

**POST-CABINET PRESS CONFERENCE: MONDAY, 5 AUGUST 2024  
HANSARD TRANSCRIPT**

**PM:** Kia ora koutou and good afternoon, everyone. I hope you all had a great weekend. It's great to be here again today with education Minister Erica Stanford. I actually do have a hard finish at 4.30, so we'll keep it moving through.

You will have seen at our National Party conference yesterday, we launched Make It Count, which is to fix our country's maths problem. A new action plan that will actually help turn around decades of decline in maths achievement and get Kiwi kids back on track with their learning. What we announced yesterday is just the start, and I've said before that the thing that I've found most alarming since coming into politics has been the rapid decline in student achievement.

The new data revealed yesterday that just 22 percent of students are at the expected standard of achievement for maths in year 8. That was shocking but, sadly, probably not surprising. Year 8 students today will be starting NCEA in just three years' time, and if four out of five of our year 8 students are not at the expected standard for mathematics now, we can expect to see NCEA results decline even further in the years to come. Otherwise, we will fail, I think, quite boldly if we don't decisively intervene as we're proposing. It confirms to us that we are doing the right thing by taking urgent action to turn the results around, and, frankly, there is nothing more important than our children and our young people being set up for success, because for many years that has been a challenge for us over many, many decades.

If we're not setting, frankly, our kids up for success, we are not setting New Zealand up for success. If we want higher wages and if we want better schools and hospitals and more cops on the beat, then we need an economy, ultimately, that can pay for it, and for that to happen, we need a home-grown, skilled workforce and communities and families that thrive, and that certainly starts at school.

National campaigned on getting our education system focused and back on the basics, and since coming into Government, that's exactly what we have done. We've acted fast. We've banned the phones in classrooms to remove distractions, we've implemented a mandatory one hour's each for reading, writing, and maths, and we've started the roll-out of structured literacy, which we've spoken to you about before.

Yesterday, we announced the first three parts to our Make It Count plan to lift maths achievement, and they are bringing in a year early a new structured maths curriculum for years zero to 8 from term 1 next year. Children will be learning maths based on a new world-leading, knowledge-rich maths curriculum based on the best from across the OECD, like Singapore and Australia, and adapted for New Zealand. Resources, including teacher and student workbooks, will be provided to every primary and intermediate school.

Secondly, the Teaching Council has agreed that anyone wanting to train to become a teacher must have at least NCEA level 2 maths, and \$20 million will be going towards professional development in structured maths for teachers.

Thirdly, as with structured literacy, there will be a small group of interventions for students who are failing significantly behind the curriculum level, informed by twice-yearly standardised assessments for maths in primary schools announced earlier in the year, which are now being implemented at the start of 2025.

Now, let me just say this is the start of what we want to do in education. As you can see, we are extremely focused on maths, numeracy, and literacy, and we're going to continue to do everything we can to lift those results. And with that, I'll pass over to Erica to talk a little bit more about it.

**Hon Erica Stanford:** Thank you, Prime Minister. I've been working very closely with teachers, principals, education professionals, boards of trustees, and specialist staff about

the many changes that our Government are making in education, and I acknowledge that there have been a number of changes in the last nine months since we've been in Government and there will be a lot more to come, and that's because our results need to change and they need to change fast. So today, yet another lot of results: the new NCEA data is out, showing that 45 percent of students achieved the corequisite standard for numeracy. That represents a 10 percentage - point decline in achievement from the same time last year, with a much bigger sample size.

Achievement in maths in Māori medium students at schools and kura kaupapa Māori settings are even more alarming. Only 25 percent are at where they need to be to gain NCEA.

