



Education Report: Further continuation of emergency support for casual staff in the State and State-integrated schooling sector

To:	Hon Grant Robertson, Minister of Finance Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	8 September 2021	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In confidence	METIS No:	1270900
Drafter:	9(2)(a)	DDI:	9(2)(a)
Key Contact:		DDI:	
Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	Yes

Purpose of Report

1. This paper seeks your approval to draw down \$3.850 million from the tagged contingency established by Cabinet to provide continued emergency support for casual workers in State and State-Integrated schools and kura in response to the COVID-19 resurgence.

Summary

2. On 6 September, the Government advised that that, expect for Auckland, the country will move to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm on 7 September 2021. Auckland will remain at Alert Level 4 until at least 13 September when Alert Levels are next due to be reviewed.

Support provided in 2020 and 2021

3. 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]. 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 18 to 24 August.
4. On 24 August 2021, the COVID-19 Ministerial Group [CMG-21-MIN-0005 refers]:
 - 4.1. 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
 - 4.2. Approved changes to funding appropriations sufficient to allow this payment to be made up to 7 September

- 4.3. Agreed to establish the *Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-Integrated Schools and Kura* tagged operating contingency of up to \$21.600 million in 2021/22 to provide for further emergency support for casual schooling workers.
- 4.4. Authorised the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education to jointly approve the drawdown of the tagged operating contingency.
5. The first payment will be made on 8 September, which is the earliest possible date payments could be processed on the education payroll.

Support for casual schooling sector workers during the current resurgence

6. We now recommend that emergency payments are continued for the Auckland region for the next full fortnightly pay period of the current restrictions, that is until 21 September.
7. We expect costs for a continuation of the emergency payment scheme in the Auckland region beyond 7 September, to be approximately \$3.600 million per fortnight based on payments made when during the Alert Level 3 restrictions for Auckland during 2020.
8. At Alert Levels 1 and 2 it is expected that relievers and non-teaching staff who normally work across multiple schools and kura will be able to return to their usual patterns of work and accordingly the Ministry of Education will cease providing emergency payments to workers except for those in Auckland from 8 September 2021.
9. At Alert Level 2, support will be provided 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 and public health measures in place at Alert Level 2. The criteria for this support will be consistent with support that has been previously provided during periods of Alert Level 2 restrictions and will be available to those workers who are sick with COVID-19, are required to self-isolate on the advice of public health, or who are at high risk of serious complications of COVID-19 and are not yet fully vaccinated (or are advised that they should continue to isolate at Alert Level 2 despite being fully vaccinated).
10. At Alert Level 2, costs have to date been very low with few casual workers requiring support. Future costs are not expected to exceed \$0.250 million for this support.

11. 9(2)(f)(iv)

[REDACTED]

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. Approved changes to funding appropriations sufficient to allow this payment to be made up to 7 September
- iii. 9(2)(f)(iv)
[REDACTED]
- iv. Authorised the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education to jointly approve the drawdown of the tagged operating contingency.

Noted

Noted

B. **Agree** that, as Auckland will remain at Alert Level 4 until at least 13 September, this support is continued for the next education payroll pay period (from 8 to 21 September)

Agree / Disagree

Agree Disagree

C. **Note** that the Ministry of Education has made 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

- D. **Approve** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decision in recommendation B above, with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and net core Crown debt:

	\$m - increase/(decrease)				
Vote Education Minister of Education	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	0.212	-	-		-
Primary and Secondary Education MCA					
<i>Departmental Output Expense:</i>					
Support and Resources for Education Providers (funded by Revenue Crown)	0.060	-	-	-	-
<i>Non-Departmental Output Expenses:</i>					
Primary Education	2.145	-	-	-	-
Secondary Education	1.433	-	-	-	-
Total Operating	3.850	-	-	-	-

☒ **Approved** ☐ Not approved

☒ **Approved** ☐ Not approved

- E. **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

9(2)(f)(iv)

☒ **Agree** ☐ Disagree

☒ **Agree** ☐ Disagree

- G. **Agree** that, the balance of funding held in the *Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-integrated Schools and Kura* contingency will continue to be held in contingency until such time as the country returns to Alert Level 1

