

## Cabinet Paper material

### Proactive release

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Minister & portfolio | Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education   |
| Name of package      | Government Response to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Ava Simeon: Increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance |
| Date considered      | 25 October 2022  |
| Date of release      | 19 January 2023  |

#### These documents have been proactively released:

**Cabinet Minute: CAB-22-MIN-0461**

Date considered: 25 October 2022

Author: Cabinet Office

**Cabinet Minute: LEG-22-MIN-0168**

Date considered: 20 October 2022

Author: Cabinet Office

**Cabinet Paper: Government Response to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Ava Simeon: Increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance**

Date considered: 25 October 2022

Author: Minister of Education

**Education Report: Response to Boarding Allowances petition**

Date: 16 September 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.

The applicable withholding grounds under the Act are as follows:

Section 9(2)(f)(iv) to protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers of the Crown and officials

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 this material.

You can read the Official Information Act 1982 here:

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



# 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 Legislation Committee: Period Ended 21 October 2022

On 25 October 2022, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Legislation Committee for the period ended 21 October 2022:

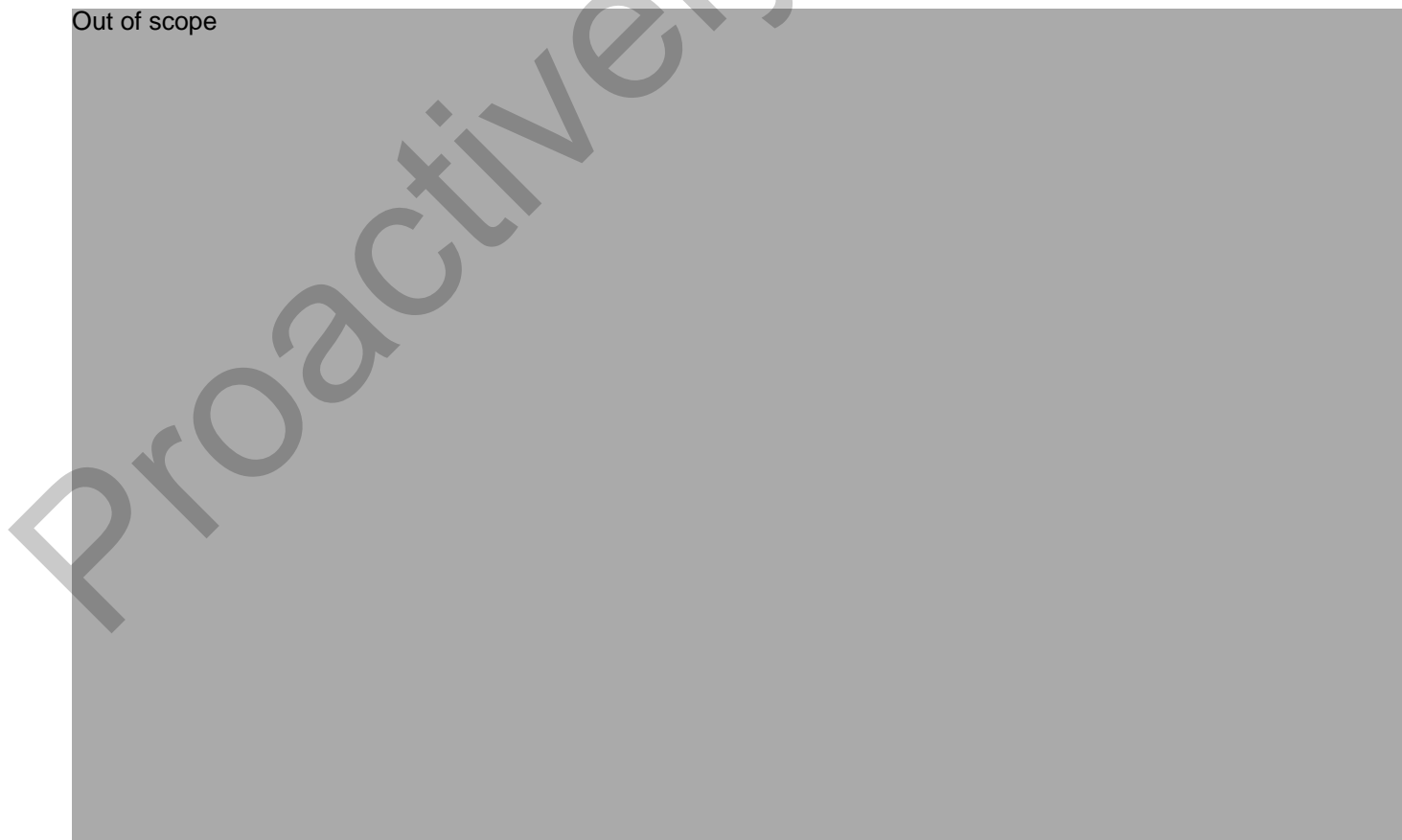
Out of scope

LEG-22-MIN-0168


**Government Response to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Ava Simeon: Increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance**  
Portfolio: Education

CONFIRMED

Out of scope



Out of scope



Rachel Hayward  
Acting Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively Released



# Cabinet Legislation Committee

## Minute of Decision

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### Government Response to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Ava Simeon: Increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance

Portfolio                      Education

On 20 October 2022, the Cabinet Legislation Committee:

- 1        **noted** that on 5 August 2022, the Petitions Committee presented its report “Report of the Petitions Committee Petition of Ava Simeon: Increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance” to the House;
- 2        **noted** that in this report the Petitions Committee recommended that the government readjust the baseline funding pool in order to fund a larger increase in the access barrier boarding allowance;
- 3        **noted** the submission of the Minister of Education and in particular their advice that any adjustments to the relevant appropriation should be considered through the Budget process;
- 4        **approved** the government response, attached to the submission under LEG-22-SUB-0168, to the Report of the Petitions Committee entitled “Report of the Petitions Committee Petition of Ava Simeon: Increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance”;
