



Education Report: Continuation of emergency payments for casual workers in State and State-Integrated schools and kura, and the future of financial support for the casual schooling workforce

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|---|--|---------------------|-------------|
| To: | Hon Grant Robertson, Minister of Finance Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education | | |
| Date: | 24 November 2021 | Priority: | High |
| Security Level: | In confidence | METIS No: | 1277295 |
| Drafter: | Isabella Sutherland | DDI: | 04 463 2887 |
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| Messaging seen by Communications team: | No | Round Robin: | Yes |

Purpose of Report

1. This paper seeks your approval to draw down a further \$3.600 million from the tagged contingency *Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-Integrated Schools and Kura*, established by Cabinet, to provide continuation of emergency financial support to casual workers in State and State-Integrated schools and kura, for the current pay period. It also provides you with advice about the future of financial support for the casual schooling workforce, given your agreement [METIS 1276429 refers] that automatic emergency payments to eligible workers would cease when the country moves to managing cases of COVID-19 through the COVID-19 Protection Framework.

Summary

1. Due to the COVID-19 resurgence in late August 2021, the Emergency Payment Scheme was re-established for day relief staff and casual workers in State and State-Integrated schools and kura who are paid by timesheet, and who would have their income significantly disrupted due to Public Health measures operating at COVID-19 Alert Levels 4 and 3, namely schools and kura being closed for face-to-face learning for the majority of students.
2. The emergency payment is only intended to compensate for the average hours worked each week and is calculated by offsetting the hours worked at a school and paid by timesheet during the Alert Level 4 and 3 period.
3. To date, support has been provided to casual workers of State and State-Integrated schools and kura as follows:
 - a. Approximately \$10.800 million was re-prioritised from non-departmental appropriations for primary, secondary and learning support to enable the

Ministry of Education to make these payments, which initially covered the period of 18 to 24 August.

- b. On 24 August, the COVID-19 Ministerial Group agreed that this support should continue up to 7 September and provided a further \$10.800 million for this purpose. On 8 September, emergency payments were made to eligible casual workers for the period 18 August to 7 September.
- c. Additional funding was also provided in the *Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-Integrated Schools and Kura* tagged operating contingency for further emergency support for casual schooling workers as required, and you were jointly authorised to approve the drawdown of this funding [CMG-21-MIN-0005 refers]. Subsequently you have agreed to the following payments:
 - o a further \$3.850 million up to 21 September while Auckland remained at Alert Level 4 and the rest of country moved to Alert Level 2 [12 September METIS 1270900 refers]. Emergency payments were made to casual Auckland staff for this period on 22 September.
 - o a total of \$3.600 million up to 5 October, while the Auckland region was at Alert Level 3 and the rest of the country at Alert Level 2 [28 September METIS 1272148 refers].
 - o a further \$4.700 million up to 2 November, while parts of the Waikato and the Auckland regions were at Alert Level 3 and the rest of the country at Alert Level 2 [29 October METIS 1273863 refers].
 - o a total of \$4.200 million up to 16 November, while parts of the Waikato and Northland regions, and the Auckland region was at Alert Level 3, and the rest of the country at Alert Level 2 [10 November METIS 1276429 refers].
4. The emergency payment scheme has supported around 15,000 casual staff across the country each pay period, while the whole of the country was at Alert Level 3 or 4 in August and early September, and around 4,700 casual staff in Auckland and other regions when they were at Alert Level 3 and the rest of the county at Alert Level 2.
5. This support is summarised below:

| Pay period | Total workers receiving payment | Cost (\$million) | Average payment per worker |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|
| 11/08 – 24/08/2021 | 13,898 | 6.668 | \$480 |
| 25/08 – 07/09/2021 | 16,658 | 11.649 | \$699 |
| 08/09 – 21/09/2021 | 7,938 | 4.283 | \$540 |
| 22/09 – 05/10/2021 | 3,891 | 3.511 | \$902 |
| 06/10 – 19/10/2021 | 781 | 0.355 | \$455 |
| 20/10 – 02/11/2021 | 4,710 | 4.145 | \$880 |
| 03/11 – 16/11/2021 | 4,598 | 3.989 | \$868 |
| Total | | 34.600 | |

