

TE HONONGA AKORANGA
COMET



SUBMISSION ON THE

BUDGET POLICY STATEMENT 2019

Submission 097/19
COMET Auckland, January 2019

Whakatauāki

E kore e taea e te whenu kotahi ki te raranga i te whāriki kia mōhio tātou ki ā tātou.

The tapestry of understanding cannot be woven by one strand alone.

Mā te mahi tahi o ngā whenu, mā te mahi tahi o ngā kairaranga, ka oti tēnei whāriki.

Only by the working together of strands and the working together of weavers will such a tapestry be completed.

I te otinga me titiro tātou ki ngā mea pai ka puta mai.

With its completion let us look at the good that comes from it.

Ā tana wā, me titiro hoki ki ngā raranga i makere nā te mea, he kōrero ano kei reira.

And, in time we should also look at those stitches which have been dropped, because they also have a message.

- Kūkupa Tirikatene

Introduction

[COMET Auckland - Te Hononga Akoranga](#) is an independent charitable trust and Auckland Council's CCO focused on education, skills and lifelong learning across Auckland and, increasingly, other parts of the country. Our latest Statement of Intent is [here](#).

This submission has been assembled based on our own collective knowledge and experience, and our ongoing engagement with our stakeholders, including educators, community leaders, employers, parents and students. Briefly, our work involves:

Sector leadership – mapping data and evidence, working with sector leaders to identify and prioritise the most pressing areas of focus, and connecting people around that common agenda, to plan collaborative action.

That can then lead to advocacy or changes to partners' business as usual, or sometimes to planning and trialling new ways of working (incubation projects).

These incubation projects generally develop through scoping and planning to trialling, and then implementation and evaluation, with the goal of handing them on once they are fully developed so we can move on to focus on another part of the system.

In particular, this submission reflects insights from our work in six areas:

[Talking Matters](#) is a campaign to get everyone talking more and talking differently to babies and young children, in the language(s) and through the culture(s) of the whānau. We are exploring what works for families in small-scale pilot projects in three Auckland communities (Māngere-Ōtāhuhu, Tāmaki and Puketāpapa) and supporting an initiative in Whanganui, aiming to identify promising practices to replicate and scale up.

The Tāmaki Makaurau Education Forum (TMEF) is a group of iwi leaders and educators who come together to share examples of effective practice for Māori learners and to discuss issues and opportunities towards enabling Māori to reach their aspirations through learning. COMET's role is convenor and coordinator of the TMEF. In 2018 their work has focused on a rangatahi consultation which brought together Māori young people from kura, mainstream secondary schools, marae and various alternative settings to hear from them about issues that affect their lives and learning.

The [Youth Employability Programme](#) (YEP): Licence to Work is a nationally-recognised programme that builds young people's employability skills and prepares them for successful transition to stable employment. YEP was shaped by COMET, based on focus groups with employers and young people about their experience of the transition to work. The programme is now delivered at 33 sites (mainly secondary schools, wharekura and youth employment programmes) across 8 regions.

STEM Alliance Aotearoa builds the STEM skills pipeline by connecting STEM-focused businesses with educators. The Alliance's work includes leading [SouthSci](#), the south Auckland arm of the MBIE-funded Curious Minds initiative. Since 2015, SouthSci has supported 35 projects that have collectively engaged 1,735 children and young people with science and involved 38 schools and 70 other organisations.

The [Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group](#) is a cross-sector group representing a wide range of language interests in Auckland, convened and chaired by COMET. Over the past few years they have developed an Auckland languages strategy, hosted a visit by international language policy expert Professor Jo Lo Bianco, and most recently published a strategy for languages in education.

Learning Auckland magazine is a by-students, for-students sister publication to Education Today. Our role is to bring together a student editor group of around 25 young people from diverse Auckland primary, intermediate, secondary and tertiary education settings to discuss and write about the issues that affect their learning.

Executive summary

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Budget Policy Statement 2019. 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.

We support all five Budget 2019 Priorities and note that there is strong evidence for the contribution of each priority to wellbeing. Education, learning and skills (formal and informal) contribute to all five priority areas.

We recognise that there is a need for development in the regions. However, we would like to see a parallel focus on Auckland. Our unique demographics mean policies developed for other parts of the country don't always fit here. Policy-makers need to take these differences seriously and to listen to Aucklanders to identify the things that work for our particular communities.

We are particularly pleased to see mention of initiatives targeting intergenerational wellbeing outcomes. In our experience, intergenerational initiatives can multiply beneficial outcomes.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1 - Include funding in Budget 2019 for delivery of youth employability programmes, beginning with two areas - funding from MOE for delivery in secondary schools, and from MSD to include them in programmes for unemployed young people.

Recommendation 2 - Continue funding for the Participatory Science Platform for the current three sites, expand it to additional sites and ultimately make it available nation-wide.

Recommendation 3 - At least double equity funding.

Recommendation 4 - Establish a plan to provide for Te Reo Māori learning for all students.

