

Briefing report

Education Review Office (ERO): What ERO understands about the Closure of Pacific Services 2019-2020

Date	7 December 2020
Security Level	N/A
ERO Priority	Medium
ERO Reference	M20-48
Date requested	Minister initiated
Date due	Minister initiated
Proactive release	Recommended

Addressee	Action sought	Deadline
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**Associate
Minister of
Education**

It is recommended that you

- a) **note** ERO sees investment in high quality early learning provision as one of the most significant public policy responses to raising long term outcomes for Pacific learners in Aotearoa
- b) **note** high quality early learning must affirm and reflect the distinctive languages, cultures and identities of the learner and their community
- c) **note** ERO's commitment to ensuring high quality community delivered and culturally appropriate early learning experiences for Pacific children
- d) **note** this paper identifies key issues in service quality and sustainability as:
- e) **note** Government has recently put in place a number of strategies and resourcing to address ongoing concerns related to viability and quality
- f) **agree to meet with ERO officials to discuss this paper**
- g) **note** that this briefing is recommended for proactive release

Briefing report



Attachments:

***Education Review Office (ERO):
What ERO understands about the
Closure of Pacific Services 2019-
2020***



Comments:

Minister's Office to complete

Noted	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Approved	<input type="checkbox"/>
Referred to:	
Date signed by Minister:	

Our Ref: M20-48

7 December 2020

Hon Aupito William Sio
Associate Minister of Education

What ERO understands about the Closure of Pacific Services 2019-2020

Purpose

1. This paper responds to your request from ERO regarding the context of Pacific Early Learning Services and the reason that these services close. You are asked to note the content of this briefing and the work that both ERO and the Ministry are doing to ensure the provision of high-quality early learning programmes for the Pacific community.

Background

2. As we have outlined in ERO's Briefing for the Incoming Minister, our own Pacific strategy and, as committed to in the Government's Early Learning Action Plan, high quality early learning provision is critical to ensuring all children in New Zealand are successful and able to contribute to Aotearoa's social, economic and cultural foundations.
3. Quality early learning programmes have been shown to be one of the best public policy investments that governments can make in education and more broadly in social and economic policy. Quality provision has the capacity to strengthen the role of families as their children's first teachers, through supporting increased language, maths and social skills. In the long term this knowledge can translate to better life outcomes by reducing achievement gaps, improving health outcomes, and boosting lifetime earnings¹. The effects of high-quality early learning experiences have been shown to last well into and beyond the schooling years.
4. Factors seen as most impactful are those related to the quality of the interactions between children and staff, the use of open-ended questions, facilitation of children's use of oral language and vocabulary and teachers engaging with children in play.
5. Quality early learning programmes can also support children in developing a strong sense of their own identities, languages, and cultures.

¹ Heckman, J. (Spring, 2011). *"The Economics of Inequity, the value of Early Childhood Education"*, American Educator

6. At the same time, poor quality provision may damage and compound disadvantage among learners.
7. Pacific children enrol and participate in services that include Pacific led services and programmes and those provided more generally within Pacific communities and neighbourhoods. Across these different offerings there is a vast range of services, including those that operate for profit or are community based and not-for-profit. ERO has previously documented its concern regarding the disproportionate number of poor-quality services it finds who operate within Pacific neighbourhoods.

Pacific Education and Care Services

8. Across New Zealand there are currently 113 licenced Pacific Education and Care Services. In a context of over 4700 early learning services nationally, Pacific services represent 2.4% of all early learning services. A key feature of Pacific early learning services is that many operate as stand-alone services. This often means that they are limited in terms of the management and support structures and resources that larger corporate services have available to them.
9. The 113 services described here include:

Region	Total	Samoaan	Tongan	Cook Island Māori	Niue	Fiji	Tokelau	Multi- Pacific
Auckland	85	36	21	8	4	1	2	13
Hamilton	1		1					
Tokoroa	4	1		3				
Napier	1	1						
Hastings	1	1						
Wanganui	1							1
Palmerston North	2	1	1					
Wellington	10	8		1				1
Christchurch	5	4	1					
Dunedin	1	1						
Invercargill	2	1						1
	113	54	24	12	4	1	2	16

The context of closures relating to Pacific Early Learning Services and why this is happening?

