



Briefing Note: Alternative Education National Body Meeting

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| To: | Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education | | |
| Cc: | Hon Chis Hipkins, Minister of Education | | |
| Date: | 3 November 2022 | Priority: | Medium |
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Purpose of Report

This briefing provides background information on the proposed agenda items for your meeting with the Alternative Education National Body on Thursday 10 November 2022.

Proactive Release

agree that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you.

☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree**



Dr David Wales
National Director Learning Support Delivery
Te Pae Aronui

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Hon Jan Tinetti
Associate Minister of Education

04/11/2022

Summary

1. The Alternative Education National Body (AENB) represents providers of Alternative Education (AE). The AENB is a collective voice for AE providers from across Aotearoa New Zealand. Established in 2003, the AENB seeks to:
 - promote good practice for AE provision
 - facilitate relational networks and communication for providers
 - advocate on important issues on behalf of AE providers.
2. You will be meeting with the following members of the AENB:
 - Joe Graham: AENB Chair. National Manager Relationships and Development with Blue Light NZ. He is AE Regional Representative for Waikato area and has been involved in Alternative Education for 20+ years.
 - Lois Conway: AENB Deputy Chair and Director, Invercargill Student Support Network. Lois is the Regional representative for Otago/Southland/South Canterbury.
 - Dr Adrian Schoone is Advisor to the AENB and an AE academic researcher (AUT).
3. You last met with these representatives in June 2021, and in October 2022 attended the AENB's national conference.
4. The key issues and opportunities the AENB want to discuss with you include:
 - the AE redesign, implications of this work, planning and discussions
 - the future direction of AE and who determines this
 - what regional design means in practice
 - funding allocation for AE
 - access to Positive Behaviour for Learning for AE providers.
5. The AENB also plan to update you on their activities and initiatives.

AE redesign

6. Since your last meeting with AENB representatives, work on the AE redesign has focused on operational improvements which step towards the ideal state for an end-to-end system of support. In 2022, the focus of the redesign has been:
 - Recontracting for provision in 2023:
 - a. including Te Mahau takiwā identifying where incremental improvements can be made at a regional level with stakeholders.
 - Updating the AE Guidelines:
 - a. aligning the guidelines with the ideal state processes: moving into, through and on from AE
 - b. updating the eligibility and entry criteria to increase flexibility
 - c. emphasising collaborative decision making and planning aligned with the He Pikorua practice framework
 - d. making it clear that entry into AE is a decision for ākonga and their whānau

- e. being clear that ākonga in AE are entitled to continued access to learning support services and resources.
7. The AENB has been involved in updating the AE Guidelines, with regular feedback and suggestions considered by the Ministry before finalising the guidance. This is an ongoing process. The AENB are generally supportive of changes and direction of travel towards the ideal state.
 8. The AENB have raised concerns with the Ministry about the redesign on behalf of AE providers. These concerns include:
 - providers feeling uncertain about future contract security
 - providers feeling disappointed about a redesign process going ahead with what they feel is a lack of investment
 - the time being taken to progress the redesign of AE.
 9. New contracts in 2023 will be for a three-year term with a right of renewal for a further two terms of one year each.
 10. Budget 2022 secured a 2.9% increase for the per place cost of AE provision to address cost pressures. This increase takes effect from 1 January 2023.
 11. Initial policy work on options for provision for younger cohorts is underway, following receipt of the Te Tupu Evaluation.
 12. Priorities for work on the Redesign for 2023 are yet to be confirmed. Options for the next area of focus include:
 - workforce
 - transitions to move through and on from AE
 - further operational improvements.

Suggested response:

13. We suggest that you:
 - thank the AENB for their engagement on the AE redesign, and acknowledge their frustration that this is not progressing as quickly as they would like, due to fiscal constraints
 - note the focus this year on leveraging operational work to progress the redesign through the updated AE guidelines and new contracts
 - note that there are a range of options for where the next tranche of work on the redesign could focus on and invite the AENB's views on what this should be.

Future Direction

14. The ideal state, agreed by Cabinet in 2019, sets out at a high level the future direction for AE. This was developed in conjunction with the sector, including with the AENB. As the redesign is being implemented incrementally, detailed design of different components will occur over time and will require engagement with the sector and other stakeholders.
15. Future work includes:

- strengthening pathways out of AE to support ākonga into their next best step
- further integrating AE into the education system and reducing stigma so that it is seen as a pathway not a destination
- identifying and addressing gaps in service provision
- supporting ākonga in AE to have equitable access to learning support services and resources
- identifying and addressing school practice which inhibits and restricts access for ākonga to engage in learning.

Suggested response:

- It is important that the redesign of AE is informed by the sector, community, iwi and hapū and delivered within the context of its communities.
- Any suggestions from the AENB on the direction of future work would be well received by the Ministry.

