

Issue 1

7th March 2017



**AUCKLAND
KINDERGARTEN
ASSOCIATION**



AKA Network Review

Open letter to all Auckland Kindergarten Association Families

Kia ora tatou

My name is Tanya Harvey. Many of you will not know me in person, but I have headed the Auckland Kindergarten Association (AKA) for almost two decades, and helped see it through some huge changes. The AKA is responsible for 107 kindergartens and providing a quality early childhood education experience for 6,500 children per day.

I have, in all this time, never viewed myself, our Board, our management, our teachers, support staff or parents as 'owners' of our Association. I have seen us as stewards. As custodians. As caretakers. As inheritors of a 109 year old organisation, with a duty to pass it onto the next generation in exceptional form, that will work for them in the most relevant, meaningful way. This involves now, and has always involved, a tricky balancing act. We must, on the one hand, preserve our unique kindergarten traditions, while we must, on the other, remake ourselves constantly so we are offering current and future families what they want and need from us.

It was with our purpose and this challenge in mind that we undertook, in late 2016, an extensive analysis of our entire network of 107 kindergartens. We found kindergartens increasingly surrounded by a rapidly growing number of competitive alternative early childhood education (ECE) services, and being impacted by this fast-changing landscape. We found many kindergartens struggling to fill places; and we also found many families wanting to take up the kindergarten experience for their children, but were unable to do so because they were working, kindergarten hours were too short, and we did not offer services in school holidays. This has meant that as much as these parents want their children to benefit from kindergarten; what we are providing currently simply doesn't work for them and their families, and as a result, we are unintentionally taking ourselves off their list of possible ECE choices.

It is not the kindergarten tradition to exclude families in this manner. The kindergarten tradition is to be available to the many. With Auckland houses becoming some of the most unaffordable in the world, an increasing number of families are facing having to return to the workforce in either a part time or full time capacity thus excluding many from using our service.

That is why we will, over the next two years or so, review our entire kindergarten network, one or two geographic groupings at a time, until we are sure we can retain the future state of kindergarten and offer services that families want today, and are likely to want in the future.

There is also another reason for change. It is to do with money. To be clear – we are and firmly remain a not-for-profit Association; but if we are to survive and thrive, then we must accept the fact that we need to

change to meet the needs of families, and retain or even grow our funding. Our government funding has been cut repeatedly since 2010. We must therefore make changes to ensure we do not run in deficit. It is not, in my view, morally defensible to 'eat the future' by spending our reserves today, and sending the bill to future AKA families. We have a duty to be fiscally responsible to ensure we have a sound platform to move forward effectively. Further to this, the opportunity to grow our funding will mean that we can ensure our properties are upgraded as they need to be, and that the AKA kindergarten experience is available to more children and their families.

It is not our intention, however, to make changes in a rush. We are going to make change in tranches – one geographic grouping (tranche) of kindergartens at a time, starting with a grouping in South Auckland. It is our intention also to listen carefully to both teachers and parents, and to work closely with them to ensure that change works as well as possible for all. We will be carefully reviewing the community needs of each kindergarten, as well as the tranche of kindergartens as a whole group, as we move through this change process.

This open letter is, therefore, the first of many to keep everyone informed of our 'Network Review' and the issues and ideas that arise. It comes with a set of *Frequently Asked Questions*, and answers. (See below). You can expect more like this in the future.

Should you have queries in the meantime, please email networkreview@aka.org.nz and our project team will respond to you, or contact me directly at tanya.harvey@aka.org.nz.

I am looking forward to working with all our parents, as together we take the steps necessary to both preserve our heritage and secure our legacy for future Auckland families.

Kind regards



Tanya Harvey

Chief Executive Officer

AKA Network Review

Frequently Asked Questions for Auckland Kindergarten Association families

– Issue 1

Why has this review been undertaken?

Our kindergartens have been, for most of our history, the largest providers of early childhood education (ECE) in Auckland. No longer. Kindergartens today are increasingly surrounded by increasing numbers of alternative services; including private sector childcare centres more than happy to tailor their services to what parents want, and poach families who would prefer kindergarten care, if only it were offered at times that allowed greater flexibility for parents.