- 5        **noted** that the government response must be presented to the House by 31 October 2022;
- 6        **invited** the Minister of Education to present the government response to the House in accordance with Standing Order 252;
- 7        **invited** the Minister of Education to write to the petitioner enclosing a copy of the government response to the report of the Petitions Committee on the petition, after the response has been presented to the House.

Rebecca Davies  
Committee Secretary

**Present:**

Hon Andrew Little (Chair)  
Hon Nanaia Mahuta  
Hon Poto Williams  
Hon Meka Whaitiri  
Dr Duncan Webb, MP

**Officials present from:**

Office of the Prime Minister  
Officials Committee for LEG

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Education  
Chair, Cabinet Legislation Committee

## **Government Response to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Ms Ava Simeon to Increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance**

### **Proposal**

- 1 This paper seeks approval of the Government's response to the Petitions Committee Report on the Petition of Ms Ava Simeon to increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance

### **Background**

- 2 Ms Ava Simeon is a student at Halfmoon Bay School on Stewart Island / Rakiura. Ms Simeon put forward the petition as a student in a community where learners do not have access to a local high school.
- 3 Access Barrier Boarding Allowances are intended to help meet the cost of boarding for learners in these situations. A range of allowances or bursaries have been in place since at least the early 1970s in various forms. The current structure of the allowances was established in 2014 [CAB Min (14) 2/7 refers].
- 4 Ms Simeon sought information from the Ministry of Education, and from high schools in her region, to assess the changes in boarding costs over time and the potential cost of her policy proposal.
- 5 Ms Simeon accurately identified that the allowance rates have not changed since 2014, yet boarding fees have increased significantly.

### **The Petition Committee's findings**

- 6 The Committee confirmed that funding for the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance has not kept pace with cost increases to boarding. The Committee highlighted that Vote Education has increased substantially over the same period and recommended that Government "readjust the baseline funding pool in order to fund a larger increase to the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance".

### **Comment on the Petition Committee's findings and recommendation**

- 7 Officials from the Ministry of Education engaged with the Committee during its consideration of the petition. Officials informed the Committee that the current boarding allowances appropriation has been capped at its current level since the current allowances were established in 2014.
- 8 I recently announced alongside Budget 2022 investments that an 8% increase would be applied to both the Access Barrier and Multiple Barriers Boarding

Allowances, effective from January 2023. This increase used an underspend in the appropriation, while allowing for expected growth in volumes.

