

ISSUES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REOPENING OF ST STEPHEN'S SCHOOL

*A Submission to the Feasibility Working
Group*



TE RAUHITANGA O TE MANO O TIPENE:
*THE ST STEPHEN'S SCHOOL OLD-BOYS
ASSOCIATION*

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Executive Summary

1. This submission was prepared by *Te Rauhitanga o te Mano o Tipene: The St Stephen's School Old-Boys Association* on behalf of the old-boys and supporters of St Stephen's School.
2. It considers options and opportunities for reopening St Stephen's School and is designed to inform the work of the Feasibility Working Group and the St Stephen's/Queen Victoria Trust Board.
3. The submission is based on various meetings, discussions, and hui which have taken place since 2000 and has recently been informed by a more structured research process.
4. A number of contextual issues attached to the reopening of the school are discussed and are used to formulate our key conclusions and recommendations.
5. Twelve principles for reopening are identified and are suggested as primary considerations for any redevelopment initiative. These include:
 - Contemporary Relevance
 - Safety
 - Academic Excellence
 - Global Citizens
 - A Point of Difference
 - The Role of Sports and St Stephen's
 - Tikanga Māori
 - Spiritual Development
 - Building on Tradition
 - Sustainability
 - Leadership; and,
 - Innovation

6. Five recommendations are made. These reflect the collective views of the old-boys and supporters and are designed to aid efforts to re-open and re-establish St Stephen's School. These recommendations include;

- Recommendation One: Reopening St Stephen's School
- Recommendation Two: Location and Emphasis
- Recommendation Three: Securing Support
- Recommendation Four: Developing an Appropriate Model; and,
- Recommendation Five: Active Utilisation of the Old Boys Association

Preamble

<i>Whakataka te hau ki te uru</i>	<i>Cease now the wind from the West</i>
<i>Whakataka te hau ki te tonga</i>	<i>Cease also the wind from the South</i>
<i>Kia makinakina ki uta</i>	<i>Let the murmuring breeze sigh over the</i>
<i>Kia mataratara ki tai</i>	<i>land. Let the stormy seas subside</i>
<i>Kia hi ake ana</i>	<i>And let the red dawn come with a</i>
<i>he ata-kura</i>	<i>sharpened air, A touch of frost</i>
<i>He tio, he huka, he hau-hunga.</i>	<i>And the promise of a glorious day.</i>

The tauparapara above is part of an ancient karakia, a chant often rehearsed when Māori gather before commencing the business of the day. Essentially, it expresses a hope for better things to come and the desire to move forward, onwards, and upwards. The issues described in this submission reflect similar desires and aspirations - an essential hope for the future and brighter days ahead.

However, the tauparapara has other implications as well. Progress does not come without effort. Just as a 'glorious day' compensates for the wind, stormy seas, and a 'touch of frost', so development is just recompense for effort, endeavour, and application. Further, the tauparapara can be seen to add its own optimism – that while the current challenges surrounding the re-establishment of St Stephen's School are not insignificant, the 'promise of a glorious day' reflects the possibility of new growth, a new school, and a brighter future for our rangatahi.

The Focus of this Submission

This submission has been prepared by *Te Rauhitanga o te Mano o Tipene: The St Stephen's Old boys Association* and on behalf old-boys and supporters of the school. It is designed to inform the work of the Feasibility Working Group (FWG) and more broadly the St Stephen's/Queen Victoria Trust Board (SSQVTB) in their deliberations on the reopening of the school.

Rationale for Reopening

The reasons for reopening St Stephen's School can be rationalised in a number of ways. Certainly the history and tradition of the school is a significant motivator - it is in fact the central catalyst which bonds the ex-pupils, parents and supporters. It remains our nation's oldest school and has made measureable contributions across multiple domains (politics, health, education, justice and in sport). In many ways, St Stephen's School became a metaphor for Māori excellence, a gateway for Māori success, and a proxy for Māori endeavour.

In spite of past achievements, and notwithstanding the utility of applying tradition as a platform for future growth, this submission draws on more contemporary reasons and opportunities. It suggests that the rationale for reopening the school must be based in the present, and as a means through which contemporary challenges can be met and future prospects identified.

