



COVID-19 Ministerial Group

Minute of Decision

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COVID-19 - Government's Response to Increased Ongoing Demand for Access to Food and Other Essential Wellbeing Items

Portfolio **Education, Social Development and Employment**

On 9 September 2021, following discussions with officials and Ministers, the COVID-19 Ministerial Group [CAB-21-MIN-0353]:

- 1 **noted** that restrictions put in place as part of the public health response to the emergence of the Delta COVID-19 variant in the community has resulted in a surge in demand for support to access food and other essential wellbeing items.
- 2 **noted** that since 17 August 2021, a total of \$69.4 million in additional funding has been released by government agencies to meet increased need for support to access food, essential wellbeing items, whānau support, support for Pacific, and Māori or iwi-led responses.
- 3 **noted** that on 27 August 2021, Cabinet agreed to reprioritise funds from Vote Education's Outcomes for Target Students Groups to Vote Social Development in order to meet increased need for food access and other essential wellbeing items following the emergence of the COVID-19 Delta variant [CAB-21-MIN-0343];
- 4 **noted** that based on spend to date, it is expected that the additional funding released by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) will be exhausted by 10 September 2021;
- 5 **noted** that it is anticipated that there will be a continued surged demand for food and other essential wellbeing items in the Auckland region while it remains at Alert Level 4 (and possibly Alert Level 3) over the two-week period from 11 September 2021 due to:
 - 5.1 large groups of people self-isolating and unable to support each other;
 - 5.2 reduced hours for some workers who may be living week to week; and
 - 5.3 increased utility costs for families who are staying at home rather than going to school and work;
- 6 **agreed** to a fiscally neutral adjustment to meet the sustained increased community demand for food access and other essential wellbeing items in response to the emergence of the COVID-19 Delta variant for the two weeks from 11 September 2021 in the Auckland region;
- 7 **agreed** to new funding of \$4.5 million to address unmet need over this past week for to food access in rural and remote areas, Community Connectors and to support iwi to address critical unmet need for their whanau;

8 **approved** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decision in paragraph 6 above, with no impact on the operating balance and net core Crown debt:

| | \$m – increase/(decrease) | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 & outyears |
| Vote Social Development Minister for Social Development and Employment Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure: Community Support Services MCA Non-Departmental Other Expenses: Community Response to Adverse or Emergency Events | 7.000 | - | - | - | - |
| Vote Education Minister of Education Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure: Outcomes for Target Student Groups MCA Non-Departmental Output Expenses: School Lunch Programme | (7.000) | - | - | - | - |
| Total Operating | - | - | - | - | - |

9 **approved** the following changes to appropriations to give effect to the policy decision in paragraph 7 above, with a corresponding impact on the operating balance and net core Crown debt:

| | \$m – increase/(decrease) | | | | |
|--|---------------------------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------------|
| | 2021/22 | 2022/23 | 2023/24 | 2024/25 | 2025/26 & outyears |
| Vote Social Development Minister for Social Development and Employment | | | | | |
| Multi-Category Expenses and Capital Expenditure: | | | | | |
| Community Support Services MCA | | | | | |
| Non-Departmental Other Expenses: | | | | | |
| Community Response to Adverse or Emergency Events | 4.500 | | | | |
| Total Operating | 4.500 | | | | |

- 10 **agreed** that the proposed changes to appropriations for 2021/22 in paragraphs 8 and 9 above, be included in the 2021/22 Supplementary Estimates and that, in the interim, the increases be met from Imprest Supply;
- 11 **agreed** that the expenses incurred under paragraph 9 above be charged against the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund established as part of Budget 2020;
- 12 **agreed** to provide delegated authority to the Minister of Finance and the Minister for Social Development and Employment, should Auckland remain in Alert Level 3 or above, to jointly agree additional funding to meet increased community demand for food access and other essential wellbeing items in response to the emergence of the COVID-19 Delta variant, up to a maximum of \$3.1 million;
- 13 **authorised** the Minister of Finance and the Minister for Social Development and Employment, should Auckland remain in Alert Level 3 or above, to jointly agree additional funding to give effect to the decision in paragraph 12 above, up to a maximum of \$3.1 million, to be charged against the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, in accordance with CAB-21-MIN-0349;
- 14 **agreed** to provide delegated authority to the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Education, and the Minister for Social Development and Employment, should Auckland remain in Alert Level 3 or above, to jointly agree any additional fiscally neutral adjustments from Vote Education to Vote Social Development to meet increased community demand for food access and other essential wellbeing items in response to the emergence of the COVID-19 Delta variant;
- 15 **authorised** the Minister of Finance, the Minister of Education, and the Minister for Social Development and Employment, should Auckland remain in Alert Level 3 or above, to jointly agree any additional fiscally neutral adjustments to give effect to the decision in paragraph 14 above;

- 16 **noted** that MSD will continue to work with Te Puni Kōkiri, Te Arawhiti, the Ministries for Pacific Peoples, Women, Ethnic Communities and Youth Development, and the Offices for Seniors and Disability Issues to share information and ensure that these support initiatives are coordinated;
- 17 **noted** that the new COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund funding of \$4.5 million will be separately tracked and reported on by the Ministry of Social Development.

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