

## AIDE MEMOIRE

### Extending the Hardship Fund for Learners into 2021 (SWC 7 April 2021)

<b>Date:</b>	6 April 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	High
<b>To:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education	<b>METIS No:</b>	1255728
<b>From:</b>	Katrina Sutich, Group Manager Tertiary, Graduate Achievement, Vocations and Careers, Ministry of Education	<b>Security Level:</b>	Budget Sensitive

#### Purpose

This Aide Memoire provides you with talking points to support a discussion on your paper at Social Wellbeing Committee on Wednesday 7 April and Cabinet on 12 April.

The Cabinet paper:

- **seeks agreement** to extend the Hardship Fund for Learners for 2021 (including financial support to access technology for learning) by \$4.197 million from existing Vote Tertiary Education funding.
- **notes** you intend to seek a further \$5.8 million through Budget 2021. The total amount would then be \$10 million.

#### Recommendations

The Ministry of Education recommends this Aide Memoire is proactively released following Budget 2021. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.



Katrina Sutich  
**Group Manager Tertiary  
Graduate Achievement, Vocations and Careers**

6/04/2021

**We get the job done** Ka oti i a mātou ngā mahi

**We are respectful, we listen, we learn** He rōpū manaaki, he rōpū whakarongo, he rōpū ako mātou

**We back ourselves and others to win** Ka manawanui ki a mātou me ētahi ake kia wikitoria

**We work together for maximum impact** Ka mahi ngātahi mō te tukinga nui tonu

**Great results are our bottom line** Ko ngā huanga tino pai ā mātou whāinga mutunga

## Talking points to support your discussion of the Cabinet paper

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### ***The Hardship Fund for Learners [Paragraphs 3-5]***

- In 2020 we moved quickly to support students to stay engaged in tertiary study through the COVID-19 student support package.
- This included setting up a Hardship Fund for Learners (HAFL) and the Technology Access Fund (TAFL) that was time limited for 2020.

### ***Extending the HAFL into 2021***

- I am seeking Cabinet agreement to extend the HAFL into 2021 as many learners still have additional costs due to the ongoing impacts of COVID-19 that go beyond the current levels of support. **[1, 7 - 13, recommendation 1]**
- The TAFL will be included within HAFL so technology needs can continue to be met. This is consistent with the digital access project we have for schools to provide technology access to school students in 2021 if there are COVID-19 restrictions. **[12, 16]**

### ***Funding sources [18-21, recommendations 2, 3, 4, 5]***

- Today, I am seeking Cabinet agreement to two funding transfers within Vote Tertiary Education.
- The first transfer is for \$2.109 million from Tertiary Scholarships:
  - This was allocated for international scholarships, including the Prime Minister's Scholarships for Asia and Latin America.
  - This funding was not used as the August 2020 scholarship round was not offered due to COVID-19 travel and study restrictions.
- The second transfer is for \$2.088 million from University-led Innovation:
  - This is leftover money from Entrepreneurial Universities contracts following our decision to end this initiative in Budget 2019.
  - This funding was to cover contracts made prior to Budget 2019 and these have now been completed.
- Transferring this money before Budget allows the HAFL to be in place as soon as possible. This will be important if there are further COVID-19 restrictions. **[14, 17]**
- There is a Budget bid to include a further \$5.8 million for the HAFL in 2021.

### ***Next steps***

- Announcements would be made following any Budget decisions on the further funding but before Budget day. **[28]**
- The Ministry of Education and the TEC will work to get this distributed to providers as quickly as possible. **[17]**

## Further Background

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- The HAFL and TAFL cost \$33 million in 2020 and helped about 30,000 learners in 2020.
- These funds provided flexible and timely support for learners who faced financial shortfalls and additional costs so they could stay focused on their study. This money was used for food, utilities, rent, technology supports or other unexpected expenses. [3, 15]
- This extra money complemented the hardship response providers already had in place to work with their learners and communities. [5-6]
- Māori and Pacific learners especially benefited from these supports (receiving over one third of the HAFL funding). [4, 23]