal role of the school in providing 'the social cement' that keeps rural communities together.

School closures and mergers expose the raw nerves of a community. This can be seen in the New Zealand context when stakeholders, as guardians of the 'taonga,' close ranks to defend the 'cultural treasure' that their school represents. As this thesis has illustrated, a familiar stakeholder response pattern emerges of anger, grief, on-going outbursts of emotive language, assertions of the parental right conferred by *Tomorrow's Schools* to choose the most suitable school for a child, insistence that stakeholders have the right to have a clear and transparent communication and consultation process, transport issues, white flight, brown flight, contentious educational debates about the virtues of smaller schools versus larger schools, anxiety about the effects of integration policies, the destruction of core communities, community infighting and organised protest taking the form of e mails, letters, internet sites, submissions, public meetings, petitions and protest marches.

Stakeholders usually perceive officials from the Ministry of Education and the Minister of Education as ‘the enemy.’ Widespread media coverage of the process raises the level of community awareness and provides a forum for wider discussion and debate.

After *Tomorrow’s Schools* parents became politicised. In some cases their dissatisfaction erupted in the public domain. This could be seen in 1990 when East School parents contested the decision made by their Board of Trustees to appoint Marama Tuuta as principal and again in 1997 when they contested the decision of their board that only Te Reo Maori would be spoken in their school. When parents exercised their new opportunities for choice through deciding to remove their child from their neighbourhood school to another they preferred, their shifting patterns of choice resulted in destabilising schooling provision which subsequently became a contributing factor in the decision of the Ministry to introduce network reviews. The changing patterns of school enrolments over a twenty year period can be seen in Tables 18 and 19 in tables 33 and 34 in the Appendices. Ironically *Tomorrow’s Schools* also provided the unintended opportunity for parents to exercise their power through contesting decisions made to close and/or merge their schools in network reviews in relation to which their changing patterns of enrolment choices had been a major contributing cause.

The increasing politicisation of parents about educational matters which emerged in the East School case became increasingly significant during the Masterton District Network Review, hardened during the Makoura College closure crisis and solidified in the community meeting protests and the Woodville protest march during the Bush District CIEP. What insights into school closures in the New Zealand context do these case studies provide?

The Masterton District Network Review 2003

The increasingly important role of the media in highlighting the new managerial and governance issues facing school stakeholders after the introduction of *Tomorrow’s Schools* could be seen in the East School case when dissatisfied parents contested the appointment of Marama Tuuta as Principal. Through providing a continuing source of local information and opinion during this case, the Masterton District Network Review, the Makoura College closure crisis and the Bush District CIEP the local media not only heightened public consciousness of the educational issues involved, but also provided a public forum for explanations, discussion and debate.

If it is true that the nature of schooling in a society affects the nature of that society, then some of the outcomes of the Masterton District Review 2003 give cause for serious concern. Nine schools faced the merger/closure dilemma. Five were closed. The catalyst for the review was that Hiona Intermediate was no longer viable. The parents and teachers who decided to contest the closure of their individual schools could not avoid the uncomfortable tensions that are part of living in contemporary New Zealand society. Some of these tensions have deepened as a result of *Tomorrow’s Schools* which has accentuated inequality and increased social stratification. Such patterns go against the social justice tradition in New Zealand education that has been described by other researchers, such as Adams and Openshaw et al.,⁷ who found that the distinction between “being *free* to choose and *able* to choose” is of central significance in any such discussion.

A deeply flawed process inevitably produces negative social outcomes. The outcome of the Masterton District Network Review divided the community along clear lines. It set schools against one another in the struggle to survive. This pattern had already been recorded elsewhere by Collins⁸ and Savage.⁹ It accentuated the east west divide. It is worth noting that with the exception of Miki Miki School, the small schools on the rural urban periphery survived the Masterton District Network Review. Totara Drive which met all the criteria for survival was closed. Solway Primary School which was expected to close, survived as a result of fighting a hard-line, politically smart campaign right from the beginning.

The 2003 network review process provided the illusion of consultation. It is pertinent to remember what was shaping the process. The InterLEAD consultants were government funded. By labelling the emerging community concerns as “myths” and explaining them away it could be argued that the consultants were positioning themselves as ‘right’ in their reading of the situation, in which case the community did not really have valid arguments against a review. Certainly it is true to say that original proposals changed later, but if the community preferences cost money, they sunk without trace. The unspoken message was that despite the introduction of *Tomorrow’s Schools*, and the consultation process, the power to make decisions clearly lay with the Ministry. Witten¹⁰ is another researcher who found that the Ministry of Education prescribed the parameters of consultation. It was not particularly interested in widening the debate to include issues of importance to the community. This was evident in the Town Hall meeting for principals, teachers and trustees in April which provided a limited opportunity for the reviewers to receive feedback to the first report from the ‘in crowd.’ Although there was an almost unanimous rejection of the review and its parameters, no provision was made for a wider community meeting. This might partly be explained by the opposition of at least three principals to such a meeting when it was advocated by the Ministry of Education and also the Mayor, Bob Francis, before the review began.¹¹

The changes in the closure and merger decisions between the original proposals and the final report show that school closures and mergers are contestable. However, once the proposals shifted some schools who had believed themselves safe suddenly found themselves the targets of closure in a situation where a rear-guard action would have been too late. Solway Primary School was the standout example of a school who never took things for granted and realised from the beginning that they would have to fight to survive. The stakeholders used strategic management to work through the complexity, unpredictability and uncertainty. Their realpolitik approach succeeded.

However it could also be argued that the lack of a clearly structured process and a tight time frame ‘muddied the waters’ and caused confusion to stakeholders thereby making it less likely that they would be confident in effectively challenging the proposals. As one survey respondent noted, “There was no policy or booklet on the process. We learnt the importance of each step as we went through it.”¹² Two former EDI project managers explained their roles to the media. Ian Robertson believed that an EDI was an opportunity for local people to have control over change which was virtually inevitable, (the status quo is not an option argument) while Gay Turner was reported as saying, “I don’t tell them who to amalgamate with, they tell me. We don’t have a plan.”¹³

The Ministry made the final decision about the school sites, whether or not they were adequate to meet the changing needs of an enlarged, merged school. In the Masterton school mergers there was no increase of playground space to accommodate the increased rolls when schools merged. Furthermore the new buildings required covered sections of the existing playgrounds. The same issue was recorded in Parkyn's 1952¹⁴ research. Lansdowne Principal, Richard Williams, pointed out to *Wairarapa Times Age* readers that, "In this day and age where there is so much talk about overweight kids, children need plenty of grass and pavement space to be able to run around in."¹⁵

The evidence clearly shows that the decision to reduce the number of town schools has deepened the decile divide and has not resulted in the estimated increased roll numbers in the continuing schools. This can be seen through reference to tables 19,¹⁶ 20,¹⁷ 27¹⁸ and 28¹⁹ which trace primary and secondary enrolments in the Masterton District over a twenty year period. All of the state primary schools remaining in Masterton after 2003 have a decile rating of four or less. Just as in other network reviews, (Stokes Valley for example) underlying racial tensions can be discerned in the shifting enrolment patterns in schools which provide evidence of 'white flight' and sometimes 'brown flight.' When the East School crisis deepened, parents expressed their dissatisfaction by shifting their children to Lansdowne School and Central School. When the closure of high decile Totara Drive School was announced in 2003 many parents unofficially contested the ministerial outcomes of the network review through voting with their feet and enrolling their children in schools on the rural urban periphery. Such factors affected the predicted rolls in the continuing town schools thereby destabilising their future. All of the schools on the rural/urban periphery (Opaki, Wainuiouru, Gladstone, Solway Primary and Fernridge) have enrolment schemes. Even Alfredton School east of Eketahuna experienced a fifty per cent roll increase from twenty-seven to forty-five in 2008.

The Masterton District Network Review reinforced a distinct cultural shift that had been developing since *Tomorrow's Schools*. The majority of the parents in the schools on the rural urban periphery come from the predominantly white, property owning, business owning or professional middle class. The people in these groups are more likely to be more economically, socially and politically powerful in society. It is to be expected that the choice of school for their children is a conscious decision that is made with the intention of preserving and reproducing their 'cultural capital' in the next generation.

It is a paradox that so many New Zealand parents who claim to value living in a socially, ethnically and culturally diverse society prefer to make school enrolment choices for their children that remove them from experiencing the practicalities of living with this challenge on a daily basis. The skills needed to live comfortably within a multi ethnic society are developed over time. It is somewhat historically ironic that the only remaining mid-decile primary school in Masterton able to offer this socially anchoring educational experience is St Patrick's Primary School. If it is one of the functions of schools to prepare students for the society in which they will live, then this issue of social segregation in schools is likely to become increasingly significant. Statistics New Zealand records that forty-five per cent of the children born in New Zealand in 2008 were of Maori or Pacific Island descent. By 2011 one in every two children born in New Zealand was of Maori, Pasifika or Asian descent. This demographic shift has long term educational implications.

For all its problems the policy of school zoning produced a better balance between supply and demand. Once school zoning was removed in Masterton extra classroom space at Opaki and Solway Primary was provided while classrooms at Cornwall Street School and Hiona Intermediate lay empty. After *Tomorrow's Schools* the benefits attached to being educated in a multi socio-economic context in the neighbourhood school was no longer the social norm. When the removal of zoning was introduced it was justified on the basis that it would increase parental choice. Among the reasons why the application of a business based paradigm of 'choice' applied to the education system is fraught with difficulties is that the basis of comparison is flawed. In the business sector the market offers the consumer many choices but purchase is optional whereas in education the service must be chosen because it is compulsory by law. Once again, as Adams, Openshaw et al. found, the distinction between "being *free* to choose and *able* to choose" is of central significance in any such discussion. *Tomorrow's Schools* gave more choice to some than to others. The removal of school zoning has seen the development of socio-economic cocoons in education. It is difficult to argue that this is an improvement.

A number of stakeholders felt that entering a merger was like entering a shotgun marriage. The process was rushed, the workload issues were huge, the stress levels were high and the opportunities to address the relationship issues between the parties were limited because the parties to the merger were often unwilling and had significantly different cultural attitudes. School closures and mergers give birth to a severe form of culture shock for those involved. This was clear in Masterton in 1938 in the merger that led to Wairarapa College in 1938,²⁰ in the merger that led to Chanel College in 1978,²¹ in the 2003 network review and in reviews elsewhere. The culture shock brought about by school mergers and closures is also recognised by overseas researchers, such as Deal and Peterson.²²

But the closing of a school is also a wrenching cultural calamity. Staff members need to deal with grief and loss of the old school. Even in a new setting, memories, old stories and nostalgia still abound. A physical move does not break the existential attachments and emotional ties.²³

Thesis survey respondents recorded severe stress in spousal, family and professional relationships and severe personal stress that led to serious emotional health issues. Some parents reported stress in supporting children through the process. Other respondents referred specifically to the career issues they faced, such as loss of their job, career, professional status, redundancy, early retirement, loss of professional relationships, job insecurity, union issues, loss of purpose, experience of gender bias in job selection processes, and the deep hurt arising from the lack of recognition and appreciation from the Ministry for long years of dedicated professional service. Giving people the dignity of ministerial appreciation and acknowledgement of services rendered is a matter of professional courtesy at a basic level. The recognition needs to happen at the time of the event. Individual letters of appreciation to the trustees and staff are preferable to a second hand message. In a network review both initiated and concluded by the Minister, it should be his/her job to attend to this matter.

The stress for the principals of the continuing schools was huge. The Ministry allows the senior management team of a brand new school an eighteen month 'lead in time' to establish policies, procedures, to plan, purchase resources, prepare, hire staff and accomplish the complex range of tasks which must be addressed. The leaders of merged schools seldom have this luxury. They must deal with the post-merger

stress related to trying to fuse significantly different cultures in the merged school, integrating the staff from different schools into a team culture in the continuing school and dealing with the on-going construction stress related to the necessity to rebuild and refurbish classrooms and facilities. They must be ready to have the 'new' school up and running by day one, term one of the following year.

The need to negotiate and contest the network review outcomes continues long after the closure/merger decision because the outcomes affect not only the schools themselves at the time but also the wider community into the future. This was evident in the struggle to ensure that the facilities at Lakeview were appropriate for the age range of the students arriving to use them and the struggle which led to the rebuilding of Masterton Primary School. At the end of his first year as the foundation Principal of Lakeview School, Peter Debney described his experience to *Wairarapa Times Age*²⁴ as the most stressful in his forty-two year teaching career:

Stress levels have been unbelievably high, as it was a politically divisive merger. We merged three schools, had the widest decile groups from 2-8 and had to operate from three different sites... Where were the politicians who ordered all of this? I call it Pontius Pilate syndrome, it's all due care and no responsibility. We haven't seen a politician all year, not one.²⁵

In June 2003, half way through the Masterton District Network Review, the Education Review Office published "Lessons for Network Review: A summary of conclusions and recommendations from ERO's Wainuiomata cluster review."²⁶ It concluded that while the financial objectives had been largely met, the educational objectives had not been adequately progressed. Its recommendations to the Ministry included taking a leading role in each of the following:

- regular meetings of the professional leaders and boards of merging schools, immediately following Network Review decisions, to begin a process of identifying educational objectives for the school
- training for principals of cluster schools on the skills related to change management. This should be done prior to the finalisation of decisions relating to school organisation
- ensuring that the principal of the new school is released from his/her current school for at least one term prior to the reorganisation taking effect
- encouraging the effective allocation of Network Review resources, to support both the planning process itself and educational priorities identified by this process
- facilitating targeted training to existing and new trustees on the basis of needs assessment to ensure the effectiveness of boards in strategic planning for the new school
- teaching staff identifying their professional development needs based on needs assessment.²⁷

At the time this report was published, eighteen months after the 2001 Wainuiomata Network Review, the Masterton District Network Review was not complete. However, even if the Ministry had not had time to put bedded systems in place it knew what the important issues were, why they were important, and through this report, how they might be addressed.

The Makoura College Closure Crisis 2008

Makoura College is an example of a school, which, against the odds, successfully contested a closure decision after it was made. By the time the closure decision was announced Masterton stakeholders had learnt from the 2003 review that they would have to fight harder and faster if the College was going to survive. Their more

sophisticated and multifaceted response was instrumental in leading to a reversal of the closure decision.

The Masterton community protested against the closure of its hospital and the proposed closure of Makoura College. The Government listened to the Hands Around Our Hospital campaign. It listened to Makoura College. What did they have in common? In the 1990s the community was able to unite because there was only one hospital to support. In 2008 it was easier for the community to unite again because Makoura was the only school being targeted, whereas in the 2003 network review there were nine schools facing the closure/merger dilemma in a post *Tomorrow's Schools* environment which set schools in competition with each other. In the Masterton District Network Review the primary school principals opposed the efforts of the mayor to involve the community in the discussions about the future provision of education in the district. Even before the closure decision was announced Chairman of the Makoura College Board of Trustees, Lindsay Gribben, said:

In investigating other options the community is welcome to offer suggestions. Unlike the earlier review of primary schools in Masterton, we firmly believe a wide range of solutions should be considered and robustly debated by the community to ensure that Makoura College and indeed the wider Wairarapa students will receive the best education available.²⁸

When the closure crisis happened, both local body and national politicians provided support to keep Makoura College open. The Mayor Garry Daniell and his predecessor, Bob Francis, were members of the task force organised by Wairarapa M.P. John Hayes. Makoura College was given the unanimous support of the Mayor and the Masterton District Council. Once the Minister of Education, Chris Carter, refused to accept the student petition, John Hayes and Allan Peachy were instrumental in providing a pathway to the Education and Science Committee of Parliament, which allowed the petition to be considered by the representatives of the major political parties at national level.

An interesting new development in the Makoura College case was the active involvement in protest action of its senior students. They organised a protest petition which gained the support of the community Wairarapa wide. Operating within a very tight time frame they collected over 7,500 signatures in ten days. This petition played an important part in the reversal of the closure decision. Although the students did not expect to find that in a parliamentary democracy a Minister can refuse to accept a petition that is brought to him by the petitioners, they learnt a valuable political lesson about how to look for alternative pathways in the pursuit of an objective.