- 9 I acknowledge this does not address Ms Simeon's preferred outcome, nor the full increase in costs of boarding since 2014. However, it is the first investment in many years, and will somewhat mitigate current cost pressures.
- 10 To adjust the allowances within the current funding pool would require reducing the rate of the Multiple Barriers Boarding Allowance or tightening allowance eligibility, either of which would reduce access to boarding for those who can most benefit from it. These allowances also serve an important purpose and I do not consider trading-off the two within the current fixed pool will materially improve the circumstances of learners in need of these allowances. Future investment decisions could still shift the rates of each allowance in different proportions, if considered suitable.
- 11 The Ministry of Education reviews the boarding allowances every three years, to determine whether they are reaching the right learner cohorts, providing adequate support to learners, and operating effectively. It also considers whether some groups need more support, for example, whether Māori may face specific barriers, and how effectively these are addressed through the allowances. These reviews include engaging with external agencies and rural sector representatives. The next review is scheduled for 2023.
- 12 9(2)(f)(iv)
- While the Budget process requires careful consideration of overall Government priorities, alongside my priorities in Vote Education, I consider that the Budget process is the appropriate means to determine the scope and scale of any potential further investment in boarding allowances.

### **Timing of the Government response**

- 13 The Government response must be presented to the House of Representatives by 31 October 2022.

### **Consultation**

- 14 The Treasury, the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and the Ministry for Primary Industries have been consulted on this Cabinet paper.

### **Financial implications**

- 15 There are no financial implications as a result of this Cabinet paper. I may seek to invest in boarding allowances through a Budget process.

### **Publicity**

- 16 The attached Government response at Annex One will be tabled in the House of Representatives by 31 October 2022.

## Proactive Release

- 17 I intend to proactively release this Cabinet paper, subject to any necessary redactions relating to the Budget process.

## Recommendations

The Minister of Education recommends that the Cabinet Legislation Committee:

- 1 **note** that on 5 August 2022 the Petitions Committee presented its report to the House entitled “Report of the Petitions Committee Petition of Ava Simeon: Increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance”
- 2 **note** that the select committee recommended that the Government readjust the baseline funding pool in order to fund a larger increase in the access barrier boarding allowance;
- 3 **note** the submission of the Minister of Education and in particular their advice that any adjustments to the relevant appropriation should be considered through the Budget process;
- 4 **approve** the Government response, attached to this submission, to the Report of the Petitions Committee entitled “Report of the Petitions Committee Petition of Ava Simeon: Increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance”;
- 5 **note** that the Government response must be presented to the House by 31 October 2022;
- 6 **invite** the Minister of Education to present the Government response to the House in accordance with Standing Order 252;
- 7 **invite** the Minister of Education to write to the petitioner enclosing a copy of the Government response to the report of the Petitions Committee on the petition, after the response has been presented to the House.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister of Education

**Government Response to  
Report of the Petitions Committee  
on  
The Petition of Ava Simeon: Increase the Access Barrier Boarding  
Allowance**

**Presented to the House of Representatives**

**In accordance with Standing Order 252**



# **Government response to Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Ava Simeon to Increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance**

## **Introduction**

- 1 The government has carefully considered the Petition Committee's report on the petition of Ava Simeon to increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance.
- 2 The government welcomes the Committee's report, which provides a helpful summary of the current state of boarding allowances, and their relative change in value over time.
- 3 This is the Government response to the report in accordance with Standing Order 252.
- 4 The Committee's recommendations by nature are linked to the Budget process. As the Committee has noted, Ms Simeon has identified a challenge that significantly affects our rural and offshore communities. The Government thanks Ms Simeon for her petition, and commends her for her engagement with the Committee.

## **Government actions**

- 5 The Government recognises there is a wide range of circumstances in which learners might require support to access education. The current boarding allowances have been in place since 2014. The Government was pleased to announce in May 2022 that from January 2023 the rates for both boarding allowances will increase by approximately 8%, their first increase since 2014.
- 6 The Ministry of Education reviews the boarding allowances every three years, most recently in 2020. These reviews consider the cohorts accessing allowances, and views from stakeholders including rural organisations, principals in rural areas, and other Government agencies. They also consider whether particular groups need additional support, for example whether Māori may face specific barriers and how effectively these are addressed through the allowances. The next review is scheduled for 2023.
- 7 The Committee has recommended that the Government readjust the baseline funding pool in order to fund a larger increase in the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance.
- 8 The current appropriation is fixed at \$11.319m p/a, and includes funding for both the Access Barrier Allowance and the Multiple Barriers Allowance. While possible, adjusting rates within the current fixed appropriation would require either restricting allowance volumes, or reducing the value of the Multiple Barriers Boarding Allowance. The first of these options would reduce access to allowances while the second would reduce the value of the allowances for students with significant needs.
- 9 The Committee's recommendation will therefore be considered through Budget processes. These processes allows departments and agencies, Ministers, and the Government to consider priorities for investment across a wide range of calls for spending.
- 10 Government will also consider whether changes may be required to the boarding allowances more generally, to ensure they are appropriately targeted and that learners have the support they need to access quality education.

