

Cabinet Paper material Proactive release

Minister & portfolio Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education
Name of package COVID-19: Update on the Reform of the Tomorrow's Schools System
Date considered 10 August 2020

These documents have been proactively released:

Cabinet Paper: COVID-19: Update on the Reform of the Tomorrow's Schools System

10 August 2020
Ministry of Education

Cabinet Minute: SWC-20-MIN-0122

10 August 2020
Cabinet office

CAB-20-MIN-0376 Report of the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee Minute

10 August 2020
Cabinet office

Material redacted

Some deletions have been made from the documents in line with withholding grounds under the Official Information Act 1982. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

The applicable withholding grounds under the Act are as follows:

Some deletions have been made from the documents as the information withheld does not fall within scope of the proactive release of this material.

You can read the Official Information Act 1982 here:

<http://legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1982/0156/latest/DLM64785.html>

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Education

Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

Update on the reform of the Tomorrow's Schools system in the COVID-19 context

Proposal

- 1 This paper updates the Government's reforms of Tomorrow's Schools agreed by Cabinet in October 2019 in the context of the impact of COVID-19. My proposal is that the reforms continue, building on the progress already made through the COVID-19 response work to date, by enhancing frontline services and support for learners/ākonga, whānau and education providers ahead of the structural changes previously noted by Cabinet [SWC-19-MIN-0153 refers].

Executive Summary

- 2 In October 2019, Cabinet agreed to reforms of the Tomorrow's Schools system. The Minister of Education was invited to report back in November 2019 (subsequently delayed to November 2020) with more detail on the establishment of an Education Service Agency (ESA) within a re-designed Ministry of Education [SWC-19-MIN-0153 refers]. This Cabinet paper replaces that report-back.
- 3 Since October 2019, implementation of the reform decisions has progressed, including the Education and Training Bill, which is currently before the House and will implement a number of the Taskforce's recommendations.
- 4 The need to urgently respond to COVID-19 drove changes to the way the Ministry operates that are consistent with the intent of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms. It required the Ministry's national and regional staff and offices, the sector, and whānau to work together differently, fostering a greater sense of cooperation and collaboration.
- 5 There is broad agreement that the relationships built, and the trust formed, during this time should be the basis of resetting how the system operates going forward, reflecting the intent of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms.
- 6 I remain committed to the intent of the Government's decision to strengthen the schooling system, so that it is more equitable and serves all learners well. However, the shape of this work has been influenced by the rapid shift to a much more tightly constrained fiscal environment.
- 7 I therefore recommend that the Government's reforms of Tomorrow's Schools be re-focused to ensure our immediate commitment is to strengthen frontline service delivery and support functions in the short term through existing organisations, and to strengthen the partnership and cooperation with Māori and the sector, building on the COVID-19 experience.
- 8 In practice, this will mean:
 - 8.1 greater flexibility at a regional level to co-design and co-construct with the sector and related agencies;

- 8.2 better coordination and decision-making to optimise how the system generates information, evaluation and research across the Education Review Office (ERO), the Ministry, and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER);
 - 8.3 building out the curriculum function at the frontline, through the recently announced 40 new Curriculum Leads to support the teaching of mental health and healthy relationships¹ (which are the basis for the Curriculum Centre) and stronger sector and academia engagement and feedback loops through an advisory board for curriculum appointed by the Secretary for Education;
 - 8.4 strengthening and deepening the Māori/Crown relationship with Māori medium leaders so they can influence the quality and growth of Māori medium education; and
 - 8.5 improved on-the-ground support for, and stronger partnerships with, iwi, education providers, and other agencies, including stronger advisory and decision-making support, by iwi and providers, on how resources are spent and how best practice is shared.
- 9 I also note, the Secretary for Education advises me that she will do organisational design work in the Ministry over time, including to create a curriculum centre, support greater internal collaboration and seamlessness to the regions.