Instead of presenting the petition to the Minister they presented it to their local member of parliament, John Hayes, who in turn presented it to parliament, who in turn referred it to the Science and Education Select Committee who in turn made it an agenda item. As a result the students received an invitation to a hearing of the committee to speak to their petition. The members of parliament from different political parties who sat on this committee were greatly impressed by the demeanour of the students, the quality of their presentation and their energy in collecting 7510 signatures in the short time span of ten days. It was as a result of the recommendation of this committee that Makoura College gained the required approval to remain open.

The outcome of all the ingredients in the multifaceted protest against closure was that Makoura College was given a second chance. In the three years since the closure decision, under the sound leadership of new Principal, Tom Hullena, and the Commissioner, Tim White, and the support received by the staff and the community Makoura College was able to elect a new board of trustees in 2011 and to look forward to a brighter future. This case shows that when the level of community concern reaches the intense level of community-wide outrage, then the politicians may decide to back down. On the roller coaster ride from a closure decision back to educational health Makoura College is a clear case of “Never give up” and “It’s not over until it’s over.”

Bush District Community Initiated Education Plan 2009

School closures and mergers are usually a social phenomenon in rural districts and towns: they seldom happen in the city context. The Bush District Community Initiated Education Plan 2009 was a rural regional review. The outraged schools and their communities fought successfully both individually and collectively in a multi-faceted approach to protect their schools from the threat of closure. What made the CIEP different from the Masterton District Network Review 2003 was that as a result of the strength of regional community opposition, the Minister of Education retreated and all the schools survived. This case clearly shows apart from their essential educational function, small rural schools represent vital social capital for their communities. This is why they were prepared to fight against closure. Their actions demonstrate the depth of feeling that people have for their schools. As Taylor Baines and Associates²⁹ argued in their 2003 report to the Timaru District Council, sustainable communities and sustainable schools go hand in hand: “It makes no sense to aim for ‘sustainable schools’ in the absence of sustainable communities and divorced from any consideration of the District’s strategic priorities.”³⁰

The Bush District Community Initiated Education Plan provided an opportunity very soon after the moratorium was lifted for the new Minister of Education, Anne Tolley, and her Ministry to test drive a new process that had been devised to ration educational provision. The term for the process clearly suggests that ‘the plan’ is developed or is initiated by the community. When the Ministry refused requests from the community and the media to disclose the names of the people or organisations who had initiated the CIEP and how the Working Group had been appointed, the process became a contradiction in terms. This issue served to illustrate yet again that when school closures and mergers are concerned, the absence of clear and transparent consultation processes causes serious stakeholder resistance and aggravation.

Although the school communities were assured by the Ministry that the process was not about school closures, it soon became clear through the proposals presented for consultation that this was the intended outcome. The Bush District CIEP shows an increasing level of sophistication in contesting school closures and mergers and illustrates how a cluster of rural communities learned to fight back more effectively. The Bush District CIEP is also a useful New Zealand example of “several important basic principles” involved in parental power in action as described by Ted Wragg in “Parent Power” in *Parents and School, the Contemporary Challenge*:

The first is that organized parents may have to do their own research, especially if they are to counteract official estimates or projections. Parents may lack the tools of information gathering or the accumulated data banks of professional bureaucrats, but they do have the

advantage of local knowledge. Secondly, many have now discovered the power of personal persuasion, especially of elected politicians...and personalising the issue.³¹

The management of the process of change involves values. As the CIEP process unfolded it became clear that our social values have been changing and that there is a growing gulf in values between the government funders and the consumers of education in rural towns and districts. This gulf was evident in the report from the Bush District Working Group who apparently believed that the three main reasons why communities wished to retain the small country school option were to provide an escape option from another school, to avoid excessive travel and to provide a rural character option. It is significant that the 'rural character' option was interpreted as an educational choice issue rather than recognising that for rural communities the school is a basic social capital issue. An 'escape option from another school, has the connotation of not understanding or accepting that 'one size does not fit all,' and even more importantly, overlooks the fact that when students are excluded from one school it is very difficult for parents if there is no alternative school to which they can be sent.

In 2006 American researchers Bard, Gardener and Wieland from the National Rural Education Association Consolidation Task Force published their "National Rural Education Association Report: Rural School Consolidation: History, Research Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations."³² The summary of their findings has much in common with the experiences of rural communities in New Zealand. They found that the educational and financial results of state mandated school district consolidations do not meet legislated expectations. There is no ideal size for schools or districts. "Size" does not guarantee success – effective schools come in all sizes. Smaller districts have higher achievement outcomes. The larger a district becomes, the more resources are devoted to secondary and non-essential activities. Local school officials should beware of merging several smaller elementary schools, at least if the goal is improved performance. Students from low income areas have better achievement in small schools."³³ The most important finding for future reference in the New Zealand context is that there is no solid foundation for the belief that eliminating school districts or small schools will improve education, enhance cost effectiveness or promote equality.

Parkyn³⁴ argues that the geographical and social context in which a school exists is an essential factor to consider in deciding the funding and resources to which it should be entitled. Fisk argues that "Schools should be resourced according to their function, not their size."³⁵ The student led protest petition against the closure of Makoura College, the Woodville protest march against the closure of Woodville School, the Tui Brewery e mail campaign against the closure of Mangatainoka School, the Mangatainoka School anti CIEP banners clipped to their netball courts and the involvement of Kumeroa-Hopelands students in the CIEP process are all actions that reflect these beliefs.

One of the significant elements in the Bush District CIEP was the involvement of primary school students in the protests against the closure proposals both at the Pahiatua and Woodville community meetings and the Woodville protest march. Parents gave permission for this to happen. Although some deplored student involvement in protest action, it has happened several times since. On November 16, 2011 students from Kawerau Intermediate School staged a protest march against the proposed closure of their decile 1 school and its proposed merger with Kawerau High School.³⁶ Once again the protest march developed from a community

meeting and parents had given permission for their children to protest. The protest march co-incident with a visit to the district by Phil Goff, Leader of the Opposition, during the General Election campaign. Protesters carried placards such as 'Lose our school, lose our vote,' 'Phil Goff is cool' and 'Tolley listen.' A week later on November 24, a group of protesters from Moerewa School in Northland, accompanied by dissident Mana Party MP Hone Harawira, blocked the path of the limousine of the Governor General, Sir Jerry Mateparae.³⁷ In this case the school was protesting against a refusal by Minister Anne Tolley to allow it to extend the range of its classes to Year 13.

While some may deplore these developments, they reflect a societal shift in the ways that schools are perceived by the community partners in a post *Tomorrow's Schools* environment. 'Their' schools have become 'our' schools. Community protests against school closures and mergers have increased. Prior to the Woodville protest march in 2009, angry parents in earlier reviews from as far away as Ngahere and Karata on the West Coast, South Taranaki rural schools and Upper Hutt schools made the effort to travel to Parliament to protest against the closure of their community schools.

School stakeholders are also voters. This was the main reason why Prime Minister Helen Clark announced a moratorium on network reviews in 2004. The political disapproval of voters in the blue ribbon northern sector of the Wairarapa electorate was also a factor in the decision to end the Bush District CIEP. Ministers of Education in both Labour led and National led governments have been left in no doubt by voters that decisions about school closures and mergers need to be treated with particular care.

Demographic contexts can change. In March 2012 it was announced that consent had been granted for Genesis Energy to proceed with the construction of a \$1.6 billion wind farm in the Wairarapa which is expected to be the biggest wind farm in the world.³⁸ The Castle Hill Wind Farm, which will be dotted over the hillsides of the northern Wairarapa in seven interlinked wind farms, will have up to 286 turbines and the capacity to generate power for 370 000 homes. The wind farm sites include the sparsely populated settlements of Tinui, Pongaroa, Alfredton, Makuri, Tiramea and Bideford. The project is expected to create 185 jobs during construction, plus 40 on-going jobs and is expected to inject up to \$247 million into the Masterton and Tararua districts. In December 2012 Fonterra announced a huge expansion at its Pahiatua plant.³⁹ The \$250 million project will create forty-five permanent jobs and hundreds more while work is being done to install a new drier which could produce 85,000 metric tons of milk powder a year. Both these projects are welcome news for rural communities with small country schools. There would seem to be a clear contradiction between Government policies which aim to foster regional development and educational policies which have as their outcomes the closure of schools, key components of basic, rural social infrastructure.

New Zealanders' preference for smaller schools is a resistance factor

The well documented preference of New Zealanders for smaller schools is a contributing factor to their resistance to school closures and mergers. However, small schools cost more. As Collins⁴⁰ reminds us in *Small New Zealand Primary Schools*, the Ministry officials whose job it is to implement the small schools policy are concerned about changing demographic patterns and roll predictions because:

Education in a school with a roll of twenty-five was twice as expensive per head on average as in a school with a roll of fifty.⁴¹

Using the Ministry of Education definition of a small school as one with less than 150 pupils, thesis survey respondents were asked if they believed that bigger schools are generally better than small schools. Most preferred smaller schools. At the time of the 2003 review the average size of a Wairarapa primary school was 148.8 pupils, less than half the size desired by the Government of the time. After the Masterton review the intended outcome was that the remaining four town schools would all have a significant roll increase. The roll projections were not realised because many parents unofficially protested the review outcomes by taking matters into their own hands by enrolling their children in the small schools on the rural urban periphery. Most of them are aware that the application of information technology systems has revolutionised modes and methods of curriculum delivery through providing easy access to knowledge and ever expanding horizons whether students are in large or small schools.

The strong resistance to the closure of small schools in rural areas recorded in *The Report of the Economic and Educational Viability of Small Schools Review 1992* was confirmed by Stewart⁴² who found that wide community resistance to EDIs was a factor that needed to be addressed. He thought that voluntary EDIs could work well in small rural areas where small schools were seeking to consolidate but emphasised that the first priority in an EDI was inclusivity and a willingness to engage in change.

At the Rural School Forum, September 2003, Martin Connelly from the Ministry of Education in *Rural Schools and Government Policy*,⁴³ clarified the Government policies which enabled financial resources to be particularly targeted at rural education in New Zealand or mostly used there. The 1,100 schools in rural and small urban areas made up forty-three per cent of the nation's schools for twenty-one per cent of the population. The Correspondence School taught 470 isolated students. School boarding bursaries were provided for approximately 5,000 secondary students. School transport assistance cost approximately \$120 million per year. Thirteen REAPs (Rural Education Activity Programmes developed in 1970s and 1980s) received approximately \$5.4 million a year, a mix of activities through brokering, direct provision and contracting. The School Administration Support Cluster programme cost \$2.7 million per year. School housing and an 'isolation allowance' could be included in employment agreements. He noted that EDIs (in their original form) were replaced by Network Reviews and later by Community Initiated Developments.

Demographic messages are changing

Sooner or later it gets down to money. The research evidence in this thesis shows that whether it is called consolidation, an EDI, a network review or a Community Initiated Education Plan, the heartbeat of the process behind government efforts to close or merge schools is economic rationalism based on profit and loss accounting, value for money, balancing the budget, declining rolls and changing demographic patterns. Although demographic patterns have been a significant factor in shaping the policies of the Ministry of Education, population trends have long been observed to be cyclical in nature. To what extent is it appropriate therefore, to use the short

term analysis of demographic statistics and trends as a basis for making long term projections that result in permanent change? Although the Ministry might argue that our population is aging, that the spread of the recent population increase is uneven and that New Zealand would barely be growing if it were not for immigrants, who are most likely to settle in Auckland and least likely to settle in Southland, recent population increases are already impacting educational provision.

As has already been pointed out, Statistics New Zealand reported in its New Zealand by the Numbers series of articles in the *Dominion Post* June 2-7, 2007⁴⁴ that New Zealand's population grew faster between 2001 and 2006 than in any five year period in the last thirty years. It estimated that replacement level, the birth rate needed to maintain the population at its current number without migration, to be 2.1. In 1961 the peak birth rate was 4.3 births per woman. In 2008, five years after the Masterton review, New Zealand experienced its highest rate of fertility since 1990. With 64,340 live births over the year, at 2.2 per woman, births exceeded deaths by 35,160, an increase of 300 over 2007 figures. As Table 12 confirmed, the New Zealand school age population significantly increased from 1998–2005.

It is important to examine the validity of the demographic rationale used for network reviews because the statistical predictions made by the Ministry resulted in many communities losing their neighbourhood school. In October 2003, at the time of the network reviews, Trevor Mallard told David Fischer from the *Sunday Star Times*:⁴⁵

We will have 70,000 fewer primary pupils in 15 years – and simple maths says there will be too many schools. You are talking about 200-300 schools {closing}. I don't think it would be unreasonable to expect 300 over a 10 year period...If you wanted to save them you'd be encouraging parents to have babies.⁴⁶

Given that where New Zealanders choose to live is a 'dynamic' factor, it is nevertheless relevant, that the population data available from Statistics New Zealand shows that the significant drop in student numbers predicted at the time of the network reviews is no longer happening. New Zealand's increasing birth rate was the focus for Kimberley Rothwell in "A bit of a bump," a 2009 feature article in 'Your Weekend,'⁴⁷ a supplement of the *Dominion Post*. After investigating the serious shortage of midwives and day care centre places in New Zealand and estimating that 2012 would be the year that the baby blip children would start school she wrote:

Until last year, education officials expected roll numbers to fall 35,000 pupils by 2026 but now expect to see 70,000 more pupils in classrooms over the next 15 years.⁴⁸

These statistics contradict the predictions of Trevor Mallard and his officials in 2003. Deputy secretary for schooling at the Ministry of Education, Anne Jackson, assured Rothwell that the Ministry had a range of policies to cope with the extra staff, classrooms and equipment required for the increase in student numbers expected by 2012. It is pertinent to remember that many perfectly good classrooms and school facilities lost in the network reviews might have been used for some of these extra students for whom taxpayers must now fund new classroom accommodation.

In Wellington many families are already experiencing practical difficulties related to the education and care of their children. On February 15, 2012 the *Dominion Post* reported that that rolls were bulging at Wellington primary schools forcing them to turn libraries and resource rooms into classrooms to cope with the demand.⁴⁹ It is therefore pertinent to question the reassurance given by the Ministry in 2009 that it

had a range of policies to cope with the extra staff, classrooms and equipment required for the increase in student numbers expected by 2012. Ms. McCallum, Chair of the Wellington Regional Primary Principals' Association, confirmed that most schools in the area were at or near capacity and that moving prefabricated classrooms into schools to cope with the demand had become "a bit like the norm".⁵⁰ Two weeks later *Dominion Post* reported a 'childcare crisis'⁵¹ because parents were trying to secure places for their children on waiting lists before they were even born, with waits of more than a year for high demand early childhood education centres. In 2011 more than 34,000 children under two were enrolled in some type of early childhood education – an increase of fifty-seven per cent a decade earlier.

Social capital issues and sustainable communities provide reasons to resist

People in rural districts resist school closures and mergers because they are directly linked to the issues of social capital and sustainable communities. Schools and hospitals perform basic social functions. If they close, rural depopulation is accentuated because people do not want to live where basic social services are far away. The case studies in this thesis show that apart from their educational function, schools are a very important part of the social capital in the communities they serve. Sergiovanni⁵² is an ardent advocate of understanding the importance of schools as communities:

Community is the tie that binds students and teachers together in special ways, to something more significant than themselves: shared values and ideals. It lifts both teachers and students to higher levels of self understanding, commitment and performance....thus providing them with a unique and enduring sense of identity, belonging and space.⁵³

Furman⁵⁴ in *School as Community: from Promise to Practice*, is another researcher who emphasises the critical importance of understanding the importance of community in relation to education:

Finally, I am convinced that 'community' is not another fad or "hot topic" in education. Rather the interest in community is more like a sea change in how we think about schools and their place in society.⁵⁵

Her research confirms that we must be aware as never before that there are multiple ways of living, thinking and believing in our world, all with claims to legitimacy and none with a valid claim to supremacy or hegemony. It is for this reason that we need to find ways to co-operate within difference. In the New Zealand context this can be seen in the inclusion within the state system of integrated schools with a religious special character, kohanaga reo and kura kaupapa and more recently, the proposal to introduce chartered schools.

