



**Te Tāhuhu o  
te Mātauranga**  
Ministry of Education

Joe Clarke

[fyi-request-34689-892f4ebb@requests.fyi.org.nz](mailto:fyi-request-34689-892f4ebb@requests.fyi.org.nz)

27 May 2026

Tēnā koe Joe

**OIA: [GEMS-47930 & 48106] – Information concerning future of Westbridge School**

Thank you for your email of 29 April 2026 to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) requesting the following information:

*Following the end of public consultation about the closure of Westbridge Residential School, please provide:*

- 1. any summaries/analysis/reports about the consultation feedback*
- 2. any communication/advice between the Secretary, Deputy Secretary Policy, Deputy Secretary Education Services, Deputy Secretary Learning Support and Director for Auckland about closure of Westbridge Residential School*
- 3. any correspondence/advice with the Minister or other government agencies about closure of Westbridge Residential School.*
- 4. Please also advise when the decision about closure of Westbridge Residential School will be released.*

Thank you too for your email of 13 May 2026 to the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) requesting the following information:

- 5. Please provide copies of all submissions received in response to the proposed closure of Westbridge Residential School.*

Your requests have been combined, numbered for ease of reference and considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

Regarding **part 1** of your request, the Ministry is in the process of producing a summary of the submissions received, which will be published once the Minister has reached her decision regarding the future of Westbridge School. It is therefore necessary to refuse part 1 of your request under section 18(g) of the Act, as the

information requested is not yet held by the Ministry, and I have no grounds for believing that it is either held by, or more closely related to the functions of, another department or organisation subject to the Act.

Information in scope of **parts 2 and 3** of your request is withheld in full under section 18(a) by virtue of section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act, to maintain the constitutional conventions for the time being which protects the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials.

The information at issue relates to advice, analysis, and recommendations prepared for the Minister of Education regarding the proposed closure of Westbridge Residential School. The Minister's decision-making process is still underway and no final decision has been made.

Release of this information at this stage would be likely to:

- Prejudice the Minister's ability to consider advice in confidence, including the full range of options, risks, and impacts associated with the proposed closure.
- Undermine the effective and orderly decision-making process, by placing incomplete and evolving advice into the public domain before it has been fully considered.
- Inhibit the free and frank expression of views by officials, who must be able to provide candid advice (including identifying risks, uncertainties, and alternative options) to support robust decision-making.
- Create a real risk of public misunderstanding or speculation, given that the material reflects preliminary positions and does not represent a settled view or final decision.

In these circumstances, we consider that withholding is necessary to uphold the constitutional convention that Ministers can receive and consider advice in confidence prior to making decisions.

We have also considered whether the public interest in release outweighs the need to withhold this information, as required under section 9(1) of the Act.

We acknowledge that there is a significant public interest in transparency and accountability, particularly in relation to decisions affecting students, whānau, staff, and the wider community connected to Westbridge Residential School.

However, we consider that this public interest is best served, at this stage, by ensuring that the Minister can make a well-informed decision based on full and candid advice. Premature disclosure of that advice would be likely to compromise the quality and integrity of the decision-making process.

We note that once the Minister's decision has been made, there will be a stronger public interest in the release of information explaining the basis for that decision, and we expect that further information will be able to be made available at that time.

You may be interested in a Report provided to the Minister of Education at the end of 2025, regarding the future of Westbridge School which is publicly available and can be found at the following link:

**[ER 1354661 \(Signed\) Consideration of the future of Westbridge Residential School-final-\\_Redacted.pdf](#)**

Regarding **part 4** of your request, the Ministry does not hold a specific date for when the Minister will reach her decision. We therefore refuse this aspect of your request under section 18(g) of the Act as set out above.

Information in scope of **part 5 of your request** is withheld in full under section 18(a) by virtue of section 9(2)(ba)(ii) of the Act to protect information which is subject to an obligation of confidence, where disclosure would be likely to prejudice the supply of similar information, or information from the same source, and it is in the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied.

The Ministry considers that, given the sensitivity of the issue under consultation, most submissions have been made with the expectation of discretion. Some of the submissions include personal and private information which, even if redacted to preserve anonymity, may still risk disclosing the identity of the submitter to others in their community. We consider that disclosure of these submissions could have a negative impact on vulnerable students and their families. We also consider that many contributors would not have participated if they thought that their submissions would be published.

In terms of the public interest that such information should continue to be supplied, the Ministry relies on the willingness of the public to respond candidly in these consultation processes. We consider that publication of such sensitive information would inhibit the public's willingness to fully participate in future consultations, and there is a strong public interest in preserving public trust in the confidentiality of these processes.

As required under section 9(1) of the Act, we have considered the public interest in the information withheld, of transparency of consultation processes and understanding the range of views received. We believe that this public interest is mitigated by our intention to publish a comprehensive summary of submissions and therefore does not outweigh the need to withhold the information at this time.

Thank you again for your emails. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review my decision on your request, in accordance with section 28 of the Act. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or to Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Blatchford', written in a cursive style.

Simon Blatchford  
Manager, Network Strategy and Planning  
**Te Mahau | Education Services**