Year 8 students today will be starting NCEA in three years, as the Prime Minister has said, and if only 22 percent of year 8 students are at the expected standard for maths now, we can expect to see those NCEA results decline even further in the years to come if we fail to act boldly and decisively now. We cannot afford for achievement to continue to slip. Our children deserve an education system that's going to set them up for success, and we need fundamental change and an unrelenting focus on lifting student achievement and closing the equity gap so that all Kiwi kids are equipped with the knowledge, the skills, and the competencies they need to lead fulfilling lives and contribute to New Zealand's future success.

So teachers and principals are at the coalface of our education system, and I am absolutely hugely grateful to those who have shared their stories and experiences with me. You all have helped shape our initiatives, our directions, and our priorities. For too long, you—teachers and principals—have been let down by a system that is directionless; that's not clearly focused on things we need to do to make a difference at the front line. For our kids to get a world-leading education, our teachers need to get world-leading training and professional development—they deserve that.

Meaningful and lasting change happens when we all work together to maintain higher standards so our children get equal opportunities to learn. So that's why I'm proud to announce the fourth component of Make It Count so our education system is accountable to deliver the fundamental shift that we need.

So, in addition to the measures announced yesterday and reiterated today by the Prime Minister, there will be an overhaul of the Educational Review Office, or ERO's reporting so it's focused on progress, achievement, and assessment. That will mean that there is clear reporting to parents on how the curriculum is being implemented, if assessment is being used, if student data from that assessment is understood, and if students are being accelerated where needed, and if those who need extra support are receiving it.

The Ministry of Education will intervene earlier and more often to schools who need extra support to keep them back on track. The ministry will sharpen its approach to intervening in schools where student achievement is at risk; redirecting and targeting resources to schools who have poor student achievement, and progress outcomes—and this is new. To support this work, the ministry have doubled the number of curriculum advisers in the regions and are strengthening their approach to contracting to ensure that the taxpayer investment is meaningfully improving student outcomes.

The Teaching Council has also agreed to strengthen the maths component in initial teacher education. From next year, trainee teachers will be better prepared to enter the classroom by their initial teacher training to teach the new maths and English curriculum.

So if we want to turn around our underachievement in mathematics, we need to support teachers to be confident in their ability to pass on that knowledge to our kids. Our Government will ensure that teachers receive the training, the support, and the resources that they need, and I am committed to continuing to work hand in hand with the sector so that we can lift student achievement and close the equity gap in our education system.

Over to you.

**PM:** Well, thank you Erica, and thank you for your passion for what you're doing around education and driving our agenda.

Can I just slip past a few more comments, and then we'll get into questions. Today, it was a real pleasure to welcome Prime Minister Salwai of Vanuatu to New Zealand for what was his third official visit as Prime Minister. New Zealand and Vanuatu have a longstanding friendship underpinned by our statement of partnership. Prime Minister Salwai and I held bilateral talks this morning, where we discussed how our two countries can build this important relationship further, and we have an official dinner this evening. Now, we also discussed a range of issues, including labour mobility and the RSE scheme. We also talked about issues in the Pacific region as we both prepare for the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders Meeting later this month.

This week, we will also be welcoming the President of India, Her Excellency Droupadi Murmu, for her first State visit to New Zealand. President Murmu's visit is particularly welcome at a time of increased engagement between the New Zealand and Indian Governments. New Zealand and India have a longstanding and vibrant relationship, and, as you well know, my Government is committed to deepening and broadening our connections. The President's visit will also highlight our strong people-to-people connections and cultural links, as New Zealand is now home to about 300,000 people of Indian descent, who make an important contribution to our business community and social life.

Before we get into questions, I'll just quickly run through House business. This week, we will be considering the committee stages of the gangs legislation and also the local government water services bill, as well. With that, Erica and I are very happy to take your questions.

