



Education Report: Highest Needs Review Updated Timeline for Phase Two Engagement

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	04 November 2021	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	ER 1275219
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to seek your agreement to extend the second phase of wider stakeholder engagement to March 2022, noting that this will not impact the planned completion for the Review in October 2022.

Summary

1. We have provided you with an update on the intended activities from now until December 2021.
2. The current phase two engagement timeline, as agreed by Cabinet, was to occur between September and December 2021. However, due to COVID related delays we are now able to start this engagement in November 2021.
3. Proceeding to the earlier planned completion of the current phase two engagement timeline in December 2021 is therefore untenable and would put the quality of stakeholder engagement and genuine participation at risk.
4. We are seeking your agreement to extend the current phase two engagement timeline to March 2022 to align with the four months of engagement agreed to by Cabinet and to ensure engagement materials are in formats that are accessible and inclusive of disabled people and mitigate the impact of COVID delays.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **Note** that we have provided you with an update on the intended activities from now until December 2021. Noted.
- b. **Agree** to extend phase two engagement until March 2022 to be more inclusive for stakeholders, specifically disabled people and communities impacted by COVID resurgence. Agree Disagree.
- c. **Note** that documents we intend to use for phase two engagement will not be in accessible formats for disabled people until the end of the year. Noted.
- d. **Note** that extending the timeframe for phase two engagement aligns with the four months of engagement agreed to by Cabinet in September. Noted.
- e. **Note** that extending the end date for phase two engagement to March 2022 will not impact the delivery timeframe of the Review's report back to Cabinet in October 2022. Noted.
- f. **Agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you. Agree Disagree.


Susan Howan
Pouwhakarae - Te Pae Aronui
Associate Deputy Secretary,
Strategy and Implementation
Sector Enablement and Support


Hon Jan Tinetti
Associate Minister of Education

04/11/2021

06 /11/2021

Background

1. Following your announcement of the Highest Needs Review (the Review) on Friday 22 October and the proactive release of Cabinet paper documents on Wednesday 27 October, the Review team has commenced phase two engagement with stakeholders to gather more evidence and information to unpack identified barriers, key areas, issues, and concerns as outlined in the Review's Terms of Reference.
2. Annex One updates you on the activities we intend to undertake from now until December 2021.
3. The initial four-month timeframe for this wider engagement [CBC-21-MIN-0082 refers] was intended to commence in September but has been disrupted by COVID related delays. We are able to commence engagement activities in November.
4. This means there will be reduced time and opportunities for engagement with a wider range of stakeholders this year. The timing of this engagement will also be challenging for stakeholders given current COVID alert level impacts, proximity to the end of the year and other extensive consultation also underway in the Education sector and Disability sector.
5. Further, key engagement documents will not be available in accessible formats (i.e., formats which are enabling for the disabled people to access) until the end of the year. The Ministry of Social Development (MSD) has been commissioned by the Ministry to enable documents in accessible formats and will work with Disabled Persons Organisations to achieve this. We are advised this is a six-to-eight-week process.
6. To deliver upon the decision of Cabinet to allow four months for wider engagement, as noted in the Review's Terms of Reference, and to also mitigate the key risk of not being inclusive, we are seeking an extension to phase two engagement from December 2021 to March 2022.
7. This will not have any implications on the Review's final deliverable of the report back to Cabinet in October 2022.
8. It is useful to note that, alongside accessibility of documents, we are also working on language translation of the documents, from English to Te Reo, Pacific Languages, Hindi, Korean and Simplified Chinese (as per the Learning Support Action Plan) through DIA. This process will take six to seven working days and our intention is to have this available through the Review's online landing page to support our engagement activities through November and December.

Key risks and benefits

9. A key risk for a shorter engagement period is that some stakeholders may perceive that the Review is limiting or excluding people from participating in the Review, specifically disabled people.
10. The benefits of extending phase two engagement period from December 2021 to March 2022 will lead to more diversity of voice and thought, and a process that is more inclusive of disabled people and communities that have been impacted by COVID resurgence. It will also align with the four-month timeframe in the Review's Terms of Reference that Cabinet agreed to.

Activities to gather quantitative data and literature

11. In this next phase of the Review, we will map the current funding and resourcing arrangements against up-to-date prevalence and forecast data for individualised support, alongside developing a better understanding of the characteristics of children and young people that have an unmet learning support need through quantitative data.
12. The Social Wellbeing Agency is discussing with us how they can assist with this analysis.
13. We are also undertaking a review of the New Zealand and international literature to build on our existing knowledge of best practice.

Next Steps

14. We will:
 - a. if agreed, advise stakeholders that phase two engagement will be extended to March 2022
 - b. provide you with an update on engagement and other workstreams in December 2021 as planned.

Annex One: Engagement activities from November to December 2021

Key dates	Work-stream	Activities
<u>Post announcement:</u> 28 and 29 October 2021	Updating	<p>Updating stakeholders on the Terms of Reference, Summary of engagement and Cabinet decisions by email; including an invitation to participate in wider engagement.</p> <p>Commissioning work to make selected Cabinet paper documents accessible for disabled people through the Ministry of Social Development (MSD).</p> <p>Commissioning language translation for selected Cabinet paper documents through the Department of Internal Affairs.</p> <p>Highest Needs Review web landing page available after “going live” on Friday 22 October.</p>
<u>Week One:</u> 1 Nov – 5 Nov	Engaging	<p>Responding to emails received in response to our update, providing additional information or co-ordinating initial or follow-up online engagement meetings.</p> <p>Finalising Advisory Group membership and exploring the use of an independent facilitator.</p>
<u>Week Two to Week Six:</u> 8 Nov – 10 Dec	Engaging	<p>This includes the Review team engaging with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholders, including education peak bodies and unions through individual meetings or wider engagement forums. Agencies through the Disability Support Services Network Hui and on a one-on-one basis as required, i.e., MSD, Ministry of Health, Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children Ministry of Education regional teams and communities of interest to discuss the identified issues, areas of concerns and barriers within scope of the Review. The Office of Disability Issues, the Disability Rights Commissioner, and the Office of the Children’s Commissioner.
<u>Week Three to Week Six:</u> 15 Nov – 10 Dec	Advisory Group & Focus Groups	<p>Meeting One mid-November - introduction to the Review team and each other with a recap of the Review to date.</p> <p>Meeting Two end November - finalise the Advisory Group’s Terms of Reference and forward plan for focus groups.</p> <p>Hosting the first of several planned Focus Group meetings alongside Advisory Group members to unpack the issues and brainstorm options.</p>
<u>Week Seven:</u> 13 Dec – 17 Dec	Briefing	Updating you with a Briefing Note on insights from the wider engagement to date and next steps.