

THE EDUCATION (UPDATE) AMENDMENT BILL 2016

6 OCTOBER 2016

STATEMENT OF NATIONAL EDUCATION AND LEARNING PRIORITIES – A SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSAL

The Bill proposes that the Minister of Education be authorised to issue a *statement of National Education and Learning Priorities* to give direction to both the early childhood and compulsory schooling sectors.

The Cabinet paper describes the purpose of the statement is “to make the Government’s priorities clear and more visible, and to gather them together in one place”.

Currently the Education Amendment Act 1989 provides for five statements of priorities for the schooling system which are communicated through third tier legislation such as Gazette notices. These are called the National Education Guidelines and include: National Education Goals (NEGs); foundation curriculum policy statements; national curriculum statements; National Standards; and National Administration Guidelines (NAGs). These are a rather confusing mix of high-level goals and administrative requirements.

The Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) on the proposal suggests that the *statement of National Education and Learning Priorities* could include indicators of success, reflect the objectives for education and be linked to regulations setting out planning and reporting requirement for schools. It could be explicit about how early childhood services are expected to take it into account. The RIS suggests “this would help early childhood services and schools understand what the priorities mean for them and how to put them into action”.

The Bill proposes that early childhood education services and schools would be required to “have regard to” the enduring goals of education and the *statement of National Education and Learning Priorities* in their planning and reporting. The statement would sit below the enduring education goals and would give effect to them.

The statement will be developed over 2017/2018 and the new system of reporting and accountability for schools by 1 January 2019. Prior to issuing the statement of national priorities the Bill states that Minister must consult with “those stakeholders in the early childhood and compulsory education sectors that he or she considers ought to be consulted”. This wording is consistent with the Tertiary Education Strategy which the RIS suggests the statement would be modelled on.

The statement would remain in effect for a period of 5 years unless earlier withdrawn or amended.

A statement issued under this section is neither a legislative instrument nor a disallowable instrument for the purposes of the Legislation Act 2012, and does not have to be presented to the House of Representatives under section 41 of that Act.

EDUCATION COUNCIL VIEWS

We agree the current system is confusing

We agree that the current system is confusing and schools find it difficult to know how to give effect to them in their planning and reporting. We support the proposal to pull the National Education Guidelines together into a clear statement which provides direction to the early childhood and compulsory schooling sector at five year intervals.

We support the suggestion the *statement of National Education and Learning Priorities* is modelled on the Tertiary Education Strategy.

We support having a framework that sets the overall direction for the education sector for 0-18 year olds

We agree with the proposal to have policy settings which focus on learners' aged 0-18 thereby encompassing early childhood education as well as schooling. This places learners at the centre of the system and will better enable whole system collaboration.

We agree that content of the statement should not be enshrined in the Act

The Bill itself provides no detail as to what the *statement of National Education and Learning Priorities* would include. The RIS suggests it "could include indicators of success, reflect the objectives for education and be linked to regulations setting out planning and reporting requirement for schools". We agree that Act would enable a "mechanism" for setting the priorities, i.e. allow the Minister to issue *statement of National Education and Learning Priorities*. We agree that the content of the statement should not be enshrined in the Act.

When the statement is being developed we would encourage a focus on a broad range of success indicators.

We strongly support the statement being developed through a consultative process, and which names the Education Council as one of the groups the Minister should consult with

We strongly support the intention for the statement to be developed through a consultative process with the education sector. The wording of the Bill [(Part 1AA (4))] states that "*before issuing a statement under this section, the Minister must consult with those stakeholders in the early childhood and compulsory education sectors that he or she considers ought to be consulted*". We understand this wording is consistent with other strategies (ie Tertiary Education Strategy, New Zealand Health Strategy). We appreciate it is not appropriate for primary legislation to include a long list who should be included in this consultation process. However, as the professional body for teachers in New Zealand, we propose that the Bill is amended to name the Education Council as one of the parties the Minister should consult with.

We would like the provision enabling the Minister to make 'minor' changes to the statement without consultation to be clarified.

The Bill includes a provision [(Part 1AA (5(a))] allowing minor changes to the statement to may be made without fulfilling these consultation requirements. It is unclear what the definition of "minor" is. We therefore would like 'minor' to be clarified before we could support this provision.

We think the importance of the statement warrants it being introduced to the House of Representatives

The statement will be THE priority and direction setting mechanism for the education system. It will not be a minor document. We think it warrants being established as a disallowable instrument for the purposes of the Legislation Act 2012, and should have to be presented to the House of Representatives under section 41 of that Act. This would provide for appropriate checks and balances.