With these issues in mind, this submission is presented within the context of Māori educational underachievement and the desire to create dynamic and innovative educational opportunities. It has taken shape in the understanding that Māori boys (in particular) have the poorest outcomes of any demographic group, that gaps in educational achievement are widening, and that novel solutions are urgently required.

Whilst opportunities for Māori educational success do not rely on the reopening of St Stephen's School, it is our belief that a model which builds on the past, but which casts its gaze confidently towards the future, holds the greatest potential. The traditions of the school, the achievements of the past, and the support of the ex-pupils can provide a unique and sustainable foundation; a platform through which new models of Māori educational success can be rooted and an enduring legacy of achievement sustained.

The Preparation of this Submission

This submission has been informed by a deliberate and considered research process. Information from various hui and meetings have been collected since 2000 and have been used to consolidate and shape various high-level views and principles. To ensure that the voices of the old-boys were accurately and comprehensively heard, an online survey was also developed and which focused on particular options for reopening and re-development.

Interviews were also conducted with key experts in Māori education and Māori development. These were designed to provide greater detail and focus so that a clearer set of recommendations and perspectives could be presented. This included canvassing the views of staff and principals from at least five Māori boarding schools, five senior Māori academics, four educational funding entities, and three Government Ministries. In total, the views of more than 500 individuals were considered during the preparation of this submission.

To add additional substance and insight, a comprehensive review of relevant literature was also undertaken. This was focused on models of education, funding and sustainability options, and alignment with government priorities.

Foundations of a New School

Although we were able to collect a significant amount of information from various hui held since the closure of the school – synthesising this material created a number of challenges. The views expressed at these meetings were often quite diverse, and not always centre on re-development, and frequently discussed issues of aligned interest. In spite of this, a number of high-level themes and principles emerged and were to occur frequently enough to warrant consideration. These principles avoided specific detail on the shape of a new school but focused instead on its broader foundations or key requisites. These 10 principles are described below:

Contemporary Relevance

Even though discussions on the reopening of St Stephen's often reflected on past achievements and the school's traditional foundations - the most consistent theme to emerge was the desire to create a school which had contemporary relevance and which would resonate with modern times. It made little sense to develop a school which was rooted in the past or which was out of sync with the expectations of both parents and students. The school should build on the past, but avoid becoming a monument to it. It should take the opportunity to innovate, to explore new and dynamic options for educational advancement, and to ultimately prepare students for the modern world. A seminal quote from one of our hui provides appropriate expression to this principle.

“The challenge here is to embrace change and to redefine the delivery of education and life skills to the next generation of St Stephen's alumni, that passes on the inherent good from its past and paying high regard to the demands of their time, in order to secure a future of boundless opportunities for those yet to come.” (Waihoroi Shortland, old-boy and HeadBoy)

Safety

Providing a safe and nurturing environment was also a theme of major interest. In the 10 years prior to the Schools closure in 2000, St Stephen's had been the focus of at least eight independent ERO reviews. These reviews were to identify a number of issues, including poor educational outcomes, as well as significant concerns over the health and safety of students. As a cornerstone of the schools re-development, the issue of safety will take primacy. Systems need to be embedded within the design of any new model so that past failings are not repeated and the confidence of parents and students is assured. Pastoral care arrangements will need to be robust, well managed, monitored and supported.

Academic Excellence

The reputation of St Stephen's School was in many ways shaped by its sporting prowess. The achievements of the school's 1st XV (in particular) had exposed St Stephen's to considerable publicity, spanning several decades, and which has continued to form the school's reputation and public profile. Notwithstanding these accomplishments, a survey of the old-boys revealed an overwhelming preference for the new school to promote academic endeavour above all else.

These views have been supported by subsequent meetings and again reflected a desire to prepare students for life outside of school and to offer them the best opportunity to enjoy a successful and rewarding career. The implications here are that an academic programme underpins any future model - that students are monitored and supported, that deficits are identified and mitigated, that technology is applied and integrated, that student careers are assessed and managed, and that staff are well credentialed, capable, passionate, and motivated. Moreover, that the best teachers are employed and that arrangements are made to ensure that they are retained.

