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President's Comment 17

Dear Colleagues

May Budget

The budget has produced some positive gains for the secondary sector, particularly given in a time of economic recession. The \$523 million operating and capital funding for future proofing existing schools and building new ones is welcomed. Likewise, \$16 million for fighting truancy and the \$51 million for students with special needs and behavioural issues is well overdue.

The proposed decision to cut \$50 million to staffing budgets by 2011 defies common sense. This will see many secondary schools on current staffing entitlements lose a teacher and a management unit. Most Principals are already employing additional staffing from their Operations Grant to meet entitlements under the Collective Agreement or to deliver a high quality curriculum to a range of 'diverse learners' demanded by the Ministry of Education.

It was also disappointing that the inadequacy of 'Operational Grants' has not been adequately addressed despite numerous independent reports over many years that they are not 'fit for purpose'. It will lead to an increasing number of fiscally prudent schools having operational deficits. SPANZ Executive will have the above two items on the agenda when we next meet with the Minister.

Initial Teacher Education (ITE)

The New Zealand Teachers Council has established a reference group to review ITE. SPANZ is pleased to be part of this group. Issues of concern that we will seek to be addressed are:

1. Better screening of students who apply for teacher training so that only the best quality candidates are accepted;
2. Ensuring that the content of the programmes across the twenty seven providers is consistent and to a high standard;
3. That the programmes reflect the needs of the sector e.g students are knowledgeable about NCEA, assessment and how to manage diverse learners;
4. That 'review panels' of programmes have a robust representation of experienced teachers and Principals;
5. That graduates are able to hit the 'ground running'.

I would also like to see the promotion of the encouragement of the notion with students that taking on a co-curricular activity in a school is both expected and a good idea.

Congratulations to Roger Moses, Headmaster of Wellington College, on being awarded The NZ Order of Merit, Services to Education, in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2009.

SPANZ Union

If you haven't already done so, please complete the questionnaire sent out last week. This data is vital to progressing the establishment of SPANZ Union.

Patrick Walsh
Vice President