

Cabinet Paper material

Proactive release

Minister & portfolio Hon Jan Tinetti, Minister of Education
Name of package School Attendance Turnaround Package
Date considered 13 February 2023
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Cabinet paper: School Attendance Turnaround Package

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Material redacted

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Budget Sensitive

Office of the Minister of Education

Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

School Attendance Turnaround Package

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks agreement to a pre-commitment of \$73.708 million against Budget 2023 to fund urgent action to address ongoing low school attendance and rising non-enrolment in education and to support an early announcement of this investment.

Relation to Government Priorities

- 2 This work directly supports the Children and Young People are Learning and Developing outcome of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. The investment into the Attendance Service contributes to the Youth Engagement work programme.

Executive Summary

- 3 Attendance and engagement in school has been declining since 2015 and was made worse by COVID-19. The Government has invested in this area and these investments are having positive impacts. However, turning around the decade long decline in a post-COVID-19 landscape will require further investment if we are to stop this decline and reverse it in accordance with the targets we set through the Attendance and Engagement Strategy.
- 4 There are two distinct aspects to the attendance problem. Hundreds of thousands of school students attend school most days, but their educational outcomes are at risk because they are not maintaining a regular attendance pattern (90% of the time or 9 days a fortnight). There is also a much smaller group who are chronically absent or not currently enrolled in school at all. Both of these aspects have been getting worse over the period from 2015.
- 5 On 30 May 2022, Cabinet agreed an Attendance and Engagement Strategy (the Strategy) [CAB-22-MIN-0193.01 refers] which set ambitious attendance targets to be met by 2024 and 2026 and well as expectations for students, schools and parents and across the system, Budget 22 supported the Strategy by investing \$40 million over four years in a Regional Response Fund and \$6 million over four years to address Attendance Service cost pressures. We have also redesigned the Attendance Service to place it closer to schools based on evidence gathered through pilot run in South Auckland and Kawerau both of which have been strongly endorsed by the participating schools and delivered improved key performance indicators.
- 6 We know there is more work to do. Rising absences, particularly moderate and chronic absence, and cost increases continue to put pressure on the system's capacity to improve attendance. There is a significant gap between the targets agreed by Cabinet in May 2022 and current attendance. While COVID-19 was a significant contribution to the most recent decline, meeting our ambitious targets in 2024 requires specific additional and immediate investments focused on moderate and chronic absences.

- 7 I have identified the following attendance turnaround package as a Budget 2023 pre-commitment to address attendance issues with urgency. The investment totals \$73.708 million over five years with a specific focus on young people missing school frequently:
- 7.1.1 establishing eighty-two new attendance officer roles to support schools improve the attendance of students who are moderately absent (\$37.583 million over 5 years)
 - 7.1.2 improving capacity for intensive support to chronically disengaged students by responding to volume and cost pressures for the Attendance Service - (\$28.392 million over 5 years)
 - 7.1.3 support for schools' management of attendance and engagement of all students by improving quality, understanding and use of data; and more effective engagement with evidence based local collaboration activities (\$7.733 million over three years).
- 8 Pending Cabinet agreement, officials will undertake immediate engagement with the schooling sector on the initiatives and so new attendance officer roles can begin in Term 2 2023, an immediate uplift can be provided to Attendance Services, and the attendance data improvement initiative can commence.

Background

- 9 Research shows that every day of school matters in the life of a young person.¹ Attending school and kura regularly is associated with positive wellbeing² and is linked to student progress and achievement. However, attendance has been declining since 2015 for every ethnicity, decile, year level and region. There have been slightly larger declines amongst younger students and lower deciles and the largest declines across primary and intermediate schools (Years 1-8) and for Māori and Pacific students.
- 10 Prior to COVID-19 our Government's approach to improving attendance was focused on removing the barriers to education through initiatives such as school donations, free period products, free healthy school lunches, preventing bullying, redesigning the curriculum to engage and inspire students. This was based on the evidence that if financial and equity barriers are addressed and students feel welcome and safe they will attend school. The Government's barrier free access suite of initiatives continues to address the known underlying drivers of poor attendance.
- 11 Alongside this, we also undertook refinements to the Attendance Service. The Attendance Service is focused on the most disengaged students, those who have a pattern of persistent non-attendance and those who are non-enrolled. For students who have moderate or irregular attendance levels, they are primarily managed by the school.
- 12 In 2011/12 the previous government made changes to the Attendance Service which saw the provision of service removed from schools and outsourced to contracted providers covering large regions (one provider covered all West Auckland and the North Shore schools, for example). Feedback from the sector and

¹ He Whakaaro: What is the relationship between attendance and attainment? Ministry of Education, 2020

² He Whakaaro: School attendance and student wellbeing, Ministry of Education, 2020

subsequent assessment have indicated that this was ineffective and contributed to the decline in attendance levels. The schooling sector expressed concerns about the distance between schools and the Attendance Service and the impact this had on re-engaging students.