**Media:** Minister, how are you going to roll out the new curriculum to kura Māori?

**Hon Erica Stanford:** That's an excellent question, and I think for the first time in a really long time we have a Government who is committed to kura kaupapa in terms of the resourcing that they need to effectively teach mathematics and literacy. So you saw in structured literacy, we're rolling out the professional learning and development to our kura kaupapa teachers. We're also having all of the resources in te reo Māori for them. We're doing the same thing with mathematics. The teacher guides and the workbooks will be produced in te reo Māori, and also the professional learning and development will be targeted and adapted for those teachers in kura kaupapa. So we've thought very long and hard and carefully about that.

**Media:** The \$20 million professional development pūtea—will that include development in te reo Māori for our ākonga kaiako Māori? Is there just the general pūtea \$20 million, and where did that original \$20 million come from?

**Hon Erica Stanford:** So that \$20 million is within our professional learning and development bucket. So we have quite a large bucket that I'm able to redirect into other areas, and so that \$20 million will include the professional learning and development for our teachers in kura kaupapa.

**Media:** Prime Minister, St John ambulance officers have voted to go on strike because they say the Government hasn't fulfilled its coalition commitment to uplift St John funding. They want better pay and they're walking off the job for two hours at a time on 20 and 24 August. Why didn't you increase their funding?

**PM:** I'll just say a few things on that. I mean, the first thing is the total contract is actually \$380 million per year. It goes from 2022 to 2026 and it's adjusted for inflation, and that was, obviously, negotiated under the previous Government and we'll continue with that. They've also received an extra \$150 million just in the last two years, and I'm just very conscious that St John's and the unions are in the middle of bargaining rounds. But, yes—I mean, that's the reality. We're only in our first year of our three-year term, and so there'll probably be more ongoing conversations about it.

**Media:** Have you instructed your health Minister to try and get a fix for cancer patients that might be eligible for the early access programme to Keytruda? Patient advocates say it's

cruel, heartless, crazy that a drug company is offering up a free lifesaving cancer drug and the health system can't administer it.

**PM:** Yeah, look, as I understand it, Health New Zealand has come back and said, look, from 1 October they can administer Keytruda in public hospitals across New Zealand. You know, that's pretty quick and that's good, but I've also asked the Minister to look into that—and I saw those reports as well—given it's obviously of critical importance to New Zealanders and interest to New Zealanders. So he'll have more to say about that.

**Media:** Prime Minister, just after the Budget, when you were talking about that cancer drug promise and working on it, why did you say that work had been going on for the previous two months? Where did you get that information from?

**PM:** Ah, because it has been, and there's been a series of meetings since we came to power and into Government. As you know, we talked about a proposal before as part of our election policy. We then started conversations immediately since coming into Government, and there's been a series of conversations. We delivered the outcome in a different way, but I think the most important thing is that there's 26 new cancer drugs and 28 other new medicines that are helping 175,000 Kiwis, and that's the main thing here.

**Media:** Specifically, at the start of the June, you said work had been ongoing over the previous—

**PM:** It has been, yep.

**Media:** —four to six to eight weeks. Where did you get that information from?

**PM:** Well, there's endless series of meetings that started from when we came to Government, right up until we had the announcement. Obviously, our big focus in the Budget, as we've talked about before, was making sure that we could secure the long-term funding for Pharmac—the shortfall that we inherited of \$1.8 billion. That was our immediate focus in the Budget, along with the \$16.7 billion increase in spending for health. But, importantly, yes, we got it a little bit later than we wanted to, but we delivered it and, importantly, it's happening.

**Media:** Prime Minister, can I ask: did Cabinet make a decision about whether or not New Zealand will adopt the new infant formula standards today/

**PM:** Yeah, what I'd say is that we have agreed to opt out of the joint infant formula standard with Australia—FSANZ, which is the joint body that actually talks about food standards across both Australia and New Zealand. There's much in the new documentation and in the new policy that we fully agreed and fully support in the guidelines, but, equally, these pieces are a small part of it, but we cannot support that—

**Media:** Do you have any idea about what the early ramifications would be on New Zealand producers because of that decision, or was it a “wait and see” sort of situation?

