

## **Appendix III.**

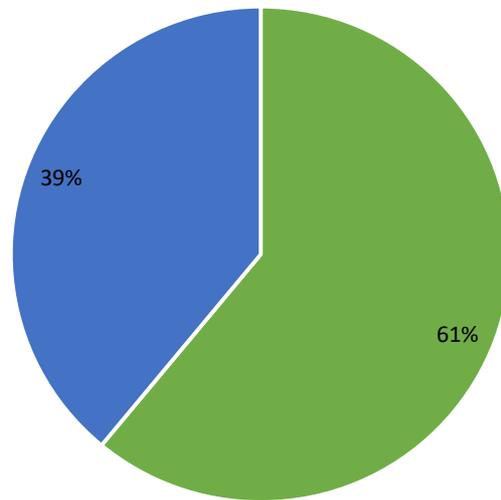
### **Proposed Merger Consultation Results Kelston and van Asch Deaf Education Centres**

#### **Stakeholder/Parent Responses and Emergent Themes**

##### **Face-to-Face Meetings**

**December 2018**

## Percentage of Stakeholders/Parents in Favour of Merger



■ In Favour of Merger    ■ Not In Favour of Merger

### Breakdown of Approval Ratings from Region

Place	Who	Date	% in favour of Merger
Wellington	Parents/Stakeholders	19/11/18	65%
Christchurch	Parents/Stakeholders	21/11/18	73%
Dunedin	Parents/Stakeholders	11/12/18	27%
Auckland	Deaf Community	17/12/18	78%

## **Emergent Themes and Overview**

Four meetings involving the Deaf Community were held in Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Auckland. These were well attended and generated lively discussion.

### **Wellington**

Many of those attending the Wellington meeting were cynical about whether there would be change, suggesting that the issue of one national organisation had been circulating since the time of the National Plan. Many at the meeting were frustrated that the agenda limited conversation to a Merger proposal and frequently speakers went off task to discuss the experience of deaf learners and the need for greater provision for Deaf learners in Wellington, including a Deaf base/campus and greater access to NZSL.

Several people said that in theory the merger was a good idea- one speaker called it a “brilliant” idea, however it was felt by many people, that without detail on the direction of change, or information on service delivery, they were not confident about saying yes to a merger.

The issue of isolation experienced by Deaf students came up many times. It was suggested that this was not such a problem in the days before mainstreaming. It was felt by many that deaf children today are isolated and unconnected and that a greater emphasis should be put on connecting these children via technology and immersion opportunities etc. This was linked to the need to give greater attention to the social and emotional wellbeing of students which was described as “pretty dire”. Several of those who spoke at the Wellington session expressed doubts about the merits of inclusive education and mainstreaming and were concerned that Deaf children were losing their Deaf identity and a sense of their Culture.

Those present also expressed a sense of urgency so that the process of change would not drag on and thereby fail to benefit those who needed support now. It was proposed that service delivery be looked at in tandem with the other issues being addressed next year, such as the recruitment of the Executive Principal and ongoing alignment work.

A request was made at the meeting that the Deaf Community in Wellington be fully engaged and consulted with on the changes going forward so that the Deaf voice could be heard.

### **Christchurch**

As could be expected, people attending this meeting were concerned about the future of existing local provision, particularly relating to the hubs. Moreover, the most dominant theme was the recruitment of the new Executive Principal. People recognised that this person would have the power to influence the shape of the Service Delivery Model. With this in mind, they asked if he/she would be Deaf or have experience of the Deaf Community/Culture have a bias towards oralism and would Deaf interests be represented on the selection/interview panel. Other concerns were:-

- Property - It was noted that while KDEC has brand new modern buildings and van Asch buildings were older. It was asked if the MoE would be upgrading facilities at Sumner. Where would the new base be located, Christchurch, Auckland or somewhere else? Concern that all the managers would operate out of an Auckland base.
- Services – Would the proposed model look similar to the Blennz model?
- Staff – People were concerned that staff would have a greater workload after a merger

- It was asked if the residences at Sumner would be closed down.
- Museum – It was pointed out that the heritage of the Sumner site is really special. Would we be merging both Museums also?
- New name- People asked if the Board would be consulting with the local community about this?
- It was queried whether under a national organisational structure, the Board would be sensitive to the fact that NZSL has regional differences/variances.