- 13 Pilots in South Auckland and Kawerau that commenced at the beginning of 2020 explored new models of attendance management. An evaluation found these new approaches supported better engagement with schools, learners and whānau and better outcomes for absent and non-enrolled learners. There was an improvement of performance against the key performance indicators and a reduction in non-enrolment notifications (NENs).
- 14 Over the last two years, we have been working to redesign the Attendance Service, informed by these pilots, to bring it closer to schools and to allow them, as well as iwi and Māori organisations and local NGOs, to be more involved in dealing with issues faced by students in the context of their communities.
- 15 On 30 May 2022 Cabinet agreed an Attendance and Engagement Strategy (the Strategy) [CAB-22-MIN-0193.01 refers]. The Strategy set expectations for parents, caregivers and whānau, schools and Te Mahau (the delivery arm of the Ministry of Education) – including bringing social services and government agencies together to work with whānau and communities to help with the wider problems that are barriers to attendance and engagement.
- 16 Cabinet agreed four ambitious new targets for regular attendance, chronic and moderate absence by 2024 ³ and 13 actions to focus on ākonga being present, participating and progressing. The new targets are set out in table one below.

³ Regular attendance at school and kura measures the percentage of students who have attended more than 90% during a term. Other attendance categories are: irregular absence where students attended more than 80% and up to 90% of Term; moderate absence where students attended more than 70% and up to 80% of Term; and chronic absence where students attended 70% or less of Term.

B U D G E T S E N S I T I V E

Table One: Attendance and Engagement Strategy Targets

| Measure | 2024 Target | 20026 Target | 2015 Rate | 2021 Rate | 2022 Rate |
|---|-------------|--------------|--|-----------|-----------|
| Percentage of ākonga attending school regularly (attending more than 90%, an average of 9 days a fortnight) | 70 | 75 | 69.5% | 59.7% | 39.9% |
| Percentage of ākonga who are moderately absent (attending more than 70% up to 80%, missing two to three days a fortnight) | 6% | 4% | 6.3% | 8.5% | 15% |
| Percentage of ākonga who are chronically absent (attending 70 % or less, missing three or more days a fortnight) | 5% | 3% | 4.6% | 7.7% | 13.8% |
| Percentage of unexplained absences where schools have notified whānau on the day of absence and initiated intervention after 5 days of unjustified absence in a term. | 95% | 100% | This is a draft measure subject to further work. There is currently no mechanism for measuring this activity | | |

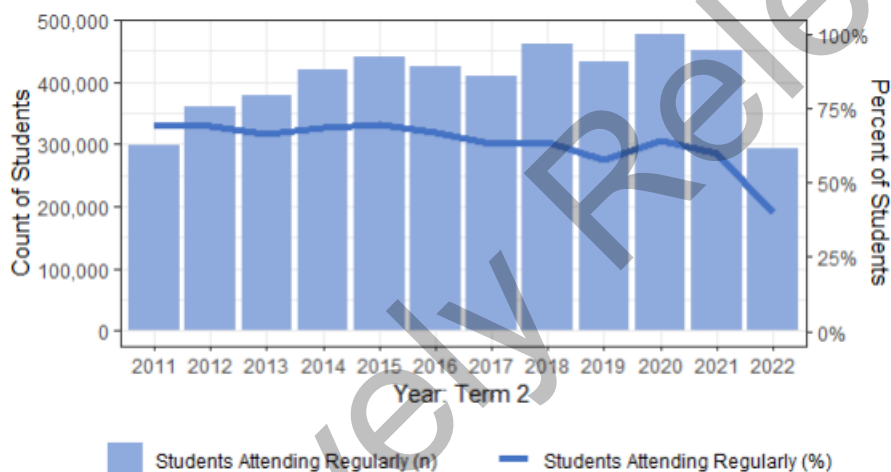
- 17 The Term 2 2022 data in table one has been published since the release of the Attendance and Engagement Strategy and reflects the increase in absences due to illness associated with Omicron and winter illnesses.
- 18 The Government's approach during and post-COVID-19 was to invest through a contestable fund to enable communities to respond to the unique drivers being the non-attendance in their community. We consistently hear from schools and community that a one-size approach does not work and the provision of flexible funding has been welcome. Budget 22 supported the Strategy by investing:
- 18.1 \$40 million over four years to establish a Regional Response Fund to meet needs at a local level. Te Mahau manages the fund which has an initial focus on student engagement and attendance.
- 18.2 \$6 million over four years to address Attendance Service cost pressures. [CAB-22-MIN-0129 – Initiative ID 14 14115 refers].
- 19 The Regional Response Fund is ongoing and has a strong initial focus on ensuring students are going to school and are engaged in their learning. The funding is being allocated at a local level and can support whānau-led responses to break the cycle of disengagement or to broker services with other agencies to ensure students have the level of support they need to stay in school. Examples of how the fund is supporting schools, include:
- 19.1 Supporting disengaged students involved in offending with sustained re-engagement into education through wrap-around support provided through the Kōtahi ki Whakaaro collaboration in Auckland.
- 19.2 Supporting disengaged and low attending students to successfully transition to secondary school by funding people to work directly with schools and families (eg in Nelson and the Porirua East Kahui Ako)
- 19.3 In Rotorua schools are targeting those below the threshold for attendance providers to limit and reduce referral to attendance providers.