**PM:** Well, look, I mean, it takes five years to implement those new guidelines from FSANZ—all those new rules from FSANZ. Obviously, our view is that we're opting out of that because we have about \$1.8 billion worth of infant formula that we sell, predominantly to China and a little bit into Australia, and, you know, we looked at those two small parts of that overall package and said, “Look, we can't support those things if it ends up undermining our ability to sell export sales to other parts of the world.”

**Media:** Are you worried about any sort of ramifications because of this decision?

**PM:** Well, no—I mean, again, we're taking a position that's acting in New Zealand's national interest, and, you know, we are very clear that we will opt out of it—with the joint standard with Australia—because of those two components. Of course we'll continue to work with FSANZ, and if we—you know, this is the fourth time I think we've done this over the history of FSANZ. So we've opted out of a standard, but, obviously, we want to—you know, the ideal scenario would be for an amendment to be made to those standards between now and the next five years, but for now, that's our position.

**Media:** You had companies like Danone threatening to quit the country, basically, if you had gone with it. Did the Government kind of give into lobbying from those companies?

**PM:** No. I think there's a number of companies within the industry that actually have a range of different views about it. We look at a business that, you know, generates \$1.8 billion worth of export sales for New Zealand. We appreciate Australia has a much lower level—I think about \$300 million, from memory—of infant formula sales, and, for us, those are things that we don't want to constrain our ability to sell our products internationally, and we think it's in our national interest to do so. Of course, if we can continue to work with FSANZ to actually get amendments to those regulations, that would be great, but in the intervening period—because we agree with everything else; it's just those two issues that we've got.

**Media:** Prime Minister, back to education: 22 percent for maths in year 8—it's pretty scandalous. When did you guys—

**PM:** Yes, it is.

**Media:** —find out about it, and how come the public didn't find out about this under the previous Government?

**PM:** Well, I'd just say to you we've moved incredibly quickly. I think it was 17 July that the Minister was told about the data. I think she asked immediately her Ministry of Education the next day for a "please explain". Work began on an alternative plan on what she could look to accelerate, and, you know, frankly, Minister Stanford's done an excellent job with that. We actually spoke as soon as I came back, and it was actually in Auckland, in a Koru lounge. I then called in DPMC four days later to say "Righto, what can we do?", and the Minister and I then called in the Secretary of Education and also the full executive team to put the plan in place. And I think we have accelerated and worked incredibly quickly to put this plan in place.

**Media:** This can't have been a thing that happened overnight? I mean—I guess what I'm asking is: had the ministry been sitting on some of this data for the last year or two as it's gotten worse, or is it's just that there has been a sudden—

**Hon Erica Stanford:** Can I—

**PM:** Yeah, it's a restatement—yeah.

**Hon Erica Stanford:** I can answer that. This is a new assessment that was done towards the end of last year. It's the very first time that the ministry has ever assessed at a particular year level at that standard. Up until then, they had been assessing over multiple years. Now, the thing to understand is this result isn't any worse; it's just been hidden in multi-year bands. So one of the things that the assessment people said to me was, "This has always been there; we just never knew it because we never looked." It's been hidden in multi-year bands, and so the results are shocking, but, actually, they've always been there, and now we're taking action because 22 percent is nowhere near good enough. We've got to get to 80 percent, at least.

**PM:** Jo, and then Clare.

**Media:** Just back on Keytruda. So you said that 1 October was quite fast but that you also had asked for the health Minister to go back and have a look at it. So, just for clarity, do you want to see people having access to Keytruda before 1 October, and then have this free access—

**PM:** Oh, we would all like that. Again, what we're taking is—Health New Zealand makes an assessment, as they do for lots of new drugs, where different drug companies will often offer drugs in trials, as I understand it, as well. But what's happening here is they're saying, "Look, by 1 October, we can confidently administer it across all of New Zealand in our public hospitals". That's great, but the reality is that if there's anything else we can do to accelerate that, I've asked the Minister to look into that, and work with his officials on that, too.

