



SUBMISSION on the 2015 Budget Policy

Statement

Paper 077/15

Prepared on behalf of COMET Auckland, 30 January, 2015

Whakatauāki

E kore e taea e te whenu kotahi
ki te raranga i te whāriki
kia mōhio tātou ki ā tātou.
Mā te mahi tahi o ngā whenu,
mā te mahi tahi o ngā kairaranga,
ka oti tēnei whāriki.
I te otinga
me titiro tātou ki ngā mea pai ka puta mai.
Ā tana wā,
me titiro hoki
ki ngā raranga i makere
nā te mea, he kōrero ano kei reira.

- Kūkupa Tirikatene

The tapestry of understanding
cannot be woven by one strand alone.
Only by the working together of strands
and the working together of weavers
will such a tapestry be completed.
With its completion
let us look at the good that comes from it
and, in time
we should also look
at those stitches which have been dropped,
because they also have a message.

About COMET Auckland

COMET Auckland, Te Hononga Akoranga (Community Education Trust Auckland) is a charitable trust and Council Controlled Organisation (CCO) of Auckland Council. Its mission is to drive systems change to make education and skills more equitable and more effective across Auckland.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2015 Budget Policy Statement. We would welcome the opportunity to provide further information on any point raised in this submission, and/or to speak to this submission, if this can be done in Auckland.

Summary of key points

1. We agree with the budget priorities on health and education.
2. We recommend that in addition to aligning with an expanded set of Better Public Service targets, the Budget Policy Statement should also explicitly refer to the government's obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and to the importance of reducing inequalities.
3. We commend the focus on growing skills to meet business need; and the intention to review spending on vulnerable children and families. We have included suggested budget provisions that would contribute to these goals in the appendix to this submission.
4. We recommend that Auckland should be identified as a separate regional focus (in addition to Christchurch), in recognition of the unique characteristics of the city.

Priorities for spending

We commend the priority on education and health for new spending. Education and health are inextricable and both are crucial for New Zealand to gain the greatest possible social and economic benefit from our greatest resource – our people.

Alignment with Better Public Service targets

We support the explicit alignment of the Budget Policy Statement with the Better Public Service (BPS) targets, and we recognise the greater focus and alignment of government services that has arisen from the use of these shared targets. However we are also aware that the targets are extremely narrow and there is a risk that other essential outcomes will be neglected if government plans such as the Budget Policy Statement refer only to the BPS targets.

We recommend that each of the BPS targets be supplemented with a small set of contributing outcomes, focusing specifically on the needs of high-priority groups and on intermediate outcomes that have been shown by evidence to be important in reaching and getting full benefit from the core BPS targets. For example the ECE participation target would be supplemented by targets on quality of ECEs, participation of Maori and Pasifika children, and literacy at age 6, so that the focus is on children's learning (the real purpose of this BPS) rather than only on participation.

In addition to references to the BPS targets, **we recommend the Budget Policy Statement should include reference to the government's obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and to an explicit focus on proactively reducing inequities.**

Growing skills to meet business needs

We commend the focus on growing skills and talent to help meet the needs of business (page 9). Suggested budget provisions that would contribute to this goal are included in Appendix 1 of this submission.

Reviewing spending on vulnerable children and families

We commend the intended review of spending on vulnerable children and families. Clearly any such review will need to build on the findings of the Green Paper on vulnerable children, and the Treasury RFI on improving results for our most vulnerable children and families. **We suggest that the Budget Policy Statement should specifically refer to these documents in describing the review of spending.**

Suggested budget provisions that could contribute to supporting vulnerable children and families are included as Appendix 2.

Improving public sector commissioning

We commend the stated intention to review the budget process and public sector commissioning, and we agree with the five bullet points listing the key intended changes (page 10 of the Budget Policy Statement).