- 19.4 A primary school has employed a family connector to broker supports to children with low attendance.

Analysis: Rising moderate and chronic absences and increased costs are putting pressure on the system's capacity to improve attendance

- 20 The decline in school attendance rates since 2015 have been experienced by every ethnicity, decile, year level and region. The declines are slightly larger among younger students and lower deciles, with the largest decline seen across primary and intermediate schools (Years 1-8) and Māori and Pacific students.
- 21 While the Omicron outbreak and other winter illnesses was the greatest contribution to the dramatic decline in attendance during 2022, unjustified absences also continued to increase. The impact of COVID-19 on school attendance was also experienced in Australia, where student attendance data shows the attendance level dropped from 71.2% in 2021, to 49.9% in 2022.⁴

Figure one: The percentage of students regularly attending school and kura from 2011-2022



Source: Ministry of Education, November 2022

- 22 In Term 3 2022, only 46.0% of New Zealand students were attending school regularly which means attending 90% of the time or 9 days a fortnight. While this is an increase over regular attendance for Term 2 2022, it is around 14 percentage points lower than it was in Term 3 for the preceding three years. On the other end of the attendance spectrum are chronically absent students (measured as attending up to 70% of the time or missing 3 or more days a fortnight) In Term 3 2022, 12.8% of students were chronically absent. In addition, in 2022, 16,402 referrals were made to the Attendance Service for students not enrolled in any school. These non-enrolment notifications (NEN) were up from 10,727 in 2021. The number of active (open) cases stood at 6,906 on 4th November 2022. Young people who become disengaged from education are more likely to subsequently not be enrolled in education or training or to be in employment (there are 13,554 young people in this situation). This not only poses significant problems for these young people and their life options but an economic and social problem for New Zealand.
- 23 Furthermore, since 2015 the number of students identified as non-enrolled and referred to the Attendance Service has also risen steadily, with a significant spike in

⁴ This measure is equivalent to New Zealand's 'regular attendance'. See [Student attendance \(acara.edu.au\)](https://acara.edu.au)

notifications in 2022. Last year 16,402 non-enrolment notifications (NEN) were made over the year (up from 10,727 in 2021). This spike was highest in February and March but as the year progressed the Attendance Service was closing more cases than new cases were being opened. This saw the number of active (open) cases reduce from 8,400 at the end of August to 6,906 on 4th November 2022.⁵

