

25 June 2019

New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) Submission on the

Policy to pay \$150 per student to decile one – seven schools in lieu of asking for donations

To: The Ministry of Education

Personal Details:

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The New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) is the largest professional organisation for lead educators representing the interests of 2,000 Principals of Primary, Intermediate, Area and Secondary Schools. Principals are from public, integrated and independent schools and are spread throughout New Zealand. NZPF aims to be the most influential advocate for school principals to enable high quality, well supported leadership for school learners in New Zealand.

We thank you for the opportunity to comment on the donations policy

General Comments

NZPF recognises and applauds that the intent behind this policy is to progress the aim for education to be free to all in Aotearoa New Zealand. We acknowledge this policy follows the Government's policy for the first year of tertiary study to be free and the NCEA and scholarship examinations, to no longer carry an examination fee.

We also recognise that a further intent of the policy is to address issues of equity. By eliminating student fees and now donations to schools, the goal of achieving equity in our education system draws ever closer.

In principle, therefore NZPF supports the donations policy. Below we outline some issues that have been brought to our attention since the announcement

Where are the parameters?

Schools at the lower end of our decile system have warmly welcomed the announcement of \$150 per student in lieu of asking for donations. Many report that they had already stopped asking for donations because the parents simply could not afford to pay. Others asked for minimal donations and were lucky if 10-20% of parents could pay.

Concerns for these schools is mainly about the detail. For example, if they accept the \$150 per student offer, can they still ask parents to fund or part-fund school camps? Can they seek costs for children to participate in swimming lessons or seek transport costs to visit an art gallery or museum or marae or some other place of interest?

These schools are anxious to know the parameters of the policy before their Board of Trustees will commit one way or the other. It would be helpful if the policy outlined those activities that

schools could continue to legitimately charge parents for should they also accept the \$150 per student offer.

Decile 8 – 10 schools

A number of schools in this decile range have argued that they should not have been excluded from the \$150 per student in lieu of asking for donations option, although many also said that their donations are much higher than \$150 per student and the majority of the parents pay because they have very high expectations of the education their children will receive. They want smaller classes and additional curriculum activities. The donations money helps them achieve those goals.

NZPF supports the idea that all schools should be offered the option of accepting the \$150 per student in lieu of donations. It is also our belief that those schools whose parents can well afford to pay will not choose the \$150 per student in lieu of asking for donations. They will instead continue to fund the higher level of donation so that their children can enjoy the advantages they wish for them.

Underfunding undermines equity

Many principals have commented that central to asking for donations is the issue of school underfunding. We have heard that schools are funding teacher aides, and other learning support specialists from donations income. High decile schools have reported that the majority of their learning support services are funded from donations.

Underfunding of schools exacerbates the inequities between schools because high decile schools can still raise enough funds from their communities and business connections to meet their children's needs whilst lower decile schools cannot. If all schools were funded to meet every child's needs, there would be no need for donations for any school. Capping the amount schools could ask for through donations, as suggested in the Tomorrow's Schools Report, will not achieve equity. For higher decile schools it will just mean a more intensive drive for sponsorships and for lower decile schools there is no money available.

Conclusion

NZPF supports the \$150 per student in lieu of asking for school donations. We would recommend that the offer be extended to all schools.

Whilst the policy goes some way to supporting the drive for free education, it will not address the inequities between schools and especially between high and low decile schools.

Those inequities will continue until the serious issue of underfunding is addressed.

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