



Briefing Note: Oral Item to Cabinet – Options for senior secondary school attendance under COVID Level 3 in Auckland

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	17 August 2020	Priority:	High
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1238437
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Paper

1. This briefing provides you with talking points and recommendations for an oral item at Cabinet on Monday 17 August, asking Cabinet to allow for flexibility for schools to seek exemptions for senior secondary school students in Auckland at NCEA Levels 2 and 3 to attend school, where desired.
2. The mechanisms to allow this to happen (through an updated Health Order, a delegation from the Director-General of Health to the Secretary for Education, or the new powers the Secretary has under the Education and Training Bill) are still being worked through, and, following Cabinet's decision on whether this is desired in principle, will be provided to you (as Minister of Health and Education), the Prime Minister, and the Associate Minister of Education (Hon Tracey Martin).

Summary

- You are seeking Cabinet's agreement in principle to allow flexibility for some senior secondary students at NCEA Levels 2 and 3 in Auckland under Covid Level 3 to attend school in person.
- The necessary recommendations are attached to this briefing note.

Proactive release

Agree that this Briefing will be proactively released once Cabinet has made decisions.

Agree / Disagree



Dr Andrea Schöllmann
Deputy Secretary
Education System Policy
17/08/2020

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

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Annexes

Annex 1: Talking points

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Annex 1: Talking points for Oral Item to Cabinet – Secondary School Attendance in Auckland under Covid Level 3

1. As you know, under Covid Level 3, in Auckland, students in years 11-13 are required to learn from home (there are 57,600 of them).
2. Secondary school principals, in Auckland, are concerned about this – some of their students have thrived on remote teaching and learning, but others have found it difficult.
3. The sorts of situations principals sought flexibility over last time were:
 - a. Vulnerable students – those considered to be at risk of mental health across year levels;
 - b. Students who had disconnected from teachers and from online learning and/or who had not submitted any work;
 - c. Students whose subjects required practical laboratory and/or portfolio work.
4. I am particularly concerned about those students who are close to Level 2 or Level 3 NCEA exams. Year 13 is a priority. While the Ministry of Education and NZQA are working closely together to maintain the NCEA system in 2020, the processes in place to provide school-based grades are reliant on schools collecting evidence that students meet the required standard.
5. For this reason, I suggest we provide flexibility to schools to be able to bring some senior school students back under Level 3 in Auckland at year levels 12-13 (Year 13 faces bigger challenges, with Year 12 as the second level of priority).
6. Pending your agreement in principle to allow this, I will continue working through with officials how that flexibility might get enacted (it could be an updated Health Order, a delegation from the Director-General of Health to the Secretary for Education under the existing Order, or the new powers of direction that the Secretary for Education has under the Education and Training Act)
7. I am looking for your agreement in principle that we should do this, and, if you agree, for me to work through the implementation details with the Prime Minister, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education and the Associate Minister of Education (Hon Tracey Martin).

The Minister of Education recommends that Cabinet:

- a. **note** that, under Covid Alert Level 3 in Auckland, secondary schools' year 11-13 students are required to learn from home;
- b. **note** that concerns have been raised by Auckland principals that some of their senior students have found remote learning difficult in the context of NCEA Levels 1-3;
- c. **note** that they are therefore looking for a flexible approach to allow some senior students to return to school in person;
- d. **note** that my preferred option is to allow this for years 12-13 students (with year 13 students being the priority);
- e. **agree** to give flexibility to schools to bring back years 12-13 students;

- f. **note** that the Ministry of Education is working through the options for achieving this (either through a Health Order, a delegation from the Director-General of Health to the Secretary for Education under the existing Order, or the new powers of direction that the Secretary for Education has under the Education and Training Act;
- g. **delegate** the authority to decide on those implementation options to the Prime Minister, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Education and the Associate Minister of Education (Hon Tracey Martin).

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