Regional design

16. The recontracting process for AE is providing an opportunity for Te Mahau takiwā to lead within their communities with key stakeholders, demonstrating:
 - taking practical action to give effect to te Tiriti o Waitangi
 - giving authority to regional and local voice
 - delivering greater responsiveness, accessibility and integrated services and support
 - improving feedback loops.
17. Procurement have designed an Engagement and Service Delivery Framework (ESDF) for AE provision that supports collaborative and co-constructed decision making about service delivery and requirements, including at the regional level.
18. Te Mahau takiwā have been utilising the ESDF to engage in a more open and constructive recontracting process. This has created some apprehension for providers seeking to secure contracts for 2023. Te Mahau takiwā are now in the final stages of this process and expect to have contracts in place by the end of November 2022.
19. Schools will continue to hold the contracts for AE in 2023. Some provision will be subcontracted to Iwi, Māori organisations or non-government organisations to provide AE in off-site locations.
20. In some areas Iwi and hapū will be involved with the governance of AE. Te Mahau takiwā are working with schools and iwi to bring iwi and hapū into the governance arrangements for AE.

Suggested response:

- You may wish to acknowledge that the shift from a national to more localised management and response to AE provision is an opportunity to improve feedback loops and communication.
- You can suggest that any providers yet to confirm contracts for 2023 are encouraged to communicate directly with their regional office.

Funding

Current Funding

21. In 2023 the total appropriation for AE (including funding allocated through Budget 22) will be \$24,175,000.
22. There are a total of 1,888 AE places and places are allocated to managing schools. Funding is allocated to the Ministry's ten education regions who determine how many places, and therefore how much funding, each managing school in their region will receive.

Funding Limitations

23. We know that providers experience difficulties in covering operating costs including utilities, staffing, learning resources and property leases. Providers have managed this by making difficult decisions between essential costs and seeking charitable funding to cover gaps where possible.
24. Resourcing does not enable parity of provision with schools, or the necessary level of wrap-around support. For example, the resourcing model does not support the employment of registered teachers for ākonga in AE nor does it address property requirements.
25. Addressing the funding disparities between settings is dependent on additional funding through Budgets.

Suggested response:

26. You may wish to acknowledge that the increase in funding for AE as part of Budget 2022 was not sufficient to fully address the financial difficulties facing providers, but that it is a step in the right direction.
27. You may also wish to highlight your intent to seek Budget funding to support the redesign of alternative education in future Budgets to address this financial pressure.

Access to Learning Support

28. There are a range of learning supports available to ākonga in AE depending on the age and needs of the ākonga. Clear communication and collaboration between AE providers, schools, whānau and ākonga determines what level of support is required. It remains the enrolling school's responsibility to request learning support services for ākonga attending AE.
29. The updated AE Guidelines strengthen previous guidance regarding access to learning supports including specialist services, resources, and interventions to meet the often-complex needs of ākonga in AE.
30. The redesign of AE is happening within the broader educational context. There are a wide range of strategies, interventions and approaches to support ākonga to be present, participate and progress. These include:

- the refresh of the New Zealand Curriculum
 - the Attendance and Engagement Strategy
 - the Learning Support Delivery Model.
31. Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) is a suite of initiatives available for schools to support them to understand and draw on effective strategies to enhance ākonga behaviour, engagement, participation and learning. Where AE provision is delivered offsite with a subcontracted provider, access to the PB4L suite should be discussed with the managing school and the Ministry to enable collaboration and sharing of knowledge and resources.
32. Joe Graham, the AENB chair is the AE representative on the PB4L sector reference group. The role of the sector reference group is to provide advice and guidance from multiple sector perspectives about the PB4L suite of initiatives.

Suggested response:

- You may like to acknowledge that ākonga attending AE have a wide range of challenges and some ākonga would benefit from support and guidance from specialist services.
- You may like advise that access to learning support services is available for ākonga in AE and any barriers to this must be addressed at both a national and regional level.

Other Relevant Information

33. The Ministry held a series of workshops on day two of the AE National Conference, focussed on the AE redesign. Providers and schools directly feedback to the Ministry their thoughts on the redesign and future state of AE.
34. On top for all providers was the need to secure contracts and staff for the New Year. Other issues raised included:
- Pressure on AE spaces: providers felt that the ongoing impacts of Covid-19 have exacerbated the need for alternative provision for some of our most at risk ākonga.
 - Lack of resourcing to meet the needs of ākonga: providers shared that current funding does not meet basic costs for providing AE nor does it adequately reflect the needs of ākonga who require bespoke and well-designed alternative learning provision.
 - Continued barriers to accessing learning support: AE is too often out of sight and out of mind for services including Learning Support and access to service is variable across the country.
 - Staff wellbeing is negatively impacted by the uncertainty that comes with fixed term contracts for service, inadequate funding and support for professional development and unrecognised value.
35. AE providers shared that working in AE is challenging but personally rewarding. Staff show perseverance and an ongoing commitment to improve the lives of young people at risk. AE staff have a wide range of experiences and expertise to engage young people and many feel this is not adequately recognised by the Ministry.