



Briefing Note: Network management Cabinet paper for lodging and talking points

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	23 February 2022	Priority:	High
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Purpose of Report

This briefing provides you with a Cabinet paper on network management updated to reflect agency and ministerial feedback. To meet timeframes for advising the Education and Workforce Select Committee as part of the Departmental Report, the Cabinet paper must be lodged on Thursday, 24 February 2022.

This briefing also provides talking points for Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee on Wednesday, 2 March 2022.

Recommendations

- a **lodge** the attached Cabinet paper by Thursday 24 February
- b **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing once Cabinet has considered the proposals with any information that may need to be withheld done so in accordance with the Official Information Act 1989.

Release / Not release



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Te Puna Kaupapahere

23/02/2022



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

23/ 2/ 2022

Consultation with other agencies

- 1 On Tuesday 15 February, we provided you with a draft Cabinet paper seeking approvals for final policy settings for early childhood network management [METIS 1281615 refers].
- 2 We consulted with other government agencies from 16 February to 21 February 2022. Agencies were largely supportive of our proposals to extend commencement and exclude Māori immersion services, but we made some adjustments to the paper in line with feedback:
 - a. we provided more context for the decision to extend the commencement date
 - b. we strengthened the rationale for excluding kōhanga reo and Māori immersion services.

Next Steps

- 3 The timeline for seeking Cabinet approval is outlined below.
- 4 Following Cabinet approval, we propose to advise the Education and Select Committee as part of the Departmental Report on the Supplementary Order Paper.

Date	Activity
23 February	Final Cabinet paper provided to Minister's Office for lodging
24 February	Paper lodged
2 March	SWC
7 March	Cabinet
14 March	Advise the Education and Workforce Select Committee of the proposed changes (as part of the Departmental Report)

Proactively Released

Annex 2: Talking points

Proposal

1. I am seeking Cabinet's approval to:
 - 1.1 delay the commencement date of network management for early learning services from 1 August 2022 to 1 February 2023
 - 1.2 exclude kōhanga reo chartered to Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust from the need to seek network management approval
 - 1.3 consult further with other Māori immersion services on a definition to exclude them from network management.
2. These proposals will support the Government's focus on high quality educational and care outcomes for our youngest learners. These proposals align with the objectives set out in *He taonga te tamaiti: Every child a taonga* – the Early Learning Action Plan 2019-2029.

What is the early learning network management function?

3. Sections 17 and 18 of the Education and Training Act 2020 (the Act) introduce a new network management process for prospective early childhood services seeking a licence.
4. From 1 August 2022, any applicant seeking a licence will need to seek network management approval from the Minister of Education before being permitted to apply for a licence to operate an early childhood service. The purpose is to take a more active role in managing the early learning network.
5. I progressed changes to the Act last year via a Supplementary Order Paper (SOP) based on proposals that I consulted on from 8 September to 13 October 2021.
6. The SOP is currently being considered by the Education and Workforce Select Committee, and includes:
 - 6.1. allowing the Minister of Education to introduce National and Regional Statements for network management and
 - 6.2. strengthening the test of applicant suitability

Delaying commencement date of network management

7. I am seeking Cabinet approval to shift the commencement date of network management from 1 August 2022 to 1 February 2023 to allow for an additional six month's preparation.
8. There are a number of issues with the current commencement date:
 - 8.1. Preparation for the sector and Ministry has proved to be more complex than originally planned and presents additional challenges in the context

of also responding to the evolving demands from COVID-19 (including the expected peak of Omicron in mid-March).

- 8.2. Under the existing commencement date, the sector has little time to engage with the development of the National and Regional Statements and detailed regulations and, if needed, pivot their proposed service to respond to these.
- 8.3. Some new services will now be subject to network management that were not expecting to be, due to delays in their establishment associated with COVID.
9. Additional time will also allow Government to consult with the sector for longer on the policy for new regulations. It will give services more time to respond to the National and Regional Statements once they have been issued. I do not think a period of less than six months (i.e. earlier than 1 February 2023) would have a material impact on sector readiness.
10. If Cabinet agrees, I will progress this change through the Departmental Report on the SOP and Education and Training Amendment Bill (No2).

Exclusion of kōhanga reo from network management

11. On 13 October 2021, Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust requested excluding kōhanga reo from network management or that an alternative process be provided. Jointly the Associate Minister of Education (Māori Education) and I agreed that the Ministry of Education should progress conversations with Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust and other Māori immersion services about excluding all Māori immersion services from network management.
12. The Ministry has now concluded these conversations with the Trust, who agree with the proposal to exclude kōhanga reo from network management.
13. I would therefore like to seek Cabinet approval to exclude from network management all kōhanga reo chartered to Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust. This is to reduce any future barriers to the establishment of new services that deliver the early learning curriculum in te reo Māori. Growing the supply of early childhood services provided in te reo Māori is a key priority for government and a responsibility under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
14. If Cabinet agrees, I will progress this change through the Departmental Report on the SOP and Education and Training Amendment Bill (No2).
15. I wish to continue conversations with other Māori immersion services on their exclusion as they have not yet agreed on a suitable definition for these services. I plan to finalise a definition by May 2022 and introduce another SOP when the Bill to amend the Act is before the House again.