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Education on Hold

Source: NZ Principals Federation

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New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) president, Perry Rush, reacted to the Government's Budget announcements today saying "We understand the importance of rebuilding the economy and first helping those New Zealanders most affected by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

"What the pandemic has also highlighted is the extent of inequity in our economic, social and educational systems," he said.

"For far too many families, wellbeing is a luxury," said Rush. "As school leaders, we all experienced that as we delivered home learning during the lockdown."

Rush welcomed the free lunches in school for 200,000 additional students, a cost of living increase to the operations grant, some extra funding for English second language learners and students with high health needs and the already announced capital for property improvements.

"Students cannot learn when basic needs like food are not met," said Rush, "so the food in schools extension is very welcome," he said.

Otherwise, there were no highlights for schools from today's budget and some glaring omissions.

"We have been calling for urgent in-school solutions, including alternative pathways, for students in crisis and struggling with their mental health, especially those who display violent behaviour," he said.

"We note no provision of student counselling services south of Year 9 or an extension to the provision of Learning Support Coordinators."

The other serious omission is funding for the Arts.

"We were hoping there might be a substantial injection of funding to revive the withering arts programmes in schools and set up an Arts Curriculum Advisory Service," he said. "The arts are critical to building the wellbeing of our young people," he said.

Rush is hopeful that these issues will be funded through the \$20billion fund not yet allocated.

We await more specific information about the funding of the Tomorrow's Schools Review outcomes and look forward to working closely with the Ministry of Education on the development of the new Education Service Agency.

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For more commentary contact Perry Rush, NZPF President

Mobile: 021 490 079

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For more information contact:

Liz Hawes | Communications Manager, NZ Principals Federation

Email: esm@nzpf.ac.nz, Tel: +64 (0)4 471 2338, Mobile: +64 (0)21 847780