

Cabinet Paper material

Proactive release

Minister & portfolio	Minister Hipkins, Education
Name of package	Reprioritising Distance Learning Pack Funding to Provide Additional Resourcing for Schools and Kura
Date considered	7 March 2022
Date of release	3 May 2022

These documents have been proactively released:

Cabinet Paper: Reprioritising Distance Learning Pack Funding to Provide Additional Resourcing for Schools and Kura

Date considered: 7 March 2022

Author: Minister Hipkins

Cabinet Minutes: CAB-22-MIN-0052

Date considered: 7 March 2022

Author: Cabinet Office

Cabinet Committee Minutes: LEG-22-MIN-0019

Date considered: 2 March 2022

Author: Cabinet Office

Education Report: Providing additional resourcing for schools to embed blended and distance learning

Date considered: 1 February 2022

Author: Ministry of Education

Education Report: Draft Cabinet Paper on resourcing for distance and hybrid learning

Date considered: 17 February 2022

Author: Ministry of Education

Briefing Note: Reprioritising distance learning pack funding talking points

Date considered: 2 March 2022

Author: Ministry of Education

Material redacted

Some deletions have been made from the documents in line with withholding grounds under the Official Information Act 1982. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Some deletions have been made from the documents as the information withheld does not fall within scope of the Minister's portfolio responsibilities, and is not relevant to the proactive release of

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<http://legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1982/0156/latest/DLM64785.html>

Proactively Released

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Education

Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

Reprioritising distance learning pack funding to provide additional resourcing for schools and kura

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks Cabinet's agreement to reprioritise \$11 million in underspends originally allocated by Cabinet to develop and distribute distance learning packs, in order to provide this funding directly to state and state-integrated schools and kura.

Relation to government priorities

- 2 This proposal supports the Government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

- 3 In August 2021, Cabinet agreed to provide \$22 million to support distance education by providing learning packs through the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund (CRRF) as part of the response to the August COVID-19 outbreak [CMG-21-MIN-006 refers].
- 4 This package of centrally-managed support has previously served schools and kura well and it is now time to shift our support closer to schools so they are better equipped to respond to the needs of their students. I expect that schools and kura will largely remain open under the COVID-19 Protection Framework (CPF), and they will need to be flexible and resilient in their provision of distance and hybrid learning. While schools and kura are already providing distance and hybrid learning, we anticipate this will increase when students require off-site education due to illness or isolation for periods of time.
- 5 We know that not all schools and kura have the same level of preparedness, and that there is not equal access to digital technology or quality learning materials. Government support for these learners is crucial to supporting all learners' rights to accessing free education in a safe setting, particularly under the CPF.
- 6 I consider that the most useful response from the Ministry to support flexible and local provision of blended and distance learning is to enable our regions to make funding allocations to schools and kura where need is identified.

Proposal to reprioritise distance learning pack funds

- 7 The Ministry have identified approximately \$13.5 million in anticipated underspends in the distance learning fund. In August 2021, this funding was allocated to ensure the Ministry could support schools, kura and early learning services in the event of extended site closures under escalated COVID-19 Alert Levels. The Ministry did not exhaust all available learning pack funding as extended closures were limited to Auckland and parts of Waikato and Tai Tokerau.
- 8 I consider that teachers and kaiako in schools and kura are best placed to determine and respond to their own distance learning needs. The Ministry has advised that further central development of learning packs is no longer the most effective model for supporting the education sector, especially where extended, large-scale national or regional closures of schools and kura are not expected.
- 9 I propose that \$11 million be reprioritised and allocated directly to schools and kura to provide them with flexible support which can be used to best prepare for distance and hybrid learning in their respective contexts. Note that \$2.5 million of the underspend will remain, in order to ensure supply for learning packs in MIQ, and to distribute the remaining stock of previous tranches of learning packs, as required.
- 10 The proposed reprioritisation of this funding is consistent with the original intention of continuing to support distance and hybrid learning. This would help schools and kura prepare to continue effective teaching and learning in the event teachers or learners are required to isolate (due to being a close contact of a COVID-19 case) or are themselves diagnosed with COVID-19 but are well enough to continue teaching or learning from home.
- 11 As with the majority of flexible operational funding provided to schools and kura, I acknowledge that there is a risk that these funds are used for purposes unrelated to supporting distance and hybrid learning. However, I consider these risks acceptable in comparison to the benefits of ensuring students can remain engaged in their learning.
- 12 While the per-school amount of funding is expected to be modest, this can be flexibly used by schools and kura to improve their distance and hybrid learning preparedness, and can include activities such as:
 - 12.1 preparing, purchasing and printing hard-copy curriculum resources;
 - 12.2 delivering materials to learner households;
 - 12.3 providing access to digital teaching and learning platforms; and/or
 - 12.4 a small amount of teacher release time or additional staffing to focus on distance and hybrid learning planning.

This funding will support our broader commitment to enabling distance and hybrid learning

- 13 In addition to directly resourcing schools and kura, the Ministry already has a range of other supports in place, including online resources for teachers, whānau, and learners, professional learning and development in digital fluency, as well as continued provision of subsidised internet connections and on-demand educational television programming. This package of support means schools and kura have multiple options to continue engaging their learners through COVID-19-related disruptions. These supports will be crucial to maintain access to education in a safe environment in the context of more widespread COVID-19 in the community, as we anticipate core frontline staff and students experiencing increased exposure to COVID-19, be unwell, or required to isolate.