Background

Cabinet agreed to reform the Tomorrow's Schools system to address system weaknesses

- 10 The Tomorrow's Schools reforms agreed by Cabinet in October 2019 seek to address some of the current weaknesses in New Zealand's education system by investing in a more networked, responsive, and supported system in stages over a number of years. Key features of the reforms include:
- 10.1 more responsive, accessible and integrated local support to schools and early learning services;
 - 10.2 stronger arrangements to underpin principal leadership of the schooling system; and
 - 10.3 a better balance between local and national responsibilities for schooling property and network provision.

The reforms also included changes to education agencies

- 11 The reforms intended elements of change to education agencies which, subject to Budget decisions, included the establishment of:

¹ The leads will work with principals and teachers to deliver a high quality Health and Physical Education and Hauora local curriculum, including the refreshed Relationship and Sexuality Education Guidelines and the Wellbeing and Mental Health Guidelines.

- 11.1 an Education Service Agency (ESA), as a separately branded business unit within a redesigned Ministry of Education, to provide more responsive, accessible and integrated local support;
 - 11.2 a new Leadership Advisor role, to provide greater localised support for principals and boards;
 - 11.3 a nationally based Curriculum Centre, to provide curriculum leadership and expertise; and
 - 11.4 the Teaching Council was invited to continue its work to establish a Centre of Leadership to advance its Leadership Strategy [SWC-19-MIN- 0172 refers].
- 12 Of these, I intend to proceed in the short term with strengthening curriculum advisory functions and the Teaching Council has agreed to advance the Centre of Leadership in the context of its Leadership Strategy.

A work programme has commenced to implement the reforms

- 13 A substantial programme of work is underway, including:
- 13.1 progressing the Education and Training Bill;
 - 13.2 investing in delivering on the National Education Growth Plan/s (which cover Māori medium schooling), and improving property management;
 - 13.3 policy and operational design work on dispute resolution, and a mandatory code of conduct for Boards of Trustees; and
 - 13.4 strengthened links with the profession, including leaders of Māori medium education, to deepen their influence in improving overall system performance.

Analysis

The response to COVID-19 drove changes to the way the Ministry operates

- 14 Responding to COVID-19 has required both the Ministry's staff and the sector to work together in different ways, fostering a greater sense of collaboration and cooperation as a result. COVID-19 also meant that education agencies worked in ways aligned to the intent of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms, but within existing structural arrangements. This included engaging with a broader set of schools and early childhood education centres directly and more proactively providing guidance and support to learners/ākonga, their whānau and education providers. This support was not limited to addressing problems; it was also focussed on finding opportunities.
- 15 This has been well received and goodwill and trust has increased, and there is broad agreement that the relationships formed, and the trust built, should form the basis of how things operate going forward. I want to build on the positive relationships that have been developed across the sector and agencies, and lock in these new ways of working together firmly within the education system.

Significant progress has been made with investment and changes to the Ministry's approach that are aligned with the intent of the reforms

- 16 We have invested in supporting the COVID-19 recovery for education through Budget 2020 and the COVID Response and Recovery Fund. Our priority has been funding initiatives that are consistent with the ambitions and intent of the reforms.

Investing in supporting student wellbeing

- 17 Our recently agreed investment of \$201.6 million in a package of essential support to address the impact of COVID-19 on the mental health and wellbeing of children is a prime example of initiatives undertaken as part of responding to COVID-19 that support the intent of the reforms and the new ways of working.
- 18 Part of the funding will be used to provide up to 40 new Curriculum Leads to support the teaching of mental health and healthy relationships as the foundation of the Ministry's new Curriculum Centre to work directly with kura, schools, kōhanga reo and early learning services on wellbeing education. These are new roles that will be largely based in the Ministry's regional offices supported by a strengthened curriculum core at the centre.
- 19 The Secretary for Education also intends to appoint an advisory board for curriculum made up of curriculum and assessment experts. It will provide (over time) for a regular, planned revision of the curricula, listen to teachers, learners/ākonga, and whānau about curricula design and delivery on the ground, and reflect this in its advice to the Ministry.