Global Citizens

There is a desire, as well, to develop global leaders and global citizens. Providing an environment which allows students to fulfil their potential (in a range of fields) is viewed as being critical so that the school will serve as a fertile bed for Maori scientists, engineers, physicians, educationalist, entrepreneurs, or trades-people. The point is, that potential is realised, that leaders are created, and that the school is able to facilitate this.

An aligned issue is the imperative to ensure that student selection and recruitment policies are pitched at an appropriate level and that the school doesn't become (as it had in the past) a repository for unwanted or troubled students. This will not necessarily mean that challenging or supported students are refused admission, but rather, that their desire to achieve is prioritised over their ability to pay.

A Point of Difference

The past success of the school was due in part to what it offered - or more significantly, what other schools did not. Māori boarding schools, including St Stephen's, had pioneered modes of education which embraced kaupapa Māori (things Māori) alongside kaupapa Pakeha (things European). For a time, this model was innovative and provided parents with educational opportunities unavailable to them locally. Parents were prepared to invest in a model which offered something different and which rationalised the additional cost.

In more recent years, this point of difference is no longer apparent. *Whare Kura* and *Kura Kaupapa* schools have come to provide an equivalent (if not superior) product. These schools are more accessible (geographically) and do not present the same level of financial burden. And, although the

challenges faced by many of our existing Māori boarding schools are complex, certainly competition from other schools, offering a similar and more competitive model, is a major issue.

To entice parents, to maintain a healthy role, and to achieve positive outcomes – a point of difference is imperative. This difference cannot simply be based on the bi-cultural models of the past but must instead focus on an unmet contemporary demand. It may in fact mean that the special characteristics of the boarding environment are maximised to provide additional academic support for students (through afterhours preparatory arrangements), that the school utilises its setting (if based at Bombay) to promote rural pursuits, or that connections with tertiary institutions are integrated so that transitional pathways for all students are effectively mapped.

The Role of Sports and St Stephen's

There is some considerable support, as well, for the establishment of a sporting academy within St Stephen's. This approach would not necessarily conflict with higher-level academic aspirations but instead could run alongside it or be integrated as a specific programme. The advantage of this approach is that it would offer opportunities to Māori students who had a particular interest in a sporting career. It would harness the considerable, and often unrealised, potential of Māori youth and likewise create additional post-secondary opportunities. In a broader sense, this model would certainly build on the established reputation of St Stephen's, it would provide that "point of difference", and further assist with profiling and publicising the school.

Tikanga Māori

While a bicultural education model should not be the sole focus of a new school, it is equally imperative that it has a strong cultural base. This base should be securely and intimately woven into the design of the school and within any strategy designed to promote its unique character. The evidence is clear in that Māori students are more likely to flourish (across multiple domains) within an educational setting that is founded on cultural values and practices.

A simplistic approach would be to ensure that Māori language and Māori culture (te reo and tikanga) are taught at the new school. However, there is an opportunity to go further, to maximise this cultural platform, and to offer a more sophisticated application of tikanga Māori to Māori education. To this end, there are several current models which could be used to ensure an appropriate integration of this. Rakaumanga (Huntly)¹ and Nga Taiatea (Rotokauri)² are just two examples of high-performing schools which are grounded on Māori custom and practice. Although each apply a different approach – consistent is the manner in which these values are threaded throughout the schools – how the school day begins, how classes are taught, homework managed, expectations and behaviour set. Cultural values are not an addendum to the school day, but fundamentally shape the manner in which all activities are undertaken. There will be an expectation from Maori parents that Maori values underpin the school. The challenge will be to ensure that this is done in a sincere manner and in a ways which ultimately promote Maori student success.

¹ Raukaumanga School, (2013), *School Prospectus 2013*, Raukaumanga School, Huntly.

² New Zealand Qualifications Authority, (2010), *Managing National Assessment Report School Assessment Systems 2009: Ngā Taiatea Wharekura*, NZQA, Wellington.

Spiritual Development

The online survey of old boys and supporters further reinforced the critical role the Anglican Church had to play in the education of young Māori boys. It was noted that in the past the school had created an enduring relationship between the students, their whanau, and the church – a point perhaps best illustrated by the high number of old-boys who had entered the Ministry. Whilst in recent years the Anglican Church has suffered from diminishing numbers, the potential to re-engage young Māori through the school, and with the Anglican faith, is significant. Although existing faith-based schools may offer similar aims, it is questionable as to whether or not they are succeeding to any great extent. It is our belief (as described previously) that an innovative and modern model of engagement is possible and that the new school could provide a contemporary pathways towards the Anglican faith.

