



Briefing Note: Funded closure day for early learning services

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	1 April 2022	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1284830
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	Yes / No

Purpose of Report

This paper updates you on the approach to allow early learning services a funded closure day so they can engage with staff, parents and caregivers around changes in the traffic light framework, including vaccination requirements.

Rationale and approach to a funded closure day Summary

1. On 25 March 2022, we provided you with a report on support for kura, schools and early learning services during changes in the traffic light framework, including vaccine mandates [METIS 1284586, refers].
2. Following discussion on 28 March, you indicated the Ministry should investigate options for some flexibility for a funded closure day for early learning services. This would allow them to address any concerns amongst staff and parents or caregivers about the impact of changes to the traffic light framework and vaccination requirements in early learning.
3. Children under five are unable to be vaccinated and other mitigations can be harder to maintain. Parental and caregiver concerns, left unaddressed, could have an impact on participation. While schools may be able to use the opportunity created by the school holidays to address the impact of these changes in schooling, early learning services remain open for most of the year.
4. Services have raised concerns with us about the expiry of vaccine mandates although we do not know how many services will choose to use a funded closure day if they have that opportunity.
5. The Ministry has delegation to fund a service that isn't open for children to attend under the 'Emergency Closure' rule. We will set a funding rule to provide a funded closure day for services that choose to use it to address concerns related to changes in the traffic light framework and changes to vaccine mandates.
6. Circumstances vary between services, and for different types of services, and how they choose to use this discretion will vary according to their circumstances. For example,

home-based services may choose to bring educators together to discuss any concerns and for some parent-led services the focus may be on re-engaging families that became excluded because of the vaccination mandate.

7. We will communicate this to services through He Pānui Kōhungahunga, directly through regional offices and early learning advisers, and other channels.
8. We will be clear that:
 - services have the choice about whether to close for a day or not;
 - services that do chose to use the funded closure day do not need to seek approval before closing and should use the emergency closure code if they exercise this discretion;
 - while we expect those that close for a day will do so in the very near future, the decision about when to close should be based on when works best for that service based on its own circumstances. Services will be able to close for a day any time over the current funding period that ends on 31 May 2022;
 - the purpose of the funded closure day is to provide an opportunity for them to address any concerns amongst staff and/or parents and caregivers about the impact of changes in the traffic light framework or vaccine mandates, provides an opportunity to re-emphasise the importance of vaccination amongst those who are eligible, outline the public health protection measures that remain in place (including surveillance testing for staff), and reassure staff and parents;
 - we recognise circumstances vary between services, and for different types of services, and that how they chose to use this discretion will vary according to their circumstances.

Proactive Release

- a **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once we have informed early learning services about the discretion to close for one day.

Agree Disagree.



Helen Hurst
Head of Covid Response
**Te Pae Aronui | Operations and
Integration**
31/03/2022



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

03/4/2022