The widespread damage to school buildings in Christchurch caused by the massive earthquakes in September 2010 and February 2011 led to co-operative accommodation arrangements between the secondary schools which survived and those which were seriously damaged.⁵⁶ This provided opportunities to observe what was or might be possible when two schools with separate timetables shared the same site. Some have described such arrangements as a form of 'educational double bunking' with reference to the cost saving 'double bunking' strategy in prisons when insufficient accommodation became a pressing issue. Christchurch also suffered from depopulation after the earthquake. As the city started to engage in the painful journey of reconstruction it was inevitable that reflection and review

about educational provision would involve decisions about whether or not it would be necessary to provide the same number of schools in the future.

Soon after the new Minister of Education, Hekia Parata, announced her post-earthquake educational restructuring proposals in September 2012 the widespread coverage in the print, sound, visual and electronic media captured the speed and the size of the angry response. Information technology has radically changed the methods used to contest school closure and merger proposals. This was clearly demonstrated by speed with which the protest marches and mass community protests in Christchurch were organised. The media coverage also indicated that the participation of children in the protest response is now considered 'normal.' Whether they were speaking to the media, creating protest placards, clearly articulating their concerns or wiping away their tears of distress, the grief of the children and the strong attachment to their schools was obvious.

The response of Christchurch stakeholders to the 2012 educational restructuring proposals and the case studies in this thesis clearly demonstrate that communities are profoundly affected by the school/merger process in ways that go far beyond any Government directed economic imperatives to ration basic social services. The beliefs stakeholders have about their educational communities are grounded in social and educational values which reflect what they believe about the role and function of education and about the role and function of the Government as its funder. These beliefs affect the way they respond to network reviews. A conflict in values has emerged between the education officials in Wellington and the school communities in the localities. Trustees see themselves as representing the people in the local community. They no longer find it tenable for the Ministry of Education to view the function of schools purely in educational terms. The party conference politicians, parliamentarians and education officials in city tower blocks who impose educational consolidation strategies on those who live in rural areas or those who live on a daily basis with post-earthquake traumatic stress seem to have difficulty in understanding the critical importance of schools as social capital. Either that or they choose to ignore it.

How we organise the delivery of health services and education is based on our social values. A number of New Zealand researchers have already pointed out, the debate at the heart of the Government restructuring in health and education in New Zealand over the last twenty years has been values driven. New Zealanders hold some core values dearly no matter what government is in power. One belief is that there should be fair and equitable access to health services. If this anchor of the social contract is disturbed protest will follow. The Masterton "Hands Around Our Hospital" protest and the on-going protest about the reduction in health services is evidence of that. Another core belief, despite the arrival of *Tomorrow's Schools*, is that regardless of their social background or their personal wealth, New Zealanders should have equal access to a quality state funded education along the lines of the 1877 Education Act and later the educational reforms of the first Labour Government as articulated by Minister of Education Peter Fraser and Director of Education Dr Clarence Beeby. School closures and mergers disturb this core belief, as well as leading to the question does one size fit all? Equality does not mean sameness. Equity does not mean sameness. One size quite clearly does not fit all.

Consolidation research usually involves weighing the evidence about what is won and what is lost, in fiscal and educational terms. The resistance to school mergers

and closures illustrate a different sort of loss that administrators and policy makers can easily overlook – the loss of quality of life which cannot be measured on a balance sheet or by educational assessment achievement criteria, but which is none the less real and just as important. This was illustrated during the Bush District CIEP where people showed that they were willing to fight to retain the social and educational quality of life that schools represent. This is an issue that needs to be recognised by the Government in the development of policies that support sustainable communities in rural New Zealand. Those involved in any policy review process need to recognise that the ground has shifted and that the understanding of the social meaning and the purpose of schools has changed.

School closures and mergers come with significant social and political costs that go beyond quality of life issues and family ties with a particular school. Schools are historical markers of community. If the school is closed nothing takes its place. When schools close there should be a requirement that their significant records are stored in community archives. In Masterton the only schools in 2003 who recognised their responsibilities in this area were Totara Drive, Harley Street and Lansdowne.

Some argue that school closures and mergers are tools used by the Ministry of Education to ration educational resources and that EDI funding has been used like the ‘sweetener to make the medicine go down.’ At a deeper level the case studies in this thesis illustrate a deeper debate over the social meaning and purpose of schools.

School closures and mergers accentuate racial tensions

While there have been many positive outcomes from *Tomorrow's Schools* it should not be forgotten that one of the negative outcomes has been a quiet social revolution in the provision of education which has highlighted a shift to inequality and privilege. The closure and merger of schools in recent times has resulted in an entrenchment of the decile divide. In our highly mobile society the long term outcome of the freedom of choice allowed by *Tomorrow's Schools* has resulted in increasing numbers of young New Zealanders being segregated from daily immersion in a multi-socio-economic and multicultural educational context. The skills needed to live comfortably with the challenges of a multi-cultural twenty-first century New Zealand society are developed over time. Statistics New Zealand records that forty-five per cent of the children born in New Zealand in 2008 were of Maori or Pacific Island descent. By 2011 one in every two children born in New Zealand was of Maori, Pasifika or Asian descent. This demographic shift has long term implications.

The parents and teachers who decided to contest the closure of their individual schools however, could not avoid the uncomfortable tensions that are part of living in contemporary New Zealand society. As media reports showed and the answers of survey respondents confirm, school closure and merger processes can set people of different racial backgrounds against each other. Some of the tensions have deepened as a result of *Tomorrow's Schools* which has accentuated inequality and increased social stratification. The fact that shifting patterns of enrolments and the school closures and mergers have further deepened the decile divide in schools is evident in the tables previously mentioned in this chapter.

Just as in other areas (Stokes Valley for example), the Masterton and Bush District communities found themselves having to confront underlying racial tensions and a

pattern of “white flight” and sometimes “brown flight.” This could be seen in the 2003 review when the closure of high decile Totara Drive School was announced. Many parents staged a silent protest at the outcomes by voting with their feet and enrolling their children in the country schools on the rural/urban periphery. Parents gave various reasons for their decision. Some believed that their decision provided a safe educational environment enabling their children to avoid bullying. Some cited social reasons. Others believed that since their child enjoys the pursuit of high academic achievement, they would benefit from avoiding the negative influences of the ‘tall poppy syndrome’ and being dragged down by the academically apathetic.

Giving people a ‘fair go’ has been part of New Zealand’s social philosophy for generations. The cultural anchor for *Fair Go*, one of New Zealand’s most popular and longest running television programmes, is the belief that consumers should be entitled to fair treatment in the market place. This belief is directly relevant in debates about educational provision because educational opportunities are linked to life chances and future quality of life. In “Ethnicity and School Choice” Sue Watson et al.⁵⁷ provided evidence to show that the schools which serve the needs of many Maori and Pacific Island students have been disadvantaged by the competitive, market driven policies introduced after *Tomorrow’s Schools* which have resulted in increased educational and social inequalities. In their abstract they claimed that ethnicity and school choice is a key factor in understanding the evolving dynamics of the secondary education market in Aotearoa New Zealand:

... if, as a society, we want to overcome poverty and disadvantage that is the daily reality for many students, and if we believe that education can have some part in breaking the cycle of poverty and disadvantage, then the schools which serve these students should be abundantly resourced to do so.⁵⁸

Their findings are relevant to the Makoura College case and also to the town schools remaining in Masterton after the network review, all of which are sitting at decile 4 or less.

Some of the issues related to school closures and mergers deserve a separate area of study. It was noticeable in this research that apart from the Makoura College case, Maori were under represented in the leadership of resistance to school closures and mergers. How do school mergers affect Maori children? How are the outcomes affected by the lack of Maori trustees, which, in turn, result in Maori being excluded from community leadership and decision making exercised by boards of trustees in closure and merger processes? A Treaty of Waitangi research question might explore how the outcomes of school/mergers closures affect the relationships between Maori and non Maori. To what extent are integrated schools a contributing factor in network reviews? How influential is the role of the media?

The Aorangi Judicial Review

A specific example of the important role played by the media could be seen in the TV One *Close Up* programme, during the Bush District CIEP, where the Minister of Education, Anne Tolley, stated that, the schools would remain open as long as the community wanted them. “If they do not want them closed, then I will not be closing them.”⁵⁹ However several months later she changed her mind. On November 24, 2009, three weeks before the end of the school year she announced the closure of Aorangi School, Bryndwyr Christchurch, effective January 27, 2010 despite the fact that the school community was united in wanting the school to remain open. The

school's board of trustees sought to quash the Minister's decision through a judicial review on the grounds that the decision was vitiated as a result of inadequate consultation, apparent bias, breach of natural justice, and in relation to the timing of the closure, unreasonableness.

Aorangi was not a failing school. Although its March 1, 2008 roll returns show its roll was eighty-eight students it could be argued that it was a 'niche school.' As well as meeting the needs of its mainstreamed students it was a school favoured by "quirky gifted kids," refugee families, parents who wished their children to be educated in a bi-lingual unit, a magnet school for students with special needs and the only provider of bi-lingual education in north east Christchurch. Its Board of Trustees included people with wide ranging and relevant skills: a commercial lawyer, a lawyer who was also an immigration consultant, a trade unionist, a factory manager and a psychiatrist. Their governance was competent and effective. The Board had earned a reputation as being the best financially managed school in the district. Its case received favourable media coverage, particularly in *The Press* and on the television news channels. Although Aorangi stakeholders found that the School Trustees Association could not be part of their fight because of its policy not to support an individual school in this situation, other powerful groups were on their side. The closure decision was opposed by the Canterbury Primary Principals' Association and the New Zealand Principals' Federation which criticised the Ministry's original costing data and concluded that losing Aorangi would be in breach of the principles of social justice.

Based on the fierce fight it put up to ensure its survival, Aorangi certainly serves as an example of a community which regards its school as a 'cultural taonga.' In her judgement, *Aorangi School Board of Trustees v Ministry of Education*, HC Christchurch, CIV-2009-409-002812,⁶⁰ Justice French acknowledged:

[6] I have a very clear impression from the evidence that there is overwhelming support in the local community for the school to remain open and that those associated with the school, especially its teaching staff and Board can be justifiably proud of what they have achieved at the school. I gained a real sense of people feeling they have created something precious, which they understandably do not want to lose. They genuinely believe they have not had "a fair crack of the whip", and are passionate in their desire to keep their school.⁶¹

Aorangi School fought closure every inch of the way. The stakeholders found that the New Zealand School Trustees Association could not be part of their fight because its policy is never to support an individual school no matter how unfairly it is treated. By August, when they believed they had found a pathway to remaining open, the trustees tried to organise a meeting with the Minister to discuss the threatened closure of the school. *The New Zealand Education Review*⁶² reported:

They were going to tell her the reasons for closing the school were now incorrect. The school could now replace the dilapidated buildings within budget, the roll had been relatively static for almost 20 years, and other schools in the area did not have the capacity to take Aorangi's students if it shut.⁶³

Former Christchurch Mayor, Garry Moore, was to have been present at the meeting to represent the wider community. Brinkmanship tactics were now used. At the last minute Anne Tolley advised that she could only meet with the board, not with Garry Moore because a legal process was being followed. When Aorangi offered to co-opt Garry Moore onto the board to remove the impediment, Mrs Tolley's office still said Moore could not attend. The *Education Review* asked for the legal reason to refuse

Garry Moore's attendance. There was no response.⁶⁴ In a written statement later Anne Tolley said she had agreed to a meeting with board members only.

In an unexpected development Ngai Tahu offered a lifeline to Aorangi through offering to fund the rebuilding of the school. Aorangi had the only bilingual unit in north east Christchurch. If this proposal had been followed through it would have led to the first school partnership between an iwi and the Crown.

However there were other issues in the political landscape. The Minister needed a win. Her unexpected comments in the TV One interview had been a turning point in the Bush District CIEP which tipped the balance of power to the parents. After her back down and the contentious introduction of national standards, the Aorangi case provided a high profile opportunity for Anne Tolley to demonstrate her power and authority by winning the case in which her right to close a school had been challenged. If she failed, then there was a possibility that every school faced with closure would want to litigate. In the Aorangi crisis, issues clearly related to rights, responsibilities and the use of power and authority were at the heart of the conflict between the school, the Ministry of Education and the Minister. Rights are also usually linked to responsibilities. Ted Wragg⁶⁵ provides a clear distinction between the two:

Rights must not be confused with power, A right represents nothing more than an entitlement. Power, on the other hand, is the ability to influence action. The two may be related, but equally they may not.⁶⁶

The High Court of New Zealand has the jurisdiction to make a final decision when closure issues between a board of trustees and the Ministry of Education cannot be resolved. The legal basis for a closure decision is provided under Section 154 of the 1989 Education Act as cited in (*Heke & Ors v Attorney-General* HC Whangarei M9/95, p2, February 8, 1995, Anderson J).⁶⁷ The Awarua judicial review in 1995 related to consultation issues with a small rural school in Northland. Even though the school later closed, the case set a legal precedent – it was possible to take the Ministry of Education to court and win.

Consultation in the school closure context is seen to involve two basic factors. The first relates to 'opportunity.' In the Awarua case, Justice N. C. Anderson explained that it needs to be shown that the Board was provided with the opportunity to present all relevant matters to the Minister, be they either for or against closure. Secondly it also needs to be shown that the Minister has had the benefit of all relevant advice which ought to reasonably be placed before him or her in order to make a quality decision that is fair. A safe guard is built into the process. The Minister still has the opportunity to reconsider a closure decision because twenty-eight days must expire between the closure decision and the Minister exercising the power of closure granted by Section 154 of the Act. Before announcing her findings at the Aorangi judicial review the judge clarified the legal difference between a judicial review and an appeal:

[8] A judicial review is not an appeal. It is not about the Court considering the information afresh and coming to its own views. Judicial review is primarily limited to an examination of the process, and if successful usually results in the decision maker being required to start afresh, as opposed to quashing the decision for all time. Thus, in this case, it is not my task to assess the wisdom or merits of this decision, to decide whether it is the right thing or the wrong thing to close the school. That is not my job. My focus must be on the process, with the only enquiry into the merits being the issue of the timing of this decision, and even then, that inquiry is limited to reasonableness.⁶⁸

The legal validity of the decision requires that appropriate consultation can be demonstrated to have occurred. Aorangi had a serious issue with the quality of the consultation that occurred. The quality of consultation prior to closure however is not the point. The law does not say when the consultation should occur or how much of it there should be. The Minister only has to prove that sufficient consultation opportunities have been offered. The judge faced a dilemma. If she was to find in favour of Aorangi a precedent would have been established which would require the Ministry to provide consultation plans for all school closures.

The Hon. Justice French acknowledged that the Board's complaint of non-disclosure and difficulty in obtaining disclosure was an issue of substance. Lack of access to the calculations on which the costs had been based was a very serious justice and quality of consultation issue:

[43] The Board says that it was not provided with any information other than the Minister's letters that it had to extract information itself by extensive use of the Official Information Act process, and even then did not obtain all the key information.

[50] Of greater substance, in my view, is the Board's complaint that it was never provided with the underlying working papers on which the cost calculations were based.

[51]...the Board commissioned its own accountant's report. The report from Staples Rodway noted the financial information provided to the Board had no supporting working papers, and that the absence of these papers prevented it from being able to make critical appraisal other than general comments on apparent methodologies, reasoning inconsistencies and process.

[53] The underlying working papers were, however, sent to Ernst and Young whom, as I have said, were instructed to independently assess the Ministry's costing.

[44] In my view, there is real force in the argument the Board should have been voluntarily provided with some of the information it was forced to obtain for itself under the Official Information Act. I also accept that there may be some merit in the suggestion made by Mr Cowey that the Minister could have provided the Board with a draft working plan. More could have been done.⁶⁹

The importance of the timely, appropriate and orderly release of information from the Ministry to inform the stakeholders in the consultation process in school closures and mergers is a recurring theme in all of the case studies in this thesis.

