



SPANZ

SECONDARY PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND INC.

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President's Comment 14



President
Peter Gall
Papatoetoe High School

I am sure most secondary principals were disappointed with the education budget announced in Budget 2007. During the Operations Grant review process, sector representatives identified specific areas of resourcing that were inadequate or inequitable and whilst it was pleasing to note that some of these areas (relief teacher funding, e-learning clusters) were addressed in the budget, others were not. No doubt it will be explained that the 4% increase in the operational grant will cover the costs of the extra week of annual leave for non-teaching staff as well as any new costs that schools may face, such as compliance with the HASNO Act. The increase in the Operations Grant is welcomed but I doubt whether it is sufficient to halt the trend, as identified in the review of Operations funding, of a growing number of schools that are finding it difficult to remain financially viable. There is also uncertainty within the sector at this stage as to the cost impact on schools for KiwiSaver.

The Ministry has developed a work programme generated from the operations funding review in the following five outcome areas:

- Reducing compliance costs.
- Improving management capability.
- Reducing complexity in funding formulas.
- Improving information streams.
- Addressing specific cost pressures – advisory groups formed on ICT, resourcing and non-teaching staff workforce with reports due to the Minister in September.

There is a genuine commitment to address compliance issues for schools. The monthly batch of Ministry communications was a starting point and schools are encouraged to receive this material electronically. Work is currently underway to look at streamlining milestone reporting requirements for contestable funds, with the intent of combining this process with the annual planning/reporting cycle. Moving towards common templates for such reports and applications for contestable funds is also on the radar.

The impact of all Ministry policies on schools' resourcing still needs greater consideration however. Many of you will be aware of a changed attitude by the Ministry towards applications for early exemption from school. The change is aligned to the Realising Youth Potential programme which focuses on the 15-19 age group and has objectives around presence, engagement and achievement. Many of the students who are now being denied an early exemption are 'resource hungry'. They often require special programmes, paraprofessional support and they exhaust our truancy workers. I would be interested to receive feedback on situations where applications for exemption have been turned down and subsequent actual costs that schools have faced that are over and above that for 'other' students.

Peter Gall
President