Building on Tradition

It has already been noted that history cannot be used as the primary motivator for reopening St Stephen's. Any plans for development must look forward and must resonate with contemporary needs and aspirations. However, there is a similar need to ensure that the traditions of the school, and links to its past successes, are recognised and secured. This can be achieved in a variety of ways and which avoid any potential conflicts with creating an entirely new and modern educational environment.

For example, it will be fundamentally important that the school's motto and school colours are retained, as is the name St Stephen's School. The school house system could also be retained and it will be imperative that artefacts from the school, including photographs and various taonga, are included within any design. These provisions are unlikely to impact on how a new model might be developed. However, they will provide a tangible link to the

schools traditions, a connection to the past, and an unquestionable opportunity to leverage on-going support from old-boys and supporters

Sustainability

Any model for redevelopment must be financially viable and able to create an enduring legacy. There is little appetite for a school which is unable to be sustained, or which is priced beyond the reach of most parents. We are aware that many schools (particularly Māori boarding schools) are struggling for numbers and consequently struggling financially. This is in part a reflection of the issues highlighted previously, an inability to adapt, or to offer a model which rationalises the investment of parents. However, and regardless, the long-term viability of the school and the mitigation of this type of risk is a significant consideration. There are a number of options to consider here.

1. Ensure that the redevelopment does not place the Trust Board in a financially unstable position.
2. That sufficient reserves and assets are available to generate income, to offset student fees, to account for maintenance, and to cover contingencies associated with implementing an appropriate educational model.
3. That an alignment with Government priorities or initiatives is secured so that financial support or partnership arrangements are established
4. That philanthropic support from iwi, individuals or organisations is actively explored, and,
5. That the Trust board works constructively with the Old-boys Association in the formation of an alumni foundation similar to those currently run by other schools. The Auckland Grammar School model could be used as an exemplar.

It is likely that financial considerations will ultimately shape what is possible in terms of any redevelopment and that the issues and opportunities above have already informed preliminary discussions. However, our main point is that while the SSQVS Trust Board should take a lead role, the burden of redevelopment should not sit solely with the Trust Board and could be spread by building relationships, exploring opportunities, and aligning with Government priorities and funding streams.

Leadership

As noted, the preparation of this submission involved a deliberate research and consultation process. While it was expected that divergent views and perspectives would be voiced, the most consistent theme to emerge was the need for active and positive leadership. In our discussions with school principals, in particular, it was stressed that the success of any redevelopment initiative would fundamentally rest on the selection of an appropriate school driver. This could be a principal, manager, or even CEO, the idea being that an appropriate person is appointed and empowered to drive the initiative and drive the model.

The examples of excellence reviewed, as part of this submission, were consistent in this regard, in that the selection of an appropriate leader was imperative. For the purposes of this submission, it is suggested that once plans for redevelopment are finalised, that equal effort is given to the selection of an appropriate individual to lead and manage the initiative. That adequate resources are set aside to entice high-quality applicants and that a robust selection process is initiated.

Innovation

While the reasons for closing St Stephen's were both challenging and complex, in many ways the demise of the school wasn't entirely unexpected. St Stephen's (for whatever reason) had become rooted in the past, unable to embrace contemporary trends, and ultimately incapable of adjusting to the modern environment. While major efforts (by senior staff and various principals) had been made to uplift and re-direct the school, in the end these efforts came too late and the task became too great.

Notwithstanding these issues, and if there has been any benefit to the schools closure, it is that the issues which constrained its development in the past are no longer apparent. The frame for re-establishing the school is broad, the parameters wide, and the scope immense. For this reason, and for the reasons detailed previously, the final principle is an expression of hope, and a clear direction from the old-boys to think beyond convention and to create an innovative model which (once again) positions St Stephen's School amongst the country's very best educational institutions.

A Suitable Setting

Throughout its long history, St Stephen's School has demonstrated an ability to evolve and reinvent itself. Since its establishment in 1844, the school has had a least five other names, and has been equally as diverse in its function and core focus. It has taught both girls and boys, men and women, it was a pre-school, primary school, offered tertiary education, and for the majority of the past 100 years a secondary school for Māori boys.