Emergency support for casual schooling workers beyond 16 November

6. On 15 November, the Government confirmed that the Waikato region would move to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm on 16 November. The Auckland region will remain at Alert Level 3,

Step 2 and this will next be reviewed on 22 November. The rest of the country remains at Alert Level 2.

7. We have previously noted for you that as vaccination rates increase across the country, the Government has signalled the COVID-19 Protection Framework will replace the Alert Level system to manage cases of COVID-19 in communities. The Protection Framework introduces a 3-level 'traffic light' system divided into Green, Orange and Red levels. Schools and kura are open at all levels, with additional health measures in place at the Orange and Red levels.
8. As we have also previously noted, the Government has revised the Public Health measures required at Alert Level 3 and re-categorised restrictions into three steps. At Step 1 of the Alert Level 3 setting, senior students in Years 11, 12 and 13 are able to return to learning onsite. In turn, staff can return to teaching onsite where senior students are returning in Alert Level 3 regions.
9. Furthermore, on 10 November, the Government announced that students in Years 1 to 10 in the Auckland and Waikato regions (Alert Level 3 regions at the time of announcement) can return to onsite learning at schools and kura from 17 November. For most students in Years 1 to 8, this will be in a part-time capacity, however Year 9 and 10 students are able to return to face-to-face learning full-time. We anticipate an increased number of staff will be required for onsite teaching where more students are returning for onsite learning, however this demand is likely to be concentrated in secondary schools and kura where more students are returning full-time.
10. From 16 November, staff in the education workforce must have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to work onsite at a school, kura or early learning service. We expect the demand for day relief and other casual staff to be higher than usual as schools and kura work through the implications of the extended COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Amendment Order 2021, and testing requirements for the education workforce.
11. Although the COVID-19 Protection Framework was not in place by 16 November, as a result of the revisions to COVID-19 Public Health measures and settings and the vaccination mandate mentioned above, we anticipate the demand for day relief and other casual staff in schools and kura will continue to grow from 17 November. However, many day relief staff and casual workers continue to rely on automatic emergency payments, as the resumption of teaching to all year levels continues to take time.
12. Accordingly, we recommend that automatic emergency payments are continued for eligible workers in the Auckland region for the next full fortnightly pay period of restrictions, that is, until 30 November 2021.
13. We expect costs for the continuation of the emergency payment in the Auckland region beyond 16 November, to continue to be approximately \$3.600 million per fortnight. As we have previously advised, this is based on payments made during the Alert Level 3 restrictions for Auckland in 2020.
14. The amount of the payment made to each worker will continue to be offset by any casual work that is paid to a worker by a State or State-Integrated school or kura in this pay period.
15. Support will continue to be made available to on application for casual workers in State and State-Integrated schools and kura at Alert Level 2, whose ability to gain employment has been directly affected by COVID-19.

16. If you agree to continue emergency payments as proposed and to the level of funding sought, the remaining balance of the *Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-Integrated Schools and Kura* tagged operating contingency will be \$1.650 million.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- A. **Note** that on 24 August 2021, the COVID-19 Ministerial Group [CMG-21-MIN-0005 refers]:

- i. Agreed to the provision of emergency support for casual workers who had worked on at least one occasion for a State or State-Integrated school or kura in the 90 days leading up to 17 August when the country moved to Alert Level 4, the extent of which will be heavily influenced by the period over which COVID-19 Alert Level 2, Alert Level 3, or Alert Level 4 restrictions remain in place
- ii. Set funding aside in a tagged operating contingency for this purpose
- iii. Authorised you to jointly approve the drawdown of the tagged operating contingency

