



Education Report: The Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards: Options for the 2021 Awards

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	30 August 2021	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1267585
Drafter:	9(2)(a) [REDACTED]	DDI:	9(2)(a) [REDACTED]
Key Contact:	Deborah Kent	DDI:	[REDACTED]
Messaging seen by Communications team:	Yes	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to agree an approach for managing the the Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards in light of the recent changes to COVID-19 Alert Levels.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- Note** that finalists and winners for the 2021 Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards have been selected and the ceremony event is currently scheduled to be held at Parliament on Tuesday 7 September 2021.

Noted

- Agree** that the 2021 Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards ceremony event be postponed until Tuesday 26 October 2021.

Agree / Disagree

AND

- a) **Agree** that should this postponement date be further affected by COVID-19, that the awards ceremony is cancelled, and that finalists are profiled and winners announced online on Tuesday, 26 October 2021.

Agree / Disagree

- a) **Agree** that this report is proactively released after 7 September 2021.

Agree / Disagree



Ellen MacGregor-Reid
Deputy Secretary
Early Learning and Student Achievement

30/08/2021

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

____/____/____

Background

1. Since 2014, the Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards have been shining a light on teaching best practice across the country.
2. The announcement of the winners takes place at a formal awards dinner, with all finalists invited along with Ministers, MPs, judges, strategic partners, Ministry and Government officials, mayors, and other key stakeholders, making up a total of around 200 guests.
3. Last year, the Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards were cancelled due to COVID-19. The event was last held in 2019.
4. For the 2021 Awards, we received a total of 51 entries from schools, kura and early learning services across New Zealand. The panel of 11 independent judges have reviewed all entries, visited all the schools and kura chosen as finalists, and selected (but not announced) the winners.
5. The 2021 awards ceremony was originally scheduled for Tuesday 7 September 2021, with your attendance confirmed, along with the Prime Minister's, and a venue in Parliament reserved.
6. We have completed much of the work needed to hold the event. However, due to the resurgence of COVID-19 in the community, the whole of New Zealand is in Alert Level 4 until at least Friday 27 August, with Auckland being in Alert Level 4 until at least Tuesday 31 August.
7. We do not think that the awards event can proceed if any part of the country is in Alert Level 2 (or higher). Given some parts of New Zealand may be in Alert Level 2, or higher, on 7 September, we have considered alternative options for the event.

Rescheduling the event to Tuesday 26 October 2021

8. We recommend postponing the awards event.
9. We have identified a potential postponement date of Tuesday 26 October. Indications from your office suggest both you and the Prime Minister are currently available on that date.
10. This week in October is the only possible date for a rescheduling during this calendar year. Any later date would encroach too much into the time around NCEA exams and end-of-year administration. Any earlier date would enter the school holidays or the first week of term four. We would not recommend postponing the event to 2022: this will start to clash with the timelines for next year's awards and will be too long for the finalist schools to wait to know if they have won.
11. As our previously reserved venue in Parliament is not available on 26 October 2021, we have managed to provisionally reserve Te Papa Tongarewa, a venue used successfully for the 2015 Prime Minister's Education Excellence Awards.
12. Postponing to October will hopefully allow sufficient time for New Zealand to return to Alert Level 1 nationally. If any part of the country is likely to be at Alert Level 2 (or higher) on 26 October, we recommend cancelling the event and move to recognising the finalists and award winners via online channels. We are exploring options for how we might achieve this and will provide further advice closer to the time, as required.

Communications

13. If you agree to these recommendations, we will communicate the postponement of the Awards via established Ministry channels, including by direct mail to participants.
14. If the event is cancelled, we will explore how best to deliver any virtual announcement of the winners. We will keep your office (and the Prime Minister's office) informed of our suggested approach.

Risks

15. We consider that any risks can be managed through good communication with the sector.

Financial Implications

16. 9(2)(i)
[REDACTED]

17. Were the event to ultimately be cancelled, we will work to minimize the financial costs as far as possible. All Ministry-booked travel for those attending the event is either refundable or can be credited. Existing material (e.g. videos of finalists) would be re-used as far as possible in any online recognition.

Proactive Release

18. We recommend that this Education Report is not released at this time because it contains information that is not yet in the public arena. However, we recommend it is proactively released after 7 September 2021, by which time all those invited to the awards ceremony will have been advised of the alternative arrangements for the event and announcement of award winners.