Consistent with this dynamic approach to Māori education, the school has also moved (physically) on at least three occasions in response to its particular focus and requirements. The Bombay site, where the school currently sits, was opened in 1931. It was a purpose built boarding facility and served that function well up until the school's closure in 2000.

Since then, the school has fallen into a state of disrepair. It has been vandalised, looted, left open to the elements and as a consequence some considerable investment is needed in order to bring the school back to its former function. We are aware that a complete renovation of the school is likely beyond the resources and capability of the Trust board. Notwithstanding that the clear preference from the old boys (as indicated in the online survey) was for the school to reopen on the Bombay site and that a full renovation of the school take place.

With these issues in mind, the Old-boys Association have discussed in some detail options for reopening and in particular the physical location of the school, the buildings, and the campus. These options are described here, and are designed to foster discussion on where the school might be located, what options are possible, and later, our recommendations on a preferred site and structure.

Option One: Full Renovation of the Bombay Campus

As indicated by the survey of old boys and supporters - a full and comprehensive renovation of the Bombay site remains the most preferred option for reopening. It is likely that sentimental and historical factors have played a role here and that the traditions of the school, its legacy and links to the past, can best be maintained at the existing site. There are considerable advantages attached to *Option One*. The existing site is in many ways synonymous with St Stephen's School, the buildings, the location, and the outlook. It provides an opportunity to build on the history and tradition of the school and to do so within a familiar setting. Here the support of the old-boys would be assured as would a link to the schools past and traditions.

However, there are also major obstacles attached to *Option One*. Significant, is the financial cost of any renovation and the inevitable burden placed on the Trust Board. For this reason, and unless the Trust Board has the resources available to commit to this, *Option One*, while the most popular, is also the most unlikely.

Option Two: Partial Renovation

Option Two centres on a partial renovation of the current school. The costs here would not be insignificant, however, a carefully managed partial renovation could see a significant reduction in financial burden when compared to a complete renovation. As a compromise, and in order to take full advantage of the historical and traditional opportunities outlined in *Option One*, we would suggest that only Te Poho o Tipene (the main administration block and Chapel) be renovated while the rest of the campus demolished and rebuilt. This option would retain the "essence" of the school while mitigating the significant cost of a full renovation.

Option Three: Demolition and Rebuild

Option Three would involve a complete demolition and rebuild on the current campus site. This may be a less expensive option than the previous two. However, the cost would not be insignificant and consideration is needed as to whether or not the opportunity cost (what would be lost) is far greater than the financial cost (what would be saved).

Option Four: Offsite Rebuild

Within *Option Four*, we considered the possibility of a complete rebuild at a location other than Bombay. This approach is likely to offer further financial savings, and is not inconsistent with the history of the school and the fact that its location has changed a number of times since it was first established. The risk however, is that a new school, in a new location, may not afford a tangible link to the history and traditions of the school and fail to completely resonate with the old-boys and supporters. Finding an appropriate site might also be difficult and it is hard to say what the cost of purchasing suitable land might be.

Option Five: Offsite Lease or Purchase

Option Five emerged as part of our discussions and research on what models of education might be appropriate. During this process, we became aware that a number of schools (particularly within the Auckland region) had closed, but that the campus was still in good order and had essentially been mothballed. An option therefore would be to lease or purchase an existing facility and to re-establish the school in this way. The challenge is that locating a suitable site might take time due to availability, suitability, or location. It is also likely that some investment will be needed in order to bring the facility up to the required standard. Like the previous example, a move

away from Bombay may also cause challenges in terms of maintaining a link to the schools past. A major advantage however would be the lower cost of redevelopment, particularly if a positive leasing arrangement were secured.

Option Six: Onsite Rebuild

We know that the Bombay campus and grounds extend well beyond the location of the current buildings. Therefore, and to avoid completely the cost of demolition, renovation, or the purchase of new land, it is possible that a new school could be built on the current campus, but at a location other than where the buildings presently sit.

Trust owned land to the south west of the current school is a potential option here. The costs of new buildings and utilities are unavoidable, however, significant savings are also evident, particularly the cost of land. Moreover, a presence at Bombay could likewise be maintained.