Investing in Māori medium and exploring future opportunities to partner with Māori

- 20 Cabinet's Tomorrow's Schools reforms decisions included a focus on exploring opportunities for strengthening Māori medium education and partnering with Māori.
- 21 Work on investing in Māori medium and te reo Māori immersion across the education system is underway. This includes new investment, for example Budget 2020 provided \$100 million to support Kōhanga Reo and revitalise te reo Māori; and \$200 million to support Māori learners and whānau to reconnect and succeed in education post COVID-19 and strengthen the integration of te reo Māori into all students' learning.
- 22 The Ministry will continue to work closely with the Associate Minister of Education (Māori Education) and Māori medium leaders on future opportunities for Māori medium education. The intention is to create space where new Māori/Crown relationships are formed to solve problems and shape the way forward focused on Mātauranga Māori, Māori medium and te reo Māori immersion education. This will include work to better support the aspirations, and reflects the needs, of Māori learners/ākonga and whānau.

Enhanced on-the-ground support for, and stronger partnerships with iwi, education providers and other agencies

- 23 Before COVID-19 the Ministry's regional education delivery focused on providing support to schools and early learning services that most needed it. The consequence

of this is that the Ministry only had a cursory relationship with other principals and early learning service leaders.

- 24 As part of its change in approach, the Ministry will work with education providers in its ten regions to co-construct new partnerships to:
- 24.1 create stronger advisory and decision-making support with iwi and education providers on the use of resources within a region (such as the allocation of an urgent response fund of \$52 million for one year for delivering wellbeing and mental health support to learners who have needs as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown);
 - 24.2 develop localised ways of building a stronger partnership, including identifying how a partnership will operate, local design of implementation of policies, and design of solutions to local issues;
 - 24.3 connect resources, knowledge and expertise at the frontline, to build on best practice and ensure that well-performing schools are brought in to assist those schools that have challenges, and enabling best practice and successful initiatives for schools and early learning services to be shared, including sharing best practice for engaging and improving outcomes for Māori learners in English medium education;
 - 24.4 provide a much stronger and more real-time feedback loop into the Ministry's strategy, planning and policy functions to inform priority setting that is continuously informed by the frontline.

Generating system level information and evaluation and cross-agency collaboration

- 25 I have also asked the Ministry and ERO to work together with NZCER to ensure that their respective evaluation and research functions increasingly generate effective system level information that informs prioritisation, action, and improvement. The Chief Executive of ERO and the Secretary for Education advise me that this work is underway.

COVID-19 has implications for the timing of the delivery of the reforms

- 26 The overall intent and ambitions of the reforms remain fit for purpose, and will work to address the weaknesses in our education system highlighted by the Taskforce. However, we are now operating in a much more tightly constrained fiscal environment and I consider that the timing is not right to prioritise resources towards structural change. My intention is to ensure that the available resources, time, and effort are focused in the short term on:
- 26.1 building on the mandate that the Ministry's regional staff/offices operationalised during COVID-19 to develop local partnerships that are much broader than supporting schools and early learning centres that need help – with a much stronger emphasis on maintaining those relationships, sharing best practice and fostering stronger connections with the sector and related agencies;
 - 26.2 operationalising the 40 new curriculum frontline roles (which form the foundation of the Curriculum Centre) that will enable the Ministry to

strengthen its curriculum function in support of the sector at the frontline, backed by national office including a stronger external governance function drawn from practitioner expertise;