Noted

Noted

- B. **Note** that on 10 November, you jointly [METIS 1276429 refers]:

- i. Agreed that emergency support was continued for the next payroll period (3 to 16 November) while parts of the Waikato and the Auckland region remained at Alert Level 3
- ii. Agreed that emergency support was continued for the affected areas of Northland at Alert Level 3 for the next education payroll period (3 to 16 November)
- iii. Noted that the scheme would be available on application at Alert Level 2 for the rest of the country
- iv. Approved changes to appropriations to provide up to \$4.200 million for these payments
- v. Agreed that automatic emergency financial support is ceased when the COVID-19 Protection Framework replaces the current Alert Levels structure
- vi. Noted that the Ministry would provide further advice about the future of the Emergency Payment Scheme beyond 17 November, if the COVID-19 Protection Framework was not in place by 16 November

Noted

Noted

- C. **Agree** that as the Auckland region remains at Alert Level 3, this support is continued for the next education payroll period (from 17 to 30 November)

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

- D. **Note** that the Ministry will continue to make Alert Level 2 support available on application for casual workers in State and State-Integrated schools and kura whose ability to gain employment has been directly affected by COVID-19

Noted

Noted

- E. **Approve** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decision in recommendations C and D above, with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and 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: | | | | | |
| Outcomes for Target Student Groups MCA | | | | | |
| <i>Non-Departmental Output Expense:</i> | | | | | |
| Learning Support and Alternative Education | 0.198 | - | - | | - |
| Primary and Secondary Education MCA | | | | | |
| <i>Departmental Output Expense:</i> | | | | | |
| Support and Resources for Education Providers (funded by Revenue Crown) | 0.056 | - | - | - | - |
| <i>Non-Departmental Output Expenses:</i> | | | | | |
| Primary Education | 2.006 | - | - | - | - |
| Secondary Education | 1.340 | - | - | - | - |
| Total Operating | 3.600 | - | - | - | - |

Approved / Not approved

Approved / Not approved

- F. **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

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

- G. **Agree** that the expenses incurred under recommendation E above be charged against the *Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-integrated*

Schools and Kura contingency previously established by the COVID-19 Ministerial Group as follows:

| Contingency: Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-integrated Schools and Kura (\$m) | 2021/22 |
|--|---------------|
| Opening balance [CMG-21-MIN-0005] | 21.600 |
| Less | |
| • continuation of income support for the current Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 restrictions up to 21 September [METIS 1270900] | (3.850) |
| • continuation of income support for the current Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 restrictions up to 5 October [METIS 1272148] | (3.600) |
| • continuation of income support for the current Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 restrictions up to 2 November [METIS 1273863] | (4.700) |
| • continuation of income support for the current Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 restrictions up to 16 November [METIS 1276429] | (4.200) |
| • continuation of income support for the current Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 restrictions up to 30 November [this Report] | (3.600) |
| Balance | 1.650 |

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

H. **Agree** that the *Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-Integrated Schools and Kura* contingency will remain available until the scheme is no longer required

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

I. **Note** that if the COVID-19 Protection Framework is not in place by 30 November, we will provide further advice regarding whether payments should be provided for the period 1 to 14 December and how this should be funded

Noted

Noted

J. **Agree** that this Report be released as part of the Government's proactive release of information relating to the COVID-19 response

Agree / Disagree

☒ Agree ☐ Disagree

Hon Grant Robertson
Minister of Finance



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

___/___/___

25/11/2021



Anna Welanyk
Hautū – Te Puna Ohumahi Mātauranga |
Education Workforce

24/11/2021

Noted

Noted

- C. **Agree** that as the Auckland region remains at Alert Level 3, this support is continued for the next education payroll period (from 17 to 30 November)

Agree / Disagree**Agree / Disagree**

- D. **Note** that the Ministry will continue to make Alert Level 2 support available on application for casual workers in State and State-Integrated schools and kura whose ability to gain employment has been directly affected by COVID-19