10. The closure of Pacific services over the past year is complex. Most closures of services usually occur because of poor practice. Generally, these services have had a long-term relationship with ERO and the Ministry of Education. This involves reviews, professional support, guidance through the Strengthening Early Learning Opportunities (SELO) programme or other agency inputs. However, closure usually occurs when sufficient improvement has not been made. The exception to long term intervention is when the health and safety of

children is immediately compromised. This will often warrant urgent action to close the service.

11. Closures can be voluntary. Services have in some instances made this decision independently. Closures often result from ERO recommendations to the Ministry of Education to reassess the service's licence. Reassessment usually follows a phased approach where every effort is made to enable the service to address identified issues. During this time the status of licences might become provisional or be suspended. Cancellation of a licence results in the cessation of all Ministry funding and as this is generally the main source of funding, this leads to closure.
12. The term 'closure' can be defined as a permanent end to something. However, early learning services can work towards reinstating a full licence and reopen. Some services reopen with a name change or under new ownership. In these cases, ERO and Ministry of Education work collaboratively to support services to improve their practice and regain their full licence.
13. Over the past year, three Pacific services have closed while other services have had their licences temporarily suspended or made provisional. In these cases, services have struggled to address historical issues because their capacity and capability to improve is limited.
14. The table below is an overview of services that:
 - had their licences reassessed
 - closed for a short time before reopening
 - closed permanently.

Name of ECE Service	Ministry of Education Profile Number	Self-description	Date of last ERO review and return time	Date of Closure/suspension/provisional	Issues	Comments re Closure
PIPC A'oga Amata Newtown	60359	Samoan ECE Service	2/10/15 Well placed	22 May 2019	Quality of teaching and centre management.	CLOSED
Akoteu Vaeva e Manava	20051	Tongan ECE Service	22/11/17 Requires further development	22 May 2019	Quality of teaching and centre management. Disconnect with board.	CLOSED
St Anthony Pacific Islands Catholic Childcare Centre	25309	Samoan ECE Service	9/10/15 Well placed	5 Feb 2019 Closed 22/12/19	Governance issues.	CLOSED
Pasifika at Home 2 HBEC service	46490	Pacific Is. ECE Service	23/6/17 Well placed	11 Nov 2020 New Owners	Governance and management issues	Not a Pacific service anymore. New owners 'Wee Wisdom/Love of Learning' - Operating
Pasifika at Home 1 HBEC service	46289	Pacific Is. ECE Service	23/6/17 Well placed	24 Jan 2020 New Owners	Governance and management issues	Not a Pacific service anymore. New owners 'Wee Wisdom/Love of Learning' - Operating
Fa'amasani Aoga Amata	10147	Samoan ECE Service	21/5/20 Not well placed	19 Aug 2020 Suspended	Governance issues. Financial, performance management. Health and safety issues	Licence expired 24/6/2020 Reopened and is currently on Provisional licence
Nafanua Aoga Amata	20462	Samoan ECE Service	13/9/17 Well placed	12 March 2020 – provisional	Aspects of quality of teaching to improve	Still operating

Samoa Moni I Lana Gagana Aoga Amata	10095	Samoan ECE Service	28/6/18 Well placed	17 Dec 2019 Suspended licence for 18 months. Health and Safety	Aspects of quality of teaching to improve	Still operating
Pulotu Aoga Amata	10097	Samoan ECE Service	26/7/16 Requires further development	4 July 2019	Governance issues, health and safety and performance management	Ministry of Education suspended licence

What the Government is Doing to Address these Issues

15. Both ERO and the Ministry of Education work very hard to ensure that underperforming services are supported so that they can thrive. ERO's Pacific Strategy has specifically singled out a commitment to support the quality of early learning services serving Pacific communities and neighbourhoods. This has also been identified as a key initiative within the Government's Early Learning Action Plan which was released in December 2019.
16. Action 5.4 of that Plan specifically looks to strengthen governance and management support for Pacific language and other community early learning services. A critical element in this regard may be searching out options which maintain the distinctive linguistic, cultural and religious base of a service but achieve some greater economies of scale to ensure maintenance of service quality, ongoing viability and manage risks. Examples of such infrastructure, such as the Pacific Business Trust, might have significant relevance for this sector.
17. Two additional elements in the Plan are worthy of note here. There is an intention in the Action Plan to review the government's approach to equity funding for services, serving disadvantaged communities. This has the potential to see some not-for-profit Pacific services better resourced and therefore better able to invest in staff and management capability. Secondly, the introduction of network planning could see a deliberate structuring into provision of services that cater to the needs of Pacific communities.