Recognising regional differences

We commend the recognition that a regional approach is sometimes needed and we support the continued focus on Christchurch as the city recovers from the earthquakes. **We recommend that a second regional focus be added, to enable tailored, aligned policy and implementation to fit the unique needs of Auckland.**

Auckland represents one-third of NZ's population but is by no means typical. Auckland is growing where most other areas are static or shrinking; has a much more youthful population; and is now

classed as a superdiverse city in international terms, with over 160 languages spoken and significant differences in ethnic mix in different parts of the city. Auckland is home to the largest proportions of Pasifika, the largest proportion of Asians and the greatest number of recent migrants. Our Maori population is also unusual, with 19 Mana Whenua iwi and around 80% of Auckland Maori affiliated to iwi outside our area. Auckland is a city of socio-economic contrast, reflected in the highest proportion of both high- and low-decile schools in the country. We also have geographic strengths and challenges, situated as we are on an isthmus which brings transport and access challenges alongside the benefits of harbours, beaches, islands and hills. Policy-makers need to take these differences seriously – to come and experience them for themselves, and to listen to Aucklanders to identify the things that work for our particular communities.

This submission has been assembled by COMET Auckland based on our own knowledge and experience, and on extensive discussions with education stakeholders.

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Appendix 1: Suggested budget provisions to support skills

1. **An explicit, interdepartmental focus (across MBIE, MOE, MSD and Careers NZ) on building young people's employability skills**, alongside more formal qualifications. This is a crucial step in increasing youth employment and reducing NEETs. It will require professional development of teachers and youth workers to understand how to build employability skills; trialling of a passport to recognise young people's developing skills; and support for employers to continue to build these skills with their young employees.
2. **Develop more fine-grained data on current and predicted future skills needs**, by area, so this can be used to guide investment in education and training and enable learners and their families to make the best decision about career directions.
3. **Focus funding on building skills in STEM**, in order to equip young people with the skills most needed by industry. This requires more effective, engaging and authentic teaching of science and mathematics in schools, so more students choose to take these subjects through to year 13; better careers guidance to ensure senior school students identify and select the specific credits they will require to succeed at their chosen tertiary courses; more effective incentives for tertiary institutions to increase participation in high-priority STEM courses; and encouraging greater and more strategic investment by STEM-focused companies into the STEM pipeline.
4. **Continue and increase funding for skill-building for adults**, in addition to young people. Current policy settings make it very difficult for adults over 25 to access education and training, yet they still have several decades of working life ahead of them. For example, in Auckland there are 410,000 adults with low literacy. Most of these are in the workforce and their productivity is limited by their low literacy skills. Increasing workplace literacy availability and funding low-level tertiary courses for adults would enable these people to get higher-paying, more stable employment, benefiting their families and also the economy. Workplace literacy is particularly useful for increasing the skills of Māori and Pasifika men.
5. **Focus on NEETs who pass through the remand system or finish very short sentences.** Typically they are young Māori and Pasifika men whose sentences were not long enough to access meaningful education and training or who are released into the community from remand without oversight from Corrections. There are few support systems that can navigate these young men into the free Youth Guarantee places that are available, and they are usually not work ready. Tertiary providers are reluctant to focus on high risk students who need considerable support to become successful in tertiary education.

Appendix 2: Suggested budget provisions to support vulnerable children and families

1. **Create a cross-departmental budget** for services for vulnerable children and whānau, to enable more holistic, connected practice. Programmes that support families in multiple ways across generations and areas of need can cost-effectively protect vulnerable children in both the short and long term. However at present, it is almost impossible to sustain intergenerational programmes that deliver multiple outcomes because no one agency funds and monitors both short and long term outcomes for children, adults and families; in health, violence-prevention, housing, education, and employment. Whānau Ora is a step in the right direction but the systems for funding and monitoring across departmental areas are still very under-developed and take too much effort for community organisations to work around. A cross-departmental budget would streamline processes for community agencies and would also enable contracts and monitoring to focus on multiple outcomes.
2. **Expand existing programmes** that have been shown to be highly effective. These should include:
 - a. **Extend the fully-funded roll-out of Early Reading Together to all ECEs that receive level 1 equity funding.** Early Reading Together (the pre-school version of Reading Together¹). In late 2014 a roll-out of Early Reading Together was announced to low-decile schools. This is welcome, but we note that Early Reading Together is in fact designed for use in early childhood centres, not schools.
 - b. **Further expand the reach of HIPPY.** HIPPY provides in-home training and support for parents to educate their pre-school children at home, is extremely well-researched² and backed by strong evidence of effectiveness, both for the child's learning and for the parent's self-efficacy and positive parenting.
 - c. **Fund the original, effective model of supported playgroups based in schools.** These playgroups have been shown³ to lead to literacy levels at age 6 as high as, or higher than, children who have attended formal ECE, while also promoting changes in family relationships, parent engagement with learning, and preparing some

¹ Tuck, B., Horgan, L., Franich, C., and Wards, M. (2007). Reading Together: School leadership in a school-home partnership. Ministry of Education: Wellington.