**Media:** Can I also just ask about Australia and the change in terror rating. What conversations have been had in your capacity as national security, and what are we doing there?

**PM:** Well, again, each country makes its own assessment as to what its standing will actually be. For New Zealand, that's obviously done continuously. I think the last time we formally talked about that was back in February of this year. We have a low threshold. There's a possibility of a threat or an attack, as you well know, but, you know, each country makes its own assessment, and for New Zealand, you know, that's our view.

**Media:** Prime Minister, Ngāpuhi walked—

**PM:** Sorry, we're going to go to Clare—that was the order.

**Media:** With Australia, theirs was raised because of the increased risk of politically motivated violence, rather than one specific incident. Have you had any advice on whether or not there has been an increase in that in New Zealand from intelligence agencies?

**PM:** No, no. There is a reality for—each country will make its own assessment based on its own considerations in its domestic country. For us, in New Zealand, we monitor it consistently and continually, and, as I said, the last formal update we had was when we articulated it in February, which—the Director-General of the SIS doesn't consult with the threat assessment group.

**Media:** Prime Minister, Ngāpuhi walked out on the Government—

**PM:** Sorry—Clare and Jo, have you got your questions? Yep.

**Media:** Ngāpuhi walked out on the Government at the iwi leader's forum on Friday. Ngāpuhi are in the House currently making a submission on section 7AA. The chairperson, Mane Tahere, said today on the forecourt that if the Government doesn't stop repealing the hard-fought gains that Ngāpuhi and other iwi have gained over successive years, then they will come out fighting. What's your response to Ngāpuhi?

**PM:** Well, look, my response is, you know, the iwi leader's forum is always pretty robust and honest, and that was a pretty positive and also constructive session, I thought, as well. I appreciate different iwi might have had different takes on that. I appreciated the opportunity to engage; I had a number of senior Ministers there. We talked about how we could advance economic, social, cultural, and environmental outcomes with iwi. In general, yeah, it's robust and a pretty direct conversation but also it's very positive and constructive.

**Media:** The iwi chairs are refusing to allow the Government back in to speak with them because of the repeals that are being done by the coalition Government—so you're actually not invited back.

**PM:** Well, again, I'd just say to you that that was a resolution, I think, passed the day before we actually had the Iwi Leaders Forum. We actually did meet and we did discuss, and we had some very positive and constructive discussion.

**Media:** But what is your specific response to Ngāpuhi that they will come out fighting if you continue with the repeals?

**PM:** Well, again, you know, if you take something like section 7AA, you know, we've talked about that consistently—that we place the wellbeing of the child above anything and everything else. That is very, very important, and I think we've explained that position. I appreciate there may be differences of opinion about that, but we are putting the child at the heart of protection. It's so important to us—these are our most vulnerable children. We have a huge responsibility as a State to make sure we're looking after them properly, and we will prioritise those considerations.

**Media:** And there's MACA and there's the Treaty principles as well, too—so there's a raft of repeals.

**PM:** And we can take them all one by one, if you would like. I mean, on MACA, all we're doing is we are returning it back to the status of what the legislation did in 2011, which was to say it recognised the legitimate rights of Māori around customary title, and also protect the legitimate right of all New Zealanders. I'm very proud of that legislation. It was a National-led Government that introduced that legislation in 2011, but the Court of Appeal has subsequently gone on and actually lowered that threshold and, as a result, changed the intention of what Parliament intended when it passed that legislation. So all we're doing is bringing it back to what it was in 2011: finding the balance between customary title and also the legitimate interests of all New Zealanders.

**Media:** Prime Minister, with due respect, do you think it's constructive for Ngāpuhi to be walking out of these meetings and banning you from any further meetings going forward? Wouldn't it be better to have some sort of engagement?

