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## **President's Comment 19**

Dear Colleagues

### **Re: Funding Cuts to Community Education**

The impact of funding cuts to Community Education based, largely in secondary schools, is now becoming increasingly apparent.

It appears that the savings made (\$16 million to \$3.2million) are small and do not justify the disproportionate effect on communities.

The Government's reasoning is that in an 'economic recession' many of the courses on offer, such as cooking and art classes are recreational in nature and do not justify state funding. They further argue that hard pressed resources need to be directed to courses that will build capacity in literacy and numeracy skills.

It is disappointing that the Government did not fully consult with the providers of Community Education before the decision was made to cut funding. A collaborative approach could have seen savings made while still maintaining courses that reflect national priorities of adult education.

Although difficult to measure, Community Education provides 'front loaded economic benefits' which, if removed, society will pay a heavy price for through its social agencies and NGO's. Clear examples include, exercise classes, particularly for those who cannot afford gym membership. They reduce obesity and ill health, which clog our hospital system. Cooking classes for those on a budget help stretch their dollar, reduce pressure on food banks and may lessen family violence.

For migrants and the unemployed, who already often feel alienated and socially dislocated, Community Education provided social contact, an opportunity to build self-esteem and better integration into society. The police and welfare agencies often have to deal with the effects of their anger and frustration.

The Government ought to revisit its decision to cut funding to Community Education. A wider analysis of its economic benefits to the country needs to be commissioned. It should also engage in genuine consultation with the providers of this valuable community resource including a line by line review of courses..

SPANZ Executive will discuss the issue further with Education Minister, Anne Tolley.

Kind regards

**Patrick Walsh**  
Vice President