Rationalisation and closure decisions sooner or later get down to money. The cost of rebuilding Aorangi was a key issue. Aorangi disputed the rebuild versus closure costs. It believed that the Government wanted to make \$50, 000 000 of savings in education. One way of making savings is to sell state owned assets. Aorangi School was located on a prime area of real estate. In the ministerial cost benefit analysis it seems greater value was put on the financial cost of keeping the school and a lesser value on its niche role and achievements. Unfortunately for the Aorangi community it became the victim of historical issues and timing issues over which it had no control, compounded by incompetent financial calculations made by Ministry officials. It was also revealed in the judicial review that when the school was built in 1959 no building paper appears to have been used with the result that moisture was absorbed into the wooden framing causing it to rot:

[11] By 2007, the poor state of the buildings had become chronic resulting in health and safety issues for the students and staff.

[12] In June 2007, the then Minister of Education approved the funding of \$2.625m to rebuild the school. There were delays and the rebuild was still not underway a year later, when there

was a change of Government

[95 ii] The fact that one of the Ministry officials in question had made a significant mathematical error in calculating the cost of the rebuild in 2008, which delayed the project with fatal consequences⁷⁰

When the rebuilding costs were disputed by the Board the Minister asked Ernst and Young to independently assess the Ministry's costing. The Board then provided the Ernst and Young report and the underlying papers to its own accountant, Staples Rodway, who in turn prepared a second report, but by the time it was received it was in the post closure decision period. The Board complained that the information in the second Staples Rodway report and which resulted in a radically different calculation should have been made available earlier in the process. Once again this is a quality of consultation issue. Right down to the wire the savings to be made by closing the school was a matter of dispute. Staples Rodway said it would be \$380,323; The Ministry said it would be \$1.469m; Ernst and Young said it would be \$2.875m. Time will tell if any of them were right. Whether or not the costs of clearing the land should be included in the sale of the land was not something the Ministry had taken into account.

In the Aorangi case the closure decision of Minister of Education Anne Tolley was upheld. While acknowledging that the concerns raised by the Aorangi Board of Trustees were well argued, had merit and needed to be ventilated and that the Ministry could have done things better Hon Justice French was satisfied that the Minister had done enough to discharge her statutory obligation to consult. The Minister could provide evidence that she had initiated consultation with both the school and the wider public in June 2009. In both her press release and in the judicial review she claimed that there was a falling roll, there were four schools nearby with the capacity to accommodate Aorangi pupils and it was her responsibility to ensure that the planned \$2.6 million replacement building programme proposed by the previous Labour Government was an effective use of taxpayers' money. The judge did not uphold the Board's complaints and the application for judicial review was dismissed.

Although the Aorangi trustees were unsuccessful, the 2009 ruling sets a significant precedent for the legal contestability of school closures. The judicial review should be required reading for any board of trustees considering seeking a judicial review in the future. Since a judicial review can only examine and determine the legality of the consultation process but not the merits of the decision itself, it could be said that the legal system is deficient in not making provision for an opportunity to legally test and contest the merits of such an important decision as a school closure. As far back as 1991 the *Report of the Economic and Educational Viability of Small Schools' Review* recommended that an independent appeal structure be established to hear the appeals of a school against closure with a clearly defined role to preclude the Ministry of Education or other agencies being required to play a dual or possibly conflicting role.

The Aorangi judicial review showed that when communities decide to litigate they cannot guarantee a successful outcome because of the nature of the present law. After the Aorangi judicial review John Caldwell, Junior Counsel for the Aorangi Board and Associate Professor of Law at Canterbury University published an opinion piece, *The Limits of Judicial Review and the Aorangi Judgement*⁷¹, in which he proposed:

Perhaps an appellate Court will ultimately prove the more appropriate forum to determine the proper scope of consultation for a decision as momentous and grave as a school closure. In her affidavit the Minister graciously acknowledged that Aorangi with a dedicated and passionate Board was doing very well and was performing an important function in the community. But the Aorangi gates are now closed. Too much money, she believed, would be spent in keeping it open. If only, though, the Minister's consultation process had allowed her to be informed that on orthodox accounting principles she was saving a maximum of \$38, 032 dollars per annum.⁷²

The Aorangi closure is yet another case where the post closure transition process had not been properly thought through. Anne Tolley had assured the Aorangi community that bilingual education was available at Burnside Primary School and Cobham Intermediate however Aorangi was closed before the transition arrangements had been finalised. When the principal of Burnside Primary School was advised of the closure of Aorangi, he immediately recognised the practical workload issues involved. He told the media that he had just had to cancel his holidays. Despite the assurances of the Director of Education, Karen Sewell, to Catherine Delahunty at a hearing of Parliament's Education and Science Committee on November 25, 2009 that the quality of education for the children in the total immersion unit would be assured, a separate classroom was not available at Burnside Primary School in 2010. The dedicated Te Reo Unit had to function on the stage of the school hall. The school newsletter of February 23 raised concerns about not having proper provision for bilingual education. Two years later, Burnside Primary School found itself a target of closure when Minister of Education, Hekia Parata in September 2012 announced the restructuring of schooling in Christchurch following the Christchurch earthquakes.

“The status quo is not an option?”

The Ministry mantra “The status quo is not an option” predetermines outcomes. Closure is not necessarily the only or best option for small rural New Zealand schools. The importance of exploring the options to closure was recognised by the NREA task force in USA.⁷³ After reviewing the USA literature on rural school consolidation and taking into account the typical arguments used to justify it, (school size, economies of scale, and student achievement) they are firm in their conclusion that consolidation should be a decision taken by local school districts and oppose arbitrary consolidation efforts at the state and local levels as a violation of local control. While recognising that in some cases consolidation is inevitable, the task force also recommends that rural community and school leaders should take into account every possible variable to decide if ‘two are better than one’ and to look for opportunities to form productive partnerships.

We need to develop a new framework of understanding in which we make room for the acceptance of other options. During the course of this research it was a pleasant surprise to discover that several school communities have developed a little known alternative to the closure/merger paradigm linked to an earlier time in New Zealand's educational history. When the rolls of the main town school eventually rose beyond the capacity of the school to cope, instead of establishing a new school, it was sometimes the solution to create a side school which operated under the umbrella of the main school. The side school was able to attend to the educational needs of its immediate community with minimal administration and without governance responsibilities. Central School Masterton established a side school for infants in 1891 to cope with an enrolment overflow that had been initially accommodated in the

Methodist Sunday School. A side school was also part of the history of Ashburton Borough School.

Ashburton Borough School provides a model of an innovative alternative pathway taken by two very different school communities when one of them was faced with school closure in 2001 during a schooling review when the closure of small schools was being promoted through government policy while Wyatt Creech was Minister of Education. Instead of a merger the two schools developed an 'arranged marriage' in which a school on two sites model was established for a trial period of three years based on a formal memorandum of agreement accepted by both parties with the opportunity to adjust it over time as both deemed appropriate. The journey of the stakeholders in Ashburton Borough School and Lagmhor School has been researched by Monique O'Sullivan in *The Challenges in moving from one school structure to another: Leading a school on two sites*.⁷⁴

Ashburton Borough School, the urban school, is a full primary school located on the edge of an industrial area within a town, with a school roll of over 350 students and Lagmhor School, the rural school, was a two teacher school located ten minutes' drive from the outskirts of town. The very real issues of cultural differences have been addressed through a 'same but different' approach. The deliberately crafted consensus has produced a viable school on two sites which has allowed the unique nature of rural school sites and the traditional aspects of a rural education to be maintained for the rural communities for whom they are so crucial. As there was no existing model of this type of school in New Zealand to follow, the leadership and management challenges of leading a school on two sites have been progressively negotiated in ways that are context specific. The school operates under one name, shares one Board of Trustees, but continues to operate from the two original school sites with classes coming together for specific school wide events. The teacher with leadership responsibility on the rural site is called the area leader. Her role resembles that of a site manager. O'Connor⁷⁵ records her viewpoint:

Area Leader: It's one school. We share the same name but we still have a country component which is quite unique and working well and we are happy with that. I think both parts of the school are happy with that. We've got a town culture and a country culture but they are both working together and accepting of each other now.⁷⁶

Ashburton Borough School is making a valuable contribution to the changing landscape of management and organisation theory in the New Zealand context through challenging traditional organisational thinking about how schools might operate as formal organisations. In a country with a small population and changing demographic patterns we need to be open to considering the flexibility offered by hybrid models of school organisation which capture and integrate the advantages to be enjoyed from blending different educational cultures using collegial, team based approaches to the daily practicalities of leadership and management in a loosely coupled model which is adaptive to changing educational policy environments yet at the same time accountable to public norms and expectations. Just as in other areas of human activity, so also in schools, we need to be open to considering and embracing options which involve accepting further layers of culture shifting change. Bolman and Deal's research⁷⁷ encourages an optimistic mind set about "more fluid and flexible organisational forms."

O'Sullivan's little known research is likely to have increasing relevance in the future for schools in the rural sector as it demonstrates that when school communities are

faced with the ministerial bold assertion that 'the status quo is not an option', there is a successful alternative that is well worth consideration. Adaptive to changing environments and accountable to educational norms and expectations Ashborough School is quietly making its own contribution to the changing landscape of management and organisation theory in the New Zealand context because it has changed organisational thinking about how schools might operate as formal organisations.

Other schools have followed the example of Ashburton Borough School. After the Grey Valley Schooling Network Review in 2004 Blackball, Brunnerton and Stillwater schools merged on the Brunnerton School site at Dobson, with Brunnerton School being the continuing school and the new merged school governing and managing a second site at Blackball. Timaru South School, incorporating Pareora East School, has become the largest split site school in New Zealand since a District Review in 2005.

The political landscape of school closures and mergers is changing. New reasons for justifying school closures have emerged ranging from the aftermath of earthquakes to the controversial new national standards. As far back as 2001 (refer to Chapter 2) Dunn predicted that one of the components in the next wave of consolidation would be, "the homogenization of education resulting from the adoption of common academic standards and accountability structures." By 2011 at least one rural Wairarapa principal had expressed his belief that failure to use national standards might be used by the Ministry or the Minister as a new reason to justify the closure of schools. The *Wairarapa News* reported in its November 30, 2011 issue ⁷⁸ that Dalefield School Principal, Kevin Jephson, feared that the school could pay the ultimate price for speaking out against national standards:

I've so peed her off over the last three years, she has probably got me at the top of her hit list. Nothing would surprise me if she shut us down. The fact that we are the best performing primary school in the Wairarapa wouldn't mean anything to her.⁷⁹

The evidence in this thesis shows that people in rural districts and towns resist and contest school mergers because in a post-modern world one size does not fit all. As Fisk⁸⁰ pointed out schools should be funded according to their function not their size because it is really important to take their community context into consideration. Rural schools are critical social capital and in an age of information technology there is no research evidence to confirm that the educational outcomes for students in smaller schools are clearly worse than for students in larger town schools. Prior to the Bush District CIEP in 2009, the Ministry of Education contracted Massey University to assist in the development of new governance and management options in small primary schools. In his report *The Kua cluster, a Journey Towards Collaborative Governance*, Tim White, Associate Director of the New Zealand Principalship and Leadership Centre, reported that a collaborative cluster of schools called the Kua Cluster were working towards a strengthened and rationalised governance structure with one board managing three schools on separate sites. This is permissible under section 110 of the Education Act which allows one board to take responsibility for up to four schools.

Post-merger support needs to be improved. After school mergers, stakeholders find themselves in a situation, usually not of their choosing, where they face the often unwelcome task of letting go of the past and engaging in the on-going challenge of creating a new culture where the unconscious taken for granted beliefs and values

which had provided the cultural glue for the merging schools must be revisited until a new culture develops which is accepted by the new school community as appropriate for its needs. The complexity of this part of the closure/merger process and the demands it makes on principals, teachers and boards of trustees and the need for on-going support has been greatly under reported and underestimated. Harris⁸¹ found that in the initial stages of EDIs boards of trustees and staff needed to be provided with Ministry funded professional development on change management principles and practices. She argues that the most important dimension of change management is managing the staff both teaching and ancillary and the transition period for the children.

On top of all the other difficulties they face, principals of the continuing schools must embrace the leadership challenge of creating a new culture and forging cultural coherence where the sub groups within the school, often unhappy about the merger, have not yet reached a cultural consensus. O'Donnell⁸² provides valuable insights into the importance of organisational culture for principals who face the huge challenge of crafting the culture of the continuing schools after closures and mergers:

The Ministry of Education may still determine **what** a school is required to be and do, but **how** it is done is determined by the school itself, based on its particular cultural values, beliefs and norms.⁸³

In a newly merged school the shared values, beliefs and norms that breathe life into a school culture do not yet exist. Developing a new school culture is like growing a highly prized plant that must be desired and chosen by the community from other options available. The seeds of the desired culture are planted in a particular location, in a carefully chosen soil base of core values, philosophy and beliefs. As the plant grows it is watered and fertilised by community experience, then weeded and pruned through reflection and review of school policies, systems, rituals, celebrations and relationships. This nurturing helps the plant to sprout, grow strong, blossom and bloom for the community to enjoy. As the seasons change the cycle continues, the vision develops and cultural norms emerge. It is not like Jack and the Beanstalk. In a new school, as my survey responses clearly confirm, culture takes time to grow.

As Jenlink reminds us, "One thing is for certain: we will find ourselves in the future whether we take responsibility for it or not."⁸⁴ The issue of closures and mergers is not going to go away. This thesis has shown that politicised and well organised stakeholders who regard their school as an educational, cultural, and social taonga will fight to retain it and sometimes succeed. But in a retrospective cost benefit analysis of Government policies there are questions that need to be asked. What actual financial savings can be incontrovertibly proven? What educational benefits for the students can be proven? What has been the real cost socially, educationally and culturally?

Bruce Ansley⁸⁵ claimed that once a school was selected for closure by the Ministry of Education the outcome was inevitable because if it did not decide to close and merge with another school as required then the Minister of Education would make the decision him or herself. The three case studies which have provided the focus for this thesis demonstrate that this is not necessarily the case. In certain circumstances school closures and mergers can be successfully contested by schools and communities but in order to win they have to start early, reflect carefully

on their specific context, do their research, understand how the political power structures operate, work very hard, be resilient when the political landscape suddenly changes, and be prepared to think outside the square.

These case studies also have a deeper significance in relation to the broader political outcomes of *Tomorrow's Schools*. As Wylie⁸⁶ points out:

No other western country bases its *entire* education system on stand-alone schools, each with their own parent led board of trustees responsible for the school's direction and staff employment, and operating without being part of a school district, or local authority.⁸⁷

Affirmative action in the context of school closures and mergers involves an issue of power. *Tomorrow's Schools* provided school communities with opportunities to challenge and contest the closure and merger of schools. In the process they found that power was everywhere, it was context specific, it was dynamic and it was changing. The Minister of Education had the power to ration educational provision and to consult and decide conferred by the Education Act. The Ministry of Education had the delegated power to run the closure/merger process, define the parameters for discussion, to appoint consultants and commissioners and report back to the Minister. Schools and their communities experienced the extent to which power could be exercised through letter writing, school newsletters, the print and electronic media, the Member of Parliament, boards of trustees, principals, teachers, parents, student involvement, community meetings, protest marches, petitions to the Minister, petitions to the Science and Education Select Committee at Parliament, judicial reviews, the power of moral outrage and the power of thinking outside the square.

Prime Minister and Minister of Education, David Lange, introduced the content of *Tomorrow's Schools* with a quote from Thomas Jefferson in both English and Te Reo:

I know of no safe depository of the ultimate power in our society but the people themselves and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it away from them, but to inform their discretion.⁸⁸

Therein lies the continuing challenge that needs to be recognised and better addressed by both Governments and the Ministry of Education as they devise policies related to school closures and mergers in the future.

CHAPTER 8

AFTERWARDS: GOING UP IN SMOKE:

THE DISPOSAL OF ABANDONED SCHOOL PROPERTIES

Richard Williams, former Principal of Harley Street and Lansdowne Schools asked, "How many times does something have to happen before there is progress? Essentially, these buildings are owned by the taxpayer and they're going up in smoke, so there is a significant cost....To stand and watch what essentially are labours of love by the parents (being vandalised), of course it's frustrating and heart breaking."¹

Not a single window was found unbroken yesterday and the darkened classrooms and school yard are fouled with faeces, filthy mattresses and strips of bedding.²

While this thesis has been primarily concerned with the extent to which school mergers/closures can be contested and negotiated, it is important to recognise that social costs and the safety issues that follow school closures and mergers leave deep physical and emotional scars in communities. These social costs are the focus of this final chapter.