**PM:** Well, I think that's what we saw on Friday—it is that, yes, I appreciate there are differences, and there always is, right? The Iwi Leaders Forum, under successive Governments, has always been a robust environment, and it should be and I expect it to be. It's the opportunity we have to talk directly. I also spend time individually with iwi leaders in their own individual iwis up and down this country, with my senior Ministers, talking about how we can work together on improving outcomes for Māori, and we'll continue to do that.

**Media:** But have those talks been constructive?

**PM:** Yes, they were. I thought they were very positive and constructive. We actually changed the format of the forum on Friday, which meant that we actually got to meet with different regional groupings, and, you know, Erica was there as well. I was there. We found it all very constructive. Yes, we came away with some good challenge and provocation, as you would expect, but we also came away with some good areas of positivity and constructiveness of how do we work out housing for Māori, how do we improve education outcomes for Māori, how do we improve health outcomes for Māori—those were very robust and good conversations and, actually, very aligned conversations.

**Media:** Prime Minister, in your meeting with the Prime Minister of Vanuatu today, did the Government's plans to repeal the oil and gas ban come up at all?

**PM:** No, it didn't. As you know, we've got major challenges around energy security, given the previous decisions of the previous Government, and, you know, it is very much our view that we need gas as a transitory energy source for some years to come and we've obviously got a shortage based off the decision that's been taken in the past.

**Media:** Prime Minister, have you seen Debbie Ngarewa-Packer's social media in regards to Karen Chhour, and what do you make of that kind of rhetoric?

**PM:** Well, I've been saying for months and months that every political leader needs to watch the rhetoric and that, you know, civility in our politics is really important in New Zealand. It does not mean by any stretch of the imagination that we will agree. As you can see, across this Parliament, in an MMP environment, there are parties of all sorts with all sorts of different views. But my ask is that I think everybody has a responsibility to watch the tone, and I'd just say to you, you know, Parliament is a robust place. It needs to be a robust place, where you can debate the ideas and the differences in policies, but we can also be respectful of each other.

**Media:** We saw the Speaker, Gerry Brownlee, last week say that there needed to be a bit of reset, and he's attempted to do that in Ms Chhour's case by asking that she have silence for her answers—that sort of thing. Is that sustainable in the long run to sort of deal with it on a case by case basis, or would you actually like to see Chris Bishop, as Leader of the House in, say, the Business Committee, actually sit down and have a conversation about how to actually address some of these issues, given the accusation that they're actually spilling out into the hallway of Parliament as well and that there's intimidating behaviour going on?

**PM:** Well, look, they're ultimately issues for the Speaker, who is responsible for Parliament, to make sure that we've got respect happening within these halls, but all I'm saying, as a political leader, is it's important that language matters, rhetoric matters, tone matters, and I think you can have strong differences of opinion without having to resort to personal disparagement, and also making sure that they maintain respectful—now, it's pretty robust here, and it needs to be robust because—

**Media:** Are you happy with how it's been handled so far, though?

**PM:** Well, again, those are the decisions for the Speaker to make. All I can say is I've reached out—my office has reached out, spoken to the Minister. We've also reached out to her office and the ACT Party office, and they are making sure she's got the support that she needs.

**Media:** Would you talk to Te Pāti Māori about it? Would you say to them that you would like—

**PM:** Well, I don't know how to be any more clearer about, actually, the—

**Media:** No, I mean in a one on one—would you invite them to your office and say, "Look, can we have a conversation about it?"

**PM:** Well, I think my message is pretty clear, which is, as I've said many, many times before, watch the rhetoric—all sides.

**Media:** Prime Minister, up to 100 jobs at Oamaru Meats are going to be cut—

**PM:** Sorry, say that again—sorry.

**Media:** Up to a hundred jobs at Oamaru Meats are going to be cut, and most of them are RSE workers from the Pacific. Is the Government going to do anything to support those workers? I know you've discussed the RSE scheme today with the Vanuatu Prime Minister.

