

Recognition pleases Dyslexia Foundation

The Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand says progress made by the Ministry of Education to address dyslexia in schools is exceeding expectations, but stresses the Government must now ensure additional funding is made available to fully deliver on the planned initiatives.

The Ministry of Education has been working collaboratively with the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand and others to better understand and address dyslexia in schools after announcing in April it recognised dyslexia and was committed to implementing a whole range of initiatives to increase the level and quality of assistance given to students with persistent reading and writing difficulties.

“Since our initial meeting with the Ministry of Education in June, a great deal of progress has been made,” chair of the Trustees of the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand, Guy Pope-Mayell says.

“The challenge laid down by the Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand, on behalf of its members and the 70,000 children affected by dyslexia in New Zealand schools, has been heard and acted upon.”

Pope-Mayell says the Ministry’s work programme does appear to be practical, empowering for schools and parents, and action orientated.

“Dyslexia in New Zealand is not being buried or lost in academic debate. What can be done about dyslexia is being signalled and the Ministry says that it is now working on how this can be implemented effectively.”

Key Ministry of Education initiatives include:

- commitment to identifying dyslexia early
- developing early intervention and assessment tools
- professional development for teachers
- material for parents to develop more understanding about dyslexia
- dedicated online website resources for teachers and parents to provide information and links to further expertise about dyslexia.

Pope-Mayell says these moves signal the start of a strong partnership between parents, teachers and students, which is critical.

“Trust between these parties must be developed and nurtured if dyslexic students’ needs are to be met and harm to their self-esteem avoided. The planned initiatives need to be supported and embraced by all. Schools will hopefully start to factor the Ministry’s direction into their planning for 2008, and from this we will see real change for our children. Parents should be encouraged and feel empowered to discuss their child’s learning needs with teachers and most critically, the Government needs to deliver the funding that will allow this to all happen.”