The once proud schools built by the taxpayers with swimming pools, assembly halls and other amenities provided by the hard work and voluntary effort of supportive school families rapidly deteriorate to become a social blight in their communities. The community must not only face the loss of a beloved school but also deal with the loss of a beloved school culture, a beloved school site and school identity. This is made worse if the school is vandalised afterwards. To lessen the pain several Totara Drive and Lansdowne respondents reported that they altered their driving routes in order to avoid confronting their deteriorating, vandalised school site. Some described their grief in ways similar to stakeholders elsewhere, comparing their experience to being part of an educational funeral where the body is still on display. The overwhelming majority of respondents expressed strong dissatisfaction with the length of time school buildings and grounds are left abandoned after school closures and believed that the Government policy on the disposal of abandoned school properties is in urgent need of revision. Respondents to the research conducted by Shirley Harris³ for the School Trustees Association expressed the same concerns and called for a review of the closed school policy to avoid school buildings being abandoned.

The disposal of Government owned facilities such as schools involves a complicated, time consuming procedure. Petone College is a case in point. Although it closed in 1999, its disposal process lasted eleven years. As a result of the Port Nicholson claim it was not until 2005 that it was declared surplus and not until June 2010 that it was sold. By the Christmas holidays it had become an arson target.

Collage of media samples related to abandoned schools prepared by Claire Hills

The financial costs of school closures and mergers continue to be debated. In "Playground Politics" in *Dominion Post* July 8, 2003⁴ education officials advised Michelle Quirke that they were spending about \$5,700 a month on security for abandoned Wainuiomata Schools. By November 1, 2003 the paper reported⁵ that security costs for the deserted schools in the 2001 Wainuiomata Review had reached almost \$100,000 since July. One week later Deborah Coddington, ACT's spokesperson on Education, claimed in the *Dominion Post* of November 8, 2003⁶ that the Wainuiomata review had cost taxpayers \$19 million in consultancy fees, grants, extra funding for schools, extra teacher salaries, property costs and redundancy pay outs. Trevor Mallard replied that \$19 million was not the net cost of the review which included \$12 million in capital costs. He said that in one area \$17 million had been reinvested in schools as a result of the changes. When she tried to track the process costs in 2004, the Ministry of Education estimated that the bill for their latest network reviews would be about \$2.5 million.⁷ In 2004, the year immediately after the Masterton Review, Quirke was told that redundancy payments were estimated to cost \$2 million, the experts hired to consult angry communities were estimated to cost over \$441,000, architects, roading and property consultants almost \$41, 000 and community mediators charged about \$48, 438.

School mergers usually generate the need for new school buildings to cope with the increase in school rolls. Some closure/merger costs are associated with the closure process itself; others are associated with its aftermath, such as the disposal of schools and the property management issues that arise in the period between closure and disposal. In May 2010 the Government allocated about \$40 million in the budget to get rid of deteriorating buildings from vacant school sites. The Minister of Education, Anne Tolley, assured the *Dominion Post* that this would "reduce antisocial behaviour and vandalism in these areas."⁸ This \$40 million needs to be included in any cost benefit analysis of the network reviews. It is arguably \$40 million dollars that was not available to be invested in the education of children.

The overall cost of school mergers and closures needs to take into account costs that are brought about as a result of the closure merger process, some of which the Ministry of Education does not pay and other costs it refuses to pay. Whenever a closed school is repeatedly targeted by vandals and arsonists, the costs associated with sending for the fire brigade, the police, glaziers, builders, plumbers, demolition firms and security firms need to be included in any cost benefit analysis. The long hours spent by the police investigating property crimes committed on abandoned school properties drain police budgets. Each call out of the fire brigade to fight arson attacks at abandoned schools costs money and affects other fire brigades. The glaziers, builders, plumbers, security firms and demolition firms who need to be called in after the vandalism, arson attacks and other crimes committed on abandoned school properties all charge money for their services which are paid for by the taxpayer. Where is the evidence to show that these costs have been estimated and budgeted for by the politicians and education officials who claim that school closures and mergers save money? The security costs associated with abandoned school sites have continued to be a contentious financial issue. On June 6, 2007 the *Dominion Post*⁹ reported that:

Beefing up security to protect abandoned schools from vandalism comes with a price tag the Education Ministry is refusing to pay... Ministry property manager, Brian Mitchell said...It would be too expensive to protect the buildings on each of the 188 empty sites on the register between November 2004 and February 2007. During that period 67 of those schools were vandalised, with damage estimated at \$218, 000. Providing fulltime security guards at all the

sites would cost \$10,000 a week.¹⁰

Abandoned schools in New Zealand have been used for everything from filming television drama, to growing cannabis and as training grounds for the armed offenders' squad. In 2005 abandoned Wainuiomata High School was used as the setting for the television comedy show *Seven Periods with Mr Gormsby*. When the police had raided the disused Darfield School west of Christchurch in 2009 they discovered an \$87,000 cannabis growing operation.¹¹ In 2010 when Lansdowne School was used for police training purposes Karoline Tucket's front page *Wairarapa Times Age* report recorded that, accompanied by two police dogs, "...twenty rifle wielding members of the armed offenders' squad stormed through the old Lansdowne primary school practising for the real thing."¹² One fireman suggested to me that abandoned schools could also be used by fire brigades for fire fighting training purposes.

After the 2003 Masterton Network Review the four abandoned boarded up schools were unsightly daily reminders of what the community had lost. During the course of this research powerful media images of classrooms on fire, the aftermath of arson, vandalised school buildings, distraught and angry onlookers, angry former principals, teachers and former students and eventually, protest groups, clearly captured the continuing community anger about the prolonged disposal process connected with the closed schools. This was also an issue elsewhere. A thesis respondent involved in the Stokes Valley review criticised wasted opportunities when she said:

Kamahi School sitting boarded up and derelict continues to cause emotional damage in the community, as people see the school they loved looking this way... We were two years on both sites. A lot of the good work could have been happening while we were caretaking. Why not? Sell on, demolition – whatever – do it quickly once closed.¹³

Harris¹⁴ spoke to a principal who advocated a radical solution:

To be honest, I personally believe they would be better off putting a bulldozer through them when they finish with them because it's a bit like I said, if you have a long slow painful death. Now that school when it closed only needed a lick of paint. It was in very good condition and then slowly over time – like I'll never forget driving past and watching the staffroom windows were broken and the curtains were flapping in and out the window and the police rang her and said, "Oh do you know who owns that place?" These buildings are all over the place.¹⁵

At the same time as it was experiencing the complicated school disposal process, Masterton residents were also watching and waiting to see how long it would take to find a new use or a buyer for its former hospital buildings. The new Wairarapa Hospital opened in 2006. In July 2007 the *Wairarapa Times Age*¹⁶ informed its readers that the seventeen hectare property behind the new hospital was to be passed to the Crown Health Financing Agency to sell on behalf of the District Health Board. Local real estate sales managers expected the sale to be difficult. While they could agree that the former hospital was a valuable property, none of them was prepared to estimate its value. Any prospective purchaser would need to research the considerable cost of demolishing nine buildings, if none of them were considered suitable for an alternative use. Now that the property has been decommissioned it has no rateable value. Given these complications, the real estate people agreed that offering the property for tender or auction might be an appropriate way to proceed. In February 2011 it was announced that the hospital would soon be put on the market with a price tag of \$2.25 million based on its Quotable Value valuation.¹⁷ As at 2012 the disposal process has not been completed. Greytown Hospital closed in 1997. The Wairarapa District Health Board sold it for \$200,000 in 2003. The buyers had

hoped to develop an accommodation and function centre. Nine years later it is back on the market with a CV of \$610,000. It is expected that, as with abandoned schools, the property will be attractive to developers who specialise in subdivision for housing purposes, but there is an asbestos removal issue to be addressed before that can happen.

The law classes schools and school property as Crown assets. There are many issues to be resolved when a school closes. Who owns what? What are the property ownership issues to be resolved? Who draws up the asset register? Who says what goes on an asset register and what does not? Who decides what goes where, to whom and why? How are the property values decided? What are the typical points at issue? How long does the disposal process take? Some of these issues are covered in a series of Ministry of Education policy documents such as the Five Year Property (5YP) Programme Guidelines¹⁸ introduced by the Ministry of Education introduced in 2000 which defines different situations related to property and describes how they are to be managed:

B Schools moving onto a closed site

This is where a school decides to move onto the site of a school that has been closed. This situation is likely to arise as a result of a review of schooling in an area to establish a school of special character. If your school would like to make use of this type of space, the Ministry will provide funding to modernise the buildings and facilities on the closed school site up to SPG entitlement.

D School Closures and Mergers

An enhanced property budget is allocated to remaining schools in cases of closures or mergers based on the property the remaining schools operate from.

If you want to access an allocated enhanced closure and merger budget you will have to allocate a new 10YPP as the school's property needs are undergoing a significant change. When you are developing the 10 YPP you will need to take into account the number of classrooms and the area being addressed by the budgets provided.

The budgets for a closure and merger project may include: 5YP catch-up funding, a classroom budget (with number of classrooms, type and area), an area budget to address any SPG deficiency, and furniture and equipment funding for each of the budgets.¹⁹

Information about the disposal of abandoned schools and the property ownership issues to be resolved after closure/ mergers is available on the Ministry of Education website. Once any Crown owned property is declared surplus the four step sequential disposal process is largely determined by the requirements of the Public Works Act 1981 and existing Government policies. Sometimes the school buildings and land might be required for alternative educational uses. If the property is required for another public work, it is transferred to another government department or territorial local authority. If the property is not required for another public work then it may be offered back to the previous owner, if alive, or their descendants, if they are dead. If the property is not sold through the offer back process then it is assessed for any related Treaty of Waitangi claims or claims under the Sites of Significance (SoS) process. In this instance the school property could be put into the Maori Land Claim Bank. Treaty claims are assessed under the Maori Protection Mechanism (MPM.) If any claim is successful, then usually the property is 'land banked' which means that it is purchased by the Office of Treaty Settlements and held pending settlement of the claim by the Government. Ownership may eventually transfer to the claimants. The SoS process protects surplus Crown land of particular significance to Maori. It is administered by Te Puni Kokiri and operates in tandem

with MPM. A sale on the open market becomes possible if the property clears the first three steps of the process described above.

The provisions relating to school property are reflected in existing Ministry of Education policy and link to the Education Land Acts 1949 I. e. Section 70. A. With regard to land no longer needed for educational purposes, the Minister may, by notice in the *New Zealand Gazette*, declare the land to be no longer needed for educational purposes. Any land referred to in the notice may be disposed of as land no longer required for a public work.

The 'Business rules for merged schools' are defined in the *Educational Institution Profile Codebook 2004* published by the Data Management Unit of the Ministry of Education.²⁰ This codebook answers the basic questions relating to the ownership of any assets after a school closure/merger and who has the responsibility for deciding what they are:

When two or more schools merge as a result of a Network Review, one is designated by the Minister as the continuing school, while the other(s) are closed or "absorbed." All assets and debts of the closing school(s) transfer to the continuing school. **Note** for the mergers that took place 2003/2004 a continuing school was given a new number only if it moved to another site or if it changed its type. If it continued in its original site or type, it kept its original unique number.²¹

However, if a continuing school wants any buildings from a closed school they must pay the removal and transportation costs incurred.

Although the policy documents describe the asset and property issues to be addressed they cannot be precise about the amount of time it takes. The location of the assets and the properties affects their marketability and also affects the time frame. When *Dominion Post* reporter Michelle Quirke questioned Trevor Mallard about the matter on August 16, 2003 during the network reviews he replied

Unfortunately, most schools that are closed are in rural areas or in suburbs that have been depopulated. The property is therefore very hard to sell and, in some cases, even to give away.²²

Three days later *Dominion Post* reported:

The Government is struggling to sell \$23 million of school property, left after classroom closures. At the start of last month the Education Ministry was trying to sell 78 school properties. One school has been in the ministry's 'disposal process' for six years and four others for more than forty months. Two Wainuiomata schools remain on ministry books 19 months after they were closed.²³

In a number of cases buildings from the closed school were shifted to the site of the continuing school. Miki Miki School was offered back to the previous owner before being transported to Opaki School where it was connected to existing classrooms and renamed the Miki Miki Block. Douglas Park School received classrooms from Cornwall Street School. Masterton Primary received classrooms from Harley Street School. There were also missed opportunities. The assembly hall at Lansdowne School might have been moved to Lakeview School to be used as a gymnasium, particularly for the senior students. It was purchased by Gladstone School but before it could be transported there it suffered serious damage from an arson attack. There were also unexpected costs at Lakeview such as the eighty thousand dollars spent in 2010 to redress a planning failure in the administration block.

Okautete School, a Wairarapa rural school near Riversdale, is a case of interest. Disposal disputes continued for eight years after it closed in 2001. Innis Land Services convened a hui with the stakeholders from Nga Pene Tarawa Trust to consider the offer by the Government to sell the property back to them for \$22 500 for the school house on the land. Edwin Perry, former M.P., Masterton District councillor and chairman of the Nga Pene Tarawa Trust was outraged. As the hapu spokesman he pointed out to *Wairarapa Times Age* in January 2009²⁴ that:

The Government offered Hood Aerodrome to the Masterton District Council, for just \$1 after it was taken from Maori under the Public Works Act, to train First World War and Second World War pilots and was strangely never returned to its original owners. ... My view (about Okautete) is that for the number of years that land was used for educating both Maori and Pakeha, the government should just write off the cost completely.

It really rankles me to think that they should be asking us to pay anything for land they have had for free for over 100 years. They should do the right thing, hand it back and go away.²⁵

Over a year later the hapu gained its objective. In October 2009 it was announced that following the recommendation of the Waitangi Tribunal an agreement had been signed by Minister of Education, Anne Tolley, which allowed the Okautete School land and buildings to be signed over at no cost. The Waitangi Tribunal recommended:

Having properly given back the site to Maori, the Crown should also give them the school buildings and school house on it. ...Te Whetu Waaka said the buildings would be for the use of "the whole community."²⁶

Five Masterton schools stood abandoned after the school mergers in 2003. Six years later only two had been sold. Totara Drive was sold in 2008. Harley Street School was sold in 2009. The community could not escape the prolonged disposal process. Driving past steadily deteriorating formerly loved school buildings and reading about the continuing property crimes on school sites became an unwelcome part of everyday life. Several thesis respondents told me that they deliberately avoided driving down the street in which their former school is located. When asked about what happened to the buildings and facilities of their school after the merger/closure, the anger about the way the Ministry was handling the situation and their perceived powerlessness to alter the situation were clearly reflected in number of survey responses such as this one:

Vandalism, fire, buildings boarded up, an eyesore. Five years on. Site is distressing and inexcusable. Have written to the Ministry to no avail. Walking past daily is no joke. Why couldn't all the buildings go so the site is clear and tidy and easily maintained?²⁷

Survey respondents were asked to rate how the Ministry of Education had managed the issue of empty buildings and facilities no longer needed after the merger/closure. On a scale of 1–5, with 1 representing very poorly managed and 5 representing very well managed, with one exception, respondents gave it a rating of 1. It made no difference whether respondents were principals, trustees, teachers or parents. With the exception of one respondent who said that, "The Ministry was constrained in what it could do" and another who said, "It was always going to be an issue and I don't care,"²⁸ the rest of the respondents repeatedly referred to the issues identified in the following three responses when asked in Question 37 to explain why they felt the way they did:

MOE said buildings would remain vacant for two years. (Treaty claims etc.). Six years later some buildings (those that haven't been burnt down) are still empty. Disgusting again.²⁹

Schools left empty in Masterton have been constantly vandalised and are an eyesore in the town. It is a total disgrace.³⁰

Buildings that have been very important to community falling into disrepair and being vandalised was heart breaking for supporters of schools.³¹

One fireman expressed the frustration of the fire brigade after the arson of the Harley Street assembly hall in October 2006:

Mr Flowerday said there had been 'multiple attempts' on other buildings in the former school grounds over the last two years... There were eleven seats of fire found under that building (classroom block). The under floor access, just like the windows had to be boarded up. This is an unnecessary waste of our resources and these schools are a known risk that should have been cleared up by now.³²

Almost three years later in September 2009 there were two further arson attacks in two weeks on the Harley Street School baths changing sheds and filter room. Nathan Crombie reported in *Wairarapa Times Age* that over \$30,000 had been spent on security and demolition costs for Harley Street School. The demolition of the assembly hall following the 2006 assembly hall arson cost almost \$15, 000.