- 26.3 working with the Associate Minister of Education (Māori education) and Māori medium leaders on future opportunities for Māori medium education, through stronger governance and partnership; and
 - 26.4 maximising our investment in research, evaluation and information provision across ERO, the Ministry, NZCER and academia, so as to provide timely, insightful and value for money insights for both children, parents/whānau and government insights.
- 27 Also, in response to our commitment in the Tomorrow's Schools reforms, I want to see the capability of schools strengthened to undertake self-evaluation and continuous improvement, including ensuring effective engagement with whānau and communities.
- 28 The Chief Reviewer has advised me of progress in developing this new approach to school reviews, and his intention to begin implementing the new model in the 2020/21 financial year. The new approach is aimed at strengthening the capability of all schools to embed a continuous improvement approach, strengthening schools' own engagement with, and accountability to, whānau, and shifting ERO's role to that of an evaluation partner with the sector. This change supports a move to a stronger internal evaluation culture and a lighter touch on well-performing schools, consistent with the reforms.
- 29 Therefore, I recommend that the Government's position on the reform of Tomorrow's Schools previously agreed by Cabinet [SWC-19-MIN-0153 refers] be re-focused in the short term on the functional changes, including the enhancement of frontline roles, as outlined in paragraph 26.

Financial Implications

- 30 Cabinet previously noted that meaningful system change will have financial implications and that the Minister of Education intends to advance these through the next three to four Budgets [SWC-19-MIN-0153 refers].
- 31 The re-phasing proposals outlined in this paper are expected to lower the near-term cost of the reforms, but may not change the overall cost of the programme.

Legislative Implications

- 32 There are no legislative implications associated with the proposals.

Regulatory Impact Statement

- 33 A Regulatory Impact Statement is not required for the proposals in this paper.

Climate Implications of Policy Assessment

- 34 There are no climate implications associated with the proposals.

Population Implications

35 The school system reforms are important for improving equity of educational outcomes across different population groups, and promoting inclusion and belonging, particularly for Māori and Pacific learners, and children and young people with disabilities/learning support needs. It is critical that progressing equity of outcomes for Māori and Pacific learners, and children and young people with disabilities/learning support needs, is achieved through a systems response. The evaluation and research functions proposed to be jointly undertaken by the Ministry, ERO and NZCER will need to ensure that the system is making a positive difference for the population groups, including children and young people with disabilities/learning support needs for whom equity of educational outcomes are yet to be realised. The need for the regular collection and reporting of data on the progress of children with disabilities/learning support needs is highlighted in the New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026, and the Disability Action Plan 2019-2023.

Human Rights

36 The proposals are consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Consultation

37 The following departments were consulted: The Treasury, State Services Commission, the Teaching Council, Education Review Office, and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PAG) was informed.

Communications

38 The Minister of Education will announce the proposals agreed by Cabinet in due course.

Proactive Release

39 The Minister of Education intends to proactively release this paper within 30 business days of being confirmed by Cabinet and in accordance with the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

40 The Minister of Education recommends that the Committee:

- 1 **note** that, on 16 October 2019, Cabinet agreed to the Government's position on the reforms of Tomorrow's Schools [SWC-19-MIN-0153 refers], including the key features of:
 - 1.1 more responsive, accessible and integrated local support to schools and early learning services;
 - 1.2 stronger arrangements to underpin principal leadership of the schooling system; and
 - 1.3 a better balance between local and national responsibilities for schooling property and network provision
- 2 **note** that, in that same decision, Cabinet agreed to the establishment of an Education Support Agency (ESA) as a separately branded business unit within a redesigned Ministry of Education, to provide more responsive, accessible and integrated local support [SWC-19-MIN-0153 refers]
- 3 **note** that I remain strongly committed to delivering on the intent and ambitions of these reforms and that COVID-19 drove changes to the way the Ministry operates that are consistent with the intent of these proposed changes
- 4 **note** that, to support a COVID-19 recovery, I want available resources, time and effort prioritised in the short term towards:
 - 4.1 building on the mandate that the Ministry's regional staff/offices operationalised during COVID-19 to develop local partnerships that are much broader than supporting schools and early learning centres that need help – with a much stronger emphasis on maintaining those relationships, including with Māori, sharing best practice, and fostering stronger connections with the sector and related agencies;
 - 4.2 operationalising the 40 new curriculum frontline roles (which form the foundation of the Curriculum Centre) that will enable the Ministry to strengthen its curriculum function in support of the sector at the frontline, backed by national office including a stronger external governance function drawn from practitioner expertise;
 - 4.3 working with the Associate Minister of Education (Māori education) and Māori medium leaders on future opportunities for Māori medium education, through stronger governance and partnership; and
 - 4.4 maximising our investment in research, evaluation and information provision across ERO, the Ministry, NZCER and academia, so as to provide timely, insightful and value for money insights for both children, parents/whānau and government insights
- 5 **agree** that, to build on progress made during the response to COVID-19, and, given the tighter fiscal environment, the Government's position on the reform of Tomorrow's Schools agreed by Cabinet on 16 October 2019 be re-focused