ERO's New Approach to Review in Early Learning Services

18. To reduce and eliminate the closure of early learning services and in particular Pacific services, ERO's revised ECE methodology is likely to better support Pacific services to comply with all licensing requirements and improve the quality of teaching and learning outcomes. This includes strengthened relationships, coordination and collaboration with the Ministry of Education and other government agencies. Embedded in the approach is the expectation that services will have an embedded quality improvement plan which addresses issues or opportunities for development which we identify through the course of a review. This should improve the alignment of support for ECE services.
19. Specifically, ERO's approach to evaluating in Early Learning Services encompasses three purposes:
 - Akanuku/Assurance reviews-evaluation for accountability including compliance with regulatory requirements
 - Akarangi/Quality Evaluations-evaluation for improvement (the strengthening of institutions and programmes through the provision of evaluative support)

- Akamatua/Evaluating, Excellence and Evaluation- generating knowledge (the acquisition of a more profound understanding in some specific area or field).
20. For Pacific services to proactively achieve high quality practices this requires educators to know what is working well for children, in this place, at this time and what they need to do next to achieve equity and excellence.
 21. A strong focus on what is working well or not working well, and why, should reduce and eliminate the closure of Pacific services and reshape and redirect Pacific services to be exemplary, high quality early learning services rich in Pacific cultures, languages and identities.
 22. Through its last Budget the Government committed \$80,236million toward lifting outcomes for Pacific learners. An element of this funding is for supporting quality in the provision of Pacific early learning services.

*How much?
↓ what activities?*

Recommendations

23. It is recommended that you:

- | | |
|---|--------------|
| a) note ERO sees investment in high quality early learning provision as one of the most significant public policy responses to raising long term outcomes for Pacific learners in Aotearoa | noted |
| b) note high quality early learning must affirm and reflect the distinctive languages, cultures and identities of the learner and their community | noted |
| c) note ERO's commitment to ensuring high quality, community delivered and culturally appropriate early learning experiences for Pacific children | noted |
| d) note this paper identifies key issues in service quality and sustainability as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - insufficient economies of scale in the operation of many services - governance and management issues - financial viability concerns - risks to children's health and safety - quality of teaching practice - internal processes for monitoring performance | noted |
| e) note Government has recently put in place a number of strategies and resourcing to address ongoing | noted |

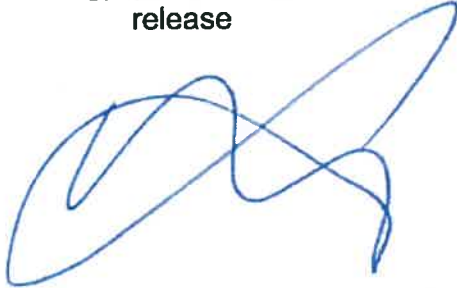
concerns related to viability and quality

f) **agree** to meet with ERO officials to discuss this paper

g) **note** that this briefing is recommended for proactive release

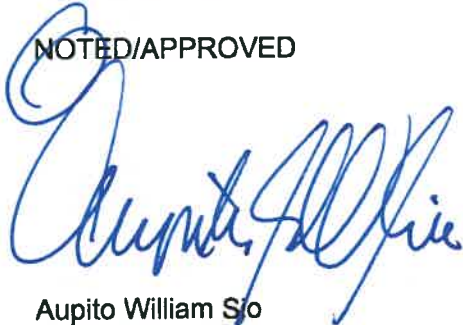
 agree/disagree

noted



Nicholas Pole
Chief Executive

NOTED/APPROVED



Aupito William Sio
Associate Minister of Education

15 / 12 / 2020