

16 April 2009

SUBMISSION TO CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL RE PROPOSED COMMUNITY LIBRARY FOR ARANUI

From: John Rohs
(Principal, Aranui High School)

On behalf of :

Aranui High School Board of Trustees
Aranui School
Avondale School
St James School
Wainoni School
Aranui Community Learning Centre

I wish to express support for the proposed Aranui Community Library as a positive step forward in recognising the special needs of the Aranui community.

In particular, I wish to touch on the library as enhancing the wellbeing of the Aranui community as well as enhancing the educational needs of the Aranui community.

It is a well known fact that libraries act as focal points in a community. In a community, such as Aranui, which is characterised by serious levels of deprivation, the siting of a library here will give the community a sense of pride and a place where positive community interaction can take place. In this sense, a library can act as a meeting place for the community and its organisations, not simply as a repository of books, but one which provides a warm and sheltering environment, in which families can gather, learn together and enjoy the recreational aspects which libraries nurture. Outside of churches, there are few environments which provide for this social need in quite the same way.

As a significant number of families in Aranui are limited economically, and often without the means of transport to access neighbouring libraries (the closest being New Brighton and Linwood) there is a positive incentive for families to use a neighbourhood library which is within easy reach of their homes. It will also give families, who have no exposure to regular library use, the opportunity to become regular or consistent library users. In this regard, the development of a library which has a particular outreach to Maori and Pasifika is extremely important.

From an educational perspective, the benefits would be incalculable. A library for Aranui would provide young people and their families with access to a range of reading/literacy resources, well beyond what any of their schools would be able to provide, and in addition, access to reading on the weekend and in the holiday breaks, which for children add up to 12 weeks per year. The schools represented in this submission see the opportunity to work together with a local library as hugely beneficial. It would provide wonderful opportunities

to collaborate with library staff and to co-ordinate initiatives across the schools in terms of the promotion of reading.

In my submission to Council in 2008 I referred to the recent study undertaken by the Ministry of Education (Pegasus Achievement Cluster) which identified serious levels of literacy deprivation among the young people of the Aranui community. Those levels put many children at least two years behind the expected levels for their chronological age in their reading ability. This extends right through to the junior levels at high school age. It is the view of all the schools concerned that working together with the educational agencies involved, the library can play a vital role in enhancing literacy, as it can adopt a community approach with a focus on whanau/family, to enhance the work being done by schools. In this sense, the library can promote learning in a positive way, in a non-threatening way which is inclusive of all parts of the community – from the most elderly, through to students of pre-school and early childhood age.

From the perspective of the Aranui Community Learning Centre, the library based here in Aranui will bring a range of enhancements in terms of the focus on adult education, which is a significant operation, currently in a state of expansion under newly appointed director Roy Tikao, and who brings a strong Ngai Tahu perspective to meeting community and adult learning needs. The vision of the Aranui Community Learning Centre would be to work very closely with the library, to ensure that both organisations could draw on the resources and potential that each brings to promoting adult education.

In brief, I wish to reiterate the view that the concept of the Aranui library is one which the educational community of Aranui is very excited about and which could bring tremendous benefits to the community as a whole. I would be delighted to have the opportunity to briefly address the submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Rohs', written in a cursive style.

John Rohs
PRINCIPAL