IN CONFIDENCE

in the short term on the functional changes outlined in recommendation 4 above

- 6 **note** that the Secretary for Education advises me that she will do organisational design work, including to create a curriculum centre, support greater internal collaboration and seamlessness to the regions
- 7 **note** that the nature of future structural change to establish an ESA within a redesigned Ministry can be informed by this ongoing work
- 8 **note** that this paper replaces the report back due to Cabinet in November 2020 with more detail on the establishment of an Education Service Agency (ESA) within a re-designed Ministry of Education [SWC-19-MIN-0153 refers].

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Chris Hipkins

Minister of Education

IN CONFIDENCE



Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

COVID-19: Update on the Reform of the Tomorrow's Schools System

Portfolio Education

On 5 August 2020, the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee (SWC):

- 1 **noted** that on 16 October 2019, SWC agreed to the government's position on the reforms of Tomorrow's Schools, including the key features of:
 - 1.1 more responsive, accessible and integrated local support to schools and early learning services;
 - 1.2 stronger arrangements to underpin principal leadership of the schooling system;
 - 1.3 a better balance between local and national responsibilities for schooling property and network provision;

[SWC-19-MIN-0153]

- 2 **noted** that SWC also agreed to the establishment of an Education Support Agency (ESA) as a separately branded business unit within a redesigned Ministry of Education (the Ministry), to provide more responsive, accessible and integrated local support [SWC-19-MIN-0153];
- 3 **noted** that the Minister of Education remains strongly committed to delivering on the intent and ambitions of these reforms and that COVID-19 drove changes to the way the Ministry operates that are consistent with the intent of these changes;
- 4 **noted** that, to support a COVID-19 recovery, the Minister of Education wants available resources, time and effort prioritised in the short term towards:
 - 4.1 building on the mandate that the Ministry's regional staff/offices operationalised during COVID-19 to develop local partnerships that are much broader than supporting schools and early learning centres that need help – with a much stronger emphasis on maintaining those relationships, including with Māori, sharing best practice, and fostering stronger connections with the sector and related agencies;
 - 4.2 operationalising the 40 new curriculum frontline roles (which form the foundation of the Curriculum Centre) that will enable the Ministry to strengthen its curriculum function in support of the sector at the frontline, backed by a national office including a stronger external governance function drawn from practitioner expertise;

- 4.3 working with the Associate Minister of Education (Māori Education) and Māori medium leaders on future opportunities for Māori medium education, through stronger governance and partnership;
- 4.4 maximising the investment in research, evaluation and information provision across the Education Review Office, the Ministry, the New Zealand Council for Educational Research and academia, so as to provide timely, insightful, and value for money insights for both children, parents/whānau and government insights;
- 5 **agreed** that, to build on progress made during the response to COVID-19, and given the tighter fiscal environment, the government's position on the reform of Tomorrow's Schools agreed by Cabinet on 16 October 2019 be refocused in the short term on the functional changes outlined in paragraph 4 above;
- 6 **noted** that the Secretary for Education advises the Minister of Education that she will do organisational design work, including to create a curriculum centre, and to support greater internal collaboration and seamlessness to the regions;
- 7 **noted** that the nature of future structural change to establish an ESA within a redesigned Ministry can be informed by this ongoing work.

