



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:	24 September 2021	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In confidence	METIS No:	1272148
Drafter:	Isabella Sutherland	DDI:	04 463 2887
Key Contact:	Deborah Kent	DDI:	9(2)(a)
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 established by Cabinet to provide a continuation of emergency financial support to casual workers in State and State-Integrated schools and kura, in response to the COVID-19 resurgence.

Summary

2. On 20 September, the Government confirmed that the Auckland region will remain at Alert Level 3 for at least two weeks. The rest of the country remains at Alert Level 2, except for a small area around northern Hauraki where a notice has been issued under section 70 of the Health Act. These Alert Level settings will next be reviewed by Cabinet on 4 October.

Support provided in 2020 and 2021

3. Support has been provided to casual workers of State and State-integrated schools and kura as follows:
 - 3.1. On 19 August 2021, you agreed to the re-establishment of emergency payments for casual workers in schools, in response to the Alert Level 4 restrictions put in place days earlier [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.

- 3.2. 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 of 9(2)(f)(iv) 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].
- 3.3. On 12 September you agreed that \$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 support for casual schooling sector workers beyond 21 September

4. We recommend that emergency payments are continued for the Auckland region, and the part of northern Hauraki where a notice has been issued under section 70 of the Health Act, for the next full fortnightly pay period of the current restrictions, that is until 5 October 2021.
5. We expect costs for a continuation of the emergency payment scheme in the Auckland region beyond 21 September, 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.
6. 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. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education ceased providing automatic emergency payments to these workers, except for those in Auckland, from 8 September 2021.
7. Support will continue to also be provided on application to casual workers in State and State-integrated schools and kura where their 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 continue to 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 due 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).
8. If you agree to funding appropriations sufficient to allow for emergency payments to continue, the balance of the *Emergency Support for Casual Workers in State and State-Integrated Schools and Kura* tagged operating contingency will be 9(2)(f)(iv) for 2021/22. As the length of time that Alert Level 4 or 3 restrictions will be required is not yet known, we recommend that this funding continues to be held in contingency until such time as the country returns to Alert Level 1.

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. Authorised you to jointly approve the drawdown of the tagged operating contingency.

Noted

Noted

B. **Note** that on 12 September, you and the Minister of Finance [METIS 1270900 refers]:

- i. Agreed that emergency payments be continued from 8 to 21 September while as Auckland remained at Alert Level 4
- ii. Noted that the scheme would be available on application at Alert Level 2 for the rest of the country.
- iii. Approved changes to appropriations to provide up to \$3.850 million.

Noted

Noted

C. **Note**, that the second emergency payment for casual staff in Auckland at Alert Level 4 was made on 22 September.

Noted

Noted

D. **Agree** that, as Auckland will remain at Alert Level 3 until at least 5 October, this support is continued for the next education payroll pay period (from 22 September to 5 October).

Agree / Disagree

Agree Disagree

- E. **Note** that the Ministry of Education 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

- F. **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	0.198	-	-		-
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

- G. **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

- H. **Agree** that the expenses incurred under recommendation F 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:

9(2)(f)(iv)

Agree / Disagree

☒ Agree / ☐ Disagree

- I. **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

- 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

____/____/____



Ellen MacGregor-Reid
Deputy Secretary
Early Learning and Student Achievement

24/09/2021



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

28/9/2021

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 cases of COVID-19 in the community and the resulting shift to Alert Level 4 at 11:59 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 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.

Emergency support for casual schooling sector workers beyond 21 September

3. On 20 September, the Government confirmed that the Auckland region will move to Alert Level 3 from 11:59pm on 21 September for at least two weeks. The rest of the country remains at Alert Level 2, except for a small area around northern Hauraki where a notice has been issued under section 70 of the Health Act. These Alert Level settings will next be reviewed by Cabinet on 4 October.
4. 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 recommend that emergency payments are continued while Auckland is at Alert Level 3, up to 5 October, and that these payments are also provided for casual workers who are affected by the section 70 notice in northern Hauraki.

Support at Alert Level 2

5. As we have previously advised, 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 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. We have made this support available and to date only two workers have applied for support.

Financial Implications

6. Your agreement is sought to the provision of \$3.600 million in additional funding to:
 - i. Extend the emergency payment scheme for the coming fortnightly pay period of 22 September to 5 October, for the Auckland region and a small area around northern Hauraki; and
 - ii. Continue to provide support on application for casual workers who are directly affected by COVID-19 during Alert Level 2.
7. 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.
8. As the length of time that Alert Level 3 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 returns to Alert Level 1.

Risks

9. 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.
10. 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.
11. 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., employees in the early learning sector.
12. 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

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

Next Steps

14. 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.
15. 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

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