Recommendation 5 - Provide policy and support for bilingual/immersion learning.

Recommendation 6 - Re-start or expand funding for Te Kotahitanga, Starpath, HIPPY, Manaiaikalani, and Mutukaroa.

Recommendation 7 - Continue trials of innovative practice that support family talk and attachment with young children.

We also suggest improving digital inclusion with more access in public spaces, and/or more support for programmes like Computers in Homes. As well, we suggest provision of free internet access in public places like trains, buses, town squares and libraries, and making available school internet access and computer suites for local families after school hours.

Overarching comments

We welcome the focus on wellbeing and on actions and measures that go beyond financial outcomes. We support all five Budget 2019 Priorities and note that there is strong evidence for the contribution of each priority to wellbeing. We note that all five priorities are interconnected. We also note that education, learning and skills (formal and informal) contribute to all five priority areas.

We have included recommendations for budget provisions that would contribute to each of the five priorities in the sections below.

We recognise that there is a need for development in the regions and we have seen the value of well-directed regional development initiatives through our involvement with regions which have incorporated our Youth Employability Programme into their regional plans.

However, we would like to see a parallel focus on Auckland.

Auckland represents a large and growing proportion of the economy. Auckland's unique demographics mean policies developed for other parts of the country don't always fit here. Auckland can also serve as a testing ground for policies that will be needed in other parts of the country in a few years, as other regions become more diverse.

Auckland represents one-third of New Zealand'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 Māori population is also unusual, with 19 Mana Whenua iwi and around 80% of Auckland Māori 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.

We are pleased to see mention (in the diagram on p5) of “initiatives targeting intergenerational wellbeing outcomes”.

This will ensure that agencies take a long view, rather than focusing only on actions that will have short-term gains but may have long-term negative consequences.

The focus on intergenerational wellbeing is an opportunity to seek out and support initiatives that deliberately work with two or more generations at a time.

Such intergenerational initiatives have potential to multiply outcomes for all, as illustrated in the example of Whānau Ara Mua, to the right.

Intergenerational programme example:

Whānau Ara Mua (WAM) is a family learning programme that we co-designed in the early 2000s and have since handed on to the Solomon Group.

WAM is a full-year course for parents with no or low qualifications, building their literacy, numeracy, career planning, and understanding of family health and relationships and of child development and learning. They spend part of each week working with their child in their school or ECE classroom, building their own skills and those of their child.

WAM delivers learning and employment outcomes for the adult learner, learning outcomes for the child, and health, relationship and income outcomes for the family.

1. Creating opportunities to transition to a sustainable, low-emissions economy

Lifting productivity requires building the skills of the current and potential workforce.

Employers tell us that the skills they most need for entry-level positions are not reflected in NCEA. They want to see more focus on building skills like communication, time management, teamwork, problem-solving and positive attitude - that is, employability skills.

Lack of employability skills also has a significant effect on young people’s short-term and long-term wellbeing. Many young people struggle to get work and even if they do find a job, may lose it within weeks because they do not understand workplace norms and requirements. This can lead to loss of confidence and a poor employment record, which can in turn lead to long-term unemployment or underemployment.

While there is an Employability Framework that is agreed across multiple government departments, there is no funding for schools, youth services or tertiary training organisations to enable them to deliberately build and assess these skills. There is also no requirement in government contracting for anyone working with unemployed or pre-employment young people to include employability skill-building in their programmes.

Based on our experiences of developing and delivering the [Youth Employability Programme](#) over the past five years, we know that building employability for young people at risk of becoming NEET requires a combination of interactive learning about the seven employability

skills; work experience to practice the skills; and accreditation of skills by an employer, so the student has credible evidence for job applications. On average, the overall cost for this programme is around \$1,000 per student for a year-long programme.

We are currently working with multiple agencies to develop a framework to categorise the various employability programmes so providers can select one that suits their clients' needs. The next step would be for government to provide targeted funding to enable providers to incorporate robust, evidence-based employability skill building in their programmes for young people.

Recommendation 1

Include funding in Budget 2019 for delivery of youth employability programmes, beginning with two areas - funding from MOE for delivery in secondary schools as part of the final-year programme for students identified as benefitting from it; and funding for inclusion of employability within MSD-funded programmes for unemployed young people.

In order to build an ecologically sustainable, low-emissions economy, all New Zealanders will need an increased understanding of why this is important, and business leaders and other decision-makers will need access to scientific knowledge and skills so they can weigh up the environmental and business impacts of their decisions. Thus, there is a need to build scientific literacy among the general population, and also to grow more technical experts to generate and interpret evidence on sustainable solutions.

Currently many young people see science as boring, difficult and irrelevant to their lives, leading to a severe gap in the supply of STEM skills for industry. The Curious Minds suite of programmes, and particularly the Participatory Science Platform (PSP), of which [SouthSci](#) is an example, addresses this gap by engaging young people in shaping and running their own scientific studies. Many of these projects focus on ecological challenges in local communities. At present there are only three PSP programmes, in south Auckland, Taranaki and Otago. The model is now well-tested and would be easily scaled. We understand that expansion is currently being considered.

