

Home Education Foundation

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Dear Mr Greening,

Thank you for your letter of 22 April 2014 answering my two letters to John Clark. Since writing those letters I have had pneumonia resulting in three weeks in hospital and surgery. I have been recuperating well but have not been able to take on any extras. So at this point I would like to acknowledge your letter of 4 June 2014 and let you know that I will be replying to it when I am able.

In the meantime it has come to my notice that there is at least one family (the Ririnui family of Tauranga to name one family) who has failed an ERO review without being given the opportunity of a second review. In the past all families were given the opportunity for a second and sometimes a third review. I was personally involved with one family who had three failed ERO reviews, but are continuing to home educate their children successfully today.

There are many reasons why a family might fail their first review. Usually it is because they have not prepared properly for the actual review. It is very distressing for a family to be reviewed these days knowing that it is because there is a complaint about their home education and family lifestyle from someone they know or a member of the public service. I'm sure you understand that this distress and nervousness might affect how the family comes across in the first review. Usually after the experience of a first review the family is better prepared for a second review and the process goes much better both for the family and the ERO reviewers.

Here's something one mother told me about her first review:

"I said at the beginning of my first review, something like, 'Please excuse me if I get emotional or stumble when I'm explaining things, but I am very nervous. This isn't just about whether or not my kids stay homeschooled or go to school, it's about the possibility of our whole family life being irrevocably altered. They were stunned - they just hadn't ever thought about it like that, they just thought it was about 9 - 3, five days a week. No concept of the whole life thing."

If the ERO gives families a second or third ERO review (as schools get) or ask for further information (as we have the opportunity to provide in our applications), it will show that a reasonable effort was made to get all the relevant information before making the decision to revoke.

I ask you now to reconsider the home educators who have failed their first review without being given a second review. Schools are permitted follow-up ERO reviews after they have failed a first ERO review. Home educators should be given the same opportunity. We have seen many families who have failed their first ERO review go on to pass their second or third ERO reviews, who now have children successful in the fields they have chosen.

Yours sincerely
Barbara Smith
National Director

