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PRESS STATEMENT

Advancing Foundational Learning: The Commonwealth Students' Association Welcomes New Zealand's Education Reform Initiative

The Commonwealth Students' Association (CSA) warmly welcomes the announcement by the Government of New Zealand of a landmark investment of over USD 131 million aimed at strengthening literacy, numeracy, writing, and teacher support across foundational education.

This bold and forward-looking initiative reflects a commendable national commitment to improving educational outcomes and ensuring that young learners are equipped with the essential competencies required for lifelong learning, innovation, and responsible citizenship. In particular, the CSA applauds the Government's emphasis on early intervention, teacher professional development, culturally responsive education, and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems through the recognition of *pāngarau* and *te reo matatini* within the broader educational framework.

At a time when many countries continue to grapple with learning loss, educational inequality, and declining foundational competencies, New Zealand's Foundational Learning Action Plan demonstrates leadership that aligns strongly with the principles of Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education and the shared educational aspirations of the Commonwealth.

The Commonwealth Students' Association further commends:

- The investment in specialist teacher support and evidence-based pedagogy;
- The introduction of accelerated literacy and numeracy programmes;
- The provision of classroom learning resources and teaching tools;
- The strategic focus on curriculum alignment and measurable learning outcomes.

While welcoming these reforms, the CSA respectfully encourages continued attention to several critical areas to ensure the initiative achieves inclusive, equitable, and sustainable impact in line with international best practice.

First, the Association recommends that implementation frameworks place stronger emphasis on educational equity, particularly for learners from disadvantaged, rural, indigenous, migrant, and digitally underserved communities. Foundational learning reforms can only achieve their full potential when all learners have equal access to quality educational resources and support systems.

Second, the CSA encourages a balanced approach to assessment and learner evaluation. While literacy and numeracy checks may support accountability and early intervention, care must be taken to avoid excessive standardised testing practices that may increase learner anxiety, narrow classroom instruction, or undermine creativity and critical thinking development.

Third, the Association recommends deeper integration of inclusive education principles, including targeted support for learners with disabilities, neurodiverse students, multilingual learners, and students requiring differentiated instructional approaches. Education systems that embrace diversity are better positioned to achieve long-term national development goals.

Fourth, the CSA encourages stronger partnerships between schools, families, and communities, recognising that foundational learning outcomes are significantly strengthened when parents, caregivers, libraries, and local communities are actively engaged in the learning process.

Finally, the Association emphasises the importance of sustained investment, transparent monitoring mechanisms, and teacher wellbeing support to ensure the long-term success and continuity of the reforms.

The Commonwealth Students' Association reaffirms its support for educational policies that promote inclusive access, learner empowerment, academic excellence, and sustainable development across the Commonwealth. We remain optimistic that New Zealand's Foundational Learning Action Plan will contribute meaningfully to global conversations on strengthening foundational education systems for future generations.

ENDS.

Issued by:

The Commonwealth Students' Association