- 24 Children and young people not enrolled in school have usually been chronically absent, are more likely to have frequent changes of school, and experience other poor outcomes (eg involvement with the justice system, unemployment, long term welfare receipt, and involvement with mental health system). For example, the 65 youth in the four target regions repeatedly involved in 'ram raiding' related offending have long histories of educational disengagement.
- 25 Chronically absent and non-enrolled students are referred to Attendance Services contracted by the Ministry of Education to work directly with this relatively small cohort of students who have the most complex needs. This requires time and effort but growing demand and limited resources make this more difficult. This is reflected in the amount of time cases are open. While sixty percent of NEN cases are closed within 180 days, almost a quarter (24%) are open for between 180 days and 364 days and another 15% are open for more than a year. In addition, in 2022, the Attendance Service was not able to improve the attendance of one in five (20.3%) of the students referred for unexplained absences and the student became a NEN referral. Recognising the historic underfunding of the Attendance Service and increasing demand, we have increased the funding for the Attendance Service on average by 20% since 2020. This increase has not, however, kept up with demand and the rise in case numbers driven largely by the impacts of COVID-19.
- 26 The larger group of students falling short of regular attendance (missing between one and three days a fortnight) aren't eligible for assistance from the Attendance Service. The onus on remedying their attendance behaviour falls on schools and parents. It can take schools time to work with families and the student to understand the reasons for absences and to work to address the impact these issues are having on school attendance and engagement (eg anxiety, family breakdown, bullying). The number of students within this category is increasing and schools are struggling to find the time to work with students to prevent poor attendance from continuing or becoming worse. It is, therefore, no longer viable for this situation to continue without additional targeted resource to support schools, students and families turn this around.
- 27 An additional challenge is societal and parental attitudes about the importance of attending school regularly. For example, recent research by the Education Review Office reported that of those surveyed:
 - 27.1 four in 10 parents (41 percent) are comfortable with their child missing more than a week of school a term, or almost a year of their schooling by the time they are 16
 - 27.2 a third of learners (33 percent) don't think going to school every day is that important

⁵ This includes a small number of notifications for five and sixteen-year olds. Excluding these five and sixteen-year olds, the number of active cases on 4 November was 6,649.

- 27.3 nearly a quarter (22 percent) of students do not think school is that important for their futures
- 27.4 Parents thought regular attendance was less important in primary school (primary school provides foundation learning and missing school in primary school is linked with poor attendance in secondary school).⁶

An Attendance Turnaround Package

- 28 We need to consider specific additional and immediate investments to reinforce the actions already contained in the Attendance and Engagement Strategy, relieve pressures and address identified gaps, with a specific focus on moderate and chronic absences.
- 29 The proposed components of the Attendance Turnaround Package outlined below target each of the concerns and cohorts outlined above. The three components are:
- 29.1 Eighty-two new Attendance Officer roles to support schools to turnaround irregular attendance (\$37.583 million over five years).
- 29.2 Attendance Service Uplift – 5% increase in funding for volume and cost pressures, improved capacity for intensive support to reengage the most complex cases, supporting service provider professional development, three Ministry employed regional Attendance Advisors for a one-year trial, and developing a business case to improve the Attendance Service case management system (\$28.392 million over five years).
- 29.3 Improved quality, understanding and use of data; and engage more effectively with evidence based local collaboration activities to support school attendance and engagement (\$7.733 million over 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 only).
- 30 Table two sets out each of these components and table three sets out the funding over five years. More detailed descriptions of the components are provided below.

Table Two: Components of the Attendance Turnaround Package

| Component | Description | Learners Supported |
|--|---|---|
| <i>Turnaround irregular attendance</i> \$37.583 million over five years | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 82 FTE to provide this support to kura and schools across the country to improve the attendance of students who attending school irregularly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximately 230,000 students attended more than 80% and up to 90% and 110,000 attended more than 70% and up to 80% in Term 2 2022. Note that this data reflects the impact of the increase in absences due to illness associated with Omicron and winter illnesses |

⁶ Missing Out: Why Aren't Our Children Going to School? Education Review Office , November 2022

B U D G E T S E N S I T I V E

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| <i>Attendance Service uplift</i> (\$28.392 million over five years) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost pressure funding of 5% • Volume increase of 14% • Intensive wrap around for non-enrolled cases open for longer than 6 months • Attendance Advisors for a one-year trial • Attendance Service Application improvements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An approximate 1,300 chronically absent and a further 1,500 non-enrolled referrals • More intensive support for 3,000 of the most complex cases (including the approximately 1,500-2,000 NENs open for longer than 6 months) |
| <i>Attendance Data Improvement Programme</i> (\$7.733 million over three years) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term initiative to improve quality, understanding and use of data to drive and support evidence-based activity to improve attendance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All learners |

Table Three: Operating Funding Over Four Years

| Operating funding proposed package | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Operating expense category | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 & outyears* | 6Total |
| Regional Attendance Officers to turn around irregular attendance | 1.503 | 9.020 | 9.020 | 9.020 | 9.020 | 37.583 |
| Attendance Service Uplift Package | 2.372 | 7.117 | 6.301 | 6.301 | 6.301 | 28.392 |
| Attendance Data Improvement programme | 1.533 | 4.600 | 1.600 | - | - | 7.733 |
| Total (\$m) | 5.408 | 20.737 | 16.921 | 15.321 | 15.321 | 73.708 |

31 I am seeking a pre-commitment from Budget 2023 for this package.

Overview of the Package

New roles to support schools to turnaround irregular and moderate attendance

32 Most students who moderately absent require additional support but are not at the point where they are referred to the Attendance Service. As discussed above, the mandate of the Attendance Service is with students with the most chronic attendance and non-enrolment issues. Referrals are predominantly for students from late primary into secondary and are usually made once unjustified absences have become frequent, persistent, and entrenched. There have been large declines in attendance amongst primary and intermediate school age students and an increasing percentage of moderately absent students. There is, however, very limited intervention for the large percentage of students who are moderately absent.