Rapidly deteriorating school properties remind stakeholders of the time they worked voluntarily to raise funds to improve school facilities. Following the arson attack which destroyed the Harley Street School assembly hall, Mr Murray Waitoa, a neighbour and former chairman of its board of trustees was interviewed by *Wairarapa Times Age* reporter Joe Dawson:

Of the biggest concern has been the total lack of communication with the people who loved the school by the Ministry of Education. The school closed officially on December 16, 2003, and from that point we expected there would be consultation about the process from there. There's been very little – there's been none. We've gone through all this time waiting for something to happen, and it never has. The hall was a community funded project, with ministry input. They all had a hand in raising money to have that hall built. As a community we would dearly have liked to have seen it go to another community, another school. It had to be useful to somebody.³³

DTZ, the agent appointed by the Ministry of Education, contracted Masterton Intermediate to carry out the basic maintenance of four of the abandoned schools. After the arson attack on the Harley Street School assembly hall, the Principal of Masterton Intermediate School, Frazer Mailman told *Times Age* reporter Joe Dawson that he was not surprised:

We look after four schools and two of them have been arsoned. The person who does the repairs is constantly boarding up windows, particularly at Lansdowne and Harley Street. Every weekend and holidays Lansdowne and Harley Street are targeted.³⁴

When I visited Totara Drive in 2007, there was already evidence of graffitied walls, holes in veranda walls and other damage. At Harley Street School there were flat spaces where the arsoned assembly hall and swimming pool changing sheds used to be. Damaged doors showed further arson and break in attempts. The memorial to Piri Ratima, a former pupil and one of the victims of the horrendous Ratima murders, stood in abandoned playgrounds. All the windows in the classroom blocks had been smashed and boarded up.



Harley Street School in its prime. Aerial photograph Peter Nikolaison.



Harley Street School vandalised. Inset, former principals Richard Williams and Fiona Marrett. Photographs *Wairarapa Times Age*, *Wairarapa News* and *Claire Hills*

The sun faded sign to pool keyholders by the school swimming pool was a reminder that it was no longer a facility shared safely with the surrounding community in the summer months. The outdoor performance stage, the wishing well and the twenty-fifth jubilee seat backed by a large tiled wall where every student at the time has a named tile, remained as relics of happier times in the history of the school. The fate of the abandoned jubilee seat generated adverse publicity.

As an ex Principal of Harley Street, the structure I am most upset about is the seat with every child's name on it, it is still (somewhat vandalised) at Harley Street.³⁵

After the school was sold Ivan Karaitiana, a community stalwart and neighbour who attended Harley Street and whose children attended the school, told *Times Age* reporter Don Farner that he wanted his own name plate on the jubilee memorial seat and the tiles for other former students returned to their families who fundraised to make the tile wall possible.

I personally loved the years I spent at Harley Street School and rather than just have the name plates crumble away or get wrecked I want to see them returned to the families. Rather than see them trashed, I would like to get a concrete cutter, remove them and reinstate them in my own back yard.³⁶

Efforts to sell the abandoned school sites ran into difficulties. The first year after its closure in 2003, Totara Drive School was used for students in Years 1-3 until the new classroom buildings were completed at Lakeview. It took until October 2007 before an abortive attempt was made to sell the Totara Drive and Harley Street School properties by L J Hooker. The words used in advertisements were enough to make a political cynic smile:

Totara Drive was one of Masterton's most desirable primary schools before Government mergers resulted in its closure. Surrounded by mature trees and quality residences, this prized location enjoys magnificent views of the Tararua Ranges... Consisting of 1.8494 hectares, this tranquil site's potential for exclusive subdivision is most obvious, but the allure for a sole private residence or facility in these park like grounds cannot be denied.

Harley Street School was also a highly esteemed primary school, in the comfortable, family oriented neighbourhood of Solway. Being a corner position, the 1.8204 hectare level site has extensive street frontage and consists of wide open spaces fringed by mature trees.³⁷

It is easy to see from the wording of the advertisement that the Ministry of Education expected that the profit expected from the sale of the Totara Drive site would be far greater than the profit expected from the Harley Street site. Just before the tenders closed on November 23, 2007, both schools were withdrawn from the market to address unresolved issues in the Treaty of Waitangi clearance process. It was not until October 2008 that the Office of Treaty Settlements released Totara Drive and Harley Street for sale and decided to land bank Lansdowne School.

It is very difficult to determine the market value of Government properties which contain purpose built facilities for which the real estate market might have little use. In an October 15, 2008 *Wairarapa News* report³⁸ real estate agent, David McHattie of L J Hooker, who was marketing Totara Drive and Harley Street, said that although Harley Street School had a rateable value of \$1.3 million and that Totara Drive was valued at \$1.9 million, including improvements, neither was likely to sell at those figures given the current state of the property market. Mr McHattie thought that any potential purchaser would have little use for the buildings. This was a signal that the properties might be acquired for the land value only. When Totara Drive was sold the purchase price was not disclosed. The asking price for Harley Street School was

\$510, 000, less than half of its Government value of \$1.3 million. Mr McHattie told *Wairarapa Times Age* on 2 December, 2009³⁹ that people had been camping in Harley Street School 'as recently as two weeks earlier and that a working couple had bought the property for "close to \$500 000." Notices screwed into tall trees along the Harley Street School fence line announced to any who might be in doubt that "This is no longer a school. Please keep out." Mr McHattie believed that the property had the potential for subdivision into twenty sections. He said that the asking price of \$510, 000 was near the same price that Totara Estate Ltd paid for the closed Totara Drive School in December 2008. David Borman, a local builder, major shareholder, and leader of the Kuripuni Village redevelopment project, said:

I'm not joking when I say that it would make an excellent school....It wouldn't have to be a state school, so if someone wants to start a private school or perhaps use it as a training centre we would listen to them.⁴⁰

Other development options were a retirement village or a subdivision. He said the price the company paid for the property would eventually be made public.

The disposal of Lansdowne School proved to be even more complicated. After its closure in December 2003, it was used to accommodate Years four, five and six students until the Lakeview School construction process was complete. After Lansdowne was abandoned in 2005 the vandalism increased and the arson attacks began. Pam McGregor, who lives opposite Lansdowne where she taught for fifteen years, maintained a high media profile throughout this period. After the second arson attack on June 4, 2007,⁴¹ she told *Wairarapa Times Age* reporter, Jo Moir:

Standing watching the school burn for a second time was really sad. Everyone was so upset after the merger (in 2004) that I couldn't even go over there. When classrooms got burnt down not long after it closed, it was like a funeral as everybody stood out in the street and cried... It was such a special place with such a sense of camaraderie among the staff that was broken by the school merger... It's not just bricks and mortar, it's a living breathing thing which was destroyed by a certain man, (Trevor Mallard,) who didn't even have the courage to come and talk to us or to hear what we had to say before it went ahead. The merger was the most difficult thing that ever happened to our schools.⁴²

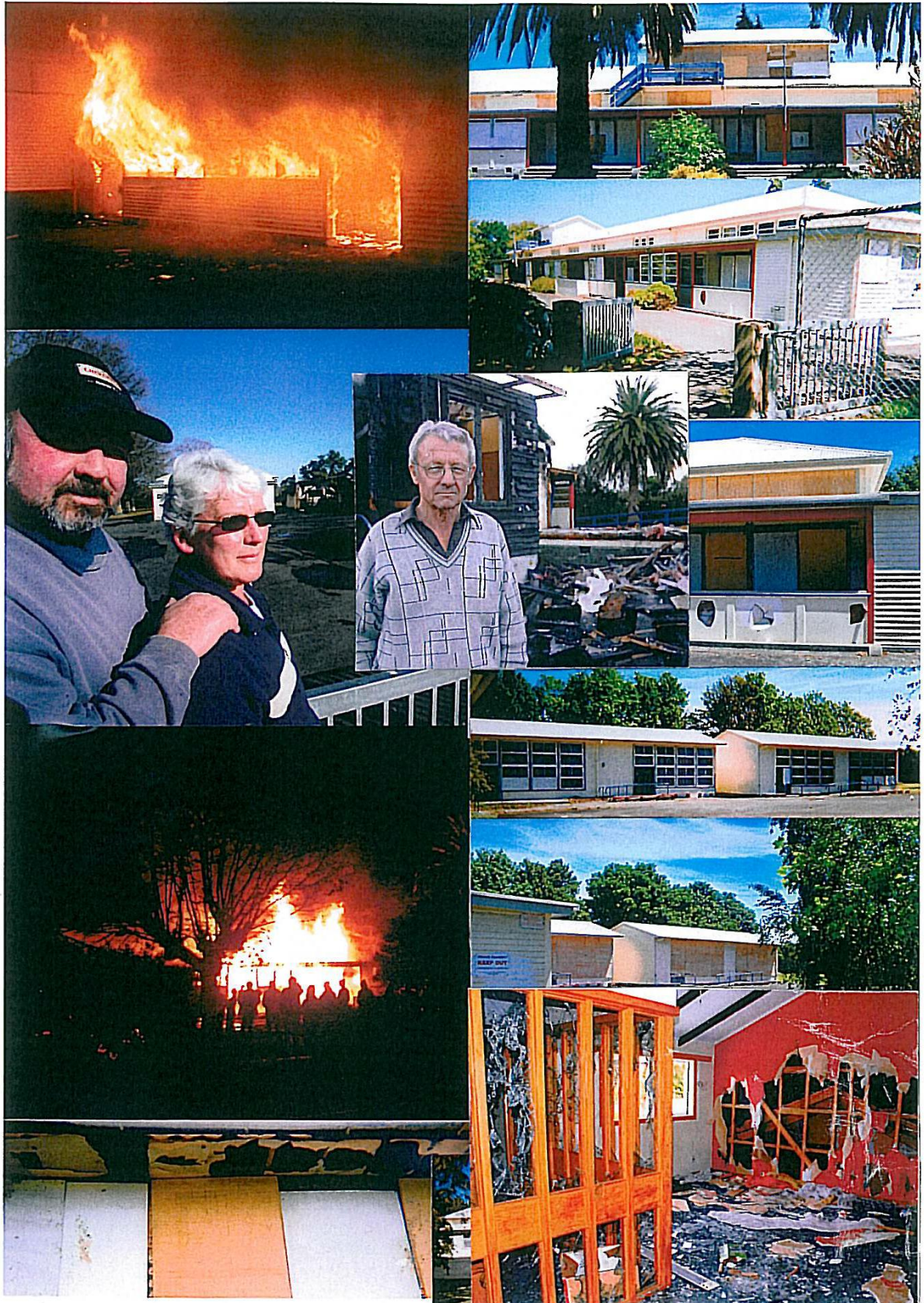
In October 2006 two children aged about ten were caught in the act of setting fire to junk mail in a Lansdowne School shed. In November 2006 five teenage boys, four fourteen year olds and one sixteen year old were arrested after 'going on a window smashing rampage at the school.' In early June 2007 a security firm was on hand to supervise the demolition work after the May arson attack where two classrooms and the toilet block had to be demolished and construction work was required to wall in the library. In August 2007 after another arson attack a detached twenty metre by fifteen metre pool building within metres of a treeline became a towering inferno. The newspaper reported that the wood and concrete building had been well ablaze with flames reaching almost to the top of a nearby telephone pole. Fire Station Officer Mike Cornford expressed the continuing frustration of the fire brigade:

Bedding and bits and pieces indicated that somebody had been living there...."It's just a disaster that our schools have been left so vulnerable and this is allowed to happen over and over again. Mr Cornford said that about \$90, 000 had been spent repainting the buildings the year before Lansdowne School had closed.⁴³

A complicating factor in the disposal of Lansdowne School was that both iwi in the Masterton District, Ngati Kahungunu and Rangitane, had settlement claims before the Waitangi Tribunal and had been working towards having deeds of mandate



Lansdowne School in its prime. Aerial photograph accessed from Wairarapa Archives



Lansdowne School deteriorates. Photos of Pam McGregor, former principal, Richard Williams and arson attack photos from *Wairarapa Times Age*; vandalism photographs taken by Claire Hills

recognised before negotiations could begin. The *Wairarapa Times Age* explained to its readers in September 2007 that:

Mike Kawana, Rangitane O Wairarapa cultural adviser and Ngati Hamua spokesman, told the *Times Age* last year that the Lansdowne School site is part of a multi-million dollar Maori land claim.⁴⁴

In 2007 Ministry of Education officials expected that the Lansdowne negotiations would take two or three years to conclude. Lansdowne School was finally land banked in October 2008 and transferred to the Office of Treaty Settlements in March 2009. In the 2009 financial year \$19,378 was spent on rates, security, insurance, shed demolition, repairs and grounds maintenance. *Wairarapa Times Age* editor, Dave Saunders, expressed the frustration of the community in his editorial on November 25, 2008:

We hear constantly that these old school sites are checked regularly, yet at Lansdowne there are signs that someone has been living in the old pool sheds, which were the subject of the attack. If the buildings are checked, how can someone not have noticed a person living there?⁴⁵

The *Wairarapa Times Age* also recorded the progressive deterioration of the site and kept the issue before the public eye. The last Lansdowne arson attack on February 16, 2010 resulted in a caretaker's shed being burned to the ground. In April 2010. Nathan Crombie reported:

Not a single window was found unbroken yesterday and the darkened classrooms and the school yard are fouled with faces, filthy mattresses and scraps of bedding.⁴⁶

In 2010 former Lansdowne teachers Pam McGregor and Judith Ewington asked the Office of Treaty Settlements for a timeline for clearing the land for sale without success. Its director, Paul James, informed the *Times Age* that it might take two to three years before the negotiations with the iwi were concluded.

As previously mentioned, I visited and photographed the sites of the continuing schools and the schools that were closed in the 2003 network review to record their appearance in the years that followed and to notice any changes for contrastive analysis purposes. My photographs record that in 2007 the vandalism at Lansdowne had already started but most of the windows were still intact. By 2010 all the windows were boarded up. As I was taking photographs in the 2009 summer holidays a small group of children on bikes cruising outside the school stopped to chat with me. They were convinced that different gangs were using the abandoned schools, that someone was living in the sheds near the swimming pools, and that Harley Street School was being used by the Killer Bees. As events unfolded it became clear that this was not simply another urban myth. Fifteen months later in April 2010, *Wairarapa Times Age* editor Dave Saunders in another editorial highlighted the social issues for the community.

The other issue here is that kids are using Lansdowne as a doss house... Frankly it's sad enough that kids are spending the night there with drunken teens. Will it take a much more serious incident for someone to act?⁴⁷

In 2010 former Lansdowne teachers Pam McGregor and Judith Ewington asked the Office of Treaty Settlements for a timeline for clearing the land for sale without success. Its director, Paul James, informed the *Times Age* that it might take two to three years before the negotiations with the iwi were concluded. Pam and Judith

organised a protest on the Lansdowne site on May 31, 2010 where they were joined by the Mayor, Garry Daniell, Deputy Mayor Jane Terpstra and several councillors and supporters. Mr Daniell, a former Lansdowne student, was reported as saying that it was “disgraceful” that the situation was being “frustrated by officialdom.” Rick Long, another long-time local body politician, former member of the Wellington Regional Council, newspaper columnist and another former Lansdowne student also vented his frustration:

Every time I drive past the site, it's a grim reminder that Wellington bureaucrats couldn't run a booze up in a brewery.⁴⁸

Yet another page one report in *Wairarapa Times Age*, in June 2010⁴⁹ described how a twelve year old girl went missing from a Friday night church group and ended up spending the night with other teenagers at Lansdowne School. Large coloured photographs in the newspaper coverage showed the extensive damage inside the school buildings. These photographs provided the first opportunity for the general public to see an example of the widespread destruction inside the school. Large holes had been bashed into internal walls of the staff room and reinforced glass walls had been smashed with a sledgehammer until the wire looked like hanging cobwebs.