How funding will be allocated to schools and kura

- 14 I have directed Ministry officials to develop an appropriate model for allocating this funding to schools and kura informed by regional insights from the frontline to ensure that this funding is distributed where needed. The allocation method is likely to involve a combination of data in a formula-driven approach, including students in each region, socio-economic status, and/or isolation. The model may be supplemented by regional discretionary funds to enable the Ministry to provide additional support for individual schools as need is identified. This is a similar approach to other funding provided to schools as part of the COVID-19 response, including the Urgent Response Fund.

Financial Implications

- 15 This is a fiscally neutral adjustment from a departmental to non-departmental appropriation, with no impact on the Crown's operating balance.

Legislative Implications

- 16 This paper has no legislative implications.

Population Implications

- 17 Addressing this suite of COVID-19 cost pressures supports children, students, schools and education workers across the country. Meeting each individual cost pressure has different impacts for communities. Meeting cost pressures relating to relief teacher/backfill support for schools and services, broadly support communities that have been or are more likely to be negatively impacted by COVID-19. This includes communities with high proportions of Māori and Pacific peoples, rural communities, and communities facing greater socio-economic barriers.

Human Rights

- 18 This paper has no human rights implications.

Consultation

- 19 The Treasury and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet have been consulted on this paper.

Communications

- 20 Should the proposals outlined in this paper be agreed to by Cabinet, the Ministry of Education will confirm and communicate details to schools and kura as soon as is practicable.

Proactive Release

- 21 I intend to proactively release this paper subject to Cabinet agreement to the recommendations provided, once funding decisions are finalised and have been publicly announced.

Recommendations

The Minister for Education recommends that the Committee:

- note** that in August 2021, Cabinet agreed to provide an additional \$22 million to support distance education as part of the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund [CMG-21-MIN-006 refers];
- note** that the Government's response to COVID-19 has now shifted, and centrally-driven initiatives are no longer the most appropriate way to support schools and kura;
- approve** the following fiscally neutral adjustment to support access to education (including distance and hybrid learning) during COVID-19 disruption, with no impact on the operating balance or net core Crown debt:

Vote Education Minister of Education	\$m - increase/(decrease)				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26& Outyears
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure: Improved Quality Teaching and Learning (MCA) <i>Departmental Output Expense:</i> Support and Resources for Teachers (funded by Revenue Crown)	(11.000)	-	-	-	-
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure: Primary and Secondary Education (MCA) <i>Non-Departmental Output Expenses:</i> Primary Education Secondary Education	7.060 3.940	-	-	-	-
Total Operating	11.000	-	-	-	-

- 4 **agree** that the proposed changes to appropriations for 2021/22 above be included in the 2021/22 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increase be met from Imprest Supply; and
- 5 **agree** that this Cabinet paper should be proactively released once funding decisions have been finalised and publicly announced.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister for 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.

Report of the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee: Period Ended 4 March 2022

On 7 March 2022, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee for the period ended 4 March 2022:

Out of scope

SWC-22-MIN-0019

**Reprioritising Distance Learning Pack Funding to
Provide Additional Resourcing for Schools and Kura**
Portfolio: Education

CONFIRMED

Out of scope

Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet



Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

Minute of Decision

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Reprioritising Distance Learning Pack Funding to Provide Additional Resourcing for Schools and Kura

Portfolio **Education**

On 2 March 2022, the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee:

- 1 **noted** that in August 2021, the COVID-19 Ministerial Group approved an additional \$22 million from the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund to distribute distance learning packs for early childhood, Years 1-10 and NCEA [CMG-21-MIN-0006];
- 2 **noted** that the government's response to COVID-19 has now shifted and centrally-driven initiatives are no longer the most appropriate way to support schools and kura;
- 3 **approved** the following fiscally neutral adjustment to support access to education (including distance and hybrid learning) during COVID-19 disruption, with no impact on the operating balance or net core Crown debt:

Vote Education Minister of Education	\$m - increase/(decrease)				
	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26 & Outyears
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure:					
Improved Quality Teaching and Learning (MCA)					
<i>Departmental Output Expense:</i>					
Support and Resources for Teachers (funded by Revenue Crown)	(11.000)	-	-	-	-
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure:					
Primary and Secondary Education (MCA)					
<i>Non-Departmental Output Expenses:</i>					
Primary Education	7.060	-	-	-	-
Secondary Education	3.940	-	-	-	-
Total Operating	11.000	-	-	-	-

- 4 **agreed** that the changes to appropriations for 2021/22 above be included in the 2021/22 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increase be met from Imprest Supply.

Rachel Clarke
Committee Secretary

Attendance (see over)

Present:

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern
Hon Grant Robertson
Hon Kelvin Davis
Hon Chris Hipkins
Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Chair)
Hon Andrew Little
Hon Poto Williams
Hon Kris Faafoi
Hon Peeni Henare
Hon Wille Jackson
Hon Jan Tinetti
Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall
Hon Aupito William Sio
Hon Meka Whaitiri
Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Office of the Chair
Officials Committee for SWC

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