Vivien Meek
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Hon Kelvin Davis
Hon Grant Robertson
Hon Chris Hipkins
Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Chair)
Hon Stuart Nash
Hon Jenny Salesa
Hon Damien O'Connor
Hon Tracey Martin
Hon Peeni Henare
Hon Willie Jackson
Hon Aupito William Sio
Hon Poto Williams
Jan Logie, MP

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for SWC



Cabinet

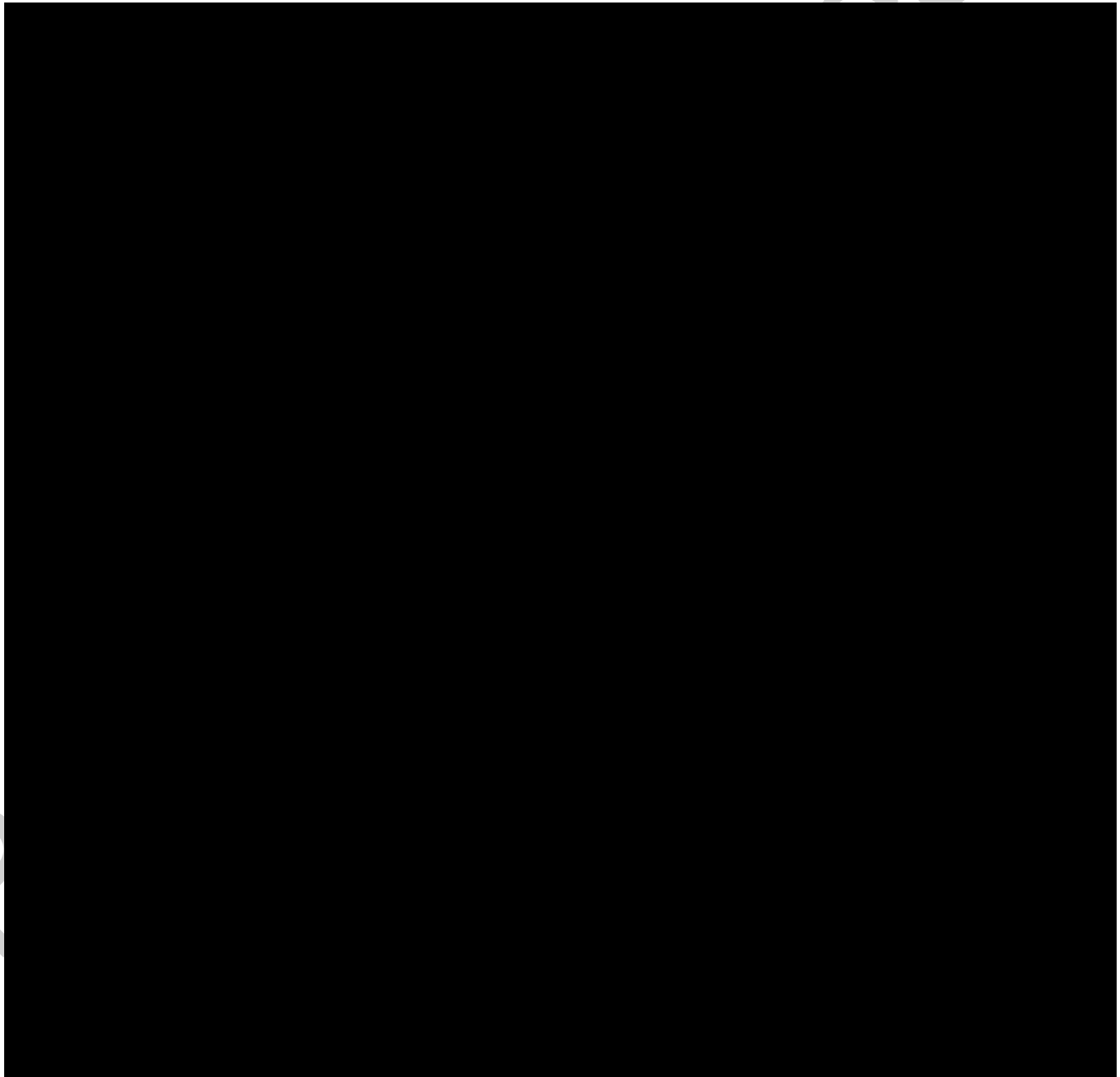
Minute of Decision

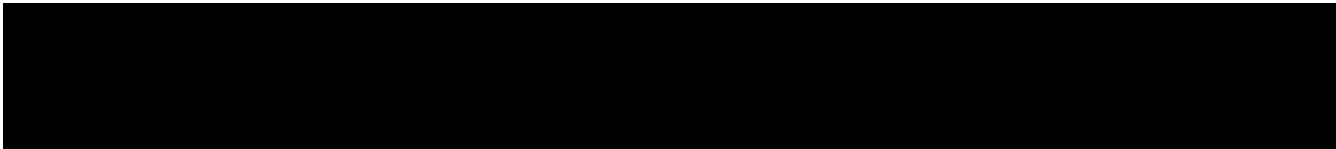