Recommendation 2

Continue funding for the Participatory Science Platform for the current three sites, and expand to additional sites, moving towards making this programme available nation-wide.

2. Supporting a thriving nation in the digital age

Digital technologies have potential to provide significant benefits to New Zealand, including export income, employment, social engagement and learning. However, there is still a significant equity gap in access to the benefits of digital technology.

Any plan to make greater use of digital technologies needs to address the three main barriers to digital equity:

- A lack of access to computers. Many people now have smart phones, allowing basic digital connection, but not the ability to draw up a quality CV, interact with complex government services or run a small business (for example). Libraries often provide free access to computers, but demand often means only half-hour slots are available.

More access in public spaces, and/or more support for programmes like Computers in Homes would help here.

- A lack of digital skills, especially skills to use digital technologies for work applications. Most high-level computing courses are too expensive for many families. There are some free computing courses, but these often do not give enough depth of skill, and/or are not available in local areas.
- Lack of access to the internet. Again, many people have access on a phone, but not all can afford even this.

Providing free internet access in public places like trains, buses, town squares and libraries would help, as would the use of school internet access and computer suites for local families after school hours.

3. Lifting Māori and Pasifika incomes, skills and opportunities

Education is an important way to enable people to take charge of their own future and reach their own aspirations. However, our education and skills system does not provide equitable outcomes for Māori and Pasifika communities.

There is already a great deal of effort from government, educators, community organisations, families and students, aiming to address this problem. Some of this effort is effective but too isolated to make the difference needed. There are also key factors that could make a difference but that are not receiving sufficient focus.

Some actions that would make a difference include:

1. Increasing the level of equity funding for schools and ECEs to at least double the current level. This is in response to data quoted in the recent Tomorrow's Schools Review Report that NZ invests only 3% of school funding in addressing equity, compared to around 6% on equivalent jurisdictions. It takes resources to address the effects of poverty on education, so at least doubling this funding would allow schools and ECEs to provide the additional support that children and families need in order to succeed.
2. Increasing initial training, ongoing professional development and learning resources that explicitly support teachers to learn about and build on the cultural and linguistic strengths that Maori and Pasifika students bring to the classroom.
3. Encouraging and supporting teaching through the medium of children's first or heritage language, in line with the evidence that bilingual or immersion education is more effective than English-medium education. Note that this benefit is still seen if outcomes are measured in English. Support for bilingual education needs to include policy change to enable it to happen (current policy only allows support for Māori immersion or bilingual learning, excluding learning

in other languages); tailored teacher pre-service and in-service training; learning resources; and assessments.

4. Establishing a strategy to work towards offering learning of te reo Māori for all New Zealand students from Year 1 to Year 8. This would need to include a workforce development plan such as is outlined in the [Languages in Education Strategy](#) published recently by the Auckland Language Strategy Working Group.
5. Re-establishing or increasing funding for programmes that have been shown to be effective for a Māori and Pasifika learners, but that have been discontinued or underfunded. This should include for example Te Kotahitanga, HIPPY, Manaikalani, Starpath and Mutukaroa.

Recommendation 3

At least double equity funding.

Recommendation 4

Establish a plan to provide for Te Reo Māori learning for all students.

Recommendation 5

Provide policy and support for bilingual/immersion learning.

Recommendation 6

Re-start or expand funding for Te Kotahitanga, Starpath, HIPPY, Manaikalani, and Mutukaroa.

4. Reducing child poverty and improving child wellbeing

While there is significant government investment in early learning through ECE funding, there is very little support for the place where babies and young children spend much more time - the home.

Our early oral language campaign [Talking Matters](#) is built on the evidence that interaction and talk help shape a child's brain architecture and influence their social, emotional and intellectual capabilities, and therefore their wellbeing, throughout their lives. We are trialling several different approaches to supporting families to talk more with babies and toddlers, and we are seeing promising early results.

We are connecting with several government departments around this work. This includes a small project with Oranga Tamariki to incorporate messages about talk in SKIP resources, and an initial trial of a "pedometer for talk" as a tool for quality improvement in ECEs.

Recommendation 7

Continue trials of innovative practice that support family talk and attachment with young children – talking tips in SKIP, LENA GROW at ECEs.

5. Supporting mental wellbeing for all New Zealanders, focusing on those under 24 years old

One area that has a major impact on mental wellbeing for children and young people is the very high incidence of bullying and racism in schools.

International evidence, the recent report by the Office of the Children's Commissioner, and our own [rangatahi consultation](#) all show that New Zealand students experience significant levels of racism and bullying, affecting their wellbeing and their learning.

Schools need more support to address this effectively.

Teaching methods that build on and respect children's language and culture would be an important step towards reducing racism in schools, in parallel with more explicit, evidence-based anti-bullying programmes.

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