² BarHava-Monteith, G., Harre, N., & Field, J. (1999a). HIPPY New Zealand: An Evaluation Overview. *Social Policy Journal of New Zealand*, vol. 12, pp. 106-121.

³ Widdowson, D., and Dixon, R. (2011). *Final report for the evaluation of the Parent Mentoring project in Manukau*. Wellington: Ministry of Education.

parents for future careers in ECE teaching. A watered-down version of this model was implemented over the past three years but the playgroups were not on school sites and were evaluated on outcomes focused on attendance rather than on supporting family practices in the home. We suggest that a new implementation be planned, using the original successful model and with a parent support, rather than an ECE, focus.

- d. **Fund a whānau-focused tertiary foundation qualification** as part of the Tertiary Review of Qualifications. This would provide a nationally recognised starting point for some tertiary priority learners – a pathways for learners whose main starting interest is helping their children. International evidence shows that family learning strategies, led by schools, are needed to raise achievement and reduce the gap between low and high achievers⁴. This year, 122 adults have graduated from Whanau Ara Mua with a level 2 NQF Certificate in Child Development and Family Learning. This represents an 80% completion rate, outstanding for such vulnerable learners. Participants are 90% female, 40% Maori and 22% Pasifika. Almost all are sole parent beneficiaries. 56% intend to head to further study and 32% to work. The length of the course gives parents a year to stabilise their family situation and realistically prepare for work.
3. **Provide extra support for at-risk children** in foster care and those from abusive, criminal or gang families, so these children can build confidence to participate and succeed in learning. This is particularly important in closed family systems where there is limited external contact outside of the family, and limited positive communication within the household. Mentors, school buddy systems and affordable after school care and holiday programmes would assist.
4. **Increase support for learning for offenders and ex-offenders**, including both vocationally oriented programmes and learning aimed at breaking the intergenerational cycle of low literacy and limited education achievement. Increasing parent education and family-oriented learning and literacy would have long term benefits. There is substantial evidence of increased truancy and offending risks to children of prisoners and also the benefit of encouraging parents to stay involved with their children. Initiatives that focus on improving the literacy of both generations are often delivered by community groups who are able to

⁴ NIACE (2013). Family Learning Works: The inquiry into family learning in England and Wales. Leicester, England, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education.

look beyond vocational education outcomes, for example, Storybook Dads⁵ provided by the Howard League for Penal Reform.

5. **Explicitly fund coordination**, to make it possible for several organisations that deliver different services to work together to provide more holistic, seamless services to families. Holistic services are more effective because they address several of the causes of vulnerability at once. However it is almost impossible to deliver services in a seamless way across organisations without an explicitly funded coordination function. At present, apart from Whānau Ora, it is extremely difficult to find such funding. We have had experience for 12 years of trying to get multi-agency funding for a qualification-oriented family learning programme for adults with no qualifications (TEC) in an empty classroom on a school site (MOE) that needed support services and coordination to achieve family wellbeing outcomes (MSD). There was no mechanism to fund what is an essentially simple idea; coordination funding could only be found from philanthropy, which is no way to bring effective programmes to scale sustainably.
6. **Invest in long term collective impact** initiatives with baseline funding for a decade. Endless cycles of pilot programmes are unsustainable and reach only a tiny minority of those who need them. Government and philanthropy often look for another new idea rather than backing and scaling local ideas that work. A Collective Impact approach would bring local and national government, educators, business and community together to plan connected action towards shared goals, and would have potential to engage parents, whānau and learners in the process. Such a Collective Impact approach could happen in Auckland through strengthening the central government involvement in Learning Auckland, which already has strong engagement across all education sectors, local government and the community sector. We would be keen to discuss this possibility further with appropriate officials.

⁵ <https://akoaootearoa.ac.nz/download/ng/file/group-3300/making-a-difference-in-prison-with-storybook-dads.pdf>