☒ **Agree** / Disagree

☐ **Agree** / Disagree

- H. **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

12/09/2021



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

09/09/2021



Ellen MacGregor-Reid
Deputy Secretary
Early Learning and Student Achievement

08/09/2021

Background

1. At 11:59 pm on 17 August 2021, New Zealand moved to Alert Level 4 of the COVID-19 alert system. As part of our resurgence response, we re-established emergency support for casual schooling workers unable to work or reduced in their ability to work due to COVID-19 and Public Health restrictions operating at Alert Level 4.
2. 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]. 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 18 to 24 August.
3. On 24 August 2021, the COVID-19 Ministerial Group [CMG-21-MIN-0005 refers]:
 - a. 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
 - b. Approved changes to funding appropriations sufficient to allow this payment to be made up to 7 September
 - c. 9(2)(f)(iv)
[REDACTED]
 - d. Authorised the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education to jointly approve the drawdown of the tagged operating contingency.
4. On 6 September the Government advised that, except for Auckland, the country will move to Alert Level 2 at 11:59pm on 7 September 2021. Auckland will remain at Alert Level 4 until at least 13 September when Alert Levels are next due to be reviewed.
5. We have continued to advise schools and kura that day relief and casual workers who had been booked for work during Alert Level 3 and 4 and restrictions should be paid for these bookings. During the continuation of Alert Level 4, (and at Alert Level 3) only a small number of day relievers and casual employees are likely to have been booked for work ahead of time and are likely to experience income hardship while these Alert Level restrictions are in place. Accordingly, we now recommend that emergency payments are continued while Auckland remains at Alert Level 4.
6. It is also recommended that emergency payments are made for whole pay periods only rather than part periods to reduce complexity and the risk of calculation error. On this basis, we recommend emergency payments are made to eligible casual workers affected by the continuation of restrictions in Auckland until at least 21 September, noting Alert Levels will be reviewed on 13 September.
7. This is in keeping with the Government's objectives and will avoid requiring casual schooling workers to rely on other forms of Government support.

8. To mitigate the risk of overpayments, the amount of the payment made to each casual worker will 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. For example, if the casual worker can work from home during Alert Level 4 are engaged for casual work for a portion of a pay period, the emergency payment they will receive will be offset by payment they receive from a State or State-integrated school or kura for this work.

Support at Alert Level 2

9. At Alert Levels 1 and 2 it is expected that relievers and non-teaching specialist and support staff who normally work across multiple schools and kura will be able to return to their usual patterns of work and the Ministry of Education will cease providing emergency payments to workers in those regions.
10. At Alert Level 2, support is provided 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. As all of the country outside of Auckland moved to Alert Level 2 at 11:59 on 7 September we have made support to eligible workers in these regions available from that date. The criteria for this support will be consistent with support that has been previously provided during periods of Alert Level 2 restrictions. The support will be accessed on direct application, where an individual declares that:
 - a. They are a current education sector worker, which is defined as workers who have worked on at least one occasion during the preceding 90 days for a State and State integrated school or kura; and
 - b. They have been negatively affected by COVID-19 as:
 - i. They are sick with COVID-19, or are caring for a dependant who is sick with COVID-19; or
 - ii. They are self-isolating, or are caring for a dependent who is self-isolating due to:
 1. Coming into close contact with someone who has COVID-19
 2. Being subject to an order made under Section 70 of the Health Act 1956; or
 - iii. They, or a member of their household, are at high-risk to COVID-19 and are not yet fully vaccinated, (or are advised that they should continue to isolate at Alert Level 2 despite being fully vaccinated), as defined by public health advice and in consultation with their General Practitioner or a specialist physician.

11. At Alert Level 2, workers who meet the criteria will need to declare at the point of application that they are not concurrently receiving other government support to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, e.g. other wage subsidy schemes. Payments will be made retrospectively.

Financial Implications

12. Your agreement is sought to the provision of \$3.850 million in additional funding to:
- i. Extend the emergency payment scheme for the coming fortnightly pay period of 8 to 21 September, for the Auckland region
 - ii. Provide support on application for casual workers who are directly affected by COVID-19 during Alert Level 2.
13. To mitigate the risk of overpayments, the amount of the payment made to each casual worker will continue 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.
14. As the length of time that Alert Level 3 or Alert Level 4 restrictions will be required is not yet known we 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 returns to Alert Level 1.

Risks

15. While these measures will continue to significantly reassure many vulnerable schooling workers in the affected region/s, they will not fully mitigate the impact of COVID-19 for these employees and the amount of support provided will vary for each individual. 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.
16. 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.
17. The proposed leave 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. for Early Learning employees.
18. It is not yet possible to estimate the length of time that support will be required or the extent to which casual workers have continued to be paid by schools and kura. Therefore, the total cost to the Government for this support is not yet known.

Consultation

19. The Treasury has been consulted in the development of this Report.

Next Steps

20. Updated detailed communications of the emergency payment scheme proposed in this paper and how this can be accessed by eligible schooling workers will continue to be made available via online channels and the school bulletin.
21. These communications will help provide confidence to casual workers, their families and whānau, and the schooling sector about the supports being put in place to minimise disruption to learning progress and look after the wellbeing of those directly involved in delivering teaching and learning.

Proactive Release

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