On July 14 2010 I visited the inside of the Lansdowne buildings accompanied by Fire Officer Henry Stechman and Pam McGregor. Fresh 'Motaz' graffiti was sprayed along the front verandas. In the pathways behind the school, trails of recent tyre tracks and footprints were easily visible. Walls were splattered with mud from 'wheelies.' Dirty leaves and assorted debris piled up in porch ways could easily have been used for fire starting. There was evidence of a number of fires that had been started close to doorways.

Despite the security measures that the community had been reassured were in place we could gain easy access to at least two areas. The first area welcomed visitors with “Fuck you bitch” and crude Nazi signs. When we entered the darkened two roomed classroom block at the end of the building we noticed that large areas of ceiling were bashed through revealing the roof framing above. Former principal, Richard Williams, had earlier told me that one of the reasons so many holes had been punched in the internal walls was because thieves wanted to gain access to the copper wiring which was used to connect the computers throughout the school to the computer system. “Copper products fetch a good price on the market.” Discarded cigarette packets and a large number of tea light candles were strewn all over the glass splattered floor. The floor was covered in a random assortment of dirty discarded clothes. The classroom curtains had been pulled down and possibly used for bedding. The mould on the carpet suggested the roof was leaking. A battery operated radio offered the opportunity for the ‘tenants’ to relax with their favourite music.

As Pam McGregor approached the former classroom that had been her pride and joy she found that it had been recycled as ‘a romantic hideaway’ labelled “the honeymoon sweet.” She recalled that about two years earlier condoms, sleeping bags and empty spirit bottles had been found in the staffroom upstairs. In the days that followed media coverage about the Lansdowne site increased. On July 21, 2010 it was announced that tenders had been offered for the demolition of the school.

Before Lansdowne School was demolished on September 10, 2010 a blessing ceremony and a final farewell was conducted by Archdeacon Hariata Tahana and Maori cultural adviser Mike Kawana. Members of both local iwi, Rangitane and Ngati Kahungunu, and community group representatives, including Pam McGregor, were present. In his *Wairarapa Times Age* editorial to mark this historic occasion Don Farmer noted:

This week, as Maori blessed the school before its sad death there was hardly a dry eye among the spectators.⁵⁰

Former Principal, Richard Williams, told *Times Age* reporter, Nathan Crombie, how the last sight of the school he had led left him devastated:

...the blessing ceremony ...and a last walk around the school he had led for seven years had left him speechless... Mr Williams described the dereliction as obscene.... The spirit of the place went with the school cat and the kids – it's gone.⁵¹

Unlike Totara Drive and Lansdowne, which were unoccupied after 2004, tenants were found for part of Cornwall Street School. After the closure of Hiona Intermediate in 2003, the Montessori School which had used several of its surplus classrooms, had to find a new base. The Ministry agreed to allow it to use part of the old Cornwall Street School from 2004 as a temporary measure. The Montessori School operated on the old Cornwall Street site for almost six years. During its tenancy twenty-six children attended the Montessori School and fifty children were enrolled in the pre-school which held two sessions a day. As a result, parents and caregivers from forty-four families were regularly coming and going on and off the site.

When I photographed the site in 2007 and 2010, the main classroom block and the remaining buildings appeared to be largely free of vandalism. The portion of the school allocated to the Montessori School was kept neat and tidy. While there had been some vandalism, particularly in school holidays, such as destroying the sandpit sun shade, interfering with the tomatoes in the school vegetable garden and some broken windows and gang graffiti tags, there were no arson attacks. In 2008 the Montessori School shifted to a surplus classroom in Carterton South School. After the preschool purchased its own premises in Lincoln Road in 2009 Cornwall Street School went on the market. Its disposal was complicated by the fact that it had been built on a dual owned property. Part of the land, owned by the Ministry of Education had originally been designated for a kindergarten. The remainder was owned by the Masterton Trust Lands Trust. Both owners decided to sell the land and buildings at the same time. The Trust Lands Trust sold its portion of the school land to the government Office of Treaty Settlements. The Ministry of Education transferred its portion of the Cornwall Street School site to the Office of Treaty Settlements in November 2012.

The Cornwall Street School case would suggest that when schools close it is preferable to find temporary or permanent tenants if possible as a community safety issue, to preserve the value of the assets and to delay the amount of vandalism. Of all the closed schools, Cornwall Street School was the least vandalised until the Montessori School tenants moved out after which the school soon became a vandal target. The graffiti increased. Huge stones were thrown through large plate glass classroom windows which were then boarded up. Around the back of the school hidden from public view, the back porches for each classroom contained heaps of

dried leaves and assorted debris. They could easily have been used to start fires as had already happened at Lansdowne School and Harley Street School. The classroom doors at the back of the school had been sufficiently damaged to allow access to the inside of school buildings. Copper thieves targeted the toilet block. The demolition of the school buildings started just before Christmas. A Ministry of Education spokesman told *Wairarapa Times Age* that "The buildings have been targeted by vandals and it was decided to remove them in the interests of keeping the school safe."⁵² Upon reflection, since the school has now been completely demolished there is no school to keep safe.

Whereas a blessing ceremony and a final farewell was conducted by Maori religious ministers and cultural advisers which was also attended by a group of people with close links to Lansdowne prior to the demolition of the school, a similar approach was not taken before the demolition of Cornwall Street School. The local media provided several illustrated reports of the demolition process.

Country schools which have long been the heart beat of rural communities can continue to serve a valuable community function after a school is closed. As previously stated, the Okautete School land and buildings were finally signed over to the local hapu at no cost in 2009. Hapu spokesman Te Whetu Waaka reminded the community that the hapu had looked after the buildings, they had not been subject to vandalism and now they would take on a new life as a centre for a variety of social and cultural functions for the hapu and the wider community.

Miki Miki School was offered back to the previous owner before being transported to Opaki School where it was connected to existing classrooms and renamed the Miki Miki Block. This solution has enabled the Miki Miki community to adjust more easily to the merged school while remaining connected to such an important part of its history.

The old Eketahuna School is now used for alternative educational and community purposes such as the Civil Defence headquarters and the Eketahuna and Districts Play Centre. Some country schools have been closely connected with the pioneer history of New Zealand. After its closure the former Mauriceville West School,⁵³ designed by well-known Wellington architect Thomas Turnbull and built in 1885, was used as a community hall. In recent years it has undergone repairs by Ian Cheriton, a heritage builder, under the guidance of Department of Conservation historian, Richard Neston. A conservation report has proposed that it might become part of the Wellington to Napier Scandinavian Trail. Although it has long since closed, a Mauriceville West School reunion was planned for February 2011, further evidence of the emotional attachment that rural communities have to their schools.

Abandoned schools trapped in the bureaucratic maze of long disposal processes are arson and vandalism opportunities waiting to happen. On July 12, 2010, *Dominion Post* readers woke up to a front page story about an arson attack which totally destroyed a three story fourteen classroom block at Wainuiomata College which had closed after the network review in 2001. The arsonist struck in the middle weekend of the school holidays. A photograph of the fiery inferno outlined the skeleton of a school building flaming end to end against the night sky. Another photograph showed the smouldering ruins the following morning. Were the costs of police time and fire brigade time factored into the cost benefit analysis projections calculated at the time of the 2001 review? Both the police and the fire brigade vented their

frustration to reporter, Stacey Wood. Acting Detective Sergeant Anthony Trebutt explained the predictability of the crime:

The school was a ripe target for vandalism. You only have to see the broken windows and the graffiti to see that.⁵⁴

Chief fire officer David Smith emphasised the danger to his fire fighters:

We had to do what we call surround and drown – we couldn't send any men in there because it was just too dangerous.⁵⁵

It took ten fire trucks and an aerial fire fighting appliance to extinguish the fire. Fire fighters who were still on site the following day needed to use an aerial hose.

Upon reflection, the situation has become almost Gilbertian. The school had closed nine years earlier. The buildings were insured but they were not in a useable condition. Trevor Mallard told the *Dominion Post*⁵⁶ that the burned down block and the one next to it were suffering from “concrete cancer.” Six years after the review the property had been given to the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust as part of a Treaty of Waitangi settlement. According to the *Dominion Post* report, although the building was not in a useable state, a Trust spokesman said they were still making a decision about how to use it and a security guard would be hired to protect the site.

Local bodies need to become far more pro-active in the disposal process of abandoned schools within their area. District councils have an obligation to provide safe communities. They have a statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 2002 to ensure the environmental, social, economic and cultural wellbeing of the community. Abandoned schools can easily become a community safety issue. Luther Taloa, former Chairman of the Reference Group and a retired senior Masterton detective, whose three children had attended Harley Street School, said to *Times Age* reporter Nathan Crombie after an arson attack in September 2009:

This was a lovely school. Parents built the changing rooms and the hall – the school community, my neighbours, not the ministry. Leaving the school to arsonists and vandals is ministerial neglect: not just being tardy. They have to keep the community safe, that's the most important part, and they need to sort out their act now.⁵⁷

Since the Masterton Area Network Review, Masterton Fire Station records show that there have been over forty fires of various sorts on Wairarapa school sites.

There has to be a better way of dealing with the disposal of abandoned schools. Harris argued for a review of the closed school policy in order to prevent school buildings being abandoned. The respondents to this thesis survey agreed. Schools are taxpayer and community funded facilities. After the continuing school has accessed the buildings and facilities it needs, the remaining facilities at a closed school should be offered to other schools. The next step could be to offer them for sale to the community who might have some creative ideas about how they might be recycled. What remains should be bulldozed leaving a clear site while the disposal process proceeds. While this might not be an ideal solution, it is preferable to seeing abandoned school facilities wasted, vandalised and going up in smoke.

SAY NO TO COURTHOUSE IN YOUR BACKYARD!!

Open Letter to Masterton Community

The proposal to house the Masterton Court House in the centre of a residential zone in the former Totara Drive School has been rightfully met with complete disgust and outrage in our community. If this site gets approved it will set a precedent against which future applications will be tested. If you live in a residential zone anywhere in Masterton then this affects you. Disruptive commercial activities do not belong in residential housing zones.

It is important that you tell the Masterton District Council (MDC) of your opposition. Remember this proposal is from the Ministry of Justice, **WHO ARE LOOKING AT OTHER RESIDENTIAL SITES IN MASTERTON TO LOCATE THE COURT HOUSE**. You could have this commercial activity appearing in the quiet residential street where you live. You don't want increased traffic, noise, foot traffic, loss of privacy, increased security and safety risks, reduced property values, to name just a few, in your street.

Residential zones should not have a Court House operating from them and commercial zones are where they belong, temporarily or otherwise. Any such activity will have significant adverse effects on our community.

We must act together and stop this resource consent application. The Masterton Residents Association Incorporated has been formed to stop this application; we are a wide group of concerned Masterton residents. We believe it is important for all Masterton residents to inform the MDC that the Ministry of Justice cannot put the Court in a residential zone, it needs to be in a commercial zone away from families safely and peacefully living their lives.

We know you feel as strongly as we do, and encourage you to send your written comments to the Council on their official form 13 (www.mstn.govt.nz) by Tuesday 24th April 2012.

If you would like to know more about the Masterton Residents Association Incorporated, would like collectively to join us in stopping this, or would like to contribute to the legal costs to achieve a sensible resolution in this lengthy process, email MastertonResidents@xtra.co.nz. Any contributions can be made into the Masterton Residents Association Incorporated WBS bank account # 02-0688-0089022-02 (reference # 100009913).

Signed

Masterton Residents Association Incorporated (pending)
Brent Thompson (Chairman) 377-0757 Andi Bond (Treasurer) 0274-516223

**Residents
prepare for
giant fight**

And so the saga continues.....Coming to a community near you! This full page *Wairarapa News* advertisement in 2012, a protest petition and a high profile media campaign, generating twenty reports, was organised by a neighbourhood committee strongly opposed to the proposal to use abandoned Totara Drive School as a temporary courthouse. Their campaign was successful.

APPENDIX A

TABLE 32: FALLING ROLLS IN MASTERTON DISTRICT SCHOOLS 1991 – 2000 (Complete).
Data extracted from Directory of New Zealand Schools and Tertiary Institutions, prepared by the Data Management Unit and the Data Analysis Section Ministry of Education 1991 – 2000.

| SCHOOL ROLLS | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Cornwall Street | 197 | 174 | 173 | 158 | 153 | 169 | 176 | 162 | 157 | 143 |
| Fernridge | 95 | 89 | 91 | 100 | 143 | 104 | 115 | 123 | 137 | 133 |
| Hadlow | 152 | 149 | 159 | 155 | 165 | 170 | 173 | 159 | 158 | 188 |
| Harley Street | 183 | 177 | 177 | 174 | 190 | 180 | 182 | 191 | 184 | 196 |
| Homeleigh | 37 | 38 | 45 | 50 | 51 | 48 | 49 | 36 | 32 | 26 |
| Kura Kaupapa | - | - | 32 | 33 | 54 | 39 | 43 | 36 | 40 | 61 |
| Lansdowne | 300 | 291 | 271 | 237 | 236 | 192 | 201 | 207 | 211 | 174 |
| Masterton Central | 248 | 255 | 237 | 239 | 269 | 268 | 299 | 297 | 271 | 264 |
| Masterton East | 191 | 180 | 183 | 194 | 170 | 166 | 157 | 139 | 129 | 100 |
| Masterton West | 221 | 201 | 194 | 203 | 231 | 194 | 222 | 216 | 192 | 176 |
| Montessori | n/a | n/a | n/a | n/a | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| Saint Patrick's | 288 | 290 | 278 | 282 | 277 | 270 | 279 | 274 | 295 | 283 |
| Solway | 98 | 95 | 95 | 127 | 132 | 121 | 145 | 153 | 180 | 173 |
| Totara Drive | 256 | 285 | 301 | 289 | 299 | 274 | 297 | 290 | 275 | 282 |
| Sub totals | 2266 | 2286 | 2246 | 2241 | 2390 | 2277 | 2289 | 2247 | 2299 | 2199 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rural Schools in Masterton School District | 1991 Roll | 1992 Roll | 1993 roll | 1994 roll | 1995 roll | 1996 Roll | 1997 Roll | 1998 Roll | 1999 Roll | 2000 Roll |
| Bideford | 19 | 18 | 10 | 18 | 15 | 24 | 24 | 20 | 19 | 22 |
| Castlepoint | 19 | 19 | 11 | 19 | 14 | 16 | 15 | 12 | Closed 1999 | Closed 1999 |
| Gladstone | 90 | 99 | 92 | 100 | 102 | 104 | 101 | 110 | 112 | 120 |
| Mauriceville | 43 | 30 | 44 | 47 | 38 | 35 | 34 | 31 | 28 | 33 |
| Miki Miki | 26 | 17 | 17 | 19 | 29 | 25 | 18 | 16 | 15 | 16 |
| Okautete | 14 | 16 | 16 | 20 | 20 | 19 | 20 | 19 | 10 | 11 |
| Opaki | 107 | 113 | 110 | 110 | 105 | 136 | 126 | 126 | 127 | 143 |
| Tinui | 57 | 58 | 63 | 62 | 75 | 61 | 55 | 59 | 73 | 63 |
| Whareama | 35 | 39 | 35 | 37 | 37 | 53 | 38 | 48 | 55 | 50 |
| Wainuioru | 66 | 71 | 64 | 68 | 58 | 37 | 49 | 38 | 44 | 35 |
| Subtotals | 457 | 480 | 462 | 470 | 493 | 510 | 480 | 479 | 483 | 471 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Intermediates | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 |
| Hiona | 196 | 213 | 225 | 197 | 197 | 168 | 157 | 149 | 127 | 115 |
| MIS | 344 | 354 | 361 | 356 | 365 | 421 | 439 | 432 | 438 | 433 |
| Subtotals | 540 | 567 | 580 | 553 | 562 | 589 | 596 | 581 | 565 | 548 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Totals | 3192 | 3271 | 3288 | 3264 | 3450 | 3376 | 3439 | 3307 | 3347 | 3218 |

APPENDIX B

TABLE 33: FALLING ROLLS IN MASTERTON DISTRICT SCHOOLS 2000 – 2010 (Complete).

