



Education report: Draft Cabinet Paper - Extending eligibility to student support to people who were affected by the Christchurch mosques terror attack

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	19 February 2020	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1220511
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	N/A	Round Robin:	No

Summary

On 13 February 2020, you agreed to seek Cabinet approval to waive the three year residency stand-down for student loans, student allowances and Fees Free tertiary education and training for:


- people on a Christchurch Response (2019) Permanent Resident Visa (Christchurch Response Visa); and
- people who would have been eligible for a Christchurch Response Visa, but were already holding a residence visa and do not yet meet the residence requirement for student financial support [METIS 1218248 refers].

We are seeking your feedback on the draft Cabinet paper in **annex 1** by Monday, 24 February.

Recommended actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- note** officials are confirming costings and a funding source for these changes with Treasury
- note** the Ministry of Social Development is confirming implementation timeframes and any additional operational costs
- provide feedback** on the attached draft Cabinet paper by Monday, 24 February.


Andy Jackson
Group Manager
Tertiary Education
19/02/2020


Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

19/2/20

Background

1. We have provided a draft Cabinet paper for your feedback in **annex 1**. It seeks Cabinet approval to waive the three year residence stand-down period for student loans, student allowances and Fees Free tertiary education and training (Fees Free) for:
 - a. people on a Christchurch Response Visa; and
 - b. people who would have been eligible for a Christchurch Response Visa, but were already New Zealand Permanent Residents (NZPRs), and do not yet meet the three year residence requirement to be eligible for student financial support.
2. Under current policy settings, if these residents accessed tertiary study, they would be eligible for domestic tuition fees but could not have any fees met through the Fees Free policy, or fees and living costs met through student loans or allowances, because of the stand-down. They may, however, be eligible for income support from the Ministry of Social Development (MSD).
3. Waiving the residence stand-down period for these two groups will provide further targeted support for those affected by the terror attack. It will also help many of these affected people achieve their tertiary education and career goals more quickly.
4. From an education perspective, these changes will significantly improve these residents' settlement outcomes, and increase their ability to actively participate in and contribute to New Zealand society and economy in the long term.
5. The Cabinet paper also seeks Cabinet approval to exempt one-off financial gifts or donations made to a person in relation to the Christchurch mosques terror attack from the student allowances personal, parental and partner income tests. This will provide certainty that such one-off financial supports will not affect their student support assistance.

There are a number of areas officials are confirming with other agencies and will provide further information on in the next draft Cabinet paper

6. This policy change will have a fiscal impact but it is relatively small and the impact is time-limited. The number of potential learners that will study and seek student financial support, prior to meeting the three year residence period, is expected to be very small as the total population affected is small and entitlement to the special immigration category is limited. We estimate that the total number of potential new learners to be in the order 30 per year.
7. Overall, over the four years from 2019/2020 to 2022/2023, officials estimate the total operating costs to be \$1.046 million and the total capital costs to be \$0.306 million. MSD advise that there may also be potential offsetting savings for Vote Social Development expenditure from any income support that people, who would become eligible for student financial support through the proposed changes, may currently be receiving.
8. Treasury have advised that funding to support the changes to student loans and student allowances will need to be appropriated. Officials are working with Treasury to confirm an appropriate source for this appropriation. We have noted in our discussions with them that funding for the changes to Fees Free could be met from within existing baselines.
9. MSD are confirming timelines for the student loans and student allowances changes to be implemented. MSD may also have additional operation costs it cannot meet from baselines. This will be confirmed once MSD has completed planning the implementation of the changes.

Next steps

10. Following your feedback, we will provide you with a revised draft Cabinet paper early next week for Ministerial consultation.
11. We recommend you consult on this paper with the Honourable Carmel Sepuloni and the Honourable Stuart Nash, as they hold the delegations for student allowances and student loans respectively.
12. If Ministerial consultation is complete by Friday, 28 February, the final Cabinet paper could be lodged on Thursday, 5 March, for consideration by Cabinet Social and Wellbeing Committee on Wednesday, 11 March.

Proactive release

13. We propose that this education report be released within 30 days of Cabinet decisions being made, with any redactions in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Release / Not release

Annexes

Annex 1: s 9(2)(g)(i)

