



MEDIA RELEASE

28 November 2023

STUDENT ADVOCACY LEADS TO IMPROVED ACCESSIBILITY AT MAC

The Te Kura o Tititea Mount Aspiring College campus will undergo a range of improvements to its accessibility thanks to disability advocate and Year 10 student Toby Mills.

As a member of the Minister of Education's Youth Advisory Group (YAG), Toby has been advocating for better accessibility throughout the education system.

"Accessibility should be a given so it doesn't become a 'thing'," said Toby.

"The moment someone who is very clearly more 'abled' than you has to do something for you that you physically can't, you feel really bad. What I'm trying to achieve is for everyone to be treated the same so accessibility is not a 'thing'."

Principal Nicola Jacobsen said Toby's advocacy had been instrumental in bringing about some important changes at MAC.

"In Term 1, Toby, Toby's mother Jo Mills, our Deputy Principal Vicki Ashton and myself met with an occupational therapist from the Ministry of Education to walk around the school and identify what changes needed to be made to improve accessibility.

"With input from Toby, we identified a number of improvements we could make, including replacing heavy doors with sensor-activated doors, installing ramps to give access to the playing field, and re-surfacing gravel paths to make wheelchair access easier.

"We are really grateful to Toby and his mother for advocating for these changes, and to Toby for his efforts in getting the work approved by the Ministry of Education."

Toby said that a disability should not stop anyone from being able to learn and access school facilities in the same way as everyone else.

"What I want is for both able-bodied and disabled people to have the same access to the same level of education and resources. If you aren't able to walk up a set of stairs to get to your classroom and there's no lift, then you no longer have equal access.

"When something as seemingly insignificant as a heavy door means someone else has to open that door for you, or push you over a big lip into a classroom, then immediately your independence is taken from you.

"Ensuring everyone can preserve their independence is what I believe is most important."

The improvements to the college campus will be completed over the course of next year.

More information: Please contact Principal Nicola Jacobsen on 03 443 0498 or principal@mtaspiring.school.nz

Image provided

- Photo of MAC Year 10 student Toby Mills