## **Dunedin**

The tone of this meeting was one of frustration from the onset. Several people expressed their exasperation that so many meetings with the group had happened over the years, but there never seemed to be any positive outcomes – change was promised but nothing ever happened. One parent vented that there was a disconnect between what the DEC was saying to them and what was actually delivered. It was asserted that while it was well and good to sort leadership and structures, this did not appear to translate into a tangible difference for families and the services they received, neither did it lift student achievement.

People also expressed extreme frustration with the length of time it took for anything to change. The Database was cited as an example of this, with the assertion that despite the DEC trying to get its database in order, 3 years down the line, it was still a work in progress. Such was their low faith in the Board, several people came close to removing themselves from the meeting.

Resourcing also featured heavily on this group's agenda and people were vexed by what they perceived as a one-way discussion around this issue. Acknowledging the challenges any merger would bring, they queried whether there was enough resourcing for what had to be done. This evolved into a discussion about Budget 18 initiatives and advocacy required to achieve this, but underlying the discussion was the ongoing concern about data, the significant number of students not included and how critical it was for the Board to sort this issue.

The opinion was strongly voiced that the Board had not been effective in collecting data that might have unlocked additional resourcing from the MoE. It was suggested that more resourcing may have been available if the Board had been reporting on the ASSIST children also. It was felt by many that the Board holds inadequate information on this cohort and does not know who its students are. The impact of a merger on the South Island was queried. As answers to some questions posed were not being provided, there was a perception that information was being deliberately withheld.

Those present discussed how the need to improve communication had been raised persistently as an issue for several years and felt frustrated that in their view very little has changed.

Comment was made that the merger and structural change process seemed to be neglecting to put the children first. The point was made that children who are deaf or hard of hearing, are still struggling to access education in the same way as their hearing peers.

It was felt that while the Merger may be seen by Board as a structure for change, parents want to understand what the key outcomes are. They understand and desire a seamless

service but feel they need to advocate for their own children and region for better service delivery. Many present expressed their frustration that the consultation was merely a bureaucratic process and were sceptical that anything would deliver real change. Others said that it was difficult to comment when they had not been presented with tangibles e.g. where would the school be based, who would run it, what impact there would be on services, would property change?

While it was acknowledged that support in Otago had improved of late, it was pointed out that there are still children in Otago who do not receive services and schools in Otago that still do not know how to access services.

It was stated that families are experiencing battle fatigue and believe promises about services are made repeatedly but don't eventuate. There was a strong consensus that people were worried about what would happen during the duration any change process and the risk that services would stagnate if the process took a year or longer to work through.

## **Auckland**

The final meeting involving the Deaf Community was held in Auckland and was very positive. Those present acknowledged the good work being done to support their children and appreciated that they were being consulted by the Board and Ministry. It was noted that the idea of one national organisation had been around for many years and people were happy this seemed to be moving again. While some people felt that Deaf Education was failing deaf people, it was noted that the current Board seems genuinely committed to bringing positive change and looking at best practice internationally.

A strong theme expressed by most people present was the vulnerability of Deaf Culture and Deaf language. It was felt that over the years, Deaf Culture was steadily being eroded and the plea was made that any changes would consider the importance of supporting and resourcing NZSL going forward. In particular, the value of immersion opportunities was highlighted. The case for more competent signers to support parents was made eloquently.

The remark was also made that stakeholder groups such as Hearing House should work more closely with other stakeholders and the Deaf Community. It was acknowledged that where resources were limited, better use could, and should, be made of networking and collaborative working.

Questions were asked about potential increases to resourcing and whether more funding could be made available for language development for children aged 0-5 yrs. Some felt that without a funding increase from the Ministry, a Merger would not improve support for students.

The needs of Maori learners were also highlighted, and this was linked to inequity in how these children were supported. The importance of the Maori at Kelston was also signalled.

The history and heritage of Deaf Education in New Zealand was discussed with affection and respect. It was felt that any Merger process would need to safeguard this as well as the great things happening at both DEC's.