Noted

Noted

- E. **Approve** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decision in recommendations C and D above, with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and 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: Outcomes for Target Student Groups MCA | | | | | |
| <i>Non-Departmental Output Expense:</i> | | | | | |
| Learning Support and Alternative Education | 0.198 | - | - | | - |
| Primary and Secondary Education MCA | | | | | |
| <i>Departmental Output Expense:</i> | | | | | |
| Support and Resources for Education Providers (funded by Revenue Crown) | 0.056 | - | - | - | - |
| <i>Non-Departmental Output Expenses:</i> | | | | | |
| Primary Education | 2.006 | - | - | - | - |
| Secondary Education | 1.340 | - | - | - | - |
| Total Operating | 3.600 | - | - | - | - |

Approved / Not approved**Approved / Not approved**

- F. **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

Agree / Disagree**Agree / Disagree**

- G. **Agree** that the expenses incurred under recommendation E above be charged against the *Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-integrated*

Schools and Kura contingency previously established by the COVID-19 Ministerial Group as follows:

| Contingency: Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-integrated Schools and Kura (\$m) | 2021/22 |
|--|---------------|
| Opening balance [CMG-21-MIN-0005] | 21.600 |
| Less | |
| • continuation of income support for the current Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 restrictions up to 21 September [METIS 1270900] | (3.850) |
| • continuation of income support for the current Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 restrictions up to 5 October [METIS 1272148] | (3.600) |
| • continuation of income support for the current Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 restrictions up to 2 November [METIS 1273863] | (4.700) |
| • continuation of income support for the current Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 restrictions up to 16 November [METIS 1276429] | (4.200) |
| • continuation of income support for the current Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2 restrictions up to 30 November [this Report] | (3.600) |
| Balance | 1.650 |

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

H. **Agree** that the *Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-Integrated Schools and Kura* contingency will remain available until the scheme is no longer required

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree

I. **Note** that if the COVID-19 Protection Framework is not in place by 30 November, we will provide further advice regarding whether payments should be provided for the period 1 to 14 December and how this should be funded

Noted

Noted

J. **Agree** that this Report be released as part of the Government's proactive release of information relating to the COVID-19 response

Agree / Disagree

Agree / Disagree



Hon Grant Robertson
Minister of Finance

28 / 11 / 2021



Anna Welanyk
Hautū – Te Puna Ohumahi Mātauranga | Education Workforce

24 / 11 / 2021

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

— / — / —

Background

1. On 19 August 2021, you agreed to the re-establishment of emergency payments for casual workers of State and State-Integrated schools and kura [METIS 1269399 refers], following discovery of COVID-19 cases in the community and the resulting shift to Alert Level 4 at 11:59pm on 17 August.
2. Support has been provided to casual workers of State and State-Integrated schools and kura as follows:
 - a. Approximately \$10.800 million was re-prioritised from non-departmental appropriations for primary, secondary and learning support to enable the Ministry to make these payments, which initially covered the period of 18 to 24 August.
 - b. On 24 August, the COVID-19 Ministerial Group agreed that this support should continue up to 7 September and provided a further \$10.800 million for this purpose. Funding was also held in the *Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-Integrated Schools and Kura* tagged operating contingency to provide for further emergency support for casual schooling workers, and you were jointly authorised to approve the drawdown of this funding [CMG-21-MIN-0005 refers]. On 8 September, emergency payments were made to eligible casual workers for the period 18 August to 7 September.
 - c. On 12 September, you agreed that a further \$3.850 million be provided for further support up to 21 September while Auckland remained at Alert Level 4 and the rest of country moved to Alert Level 2 [METIS 1270900 refers]. Emergency payments were made to casual Auckland staff for this period on 22 September.
 - d. On 28 September, you agreed that a further \$3.600 million be provided to fund further support up to 5 October, while the Auckland region was at Alert Level 3 and the rest of the country at Alert Level 2 [METIS 1272148 refers].
 - e. On 2 November, you agreed that a further \$4.700 million be provided to fund further support up to 2 November, while parts of the Waikato and the Auckland regions were at Alert Level 3 and the rest of the country at Alert Level 2 [29 October METIS 1273863 refers].
 - f. On 10 November, you agreed that a further \$4.200 million be provided to fund further support up to 16 November, while parts of the Waikato and Northland regions, and the Auckland region was at Alert Level 3, and the rest of the country at Alert Level 2 [10 November METIS 1276429 refers].

