

AIDE MEMOIRE

Oral item: Change to the counselling component of the Wellbeing and Mental Health budget initiative

Date:	19 June 2020	Priority:	High
To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education Hon Tracey Martin, Associate Minister of Education	METIS No:	1232242
From:	Ben O'Meara, Group Manager, ESP	Security Level:	Budget Sensitive

Purpose

- On 11 May, Cabinet agreed to fund a package of initiatives to support the wellbeing of learners and whānau across the early learning, schooling, kura and tertiary sectors, and additional wellbeing support for teachers and kaiako in schools and kura [CAB-20-MIN-0219.09 initiative 12675 refers].
- The package included a pilot of guidance counsellors in primary schools and an increase to the guidance staffing entitlement for secondary schools. This item proposes that Cabinet agree to a fiscally neutral change to fund community organisations to provide guidance counselling to primary and secondary students, by reducing the agreed increase to the guidance staffing entitlement for secondary schools.

Changes to the counselling component of the Wellbeing and Mental Health budget initiative

- Guidance staffing is allocated to all state and state-integrated schools with secondary students for the provision of guidance counselling, careers guidance and pastoral care.
- The Ministry has received consistent feedback from secondary schools (particularly larger schools) that their guidance staffing entitlement is insufficient for them to meet increasing student needs for guidance counselling and pastoral care support.
- Increasing this entitlement will enable schools to provide greater access to guidance counselling to help their students deal with mental wellbeing difficulties caused or exacerbated by the COVID-19 crisis.
- However, schools would also be able to use the entitlement to employ registered teachers for any reason. I am concerned that if we provide this increase entirely

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through staffing entitlement, it will not be used by all recipient schools in the way we intended.

7. There are a number of organisations already operating in communities with valuable skills and expertise in the provision of guidance counselling. I am proposing to provide a smaller increase in guidance staffing than was originally agreed, targeted to schools with over 450 secondary students. The remaining funding would be combined with the funding originally agreed to pilot guidance counselling for primary school students, and used to contract community organisations to provide guidance counselling across all year levels.
8. This would allow us to meet the demand for additional guidance staffing in large secondary schools, while also testing an alternative model of guidance counselling provision where there is greater central control over how the funding is used and greater utilisation of expertise from outside the education sector.
9. The table below shows the proposed change in how the funding for guidance counsellors in schools would be allocated.
 - a. Funding to increase the guidance staffing entitlement for secondary schools would be reduced from \$52.4 million to \$31.8 million over four years.
 - b. Funding for contracting community organisations would be increased from \$23.5 million to \$44 million over four years, including departmental funding.

	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 & outyears	4 Year Total
Original allocation of funding (\$m)					
Guidance staffing increase	7.287	15.035	15.035	15.035	52.392
Pilot of guidance counselling in primary schools (including departmental funding)	3.735	6.555	6.555	6.605	23.450
Proposed new allocation of funding (\$m)					
Guidance staffing increase	4.427	9.136	9.136	9.136	31.835
Funding to contract community organisations (including departmental funding)	6.595	12.454	12.454	12.504	44.007

Financial implications

10. A total of \$52.392 million had been allocated to the Secondary Education category of the Primary and Secondary Education Multi-Category Appropriation (MCA) to fund the increase to guidance staffing entitlement.
11. Providing some of this funding to community organisations, rather than to schools, would still fall within the scope of the Primary and Secondary Education MCA. However, departmental funding will be required for the Ministry to administer the contracts with community organisations. I am therefore seeking Cabinet's approval to transfer \$0.465 million per year from the Primary and Secondary Education MCA to the Outcomes for Target Student Groups MCA.

Recommendations

The Minister of Education recommends that Cabinet:

1. **note** that, on 11 May 2020, Cabinet approved the Increasing Wellbeing and Mental Health Support to Learners and Education Workforce initiative and associated appropriation changes, including a pilot of guidance counselling in primary schools and an increase to the guidance staffing entitlement for schools and kura with over 200 secondary students [CAB-20-MIN-0219.09 initiative 12675 refers];
2. **agree** to rescind the decision to include a pilot of guidance counselling in primary schools and an increase to the guidance staffing entitlement for schools and kura with over 200 secondary students;
3. **agree** to instead include funding to support community organisations to provide guidance counselling for primary and secondary students and an increase to the guidance staffing entitlement targeted towards larger secondary schools;
4. **agree** to the following new initiative description for the Increasing Wellbeing and Mental Health Support to Learners and Education Workforce initiative: "This initiative will provide funding to increase the provision of wellbeing and mental health support to learners and the education workforce in response to COVID-19. Initiatives include: funding to support community organisations to provide guidance counselling for primary and secondary students; an increase to the guidance staffing entitlement targeted towards larger schools; the establishment of an urgent response fund for early learning services, schools and kura; the embedding of quality teaching approaches to mental health, wellbeing and healthy relationships in schools, kura and early learning services; increased access to workplace assistance for educators; strengthening mental health services for tertiary students; and local responses to youth mental health and wellbeing. Led by the Minister of Education."
5. **note** that the policy decision in recommendation 3 above requires a transfer of non-departmental funding to departmental funding in order for the Ministry of Education to administer the contracts with community organisations;
6. **approve** the following fiscally neutral adjustments to give effect to the policy decision in recommendation 3 above, with no impact on the operating balance and net core Crown debt;

	\$m – increase/(decrease)				
Vote Education Minister of Education	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/23 & Outyears
Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure:					
Outcomes for Target Student Groups (MCA)					
<i>Departmental Output Expense:</i>					
Interventions for Target Student Groups (funded by revenue Crown)	-	0.465	0.465	0.465	0.465
Primary and Secondary Education (MCA)					
<i>Non-Departmental Output Expense:</i>					
Secondary Education	-	(0.465)	(0.465)	(0.465)	(0.465)

7. **agree** that the proposed change to appropriations for 2020/21 above be included in the 2020/21 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increase be met from Imprest Supply.