## **Recommendations and Government response**

- 11 Recommendation 1: that the Government readjust the baseline funding pool in order to fund a larger increase in the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance.
- 12 Response: The Government will consider this recommendation through a future Budget process. The Ministry of Education will provide advice to the Minister of Education on options to address the concerns raised by Ms Simeon.

## **Conclusion**

- 13 While the issues Ms Simeon and the Committee have identified are clearly set out in the Report of the Committee, the Government has an obligation to follow due process for amending appropriations. The Government considers that this is best managed through the Budget process.



## Education Report: Response to Boarding Allowances petition

|   |  |                     |             |
|---|--|---------------------|-------------|
| <b>To:</b>                                    | Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education |                     |             |
| <b>Date:</b>                                  | 16 September 2022                        | <b>Priority:</b>    | Medium      |
| <b>Security Level:</b>                        | In Confidence                            | <b>METIS No:</b>    | 1282099     |
| <b>Drafter:</b>                               | Joshua Thurston                          | <b>DDI:</b>         | 04 463 8894 |
| <b>Key Contact:</b>                           | Alanna Sullivan-Vaughan                  | <b>DDI:</b>         | 04 463 8414 |
| <b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b> | No                                       | <b>Round Robin:</b> | No          |

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to agree the proposed Government response to the Petitions Committee Report on increasing the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance, and to circulate the attached draft Cabinet Paper for agency and Ministerial consultation.

### Summary

- Ms Ava Simeon is a student at Halfmoon Bay School on Stewart Island / Rakiura. Ms Simeon put forward a petition seeking an increase to the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance as a student in a community which does not have a local high school.
- The Petitions Committee has considered the petition and recommended an increase be made to the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance from within the current fixed appropriation. Standing Order 252 requires the Government to provide a response to the House of Representatives by 31 October 2022.
- Government has recently approved an 8% increase in both allowance rates, to take effect from January 2023. This increase has used up the fiscal headroom within the appropriation that supports Boarding Allowances. Therefore, while the Committee's recommendation is possible, it would require either reducing allowance volumes, or reducing the value of the Multiple Barriers Boarding Allowance which is funded from the same appropriation, neither of which are recommended.
- Any changes to boarding allowance funding would therefore need to be considered through the Budget process. We have provided a draft Cabinet Paper and Government Response in line with this recommendation.
- 9(2)(f)(iv)

- 6 We seek your agreement to agency and Ministerial consultation on the attached draft Cabinet Paper and Government Response

## Recommended Actions

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The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **note** that a petition to increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance has been considered by the Petitions Committee, and that the Government is required to respond

**Noted**

- b. **note** that Government has recently approved an 8% increase to boarding allowance rates, to take effect from 1 January 2023

**Noted**

- c. **note** that further increases to the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance within the current fixed appropriation (as suggested by the Committee) would require reducing the number of allowances available or reducing the value of the Multiple Barriers Boarding Allowance, neither of which is recommended

**Noted**

- d. **agree** that further changes to boarding allowances are most appropriately considered as part of a Budget process

**Agree** Disagree

- e. **agree** to circulate the attached draft Cabinet Paper and Government Response for agency and Ministerial Consultation


**Agree** Disagree

- f. **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing once the Government Response has been provided to the House of Representatives

**Agree** Disagree.

  
John Brooker  
Group Manager Te Puna Kaupapahere

16/09/2022

  
Hon Chris Hipkins  
Minister of Education

30/ 9/ 2022

## Annexes

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- Annex 1: Draft Government Response to Report of the Petitions Committee on The Petition of Ava Simeon: Increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance
- Annex 2: Draft Cabinet Paper: Government Response to the Report of the Petitions Committee on the Petition of Ms Ava Simeon to Increase the Access Barrier Boarding Allowance