Emergency support for casual schooling workers beyond 16 November

3. On 15 November, the Government confirmed that the Waikato region would move to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm on 16 November. The Auckland region will remain at Alert Level 3, Step 2 and this will next be reviewed on 22 November. The rest of the country remains at Alert Level 2.
4. As we have previously noted, the Government has revised the Public Health measures required at Alert Level 3 and re-categorised restrictions into three steps. At Step 1 of the Alert Level 3 setting, senior students in Years 11, 12 and 13 are able to return to learning

onsite. In turn, staff can return to teaching onsite where senior students are returning in Alert Level 3 regions.

5. Furthermore, on 10 November, the Government announced that students in Years 1 to 10 in the Auckland and Waikato regions (Alert Level 3 regions at the time of announcement) can return to onsite learning at schools and kura from 17 November. For most students in Years 1 to 8, this will be in a part-time capacity, however Year 9 and 10 students are able to return to face-to-face learning full-time. We anticipate an increased number of staff will be required for onsite teaching where more students are returning for onsite learning, however this demand is likely to be concentrated in secondary schools where more students are returning full-time.
6. From 16 November, education workers must have received at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine to work at a school, kura or early learning service site. Anecdotally, we have heard directly from some staff members who have indicated they will not be vaccinated. We expect the demand for day relief and other casual staff to be higher than usual in some areas as schools and kura work through the implications of the extended COVID-19 Public Health Response (Vaccinations) Amendment Order 2021, and testing requirements for the education workforce.
7. In addition, recently updated health guidance means day relievers can now work across more than one site if they are fully vaccinated. This update was communicated through the Bulletin for School Leaders on 10 November. Previously, these staff were advised to work with one school only to limit the number of additional people outside the individual's immediate household who they may come into close contact with. We have heard accounts from the sector that there is a degree of caution in response to this change in guidance, so work opportunities available to fully vaccinated relief staff may still be limited.
8. On 10 November, you made the in-principle decision [METIS 1276429 refers] that automatic emergency financial support would cease when the COVID-19 Protection Framework replaces the Alert Levels structure. Although the COVID-19 Protection Framework was not in place by 16 November, for the aforementioned reasons, we anticipate that the demand for day relief and other casual staff in schools and kura will continue to grow from 17 November. However, many day relief staff and casual workers continue to rely on emergency payments, as the resumption of teaching to all year levels continues to take time.
9. Accordingly, we recommend that automatic emergency payments are continued for eligible workers in the Auckland region for the next full fortnightly pay period of restrictions, that is, until 30 November 2021.
10. We expect costs for the continuation of the emergency payment in the Auckland region beyond 16 November, to continue to be approximately \$3.600 million per fortnight. As we have previously advised, this is based on payments made during the Alert Level 3 restrictions for Auckland in 2020.
11. The amount of the payment made to each worker will continue to be offset by any casual work that is paid to a worker by a State or State-Integrated school or kura in this pay period.

Support at Alert Level 2

12. As we have previously advised, at Alert Levels 1 and 2, it is expected that relievers and non-teaching specialist and support staff who are fully vaccinated and would normally work across multiple schools and kura will be able to continue this usual pattern of work.