| 1 July Headcount roll data for cluster schools, Ministry of Education 2000 – 2010 | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| SCHOOL ROLLS | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
| Cornwall Street | 149 | 141 | 148 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Fernridge | 140 | 135 | 138 | 184 | 164 | 163 | 162 | 169 | 187 | 200 |
| Hadlow | 198 | 194 | 196 | 191 | 191 | 194 | 195 | 194 | 197 | 187 |
| Harley Street | 204 | 211 | 202 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Homeleigh | 32 | 29 | 25 | 14 | 12 | 19 | 7 | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Kura Kaupapa | 63 | 97 | 96 | 104 | 110 | 119 | 102 | 82 | 62 | 57 |
| Lansdowne | 178 | 172 | 192 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Masterton Central | 267 | 278 | 234 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Masterton East | 67 | Closed | | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Masterton West | 164 | 169 | 163 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Montessori | 30 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 | 25 |
| Saint Patrick's | 282 | 264 | 253 | 279 | 249 | 232 | 231 | 246 | 256 | 265 |
| Solway | 155 | 168 | 182 | 198 | 208 | 205 | 210 | 208 | 200 | 190 |
| Totara Drive | 306 | 293 | 295 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Merged schools | | | | | | | | | | |
| Douglas Park | – | – | – | 315 | 290 | 327 | 343 | 319 | 331 | 350 |
| Lakeview | – | – | – | 485 | 466 | 492 | 468 | 446 | 461 | 441 |
| Masterton Primary | – | – | – | 398 | 324 | 259 | 253 | 205 | 205 | 232 |
| Subtotals | 2235 | 2171 | 1813 | 2166 | 2014 | 2010 | 1971 | 1869 | 1899 | 1947 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Rural Schools further from Masterton | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
| Bideford | 12 | 10 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Gladstone | 107 | 101 | 104 | 99 | 117 | 131 | 136 | 157 | 120 | 118 |
| Mauriceville | 28 | 29 | 29 | 25 | 29 | 27 | 25 | 22 | 29 | 30 |
| Miki Miki | 15 | 12 | 9 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Okautete | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| Opaki | 136 | 130 | 138 | 149 | 162 | 164 | 162 | 163 | 156 | 160 |
| Tinui | 66 | 67 | 61 | 69 | 63 | 55 | 62 | 64 | 61 | 55 |
| Whareama | 53 | 50 | 52 | 45 | 32 | 32 | 29 | 24 | 27 | 28 |
| Wainuiouru | 35 | 45 | 57 | 53 | 64 | 51 | 49 | 64 | 69 | 76 |
| Subtotals | 452 | 454 | 441 | 440 | 467 | 460 | 463 | 494 | 462 | 467 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Intermediates | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
| Hiona | 113 | 101 | 103 | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed | Closed |
| MIS | 475 | 475 | 479 | 479 | 404 | 382 | 412 | 412 | 407 | 455 |
| Sub totals | 588 | 576 | 582 | 479 | 404 | 382 | 412 | 412 | 407 | 455 |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| Annual roll totals | 3275 | 3201 | 2836 | 3085 | 2885 | 2852 | 2846 | 2775 | 2778 | 2869 |

APPENDIX C

**TABLE 34
WAIRARAPA SECONDARY SCHOOL ROLLS 1990 – 1999.**

Data extracted from Directory of New Zealand Schools and Tertiary Institutions, prepared by the Data Management Unit and the Data Analysis Section, Ministry of Education 1990 – 1999.

| SCHOOL | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 |
|-------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| CHANEL | 377 | 398 | 422 | 413 | 428 | 387 | 346 | 330 | 301 | 275 |
| KURANUI | 798 | 684 | 643 | 619 | 573 | 552 | 551 | 565 | 549 | 579 |
| MAKOURA | 630 | 622 | 569 | 554 | 532 | 486 | 455 | 420 | 415 | 393 |
| RATHKEALE | 382 | 335 | 196 | 198 | 178 | 202 | 215 | 231 | 248 | 243 |
| ST MATTHEWS | 164 | 159 | 211 | 217 | 237 | 246 | 266 | 292 | 283 | 297 |
| SOLWAY | 77 | 83 | 100 | 134 | 125 | 145 | 136 | 157 | 138 | 112 |
| WAIRARAPA | 893 | 897 | 1004 | 1074 | 1080 | 1082 | 1113 | 1091 | 1117 | 1104 |
| TOTALS | 3321 | 3178 | 3145 | 3209 | 3153 | 3100 | 3082 | 3086 | 3041 | 3003 |

APPENDIX D

**TABLE 35
WAIRARAPA SECONDARY SCHOOL ROLLS 2000 – 2010.**

Data extracted from 1 March FTE roll data for cluster schools prepared by the Data Management Unit and the Data Analysis Section Ministry of Education 2000 – 2009.

| | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| CHANEL | 250 | 273 | 275 | 254 | 279 | 330 | 346 | 386 | 391 | 386 | 385 |
| KURANUI | 565 | 551 | 515 | 489 | 484 | 491 | 472 | 459 | 467 | 475 | 459 |
| MAKOURA | 374 | 382 | 421 | 430 | 382 | 325 | 318 | 277 | 259 | 256 | 277 |
| RATHKEALE | 238 | 239 | 234 | 271 | 280 | 294 | 288 | 289 | 260 | 271 | 265 |
| STMATTHEWS | 310 | 312 | 320 | 329 | 331 | 336 | 333 | 329 | 335 | 328 | 335 |
| SOLWAY | 110 | 100 | 110 | 121 | 139 | 126 | 133 | 134 | 147 | 135 | 137 |
| WAIRARAPA | 1076 | 1052 | 1083 | 1064 | 1136 | 1157 | 1195 | 1174 | 1169 | 1124 | 1094 |
| TOTALS | 2923 | 2909 | 2958 | 2958 | 3031 | 3059 | 3085 | 3048 | 3028 | 2975 | 2952 |

APPENDIX E

LETTER FROM HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE MASSEY UNIVERSITY



Massey University

14 January 2009

Claire Hills
11 Cornwall Street
MASTERTON

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Dear Claire

Re: To Close or To Be Closed: To What Extent Can School Mergers and Closures Be Negotiated?

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 22 December 2008.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz".

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

Sylvia V Rumball (Professor)
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Research Ethics)

cc Prof Roger Openshaw
School of Educational Studies
PN900

Prof Howard Lee, HoS
School of Educational Studies
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Ms Tara Fisher
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APPENDIX F

INFORMATION LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE THESIS SURVEY

Close or be Closed: to what extent can school closures and mergers be contested and negotiated?

This is a case study on network reviews and EDIs in New Zealand rural and suburban communities with a particular focus on how mergers and closures have affected the community in the Masterton District Review.

I am undertaking a doctoral thesis on the above topic. Thank you for showing an interest in this research. Please read this information carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate thank you very much. If you decide not to participate there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and I thank you for considering my request.

What is the aim of the project?

My purpose is to examine and to analyse the events leading up to the network reviews and EDIs and the impact and outcomes for the educational communities concerned. Network reviews and EDIs have resulted in restructuring our schools and changing the history of education in New Zealand.

Recently you have been involved in a network review and/or EDI. I want to meet with people like you, to ask some questions and to listen to what participants like you have to say about network reviews and EDIs. I hope that your viewpoint will assist in contributing towards the research findings that will be helpful to other educational communities in the future who might be asked to go through the process of school mergers and closures.

The Ministry of Education announced a moratorium on EDIs from 2003-2008. This means that it is highly likely that in the first term of the present government the issue of school closures and mergers will once again become an educational issue.

What will the participants be asked to do?

Should you agree to take part in this research, I will ask you to fill out a survey and later maybe to meet me at a time and place you are comfortable with. Filling in the survey will help us to focus and will give us some points to start our discussion from.

However, if you wish and agree to contribute further then we could arrange to meet for a further two or three interviews. Consequently, although the Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

I have outlined the general issues I wish to discuss with you, however this process will involve an open question technique, where the precise nature of the questions to be asked has not been totally determined in advance, but will depend on the way the interview develops. In the event that a line of questioning does develop in a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable about, you are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular questions and also that you may withdraw from the process at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?

You may decide not to take part or withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?

The information collected will be related to school closures and mergers and related matters. While we are talking, I am likely to make some notes. I will use the information to gain an understanding of the issues surrounding school closures and mergers.

The results of this research may be published but any data included will not be linked to any specific participant.

You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish. The data collected will be securely stored. Only my supervisors will have access to it. Any raw data on which the results of this research depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

What if participants have any questions?

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above (Claire Hills) is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice Chancellor (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249 or e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

The supervisors of this thesis are:

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Yours faithfully

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APPENDIX G

THESIS SURVEY FOR 'CLOSE OR BE CLOSED.'

This appendix contains the survey questions. In this copy the spaces provided for the answers in the survey document itself have been omitted to save space.

SURVEY

Close or be Closed: To what extent can school closures and mergers be contested and negotiated?

A case study based on network reviews and EDIs in New Zealand rural and suburban communities with a particular focus on how mergers and closures have affected the community in the Masterton District Review.

INTRODUCTION

Recently you have experienced a school closure or merger, sometimes referred to as an EDI or a network review. EDIs and network reviews have resulted in restructuring our schools and changing the history of education in New Zealand.

Thank you for being willing to share your experience of an EDI/network review and for giving up your valuable time to answer this survey. There are no right or wrong answers. This survey is designed so that you can express your own viewpoint on any issue.

As you answer this survey please

- Circle the options that are your answers
- Use the spaces provided for your written answers
- If there is not enough space please continue your answer on the back of the page. Please include the question number as well if you do this.

Please circle the words that best describe how you experienced the EDI process:

Parent Principal teacher office staff teacher aide caretaker BOT Chairperson
parent representative on the BOT staff representative on the BOT NZEI official

NAME OF SCHOOL IN NETWORK REVIEW

REGION / LOCATION

NAME OF MERGED SCHOOL

BEFORE THE CLOSURE/MERGER PLANS WERE ANNOUNCED

- 1 In the five years before the closure/merger did your school roll
 - a. Decline
 - b. Increase
 - c. Stay the same
 - d. Don't know
- 2 Before the closure/merger proposal, was there any evidence that your school was dysfunctional or failing?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
- 3 How do you know?

THE MERGER CLOSURE IS ANNOUNCED

- 4 How did you find out that your school had been selected for merger/closure?
5 What were the reasons and/or benefits offered to explain the merger/closure?
6 To what extent did you agree with the reasons? Please indicate by circling a number from 1-10. 1 represents complete disagreement. 10 represents full agreement

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Any comments?

- 7 The Ministry of Education classifies a school with less than 150 pupils as a small school. Do you believe that bigger schools are generally better than smaller schools?
Yes No
8 Why do you think this way?

COMMUNICATION ABOUT SCHOOL MERGERS AND CLOSURES

- 9 Could you name any people you particularly associate with school mergers and closures?
10 What were you told about the merger?
11 Who told you about it?
12 How effective were the avenues of communication during the network review/EDI process? Please rate each of the following on a scale of 1-5 with 1 being the least effective and 5 being the most effective
- | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. The Ministry of Education | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| b. The BOT | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| c. The Principal and senior management of the school | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. The school newsletter | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| e. The media | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| f. The Internet | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
- 13 Did you find out later any important details that you would have wished to know earlier?
14 How was the school merger/closure handled by the Minister of Education?

PROTESTS

- 15 Was there any organised protest to the merger/closure proposal? Yes No
16 If your answer was Yes, what form did the protest take?
17 Who organised the protest
18 How was the protest organised?
19 Did the organised protest affect the final outcome, and, if so, in what ways?

WINNERS AND LOSERS

- 20 Were there any benefits your school gained from the merger? Yes No
21 If yes, what were these benefits?
22 Please list any improved educational opportunities for your children that resulted from the merger?
23 Has your child's education been adversely affected as a result of the merger/closure? Yes No
24 In some merger/closure processes racial issues were alleged to have influenced the outcomes. Did you notice any issues that arose that were related to racial issues of any sort? Please comment.
25 Did the school merger/closure result in additional expenses for you as a parent? Please describe any additional expenses that you incurred.
26 If the school transport arrangements for your child changed as a result of the merger/closure, please describe the changes and the affect that they had?

LETTING GO AND BEGINNING AGAIN

- 27 Describe any farewell rituals organised before the school closed.

- 28 Please describe any ways in which the existence of the merging school has been recognised in the new school.
- 29 Has your school introduced an enrolment scheme? Yes No

THE STRESS FACTOR

- 30 Did you find the school closure/merger experience stressful? Yes No
- 31 If yes, on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being the highest, how stressful would you rate a school closure/merger?
- 32 What sort of impact did the stress of school closures/mergers have on you personally?

REFLECTION

- 33 Based on your experience, what advice would you have for communities going through a school merger or a school closure process?
- 34 Based on your own experience, what advice would you offer to the Minister of Education about how communities experience a school merger or a school closure process?

FACILITIES

- 35 What happened to the buildings and facilities of your school after the merger/closure?
- 36 On a scale of 1-5, with 1 representing very poorly managed and 5 representing very well managed, how well do you think the issue of empty school buildings and facilities no longer needed after school mergers and closures has been managed?
- 37 Why do you think that way?
- 38 After the merger how important were each of the following and why?
- a. Financial issues
 - b. Property issues
 - c. Building a new school culture
- 39 Which questions not asked should have been part of this survey?

HOW DO LOCAL COMMUNITIES FUNCTION IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

- 40 Were you aware of the local community protests in the 1990s against the proposed closing of Masterton Hospital? Yes No
- 41 If yes, can you describe any similarities you see between the government policies in health to close or merge hospitals and government policies in education to close or merge schools?
- 42 Were you involved in any protest meetings or protest action taken in the Wairarapa in the years after the health reforms were introduced which resulted in proposals to reduce the health services in the Wairarapa and to restructure health administration? Yes No

QUESTIONS FOR SCHOOL STAFF

- 43 How early in the process was the staff consulted?
- 44 As a member of staff, how did you experience the closure/merger process?

NOTES

Introduction

The references used for this thesis have been varied and extensive. To assist the reader with manageability I have included the page references as well to assist with cross referencing where required.

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School Closures and Mergers: The New Zealand Context

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Introduction

As I have already explained in Chapter 3: Methodology, the sources consulted for this thesis were extensive. I have chosen to organise them in the Bibliography under major headings in order to assist the reader to engage in the importance of the regional and historical nature of the events and processes described.

Under unpublished primary material I have included unpublished letters and archival material.

Media Sources, such as newspapers and magazines have been organised in a separate section for a number of reasons. The newspaper sources in this thesis are very important and usually have clear links to the different chapters which are case study based. Since this thesis has a distinctly regional anchor, the newspapers have been listed separately in alphabetical order and the reports and feature articles listed in chronological order for ease of reference. This method allows the reader the opportunity to more easily discern patterns of community issues in the coverage of school closures and mergers over time both within and across regions.

Most media reports were attributed but some were not. I have followed the protocols recommended in *Chicago Manual of Style* and provided the reporter's name where known. This has also allowed an opportunity to notice gender employment patterns which are reflected in the reporting of educational issues in rural communities. Where the media report was not attributed I have provided the newspaper name first, as recommended in *Chicago Manual of Style* 2010, 14.207.

The Chicago Manual of Style, 2010, states that page numbers for newspaper citations may usually be omitted. The operative word is 'may'. I have chosen to include page numbers where available in order to show a clear pattern of page one coverage of school closure and merger issues in the local media. This is a reflection of the high importance placed on school closure and merger issues in rural areas. Since most of the newspapers only have one daily edition, page confusion is not a citation issue.

The secondary sources section includes published material relevant to the focus of the thesis, such as books, journal and magazine articles, research reports and scholarly research, both printed and on the internet, organised into subsections.

Under Ephemera I have included documents such as annual reports and occasional publications together with photographic material, all of which make a valuable contribution to our understanding of the educational contexts in which school closures and mergers occur.

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Photographs

The photographs published in this thesis came from several sources. I have used a selection from the hundreds of photographs I have taken together with photographs from other sources. I would particularly like to thank the following people and organisations for permission to use their photographs: *Wairarapa Times Age*, *Wairarapa News*, *Wairarapa Archive*, and Peter Nikolaison for the aerial photographs.