- 33 As seen in the examples of initiatives funded through the Regional Response Fund, with resources schools can intervene earlier and work with whānau to get students with worrying moderate absence on the path to more regular attendance. Dedicated resources placed in or as close to schools as feasible would support them focus on turning around moderate absences. This earlier intervention also has the potential to reduce chronic absence and the need for subsequent referral to the Attendance Service.
- 34 A total of \$37.583 million over five years is required to fund schools or Attendance Services to employ 'Attendance Officers' with a specific role to support clusters of schools improve the attendance of students who attending school irregularly. This approach is in line with evidence that identifying students 'at risk' of disengaging from school and intervening early is one of the key steps schools can take to improve attendance.⁷
- 35 Based on the number of students with between 70 and 90% attendance and the experience of the Attendance Service pilots, the Ministry estimates that 82 FTE are required to provide this support to kura and schools across the country (the full year cost is \$9.020 million).
- 36 Details of the allocation between regions need to be worked through as part of implementation planning. I propose allocating the roles using a methodology very similar to that used to distribute resources for the Attendance Service. As with the Attendance Service distribution, the Ministry would use the equity and isolation indexes but, recognising the different target group, focus on moderate absences rather than chronic. There is potential to adjust the weightings between these factors and to use absence data for the last three years of Term 2 to control for COVID effects in 2022. The Ministry would distribute funding at a regional level and communities can use this as their starting point for distribution, with flexibility to adjust the distribution based on other factors such as local knowledge.
- 37 This proposal includes \$1.503 million in 2022/23 to support the early implementation of this initiative in Term 2 2023.

Attendance Service uplift for chronic absentees and non-enrolled

- 38 As noted above, rising costs and demand are putting pressure on the limited funding directed at reducing chronic absenteeism and non-enrolment. Given Attendance Services are demand driven, they have been managing these pressures by spreading resources more thinly, triaging students, or through waiting lists. However, given the complexity of need and the intensity of the support required, these approaches can reduce the likelihood of successfully re-engaging students in education which, in turn, can reduce schools' confidence in the usefulness of referring students to the service.
- 39 Attendance Services, therefore, need additional funding to address the increased volume of students referred and to work with schools and whānau to address complex needs and provide the intensity of support needed so students re-enrol and return to more frequent attendance. This funding would enable them to increase staff capacity and respond more quickly and thoroughly to chronic non-attendance and non-enrolment. It would provide the hours of support required for the complexity and intensity of needs driving poor attendance and non-enrolment

⁷ https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/spotlight/11319-aitsl_spotlight_attendance_web-fa.pdf

and allow students to be returned to school more quickly before non-attendance becomes entrenched or the student becomes non-enrolled.

- 40 We seek agreement to funding of \$28.392 million over five years to address pressures on Attendance Services. This includes \$2.372 million in 2022/23 to support an immediate uplift for Attendance Services.
- 41 This includes cost pressure funding of 5% (\$3.579 million over five years) and a volume increase of 14% to allow for an approximate 1,300 chronically absent and a further 1,500 non-enrolled referrals (\$10.725 million over five years). In addition, it provides for intensive wrap around for non-enrolled cases open for longer than six months (\$13.000 million over five years) and three Ministry employed regional Attendance Advisors for a 16 month trial (at a cost of \$0.722 million) to focus on chronic and non-enrolled cases, support coordination of Attendance Services and Attendance Officers and other attendance initiatives within their regions, and work with schools and the new school-based Attendance Advisors described below to support their attendance policies.
- 42 Finally, the funding includes one year of funding to develop a business case for Attendance Service Application improvements that support providers to effectively deliver the required holistic, wraparound approach. Without these improvements there is a high risk of compromised service delivery. An improved case management database would enable the more efficient delivery of the service as the Attendance Service Application (ASA) used by providers for case management needs updating.
- 43 The cost pressure funding to address the growing complexity and intensity of some unexplained absence (UA) and non-enrolment (NEN) referrals is based on providing additional hours of support to approximately 3,000 of the most complex cases (including the approximately 1,500-2,000 NENs open for longer than 6 months).⁸ This would be sufficient to provide an additional 10 hours of support for each of these most complex cases.