Many of our kindergartens are, as a consequence, no longer full, and there is substantial risk that kindergartens full currently, may not be in the future.

This is not the kindergarten way. We are about inclusion. We are for the many, and not just the lucky few.

The changes we seek are designed therefore to make kindergartens a viable offering for greater numbers of families. For our current families; for families in which both parents must work and for families that need longer hours of daily care, and early childhood education services in the school holidays.

What are the key factors in the review?

The main ideas up for consideration are:

- that AKA kindergartens provide an additional one hour of contact time for children each day, meaning seven contact hours (8.30am to 3.30pm); and
- that AKA kindergartens remain open all year, except for the annual Christmas/New Year closedown period.

What might this mean for the way my kindergarten operates?

Most AKA kindergartens currently offer families a full six hour day, two to five days a week. Some currently split the day, with parents able to send their children for four hours in the morning only, or for a full six hour day - two to five days a week.

We are proposing the following:

- that most kindergartens offer a seven hour day, available for families - two to five days a week.
- that some kindergartens, where the community wants it, divide their day into two sessions of three and a half hours each, with some children attending in the morning only, some in the afternoon only, and some all day - two to five days a week. (This model would be available to those communities able to fill both morning and afternoon sessions, and it is likely, we think, that there would be more all day children in these kindergartens than sessional).
- all kindergartens will get a six month transition from the day their change process begins, during which time existing services will be available.

What might this mean for parent fees?

Most AKA kindergartens currently request a \$1 an hour donation for the first 20 hours (assuming families are not claiming the Government's 20 hours subsidy elsewhere), and a \$5 an hour fee after that.

We are proposing the following:

- that the \$1 an hour donation be reviewed (and possibly reduced); and
- that the \$5 an hour fee be retained as is.

We are also looking to extend the AKA subsidy of additional 'free' hours to kindergartens in low socio-economic areas; from 30 to 35 hours a week.

Will the changes impact the way kindergarten children are looked after?

We are taking care, in this change process, to ensure that all the key elements of the current kindergarten experience are retained. The same Te Whāriki curriculum and the same play based approach. The same high quality interactions between teachers, parents and children. The same welcome for parents who wish to stay and play with their children and help out with others.

When is our kindergarten due to be reviewed?

Changes will not occur in all our kindergartens at the same time. Kindergartens will instead move through the change process in geographic groupings. One or two groupings at a time. The first geographic grouping includes five kindergartens from South Auckland. The second includes a South Auckland grouping and one from West Auckland.

This one or two areas at a time approach will give families an opportunity to tell us what they think of the changes, and will allow us to assess the impact change in one kindergarten might have on neighbouring kindergartens serving the same community.

The table attached reveals when all our kindergartens are scheduled to come up for review.

What if parents do not want their children to attend during school term break?

Attendance in school holidays is, of course, not compulsory. As they can at the moment, parents will be able to choose for their child to be absent from kindergarten at any time during the year as long as they are not breaking the Government's frequent absence rules which prohibit sustained absentee patterns or a single absence of more than three weeks in a row.

Given that Government-funded Education Support Workers (ESW) do not work in term breaks, what will happen to the children with special learning needs who require their help?

There is no Government funding for ESWs in term breaks. This is a problem for all early childhood education services. Not just kindergartens. We will work closely with each kindergarten grouping in relation to the ESW support they need as we move through the progressive roll out of these changes across our network of kindergartens.

What will happen to the age of entry of children?

We anticipate, once change is implemented, that demand will rise for kindergarten services and the age of entry will increase especially at those kindergartens with low current demand for their services.

Is the teachers union (NZEI Te Riu Roa) aware of the changes?

Yes. The Auckland Kindergarten Association has a strong working partnership with NZEI that shares our concerns about the increasing dominance of private provision in our sector, the need for a strong community sector in ECE, and for strong, viable kindergartens.

What if I have more questions right now?

The changes we seek to make are designed to re-establish a century long tradition of community inclusion, to ensure that our kindergartens become, once again, an option for many.