13. Nevertheless, to support the Public Health response, emergency payments have been provided on application for those casual workers in State and State-Integrated schools and kura whose ability to gain employment has been directly affected by COVID-19. To date, only two workers have applied for this support since the scheme was re-opened for the current resurgence.

The future of the Emergency Payment Scheme

14. The intention of the emergency payment scheme was to provide emergency income support to day relievers and casual non-teaching staff who are paid by timesheet and who would have had their usual income significantly disrupted because of the current COVID-19 resurgence and associated Public Health measures in place.
15. As you know, on 10 November, you made the in-principle decision [METIS 1276429 refers] that automatic emergency financial support would cease when the COVID-19 Protection Framework replaces the Alert Levels structure. The Protection Framework introduces a 3-level 'traffic light' system divided into Green, Orange and Red levels. Schools and kura are open at all levels, with additional health measures in place at the Orange and Red levels.
16. The Government has signalled that Cabinet will consider the introduction of the COVID-19 Protection Framework at the Cabinet meeting of 29 November. This means the earliest date the Framework would be in place falls in the next education payroll pay period (from 1 December 2021).
17. As we have previously noted, the introduction of the COVID-19 Protection Framework will impact the way we assess and provide emergency financial support, as the current criteria for support is based on schools and kura being closed at Alert Levels 4 and 3.
18. Considering this, we continue to recommend that automatic emergency financial support is ceased when the country moves to managing cases through the COVID-19 Protection Framework.
19. Where ongoing financial support may be needed, other forms of Government support are available to casual workers through Work and Income.

Financial Implications

19. Your agreement is sought to the provision of \$3.600 million in additional funding to:
- a. Extend the emergency payment scheme for the fortnightly pay period of 17 to 30 November for the Auckland region at Alert Level 3.
 - b. Continue to provide support on application for casual workers who are directly affected by COVID-19 during Alert Level 2.
20. To mitigate the risk of overpayments, the amount of the payment made to each casual worker will continue to be offset by any casual work that is paid to a worker by a State or State-Integrated school or kura in the pay period in which the emergency payment is made.
21. As the length of time that restrictions will be required is not yet known, we continue to recommend that the balance of funding held in the *Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-Integrated Schools and Kura* tagged operating contingency continues to be held in contingency until such time as the country shifts to the COVID-19 Protection Framework and the emergency payment scheme is no longer required.

Risks

22. As we have previously advised, while these measures will continue to significantly reassure many vulnerable schooling workers in the affected regions, they will not fully mitigate the impact of COVID-19 for these employees and the amount of support provided to each individual will vary. This could create a perception of inequity between those who receive different support depending on their circumstances, or people who receive other COVID-19 assistance payments from Government.
23. Some contingent workers may also be eligible for other Government assistance depending on their circumstances. For example, they may work at a non-schooling sector part-time job as well as undertaking relief teaching work.
24. The emergency payment scheme provides direct income support to casual State and State-integrated schooling sector employees. This may be considered more beneficial than the support that has been provided to casual employees in other sectors where different funding and employment settings apply, e.g., employees in the early learning sector.
25. As we have previously advised, if we continue providing financial support through emergency payments at Alert Level 3 while restrictions are easing through the step system, there is a risk that this will provide a disincentive for relief staff to make themselves available for work at schools.
26. It is not yet known the extent to which schools will engage day relievers and other casual staff beyond 30 November, therefore there may be relievers who perceive automatic emergency payment support should continue for a longer period.

Consultation

27. The Treasury have been consulted in the development of this Report.

Next Steps

28. Updated communications about the future of the emergency payment scheme will be made available via online channels and the Bulletin for School Leaders.
29. These communications will help provide confidence to casual workers and their whānau about the supports being put in place to minimise disruption to learning progress and look after the wellbeing of those people directly involved in delivering teaching and learning.

Proactive Release

30. We recommend that this paper is proactively released in line with the Government's commitment to the release of such information and advice.