

Hon Chris Hipkins



MP for Remutaka

Minister of Education

Minister of Health

Minister of State Services

Leader of the House

Minister Responsible for Ministerial Services

14 Oct 2020

The Driving Change Network
By email to: wendy@drivingchange.nz

Ref: C015994

Dear Members

Thank you for your letter of 20 July 2020 about driver education, training and licencing, and the Target Trades and Apprenticeship Fund (TTAF). I commend your organisation's focus on decreasing the barriers for young people to obtain a driver licence, and aim for a more equitable licencing system.

Having a driver licence is important for young people to be able to fully participate in society, and, as you mention, it will help them access employment opportunities, especially in the current environment.

I note your request for additional support and funding for Class 1 driver licence training and testing, including incorporating it as part of the TTAF. The TTAF covers the tuition or training fees until 31 December 2022, for eligible tertiary education programmes that would have been charged by tertiary educations. The funding is for fees-free apprenticeships and targeted qualifications at level 3-7, excluding degrees, on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework. It is important to note, the Level 1-2 provision within tertiary providers is already fees-free. Industry skill needs and employment prospects have been taken into account in determining the target areas for TTAF. As you will appreciate, not every industry area with skill needs can be covered due to funding constraints.

As a Class 1 driver licence is not a qualification on the New Zealand Qualification Framework, and the costs of licence tests are not training costs, these are not covered within the focus of this fees-free tertiary education funding. Training for heavy vehicle licences is covered by the TTAF, through a Level 3 qualification on the New Zealand Qualifications Framework: the New Zealand Certificate in Commercial Road Transport (Heavy Vehicle Operator).

New Zealand schools, kura and Communities of Learning | Kāhui Ako are able to make choices about how best to invest in their students' learning, and this includes decisions about driver education, training and licencing. They may choose to offer driver education using their operations grant, including the Secondary Tertiary Alignment Resource (STAR), and initiatives such as Gateway for targeted students. Other support for driver licence training and test costs are provided through initiatives and grants managed by the Ministry of Social Development, and from specific programmes funded by the Provincial Growth Fund.

While my current commitments mean I am unable to meet with you at this time, I have asked Ministry of Education officials to work with you, and to keep me updated on these discussions. You are welcome to contact Richard D'Ath, Senior Manager of the Secondary and Tertiary team at richard.dath@education.govt.nz to arrange a time.

Thank you again for writing. I wish everyone at the Driving Change Network all the very best.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CH', representing Chris Hipkins.

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education