



Education Report: Clarification of extension to discretionary hours

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	26 May 2020	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1229812
Drafter:	Graham Bussell	DDI:	s 9(2)(a)
Key Contact:	John Brooker	DDI:	
Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

This paper seeks your agreement to extend the temporary increase to discretionary hours currently available for teacher led centre based services until the end of September 2020.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **agree** that teacher led centre based services have the current temporary increase from 40 to 60 discretionary hours extended from 31 May until 30 September 2020;


☒ **Agree** / ☐ **Disagree**


- b. **agree** that reporting back to you on use of these temporary hours is extended until the end of September 2020

☒ **Agree** / ☐ **Disagree**

- c. **proactively release** this Education Report with any information that may need to be withheld done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

☒ **Release** / ☐ **Not release**


John Brooker
Group Manager
Education System Policy
26/05/2020


Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education
28/5/2020

Background

1. On 24 May 2020, you confirmed a range of funding settings applying to early learning subsidy funding over the next 4-8 months [Metis 1228122 refers]. These were mainly aimed at stabilising the sector in the short-term as COVID-19 impacted on attendance and enrolments as well as allowing services to reset to the new normal of demand.
2. One of the decisions you made was to agree to extend the number of discretionary 'situations' (sessions or days) that non-teacher led, centre based services were able to claim in the July funding period (from June to September) from five to 10 situations. This was one of a number of approaches in the paper aimed at limiting funding impacts from increased sensitivity to staff working with minor illnesses and underlying conditions in the COVID-19 environment.
3. In teacher-led centres, discretionary hours can be used to record Other Teacher hours as Certificated Teacher hours. They allow services to have more certainty of remaining in the 80%+ qualified funding band when they are very close to dropping below it due to certificated teachers being unavailable. Discretionary hours can only be used after avenues to fill absences or vacancies with certificated teachers have been exhausted.

Extending discretionary hours for teacher-led centre based services

4. The paper also included a related recommendation to extend the increase in discretionary hours you agreed in September 2019 for teacher-led, centre-based services [METIS 1204300 refers]. The increase in hours from 40 to 60 is due to expire on 31 May.
5. Due to an oversight on our part, this recommendation was only included in one of the option descriptions (option 3), an option you did not support. We intended for this extension to be included regardless of which option you chose, and therefore recommend you agree to it. As with the increase in the number of situations for non-teacher led centre based services, this will provide an extra safeguard against services dropping down funding rates due to higher than usual levels of sick leave taken over the next funding period.
6. We also propose reporting on the use of these hours at the end of September, rather than 31 May 2020, as originally agreed last year.

Fiscal impact

7. Continuing the increased discretionary hours will only maintain the existing forecast track and will not lead to increased levels of spending from the forecast.

Proactive release

8. It is intended that this Education Report is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.