Attendance Data Improvement Programme

- 44 Following COVID 19 disruptions there is a growing need to understand the drivers and underlying causes of unjustified absences and non-enrolment. The practice and capture of quality attendance data has diminished as the sector shifted to supporting students with the provision of education and flexible learning. As the education system begins to return to normal, returning all students back to school and into regular attendance is now the priority.
- 45 Funding is needed to review and redesign the approach in which attendance data is collected from across the education sector, boost activity with specialised staff to support intensive real time interrogation and integration of data sources and gain more timely operational insights through increased evaluations. Attendance data captured from the sector is crucial in establishing trends so existing or new services can adjust to meet demand.
- 46 In order to turn around attendance we need accurate data and reporting so resourcing and efforts can be targeted. Historically we've used the attendance data from Term 2 as the flagship measurement. In the last few years we've increased

⁸ The number of NENs open for six months or more varies throughout the year as cases are closed and new cases stay open longer than six months.

reporting to other terms which wasn't previously available. The quality of attendance data is largely reliant on schools to record, report and take appropriate actions. While over 90% comply with the requirement to submit their attendance data to the Ministry, we lack a standardised approach across schools which means the data is unlikely to be as accurate as it could be.

- 47 I am seeking funding (\$7.733 million over three years) for five experts to work directly with schools and communities, specialised services (SMS providers etc) to design and implement collection of new measures, the development of collateral, and evaluation of services, and the development of new approach to collection and use of data, including engagement. Subject matter expertise to support development of new approach and technical development of new approach including integration with existing systems are included. This proposal includes \$1.533 million in 2022/23 to support the early implementation of this initiative.
- 48 Further work with schools to promote best practice on collection of attendance data post-Covid is also required. Schools need to be skilled in the use and analysis of data if they are to effectively intervene where attendance begins to deteriorate. Effective use of data can prompt a school to engage with families and students to identify what is driving an emerging pattern so that they can begin to offer support (eg a pattern of justified medical absences because the student has developed anxiety). This funding would, therefore, also be used to upskill schools to improve the quality, understanding and use of data to deliver front-line collective action from fact-based insights; supporting collection and use of new data (e.g. the fourth attendance measure) and piloting a new approach to how we collect and use data.

Implementation

- 49 I am seeking funding in the current financial year for attendance officers. This is to get them on the ground quickly in Term 2 2023 (which commences on 24 April 2023).
- 50 Our experience with the introduction of recent changes to the Attendance Service gives us confidence schools and providers will be able to find suitable people and Attendance Services are well placed to utilise additional funding. Funding schools to employ the new attendance officers will support more rapid employment. The Ministry will also consider prioritising high need areas to accelerate implementation. However, there are places where it may be more challenging to find suitable people (eg some rural communities). The Ministry will manage implementation in a way that recognises the challenges that the tight employment market may present in the short-term.
- 51 Ensuring that services are delivering for Māori and Pacifica ākonga will be a critical part of the implementation rollout. This includes provision for the Attendance Officers to work with Māori Medium kura. As discussed, the Attendance Service redesign has enabled the service to be closer to schools and communities and seen many Māori and Iwi organisation successfully procuring the contracts.

Financial Implications

- 52 This package requires up to \$73.708 million over five years in additional spending (\$64.888 million non-departmental funding and \$8.820 million departmental). I am seeking funding of \$5.408 million in the current financial year to support implementation the attendance officer initiative, an immediate uplift for Attendance Service, and the commencement of the Attendance Data Improvement Programme.

There is \$15.321 million p.a. required for outyears. If agreed, the incurred expenses will be charged as a pre-commitment for Budget 2023 against the Education cost pressure envelope.

- 53 As discussed above, funding this package as a pre-commitment reflects the urgency of the continuing attendance problem and the need for additional effort close to schools to turn around chronic and moderate absences. It allows for an earlier announcement and an accelerated response. Given the lead in time for implementation of the attendance officer roles an early decision allows for an early announcement and engagement with the schooling sector to put these resources in place in Term 2 2023 given the attendance officer roles are envisioned as being mostly employed by schools. Pre-commitment to the whole package allows for an immediate uplift for Attendance Service under pressures to respond to chronic non-attendance and non-enrolment and allows for the commencement of the Attendance Data Improvement Programme. It reinforces that urgent action is needed and the importance government places on improving chronic and moderate absences given the impact this level of absence has on the progress and achievement and wellbeing of these students.

