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Ministry canned \$3m plan

Official documents reveal expensive process to relocate school before idea was abandoned

EDUCATION
Cate Macintosh

The Ministry of Education spent more than \$3 million on consultants to develop a new, permanent home for a Christchurch Māori immersion school – only to abandon it and opt to permanently fix the earthquake-damaged, leaking, mould-ridden buildings instead.

In the past five years, the ministry has spent a total of \$3.06m on “consultancy services for new school development” and a total of \$2.8m on ministry- and school-led remediation of the buildings, information provided to *The Press* by the ministry shows.

The Te Pā Rākaihautū board has for 10 years battled increasing problems with its freezing earthquake-damaged and mould-ridden temporary school – the

former Linwood Intermediate School – while working with the ministry towards a new permanent site.

Last week, a 9-year-old girl gashed her knee in her classroom, where metal trim had been laid to secure old carpet to the floor, while remediation of mould discovered in May is uncompleted.

In July, a plan for a co-located school on a new city site and land at Diamond Harbour – the third plan in 10 years – was turned down by the ministry’s school property unit.

Instead, it would remediate the former Linwood Intermediate buildings as a permanent solution, the board was told.

The proposal for Te Hapū o Ngāti Wheke at Rāpaki to purchase Christchurch City Council land at Diamond Harbour, and lease it back to the ministry for the kura, was also turned down.

Board chair and founder Rangimarie Parata-Takurua said the ministry’s decision to abandon the project was irresponsible.

“I think it’s irresponsible to string a community along for so long. That was a three-year investment of significant resource, both in terms of money that the ministry has poured into this, but also our time and energy.

“This journey has been too long already, and it’s exhausting, and our kids deserve better.”

Parata-Takurua struggled to come up with a reasonable explanation for the kura’s experience.

“It’s almost unexplainable. It’s hard to distinguish between incompetence and discrimination – there’s both things going on here.”

Ministry chief executive for school prop-

erty Jerome Sheppard said the project to develop a permanent solution for Te Pā Rākaihautū in 2022 followed a scoping and planning process that involved several consultants.

“Several sites were being considered, and solutions were focused on new buildings and sites with cost estimates up to \$90 million.”

He said it was a “legacy” project, and had undergone a significant change in direction towards “maintaining existing assets and using standardised planning and design solutions”.

“Whilst some of the consultants’ work will not be needed, the change in direction will enable a project to be delivered at about one-third of the original cost estimate.”

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MPs should do the right thing, says Tamihere

The Te Pāti Māori president says rogue MPs Mariameno Kapa-Kingi and Tākuta Ferris should leave the party

Story, page 2

Te Pāti Māori MP Tākuta Ferris, left, and party president John Tamihere, right, are at odds over the party’s future.

PHOTOS: BRUCE MACKAY/RYAN ANDERSON/STUFF



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