

I am speaking to you today on behalf of Oakura Playcentre. Being born and raised in Oakura I also attended Oakura Playcentre and Oakura School.

The Oakura Playcentre has a few main areas of concern in regards to this proposal. Our first main concern is due to increased traffic and the safety of our children.

Oakura Playcentre is located adjacent to the school and the library and is accessed via Donnelly St, directly off State Highway 45. As many will know and have experienced, there is already an extremely high flow of traffic on Donnelly Street which creates a substantial hazard for our families when they are arriving or departing from our centre. The families that walk or bike to our Playcentre already need to be extremely vigilant when crossing Donnelly street and the influx of traffic would further escalate the high danger surrounding this crossing.

Currently, parking at peak times (school drop offs and pickups) Donnelly Street, Hussey Street, the Main Road and The Outlook are at full capacity, with it often being hard to find a park as it is and having to circle around until you get one. The Children at Oakura Playcentre range in age from newborns to 6 years and many of them arrive in prams, capsules and carriers, often with many road crossings to negate. We are concerned that if this proposed subdivision goes ahead, there will be an added flood of people causing a surge in both traffic and pedestrians and we worry there will be severe implications for our children.

Another major concern from the Playcentre is that our site and centre are in jeopardy of being lost. Currently, the Ministry of education leases the land on which the centre is situated. This allows us to provide a service that is unique to the village, offering a child centred environment or hub on Donnelly Street which is inclusive to 0 – 5 year olds and where whanau and our community are enriched.

If the proposed plan change was to occur, there is no doubt that Oakura school would rapidly grow and extra space would be needed for this expansion. We are concerned that the site of our playcentre would be needed for the growing school and it would be lost which in particular is very concerning as our site holds lots of history, for example... I attended Oakura playcentre and now take great joy in seeing my children do the same. It is a very special privilege.

Also, members of our community will then have to travel elsewhere to get the same opportunities, experiences, services and education that Oakura Playcentre offers.

Finally, our Playcentres strategic plan has a strong environmental stance and as a centre we value our natural environment and our national park. There is a concern here that the proposed development would encroach on the national park and also be detrimental to the existing ecosystems. We have watched our community embrace the Restore Kaitake project and the proposed plan change seems to negate this whole initiative.