



Briefing Note: Cabinet Paper: Draft Strategic Plan for Early Learning, 2019-29 – Release for Consultation

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Date:	2 November 2018	Priority:	Medium
Security Level:	Budget Sensitive	METIS No:	1163758
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of Report

The paper provides you with talking points for your discussion of the Cabinet paper: *Draft Strategic Plan for Early Learning, 2019-29 – release for consultation* at the Social Wellbeing Cabinet Committee on Wednesday 7 November.

Summary

- You are seeking Cabinet's approval for the draft Strategic Plan for Early Learning to be released for public consultation which, if approved, will take place from 13 November 2018 to 31 January 2019. The final Strategic Plan is to be considered by Cabinet in April 2019.
- The draft Strategic Plan was developed by a Ministerial Advisory Group working with a sector Reference Group and supported by the Ministry of Education.
- The draft Strategic Plan has a vision that 'New Zealand's early learning system enables every child to enjoy a good life, learn and thrive in high quality settings that support their identity, language and culture and are valued by parents and whānau'.
- To achieve this vision, the draft Strategic Plan outlines five interdependent goals and 23 recommended actions which set the policy intentions for the next ten years.
- The draft Strategic Plan represents an ambitious programme of work over the next ten years which will see some significant changes in the sector. There are significant financial implications coming from some of the proposals, and any implementation will be subject to the availability of funding either through reprioritisation or the standard Budget process.

Proactive release

Agree that this Briefing will be proactively released alongside the release of the Cabinet paper.

Agree / Disagree



Nancy Bell
**Director Early Learning
Early Learning and Student
Achievement**

2/11/2018

Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

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Talking Points

1. I'm seeking your approval to release a draft Strategic Plan for Early Learning for public consultation. The Ministry of Education would undertake the consultation from tomorrow until 31 January. I'm anticipating bringing a final plan to Cabinet in April next year.
2. The Plan is intended to support our Government's vision for a high quality education system and a world class early learning system is critical to achieving this vision. I want an early learning system that clearly prioritises quality provision, improves equity and maintains choice for parents, caregivers and whānau.
3. I'd note that an early learning system that functions well supports our broader economic strategy by contributing to the capability of the workforce and enabling labour market participation. It also supports our Government's forthcoming Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, in particular the Plan will make a significant contribution to the outcomes under the 'children and young people are learning and developing' domain.

The MAG's development of the Strategic Plan for Early Learning

4. I got your agreement earlier in the year to set up a Ministerial Advisory Group to advise on the development of new ten year strategic plan. At the time I said that we needed to get back to having a coherent ten year plan. This would set out the vision and future direction for the sector in order to achieve our goals for education.
5. The Advisory Group has presented me with a draft Plan. It's had input from a sector Reference Group. I'd characterise its development as iterative and collaborative. I've had good engagement with the Group and am pleased with how it's come together.

Strategic Plan for Early Learning – 2019-29

6. Some key points about the Plan to note are:
 - a vision: "New Zealand's early learning system enables every child to enjoy a good life, learn and thrive in high quality settings."
 - five interdependent goals. These are:
 - a. Quality is raised for children by improving regulated standards.
 - b. Every child is empowered through timely access to the resources they need to thrive.
 - c. Investment in our workforce supports excellence in teaching and learning.
 - d. Planning ensures that provision it is valued, sufficient and diverse.
 - e. The early learning system continues to innovate, learn and improve.
7. There are 23 actions under the 5 goals. From my perspective, the most significant ones are to:
 - a. regulate new adult:child ratios for infants and toddlers
 - b. incentivise for 100% and regulate for 80% qualified teachers in teacher-led centres, leading to regulation for 100%
 - c. improve the consistency and levels of teacher salaries and conditions across the early learning sector

Proposed implementation and workforce implications

8. The actions within the draft Strategic Plan represent an ambitious programme of work over the next ten years, and would place significant demands on the sector and government. I'm also aware that some recommendations in the Plan could increase the cost of early learning provision. This might lead to reduced service availability or increased parental fees.
9. So I'm definitely interested in how the sector, parents, caregivers and whānau feel about these proposals.
10. The Plan would place definite demands on workforce and resourcing. With regards to the latter, I'd progress initiatives only as funding and fiscal conditions allow Budget by Budget.
11. Also, the Advisory Group has worked in a staged view to implementation and I think this provides a good balance between making changes the sector needs and being mindful that we can't do everything straight away.