

Ministry to release Miramar school seclusion room investigation report

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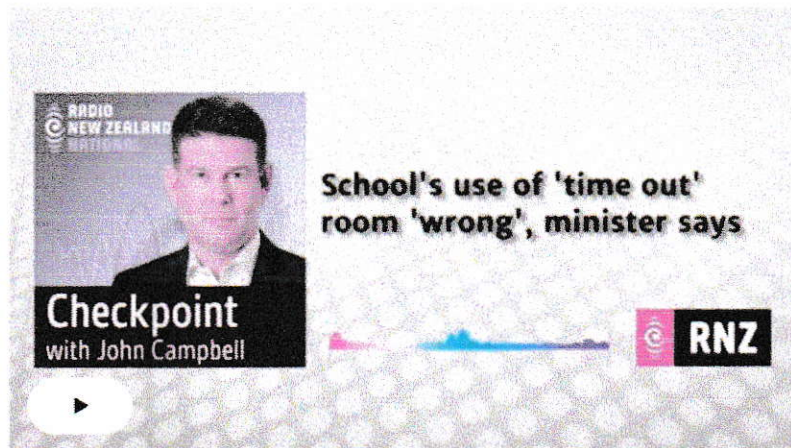
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Education Minister Hekia Parata says she is against the use of "timeout" rooms in schools, calling them "absolutely intolerable".

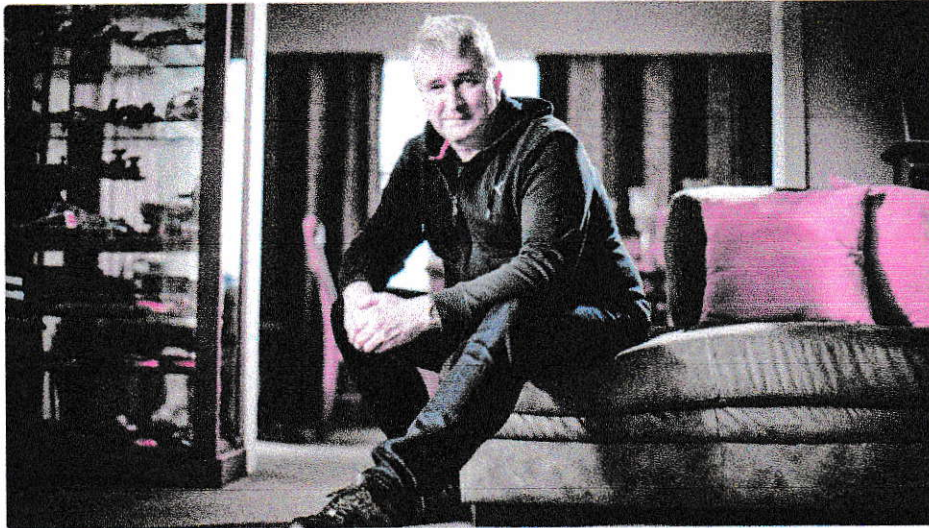
"It's not good practice and there are better ways of doing things," Parata said of the RNZ reports. "The guidelines that we've developed are about moving us toward the elimination of seclusion."

The Ministry of Education said secluding children in small rooms was an extremely serious form of intervention, and schools should be working towards phasing it out.

However, it was still working on guidelines, which were due to be published before the end of the year.

Her comments come after reports of an 11-year-old autistic boy being locked in a small, dark room at another Wellington primary, Miramar Central School.

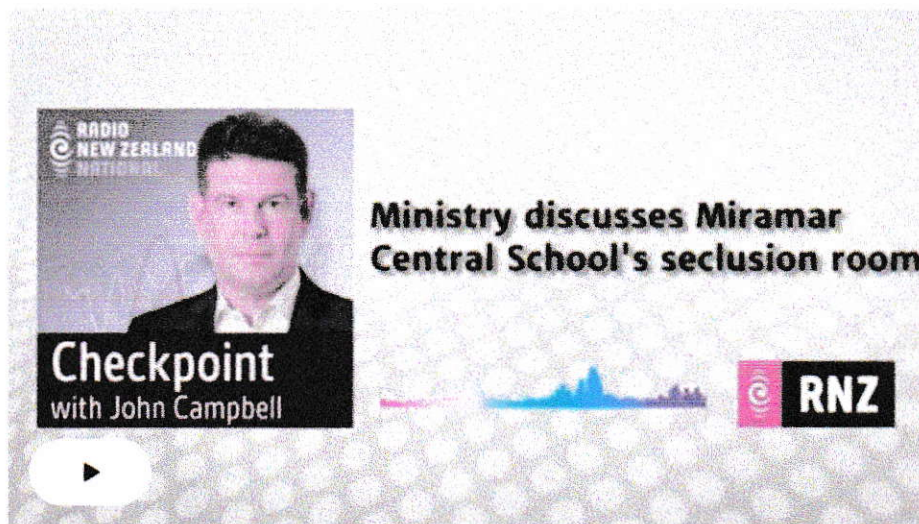
Another 6-year-old autistic boy was also put in the school's seclusion room, his parents told RNZ's *Checkpoint* on Thursday, saying they found out about it after hearing of the 11-year-old's treatment.



Wellington man Robert Buckley is angered that an autistic boy was locked in a closet as part of 'time-out' while at school, mirroring his own son's treatment four years ago. Photo: ROBERT KITCHIN / FAIRFAX NZ

"I'm absolutely horrified," Parata said on Thursday night.

"I think it's absolutely intolerable that a wee boy like this has had that treatment in response to his behaviour. I think that a seclusion room of this nature is unacceptable, and I'm making that absolutely clear."



Ministry discusses Miramar Central School's seclusion room

On Wednesday, Wellington dad Robert Buckley told of how his 13-year-old son was locked in a small room at Tawa Intermediate School in 2012.

Buckley said his son was put in the room for 4½ hours for misbehaving. The door was not locked, but the boy, who did not have special needs, was too worried about getting in more trouble to leave.

Principal Brendon Henderson, who did not work at Tawa Intermediate at the time, said on Wednesday that the block containing the room had since been demolished and rebuilt, without a seclusion room.

The ministry wanted to provide support to the most vulnerable children and schools that cared for them, Parata said.

She did not believe the seclusion practice was commonplace, and the ministry had told her it had received two complaints about use of seclusion rooms, one of which was about Miramar.

She would not name the other school in the other complaint.

The education sector group working on a set of guidelines were due to publish them next month, Parata said.

Head of special education David Wales also told *Checkpoint* the ministry would release a report on seclusion investigations on Friday.

Intervention had risks and was a practice the ministry was seeking to eliminate "in time", he said.

The report investigating the Miramar school's use of seclusion, including the number of times it had been used, was being released on Friday.

- Stuff