This is the first edition of an open letter for kindergarten parents, explaining what we are doing and why. There will be more. If you have unanswered questions please forward them to our change project team at networkreview@aka.org.nz, or to our CEO Tanya Harvey at tanya.harvey@aka.org.nz and we will see that they are addressed in the next issue of this letter.

AKA Network Review Draft Rollout

Start of preparation	Go Live	Catchment Areas		
Beginning of term 1, 2017	End of term 1, 2017	Catchment 1 Aorere Kindergarten Kotiri Kindergarten Murdoch Park Kindergarten Omana Kindergarten Papatoetoe Kindergarten		
Beginning of term 2, 2017	End of term 2, 2017	Catchment 2A Bairds Kindergarten Flat Bush Kindergarten Mayfield Kindergarten Otahuhu Kindergarten Otahuhu Central Kindergarten Yendarra Kindergarten	Catchment 2B Henderson Kindergarten Sturges Rd Kindergarten Summerland Kindergarten Sunnyvale Kindergarten Te Atatu South Kindergarten	
Beginning of term 3, 2017	End of term 3, 2017	Catchment 3A Birdwood Kindergarten Don Buck Kindergarten Lincoln North Kindergarten Massey Kindergarten Ranui Kindergarten Waitakere Kindergarten	Catchment 3B Favona Kindergarten Kingsdene Kindergarten Mangere Bridge Kindergarten Mangere West Kindergarten McNaughton Kindergarten	Catchment 3C Mangawhai Kindergarten Snells Beach Kindergarten Wellsford Kindergarten
Beginning of term 4, 2017	Beginning of term 1, 2018	Catchment 4A Colwill Kindergarten Hobsonville Kindergarten Te Atatu Peninsula Kindergarten Te Atatu Village Kindergarten Taupaki Kindergarten Whenuapai Kindergarten	Catchment 4B Glen Eden Kindergarten Glen Eden West Kindergarten Green Bay Kindergarten Laingholm Kindergarten New Lynn Kindergarten Oratia Kindergarten Titirangi Kindergarten	Catchment 4C Glendowie Kindergarten Glen Innes Kindergarten Meadowbank Kindergarten Mission Bay Kindergarten Orakei Kindergarten Pt England Kindergarten St Johns Kindergarten St Heliers Kindergarten
Beginning of term 1, 2018	End of term 1, 2018	Catchment 5A Bucklands Beach Kindergarten Farm Cove Kindergarten Highland Park Kindergarten Howick Kindergarten Maraetai Beachlands Kindergarten Pigeon Mountain Kindergarten	Catchment 5B Anchorage Park Kindergarten Botany Downs Kindergarten Cascades Kindergarten Dannemora Kindergarten Pakuranga Kindergarten Somerville Kindergarten	Catchment 5C Eilersie Kindergarten Epsom North Kindergarten Epsom South Kindergarten Onehunga Kindergarten Oranga Kindergarten Remuera Kindergarten Sylvia Park Kindergarten
Beginning of term 2, 2018	End of term 2, 2018	Catchment 6A Freemans Bay Kindergarten Grey Lynn Kindergarten Parnell Kindergarten Pt Chevalier Kindergarten Ponsonby Kindergarten sessional Waiheke Kindergarten Westmere Kindergarten	Catchment 6B Avondale Kindergarten Ferndale Kindergarten Morningside Kindergarten Mt Albert Kindergarten Mt Eden Kindergarten Sandringham Kindergarten Waterview Kindergarten	Catchment 6C Blockhouse Bay Kindergarten Hillsborough Kindergarten Lynfield Kindergarten Mt Roskill Kindergarten Owairaka Kindergarten Roskill South Kindergarten Wesley Kindergarten
Beginning of term 3, 2018	End of term 3, 2018	Catchment 7A Devonport Kindergarten Belmont Bayswater Kindergarten Milford Kindergarten Northcote Kindergarten Northcote Central Kindergarten Sunnynook Kindergarten Takapuna Kindergarten Westlake F Hill Kindergarten	Catchment 7B Bayview Kindergarten Beach Haven Kindergarten Birkenhead Kindergarten Chelsea Kindergarten Glenfield Kindergarten Greenhithe Kindergarten Kauri Park Kindergarten Marlborough Kindergarten	