

27 November 2015

Dear parents and caregivers,

Ngā mihinui ki a koutou.

I wanted to update you on a number of discussions I have been having with the many users of the school site as these arrangements affect our students, staff and the community. As part of this I also need to update you on restrictions around the use of funds from the sale of the farm in 2007.

As you may be aware, all users of school land and buildings need to have in place current Property Occupancy Documents (PODs) and leases that detail the rights and responsibilities of the parties involved. These include information about such things as insurance, liabilities, maintenance and health and safety, and need to be kept updated and be compliant with Ministry of Education requirements. As part of my role as Commissioner I have worked with staff to review these as the school's PODs need updating. We will be working with the external parties to develop new agreements and ensure they are both current and compliant.

RHS Nursery School

In recognition of the special relationship that exists between Rangiora High School and the RHS Nursery School, we made it a priority to update the RHS Nursery School POD and prepare a new lease. This is nearly ready to be signed. We are very pleased that we are able to provide security of tenure to this very valued part of the Rangiora community.

North Canterbury Sport and Recreation Trust

As you will be aware there is a lot of potential to upgrade this valuable facility but we are not able to progress any discussions about renovating and upgrading the facility until a compliant and current POD is in place with the Trust. Fortunately we have been able to provide additional changing rooms as the existing ones were under significant pressure. The new POD needs to reflect the changes made since 1989 and agreement needs to be reached on the liabilities for maintenance for both parties. The Trust and I look forward to updating you next year on our progress and will be beginning discussions to ensure a bright future for this great community resource.

North Canterbury Community College

We have started to review the documentation for the North Canterbury Community College's use of the buildings on the farm side of the school. There is a lot of potential to strengthen our links with the College to assist students with transition so we will be working closely together to make this compliant as soon as possible next year.

Hope Trust / Rangiora Community Gardens

Over recent years the Hope Trust has been running the Community Gardens at 115 East Belt, which is in the property plan to be redeveloped for school use in the future. The Memorandum of Understanding expired in

the middle of the year but we are very pleased that we have been able to extend their use for another year to support them to find a suitable alternative for this great community initiative.

Milton Reserve

Milton Reserve has been leased by the school for several years for grazing stock and you may have seen the article in a local newspaper about the North Canterbury Equine Trust and the future development of an Equine Centre and facility for RDA. Des Moore, the chair of RDA, met with me recently to talk about their plans and how securing a long-term lease on this land would assist this. The Farm Manager, Property Manager, Head of Land-based Studies, Acting Principal and I have discussed the school's use of this land and considered what our future needs are. Currently the land is used by Rangiora High School for grazing about 10 cattle and does not have any educational purpose. It was noted that the existing farm had the capacity to provide grazing for these animals and that the off-site location was not particularly convenient when animals needed to be transported between sites. After looking at different options, it was agreed that relinquishing the lease would not disadvantage the school's farming operations or students. We have since given notice to Waimakariri District Council, which will allow the North Canterbury Equine Trust and RDA to take over the lease and develop another great community resource.

Caveat on Use of Funds for Purchase of New Farmland

As you may know, it has long been understood in the community that there was a caveat in place requiring the funds from the 2007 sale of a re-zoned parcel of land, south of Kippenberger Avenue, to be used for a future farm purchase. When I was reviewing all of the legal documentation for the use of the school property, I could find no documentation relating to this on the school's files.

For full understanding, I asked the school's lawyers, Wynn Williams, for information about the caveat and was given a legal opinion last week that no caveat was registered on any current or historical title searches of any land purchased or sold by the school.

I also consulted with the Ministry and found that they have no legal record of the caveat, but had asked the school for documentation around the caveat on a number of occasions since 2012.

I have subsequently met with Colin and Betty Walls and retired Professor of English at Canterbury University, Dr David Gunby, all alumni of Rangiora High School. David is the author of the Rangiora High School centenary books. His research into the history of the school farm shows the school Board first leased land in 1910 and subsequently leased or purchased various farmland to "provide practical experience to pupils taking the agriculture course and supplement the theoretical teaching of the agriculture instructors." We agreed there is no record of land being gifted, but in 1930 the Government of the day matched locally raised funds of three thousand pounds to enable two blocks of land to be purchased.

I realise that this will come as a surprise and so wanted to share with you the legal opinion, copies of titles and a summary of the farm history. You can click [here](#) to access them.

Whilst the existing farm and land-based studies continue to be a highly valued part of this school community and the school's special identity, this means that the significant funds that the school holds are not legally tagged for spending on more farmland. However, I want to stress that this does NOT mean that they cannot be spent on a new farm.

Instead what it means is that the school has some discretion over what it can spend its resources on to best meet the needs of its students. If analysis shows that additional land would have educational value for its students, then this would be considered. Conversely, however, if it was felt that it was in the best interests of the students to have upgraded facilities or additional resources in other areas of the school, then this would need to be considered too.

Regardless, I would like to reassure you that no decisions on the use of this multi-million dollar asset will be made over the next few months and that the funds will continue to earn interest in the school's account with that interest supporting the school. Additionally no decisions will be made without full analysis of what would benefit current and future Rangiora High School students, which is what all decisions need to be tied to. I will keep you updated on this and provide any further information that comes to hand about this matter.

I realise that you may have questions about this email and that the information about the caveat will come as a surprise to some. As always you can contact me either via my email bev.moore@xtra.co.nz or through the school office. I will endeavour to get back to you as soon as possible, but please note that I will be away from 6-20 December and not able to respond during that period.

In the meantime I will be in touch about this and any other matter as needed.

Ngā mihi.

Yours sincerely,

Bev Moore
Commissioner
Rangiora High School