Option Seven: Fascia Rebuild

The final option is perhaps the most innovative and is an attempt to retain a semblance of the past while maintaining a focus on the future. As noted previously, the public face of St Stephen's School is very much linked to the Bombay campus, and more broadly its Chapel and main administration block. As a means of retaining this feature while avoiding the large cost of renovation, consideration could be given to retaining the main façade and steeple and building a new (and more sound) administration block around this. We have, as an Association, made some initial inquiries as to how feasible this might be and the logistics associated with this. Based on these conversations we have been assured that this would be entirely possible and that a number of cost-effective options could be developed.

A secondary but similar option is linked to the onsite south-west rebuild but involves the removal and integration of the chapel's steeple and main façade into the design of the new buildings. We have similarly sought professional advice on this option and have again been reassured that this would be possible and cost-effective.

Recommendations

This submission has covered a broad range of issues and opportunities which have assisted with rationalising our thoughts and the identification of the five recommendations below. These recommendations are based on our research, hui, survey, consultations and expert interviews; they reflect the collective views of the St Stephen's Old-Boys Association and are intended to assist with the reopening of St Stephens School.

Recommendation One: Reopening St Stephen's School

Without question, there is considerable enthusiasm and support for re-opening St Stephen's School. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that our first recommendation is centred on re-opening and that the Trust Board acts with some urgency to progress this. This will necessarily involve the establishment of a subcommittee or group and that resources be provided to progress the redevelopment. The reasons for re-opening have already been stated and are primarily based on the opportunities a new school might afford, the chance to address educational underachievement, to build on past successes, and to leverage from the significant support which currently exists.

Recommendation Two: Location and Emphasis

Our second recommendation is that a boarding school for Maori boys, situated at Bombay, form the focus of any new development. We know that levels of educational underachievement are particularly high for Maori boys and that single-sex schools offer the best opportunity to address this gap. The boarding environment also provides a means through which extra-curricular activities and support can be anchored. Locating the school at Bombay (consistent with the options described above) may prove to be the most cost-effective approach. This setting will also facilitate a link to the

school's history but without necessarily constraining what models of education are eventually developed. It is worth noting too, that Bombay is on the peripheral of the world's largest Polynesian city, while still maintaining a distinctive rural outlook. The potential for growth in both student numbers and campus size is encouraging. Our survey of old-boys has also revealed that significant numbers would enrol family members should the school be reopened. A figure of more than 300 has been indicated for the first year of operation alone.

Recommendation Three: Securing Support

Given the potential cost of any new development it will be important that a robust financial assessment and plan is developed. The content and direction of this plan is certainly beyond the brief of this submission. However, we are in a position to offer some broader recommendations on what this plan might consider.

It will be important that Government support is secured and that financial resources are provided. Previous "Integrated" arrangements were useful and could be re-examined as an option. However, there are at least two current initiatives which are worthy of consideration and which (importantly) have resources attached to them.

Charter or Partnership schools are an obvious option here. Five schools have already been approved with a total of \$19m having been set aside for the first of these. Some concerns have been raised about the utility of this model. However, the fact remains that considerable resources have been set-aside to promote this initiative and should therefore be explored as a serious option. Further, it is our belief that the concerns with the Charter School model is more to do with the nature of the partnership as opposed to the model itself. A partnership arrangement between the Trust Board and the Government could be both effective and mutually beneficial – especially when considering what funding for capital costs might be available. An arrangement with St

Stephen's School (in particular) could likewise be seen as an opportunity to further promote the partnership model.

Tai Wananga was established in 2010 and has so far established two schools in Palmerston North and Hamilton. The initiative is focused on promoting Maori educational achievement, particularly at secondary school, through active connections with Te Wananga o Aotearoa, and by promoting a distinctive Maori character. New schools are planned and a formal application process has been established. We have met with the CEO of the programme and had informal discussion on whether or not St Stephen's might fit the model and criteria. These discussions, while at an embryonic stage, have given us some confidence that a Tai Wananga partnership is possible and that an application would be viewed with some enthusiasm.

Philanthropic support, through individuals, company's, or iwi could likewise be explored. The risk here (unlike the options above) is that resources to support the schools redevelopment may not be available or budgeted for. Nevertheless, it is likely that any requests for financial support will be viewed sympathetically.