Legislative Implications

- 54 None indicated.

Impact Analysis

Regulatory Impact Statement

- 55 Impact analysis requirements do not apply.

Climate Implications of Policy Assessment

- 56 Not required.

Population Implications

- 57 While school attendance is low even among the most advantaged groups, it is lower in lower decile schools, for Māori and Pacific ākonga, in more disadvantaged regions, and in secondary year levels (especially Years 11-13). These populations overlap. For example, there are higher proportions of Māori and Pacific ākonga in lower decile schools and higher proportions of lower decile schools in disadvantaged regions.
- 58 Given the link between attendance and progress and achievement, increasing the funding for the Attendance Services, which will include more Māori and iwi providers in 2023, to effectively address the attendance challenges faced by many Māori ākonga and Pacific students and supporting schools to improve the attendance by ākonga with irregular attendance can support improved educational outcomes for these ākonga.
- 59 The Attendance Service gives practical effect to Ka Hikitia - Ka Hāpaitia through its services and approach it provides. The overarching vision of Ka Hikitia - Ka Hāpaitia is Māori are enjoying and achieving education success as Māori, as they develop the skills to participate in te ao Māori, Aotearoa and the wider world. The

Attendance Service supports this by re-engaging Māori ākonga back into education, increasingly by contracting with iwi and Māori providers

- 60 The Attendance Service has been in operation for a decade, and with the most recent redesign, the Ministry engaged with mana whenua on what approaches work when engaging with ākonga Māori in different regions. As part of bringing services closer to schools and iwi and other Māori organisations having more input into attendance in local areas, the Ministry is contracting with more iwi and Māori organisations for attendance services, acknowledging these groups are best placed to understand the context which to work with Māori ākonga in their local area.

Human Rights

- 61 These proposals are consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Consultation

- 62 The Treasury and the Education Review Office have been advised of this paper but have not had time to comment.

Communications

- 63 If Cabinet agrees to this funding and approach, the Minister of Education will find a suitable vehicle and time to communicate this decision, in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance.

Proactive Release

- 64 I propose to release this Cabinet paper and relevant Minute proactively within 30 business days, subject to redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

The Minister of Education recommends that the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee:

- 1 **note** on 30 May 2022, Cabinet agreed an Attendance and Engagement Strategy (the Strategy) to address declining school attendance and increasing numbers of non-enrolled and educationally disengaged children and young people, improve their engagement in education and their educational and life outcomes [CAB-22-MIN-0193.01 refers];
- 2 **note** that the Strategy is driving efforts to improve school attendance but:
 - 2.1 rising costs and higher demand are putting pressure on the limited funding available to address chronic absenteeism and non-enrolment through Attendance Services which in turn is undermining services and schools' ability to turnaround the current trajectory for attendance and successfully re-engage students in education;
 - 2.2 some of the largest declines in attendance are for primary and intermediate school-age children and many schools do not have the resources to respond with whānau proactively to worrying attendance patterns before a referral to the Attendance Service is necessary;

B U D G E T S E N S I T I V E

- 3 **agree** to an Attendance Turnaround Package of initiatives to respond to the pressures described in recommendation 2 and turnaround declining school attendance and engagement and rising non-enrolment: comprising
- 3.1 Attendance Service – 5% increase in funding for volume and cost pressures, improved capacity for intensive support to reengage the most complex cases, three Ministry employed regional Attendance Advisors for a one-year trial, and developing a business case to improve the Attendance Service case management system;
 - 3.2 New attendance officer roles to support schools to turnaround irregular attendance;
 - 3.3 Improved quality, understanding and use of data; and engage more effectively with evidence based local collaboration activities to improve school attendance and engagement;
- 4 **note** the operating costs of each part of the components are set out in table below:

| Operating funding proposed package | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Operating expense category | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 & outyears* | 6Total |
| Regional Attendance Officers to turn around irregular attendance | 1.503 | 9.020 | 9.020 | 9.020 | 9.020 | 37.583 |
| Attendance Service Uplift Package | 2.372 | 7.117 | 6.301 | 6.301 | 6.301 | 28.392 |
| Attendance Data Improvement programme | 1.533 | 4.600 | 1.600 | - | - | 7.733 |
| Total (\$m) | 5.408 | 20.737 | 16.921 | 15.321 | 15.321 | 73.708 |

