



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Welfare Overhaul: Advice from the Welfare Expert Advisory Group and Next Steps

Portfolio Social Development

On 15 April 2019, following reference from the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee (SWC), Cabinet:

Part I: Overview of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group's report and their recommendations

- 1 **noted** that the Welfare Expert Advisory Group has delivered its final advice *Whakamana Tāngata: Restoring Dignity to Social Security in New Zealand* (the report);
- 2 **noted** that the report recommends significant change to the welfare system that will require careful consideration, as well as balancing against other government priorities and fiscal constraints;
- 3 **noted** that in May 2018, SWC agreed that decisions on any continuation of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group beyond February 2019 would be made by Cabinet in March 2019 following consideration of their advice [SWC-18-MIN-0050];
- 4 **agreed** not to extend the Welfare Expert Advisory Group;

Part II: Government progress on the overhaul of the welfare system and support for the recommendations of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group to inform future work

- 5 **noted** that the government has already implemented a range of changes as part of the overhaul of the welfare system, which address some of the advice in the report;
- 6 **noted** that there is significant alignment between Welfare Expert Advisory Group's overall approach and the government's vision for welfare;
- 7 **agreed** to a phased approach to the next steps of the welfare overhaul, due to the complexity of the welfare system, and to balance the need for fiscal prudence with improving wellbeing and other high priority government objectives;
- 8 **agreed** that work proceed on a long term work programme for the next steps of the welfare overhaul;

- 9 **invited** the Minister for Social Development to report back to SWC later in 2019 with an update on the priority areas for action and policy development, as well as a long term comprehensive work programme;

Part III: Three priority areas of work and next steps in response to the WEAG report

- 10 **agreed** to undertake immediate work in priority areas to address the report's recommendations, while also considering longer term changes;
- 11 **agreed** that, in response to the recommendations of the Welfare Expert Advisory Group, the priority areas are:
- 11.1 addressing financial support with a focus on child wellbeing;
 - 11.2 supporting people who are able to be earning, learning, caring and volunteering;
 - 11.3 improving access to affordable housing;
- 12 **agreed** to the approach outlined in the paper under CAB-19-SUB-0170 to respond to the three priority areas;
- 13 **noted** that subsequent Cabinet papers outlining policy programmes as a result of further work agreed to in the three priority areas will be put forward to SWC in due course by the appropriate Ministers;

Publication of the report and supporting papers

- 14 **agreed** to publicly release the report along with a series of key evidence papers;
- 15 **noted** that the Minister for Social Development intends to seek agreement for a pre-Budget announcement alongside the release of the report.

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Secretary of the Cabinet

Hard-copy distribution:

Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister for Social Development