**PM:** Look, sorry, it's just not an issue I've been briefed on, on that particular situation. What I can say is that we are very cognisant with the RSE scheme, and my own conversations with Pacific Island leaders and nations across the region about—there are some countries that, you know, don't want to contribute more RSE workers, there are others that actually want more, and so each country has a slightly different take on the scheme. I think our scheme is actually quite a respected one. When I talk to the Pacific Island leaders compared to, say—you know, Australia has a completely different model and a completely different scheme, as well. But we will slowly look to make sure that we can increase the amount of the RSE workers, as long as we've got good support for them and that they're going to be well looked after.

**Hon Erica Stanford:** I'll pick that up with Immigration New Zealand.

**PM:** Yeah.

**Media:** Will you be supporting these workers who are, essentially, stranded now in New Zealand without jobs?

**PM:** Well, I hadn't heard of this before, but the Minister, as also Minister of Immigration, can pick that up with Immigration New Zealand.

**Media:** Prime Minister, when do you expect you might lift funding for Hato Hone St John?

**PM:** Well, again, you know, as I've said to you, there's just been concluded, as we came into Government, a new contract. That does have an extra—there's \$380 million a year, there's been an extra \$150 million in the last two years spent, and we'll continue to look at it. We're just our first year into our term, but, again, I'd just say to you that the unions and St John's are in the middle of bargaining, and it's sort of inappropriate for me to wade into that.

**Media:** Do you stand by those comments you made in May that you understood that St John's didn't want to be solely funded by the Government?



**PM:** Well, that's true—I mean, we've got to make sure that core funding is appropriate and we'll continue to look at that. It's good that these contracts are adjusted for inflation—as you know, each and every year they are revisited on the basis of inflation—but also I do know that the organisation, having chatted with them over a number of years now, actually also wants to maintain an ability to raise funds privately, as well.

OK—

**Media:** Just back on the—

**PM:** Sorry, yes—last question.

**Media:** Sorry, just back on the cancer drugs, just for one moment, is it your position that the Government was always going to fund those drugs on the exact day that you do did?

**PM:** Ah, well, we—

**Media:** In this year?

**PM:** Well, we didn't set a date; what we set was a—what we had to deal with was the \$1.8 billion—

**Media:** But you didn't bring it forward by like a year, for instance?

**PM:** No, what we were trying to do was, first and foremost, make sure we had funding in healthcare, which we did—\$16.7 billion. We had to make sure we funded the funding cliff that existed in Pharmac of \$1.8 billion in the Budget—which we were very pleased that we were able to do—and make sure that was sustainable going forward, and then we were trying to work out the best mechanism, as I've said to you before, around what we had proposed pre-election as part of the election campaign, and we ended up with something different and constructed in a different way that actually had a much bigger benefit, as well. So I'm really pleased that we actually did work out our way to get 26 new cancer drugs and 28 new medicines helping 175,000 Kiwis, and I think that's what it's about.

**Media:** So it's your position that there was no scramble, post-Budget?

**PM:** No, we've been taking about this issue from day one. From when we came into Government, it's been endless meetings that have been taking place over that period of time.

**Media:** Erica, just on the curriculum advisers that you were talking about before: were they part of the group that earlier this year—when funding cuts were done across the board in the Ministry of Education, were there cuts with the curriculum advisers, or have they always been the same number?

**Hon Erica Stanford:** No, we doubled the number—front line. We're—

**Media:** As part of this announcement, they have been doubled?

**Hon Erica Stanford:** No, no—no, back at the Budget, when the Secretary for Education was looking at the restructure, one of the things I said to her was the front-line workers who are dealing with children and schools and teachers need to be protected, and a really important role are the curriculum advisers and those numbers will be doubled.

**PM:** OK, guys, thank you very much. We'll stop it now—we've got to hard stop. Thanks so much.

### conclusion of press conference