



## AIDE MEMOIRE

### Talking points to support meeting with Simeon Brown

<b>Date:</b>	28 July 2020	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>To:</b>	Hon Jenny Salesa, Associate Minister of Education	<b>METIS No:</b>	1236300
<b>From:</b>	Katrina Sutich, Group Manager, Tertiary Education Policy	<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence

#### Purpose

1. This Aide Memoire provides you with talking points to support your meeting with the New Zealand National Party's Tertiary Education spokesperson, Simeon Brown on Wednesday 29 July at 4:45pm.
2. You are meeting to brief him on your plans for targeted consultation on proposed changes to the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF). Ministry of Education officials will be in attendance to support you.
3. The Cabinet paper *Report back on the Performance-Based Research Fund review* [METIS 1230952 refers] was approved by the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee on Wednesday 22 July [SWC-20-MIN-0102 refers] and Cabinet on Monday 27 July [CAB-20-MIN-0352 refers].
4. The Cabinet paper sought approval for the Ministry of Education to conduct targeted consultation, during the pre-election period, on a proposed package of changes and options to the PBRF.
5. Annexed to this aide-memoire is a summary of the proposed changes to PBRF, in case you wish to discuss any details of the proposals with Simeon Brown.

#### Proactive Release

- We recommend this aide memoire be proactively released, along with other PBRF Review papers, as part of the targeted consultation on proposed changes.

## ***High-level talking points on the Review and targeted consultation***

### *The Review of the Performance-Based Research Fund*

- The PBRF is a capped pool of funding (currently \$315 million per year) that encourages and rewards high-quality tertiary education research and research-led teaching.
- The PBRF is reviewed periodically and, as part of the Education Work Programme, Minister Hipkins and I committed to an independent review of the fund to ensure it continues to support research excellence.
- We appointed an independent panel to carry out the Review of the PBRF. This panel, chaired by Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith, presented me with their recommendations in January.
- The Review panel engaged extensively with the tertiary education and research sectors to inform their recommendations.
- The changes and options I am proposing to consult on are informed by the work of the Review panel, and are packaged into three key objectives:
  - *Broadening the PBRF conception of research excellence*
  - *Enabling a more sustainable and diverse research workforce*
  - *Improving how Government supports research across the tertiary sector*

### *Targeted consultation process*

- Cabinet has recently agreed that the Ministry of Education should conduct targeted consultation on these proposals for reform in the pre-Election period. The proposals do not contain any recommendations for additional funding.
- Cabinet also noted that I would consult with you on this plan in your capacity as Tertiary Education spokesperson for the National Party before the Ministry begins consultation.
- The Ministry of Education will undertake a targeted consultation where it seeks feedback from Tertiary Education Organisations, key peak bodies, and individual researchers on the proposed changes and options.
- This will likely involve an online survey and written submissions, with the process taking around four to six weeks.

### *Reasons for proceeding with consultation now*

- Due to the impacts of COVID-19, I have recently decided to delay the next PBRF Quality Evaluation by one year until 2025.
- Postponing consultation until after a new Government is formed would lead to an additional delay of up to six months. This would make it more difficult to engage with the tertiary research sector adequately to plan the next PBRF Quality Evaluation, regardless of the nature and scale of any changes subsequently adopted.

## **Annex 1 – Summary of proposed changes to the PBRF**

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### *Broadening the PBRF conception of research excellence*

- I propose broadening the conception of research excellence in the PBRF to include a fuller range of research activity and cultures.
- Under this objective, I propose options including:
  - a. Refreshing how the PBRF defines, recognises and rewards research excellence;
  - b. Reviewing subject area weightings to better reflect the costs of research.

### *Enabling a more sustainable and diverse research workforce*

- Under this objective, I propose options including:
  - a. Increasing funding weightings for research portfolios assessed by the Māori Knowledge and Development and Pacific Research panels;
  - b. Additional funding weightings for researchers who identify as Māori or Pacific;
  - c. Bringing in a 'merit relative to opportunity' concept when assessing the work of researchers - in the short term, this will help account for the varying impacts of COVID-19 on researchers' outputs, and;
  - d. Simplifying qualifying criteria for new and emerging researchers to better support developing our workforce.

### *Improving how Government supports research across the tertiary sector*

- I am also proposing some changes to the PBRF that will work to improve support for research.
- Under this objective, I propose options including:
  - a. Supporting ongoing work with wānanga to co-design appropriate and sustainable research funding solutions;
  - b. Supporting the New Zealand Institute of Skills and Technology (NZIST) by providing a temporary backstop of funding in the next Quality Evaluation;
  - c. Potentially removing the External Research Income component to rebalance and refocus the fund on assessing and supporting research quality;

### *Operational changes to the PBRF*

- Finally, I am proposing operational matters for the Tertiary Education Commission to consider.
- These are designed to support the three key objectives of changes to the PBRF I am proposing.
  - a. Ensuring peer-review panels are diverse and well supported;
  - b. Consulting the Sector Reference Group for the next Quality Evaluation on change implementation following this Review.