This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Redactions made as content outside of scope of this proactive release

Report of the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee: Period Ended 7 August 2020

On 10 August 2020, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee for the period ended 7 August 2020:

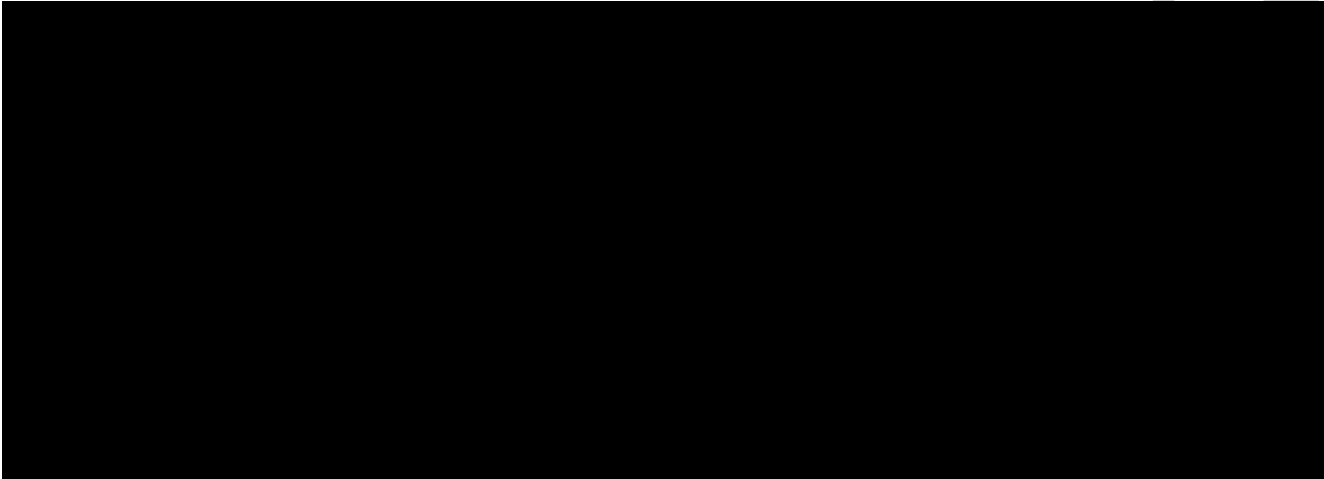




SWC-20-MIN-0122

**COVID-19: Update on the Reform of the
Tomorrow's Schools System**
Portfolio: Education

CONFIRMED



Michael Webster
Secretary of the Cabinet

Proactively