- 5 **approve** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decision in recommendation 3 above, with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and net debt:

| | \$m – increase/(decrease) | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------------------|
| Vote Education Minister of Education | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 & Outyears |
| Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure: | | | | | |
| Outcomes for Target Student Groups MCA | | | | | |
| <i>Departmental Output Expense:</i> | 1.804 | 5.416 | 1.600 | - | - |

BUDGET SENSITIVE

| | | | | | |
|---|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Interventions for Target Student Groups <i>(funded by revenue Crown)</i> Non-Departmental Output Expense: | | | | | |
| Students Attendance and Engagement | 3.604 | 15.321 | 15.321 | 15.321 | 15.321 |
| Total Operating | 5.408 | 20.737 | 16.921 | 15.321 | 15.321 |

- 6 **agree** that the proposed changes to appropriations for 2022/23 above be included in the 2022/23 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increases be met from Imprest Supply;
- 7 **agree** that the incurred expenses under recommendation 6 above be charged as a pre-commitment against the Budget 2023
- 8 **agree** that the expenses above be counted against the education Budget 2023 cost pressure envelope education cost pressure envelope;
- 9 **note** that the Minister of Education intends to announce these decisions as soon as practicable following Cabinet's approval, in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Jan Tinetti

Minister of Education



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

School Attendance Turnaround Package

Portfolio **Education**

On 13 February 2023, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that in May 2022, Cabinet agreed an Attendance and Engagement Strategy (the Strategy) to address declining school attendance and increasing numbers of non- enrolled and educationally disengaged children and young people, and to improve their engagement in education and their educational and life outcomes [CAB-22-MIN-0193.01];
- 2 **noted** that the Strategy is driving efforts to improve school attendance but:
 - 2.1 rising costs and higher demand are putting pressure on the limited funding available to address chronic absenteeism and non-enrolment through Attendance Services, which in turn is undermining services and schools' ability to turnaround the current trajectory for attendance and successfully re- engage students in education;
 - 2.2 some of the largest declines in attendance are for primary and intermediate school-age children and many schools do not have the resources to respond proactively with whānau to worrying attendance patterns before a referral to the Attendance Service is necessary;
- 3 **agreed** to an Attendance Turnaround Package of initiatives to respond to the pressures described in paragraph 2 and turnaround declining school attendance and engagement and rising non-enrolment, comprising:
 - 3.1 Attendance Service – 5 percent increase in funding for volume and cost pressures, improved capacity for intensive support to reengage the most complex cases, three Ministry employed regional Attendance Advisors for a one-year trial, and developing a business case to improve the Attendance Service case management system;
 - 3.2 new attendance officer roles to support schools to turnaround irregular attendance;
 - 3.3 improved quality, understanding and use of data; and engage more effectively with evidence based local collaboration activities to improve school attendance and engagement;

- 4 **noted** the operating costs of each part of the components set out in table below:

| Operating funding proposed package | | | | | | |
|--|--------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Operating expense category | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 & outyears* | Total |
| Regional Attendance Officers to turn around irregular attendance | 1.503 | 9.020 | 9.020 | 9.020 | 9.020 | 37.583 |
| Attendance Service Uplift Package | 2.372 | 7.117 | 6.301 | 6.301 | 6.301 | 28.392 |
| Attendance Data Improvement programme | 1.533 | 4.600 | 1.600 | - | - | 7.733 |
| Total (\$m) | 5.408 | 20.737 | 16.921 | 15.321 | 15.321 | 73.708 |

- 5 **approved** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the decision in paragraph 3 above, with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and net debt:

| Vote Education Minister of Education | \$m – increase/(decrease) | | | | |
|---|---------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------------|
| | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 | 2026/27 & Outyears |
| Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure: | | | | | |
| Outcomes for Target Student Groups MCA | | | | | |
| <i>Departmental Output Expense:</i> | | | | | |
| Interventions for Target Student Groups (funded by revenue Crown) | 1.804 | 5.416 | 1.600 | - | - |
| <i>Non-Departmental Output Expense:</i> | | | | | |
| Students Attendance and Engagement | 3.604 | 15.321 | 15.321 | 15.321 | 15.321 |
| Total Operating | 5.408 | 20.737 | 16.921 | 15.321 | 15.321 |

- 6 **agreed** that the changes to appropriations for 2022/23 above be included in the 2022/23 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increases be met from Imprest Supply;
- 7 **agreed** that the incurred expenses under paragraph 5 above be charged as a pre-commitment against Budget 2023;
- 8 **agreed** that the above expenses be counted against the Education Budget 2023 cost pressure envelope;

- 9 **noted** that the Minister of Education intends to announce the above decisions as soon as practicable following Cabinet's approval, in consultation with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively Released