Our recommendation therefore, is that redevelopment plans are securely linked to Government priorities and initiatives, that resources are secured to assist with the redevelopment, and that philanthropic support is simultaneously secured.

Recommendation Four: Developing an Appropriate Model

The focus on excellence and the desire to produce well rounded, capable, and prepared students is not unusual. The fact is that most schools espouse similar aims and in order to offer the best education they possibly can. Achieving these outcomes are however more difficult and they often fail to meet these expectations. The reasons for these failures are complex, but can be aided by ensuring that the education model is robust and well supported.

The single greatest advantage that St Stephen's School has is that the options here are broad and relatively unconstrained. Further, that some guidance has been received on what shape the educational model should take.

Our recommendation therefore, is that a model be developed which builds on some of the current examples of "best-practice" and which have demonstrated an ability to promote and sustain educational excellence. The model should;

- Actively integrate Maori cultural values
- Provide for the religious and spiritual needs of students
- Take advantage of the boarding environment
- Maintain the history and traditions of the school
- Place an emphasis on academic development
- Encourages sporting excellence
- Ensure the safety of students
- Recruit and retain quality staff
- Establish criteria for student selection
- Be effectively led and driven
- Offer a point of difference or special focus, and
- Actively prepares all students for post-secondary careers

Further to this recommendation, we also **strongly** suggest that the Trust Board organise to meet with representatives of the *Tu Toa* School in Palmerston Nth. During the development of this submission we had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the school (as did the feasibility working group) and were especially impressed with how the school had evolved, the success it had achieved, and how its founding principles aligned with our collective aspirations. Nathan Durie (the school's Director) has formally agreed to assist with the re-establishment of the school and the design of an appropriate model.

Recommendation Five: Active Utilisation of the Old Boys Association

The Old Boys, Supporters, and Trust Board currently enjoy a positive relationship. This has not always been the case, and we are heartened by the on-going willingness of the Trust Board to support our various initiatives and to actively consult on matters attached to the schools redevelopment. We are keen to ensure that this relationship is maintained and that we position ourselves to provide as much support as we can.

In spite of the fact that the school closed more than a decade ago, the Old Boys Association has never been stronger and the support for the school never more obvious. The Association has recently been Incorporated and a bank account set-up. Membership fees have already been deposited and these will undoubtedly receive a significant boost in Labour Weekend. Branches are active across the country and have done much to consolidate our energies. Old boys are now well-positioned, in a range of sectors, and are keen to support in whatever manner they can.

A reunion has been organised for this year and will attract upwards of 400 participants. A new and more functional website and data-base is under construction and will be launched at the reunion. Sales of school merchandise currently out-strip supply and St Stephen's teams are now actively participating at various sporting events - including Rugby, the annual Whakatane Touch Tournament, and this year's Iron Maori.

Our recommendation here, is that this enthusiasm, support, and commitment should be harnessed and used to assist with driving the development and reopening of the school.

Conclusion

As emphasised throughout this submission, our primary focus centres on the promotion of educational excellence and creating tangible opportunities for Māori youth. It is our belief that a re-opened and re-defined St Stephen's School can provide a platform for this, and that a new school will create opportunities that extend well beyond the education sector and for future generations to come.

Although we are under no illusion of the task at hand, or the challenges ahead, we are also excited about the possibilities and opportunities. Further, that the Old Boys Association will provide all the support it can to ensure a positive and constructive outcome.

The whakatauki which prefaced this submission was used as a guide to consolidate and collect our thoughts, to direct our words and shape our ideas. The whakatauki which follows is used with similar intent but is designed to guide and support both the Feasibility Working Group and the St Stephen's/Queen Victoria Trust Board. While it might be interpreted in a number of ways, it is essentially a reminder that great effort provides for great rewards, and that bold decisions can both motivate and inspire. It is our hope that this submission will assist with these deliberations, that this journey continues, and that our ultimate destination is realised.

PostScript

“Kua tawhiti kē to haerenga mai, kia kore e haere tonu; he tino
nui rawa o mahi, kia kore e mahi tonu “

“We have come too far not to go further; we have done too
much, not to do more.”

Sir James Henare