



## Education Report: Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches Update on Assurance Process and operational decisions

<b>To:</b>	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Cc:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	29 June 2022	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1284243
<b>Drafter:</b>	Sheryl Ching, Director Special Projects	<b>DDI:</b>	9(2)(a)
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<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	No	<b>Round Robin:</b>	No

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update you on the implementation of the Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches programme and the outcomes of an assurance process that the programme team has undertaken. This was to ensure the rationale behind inviting participating schools and kura fit the programme's criteria and that all schools and kura that are eligible have been invited to join the programme.

This report seeks your approval on providing an annual opportunity for schools who were invited but initially declined to re-join the programme. This is to support the current operational challenges with allowing schools that decline the programme to potentially re-join at any time.

### Summary

1. The programme started as a small pilot of 42 primary schools in January 2020. Schools joining the programme are referred to in 'Tranches'.
2. In late 2020 and early 2021, the programme was significantly expanded (funded through the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund) and by January 2021, 843 schools had been invited into the programme. By April 2022, 946 schools were participating in the programme with daily lunches being served to over 219,000 students. Feedback to date has been overwhelmingly positive, with schools commenting on the difference it is making to the lives of their students.
3. In August 2021, the evaluation report on the pilot programme was released. The evaluation found that the pilot performed very well at improving satiety for learners. Most notably, learners with insufficient food experienced greater food security and mental wellbeing improvements.

4. Given the rapid expansion the Ka Ora, Ka Ako programme team has undertaken an assurance process across all schools and kura by reapplying the original programme policy which measures disadvantage using the 2019 Equity Index (CAB-19-MIN-0329). The assurance process assessed all schools against this criteria, network stability and exceptional circumstances. The Ministry also commissioned an independent quality assurance review (IQA) across the programme.
5. There are 33 schools that were introduced into the programme on the basis of network stability<sup>1</sup> and 13 schools that were included under expectational circumstances (primarily based on local insights provided by Directors of Education).
6. Four schools who meet the criteria but were not previously invited (based on the 2019 Equity Index criteria) are in the process of being invited.
7. A total of 42 schools originally declined the invitation to join the programme. Of these, 13 schools have since reconsidered.
8. In November 2020 Cabinet ([CAB-21-MIN-0079](#) refers) agreed that the 'no losers' approach also applied to schools who were invited and then initially declined to participate at a later date. We are seeking your approval on providing an annual opportunity for these schools to re-join the programme, to manage the operational implications.
9. Annual updates to the Equity Index mean that the number of schools eligible to join the programme is likely to increase. Onboarding these schools at the same time as schools that initially declined the programme will streamline this process.
10. Due to current year underspend the programme requested an IPET of \$28m for School Lunches in Non-Departmental. This has been approved in principle by Treasury, and by Cabinet. The underspend will be used to support the delivery of lunches to the schools that are part of 'Tranche 6' as outlined in this report.

## Recommended Actions

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The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a **note** the programme started off as a small pilot of 42 schools in January 2020. The programme was then rapidly expanded to include 843 schools by January 2021 and 946 schools by April 2022;
- b **note** that due to the rapid programme expansion the Ministry undertook an assurance review across the programme (including an IQA report) and a review of all schools and kura to ensure that all that are eligible have been invited to join the programme;
- c **note** that the IQA recommendations have been implemented along with a number of other assurance measures and the programme is now in a steady state;
- d **note** that four eligible schools that have not been invited to the programme have been identified. These schools are currently being invited (part of Tranche 6);

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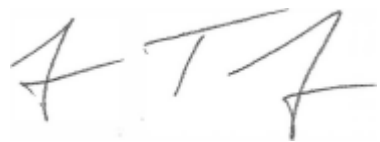
<sup>1</sup> CAB-21-MIN-0079- Continuing the Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches programme, para 6

- e **note** that the programme requested an IPET (\$28M in total) to move current financial year underspend to subsequent years. This has been approved in principle by Treasury and Cabinet;
- f **note** that whilst the underspend is subject to year-end audit requirements the programme will start inviting Tranche 6 schools now so lunch delivery can commence in the 2022 school year. The Ministry considers it low risk to start committing the funding now given our current forecasted underspend;
- g **agree** to schools who decline an invitation to the programme but then request to re-join are able to but that this is considered on an annual basis in line with Equity Index changes; and

☒ Agree / ☐ Disagree

- h **agree** that this briefing is not proactively released as it contains commercially sensitive information.

☒ Agree / ☐ Disagree



Sean Teddy  
Hautū | Deputy Secretary, Te Pae Aronui

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Hon Jan Tinetti  
Associate Minister of Education

01/07/2022

## Background

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1. In 2019, the Ministry of Health released a report detailing studies that have shown how a lack of nutrition negatively impacts academic engagement, achievement, and overall wellbeing in school age children. Following this, the Government announced a two-year initiative to explore delivering a free and healthy daily school lunch to Year 1 to 8 (primary and intermediate aged) students in schools with high levels of disadvantage. The programme aimed to reduce food insecurity, improve levels of concentration and achievement, and improve learners' overall health and wellbeing.
2. Around 10,000 learners in 42 schools across Bay of Plenty/Waiariki and Hawke's Bay/Tairāwhiti were the first to get school lunches in Term 1 2020. Over 3,000 students in 18 schools and kura across Otago and Southland joined Ka Ora, Ka Ako in Terms 2 and 3.
3. In 2020 and 2021, a major expansion of the programme occurred, which was funded through the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund. The aim of the expansion was to cushion the blow of COVID-19 impacts on students living in households which may now be experiencing heightened financial stress, job and income losses that can interfere with learning and wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>
4. The expansion began with another 70 schools and kura in Bay of Plenty/Waiariki and Hawke's Bay/Tairāwhiti in Terms 3 and 4 of 2020. Schools across the rest of the country soon joined the programme, with an additional 322 providing lunches to around 88,000 learners from the start of Term 1 2021.
5. By April 2022, 946 schools were participating in the programme with daily lunches being served to over 219,000 students. The programme has resulted in over one million lunches being served to over 219,000 students across the country each week, with over 45 million lunches having been delivered in total (as of March 2022).
6. The expansion of the programme means around 25 percent of Year 1 to 15 students across New Zealand receive a free lunch.
7. Expanding the programme also supported job creation and economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately 2,300 jobs have since been created and retained by the programme.
8. With the expansion the programme, a new name was adopted, one that can be universally used, connects with key stakeholders and better represents the connection to wellbeing - Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches Programme, meaning *when you are well, you can learn*.
9. The expansion of the programme happened at pace and saw the delivery of lunches massively scale up in a short period of time. A detailed breakdown of the programme's expansion can be found in Appendix 1.
10. In Term 1 2020, an interim evaluation of the programme showed 'large benefits' from the programme for all learners in respect of the types of food available and consumed. Large gains in mental wellbeing by the most disadvantaged learners and small but significant improvements for learners, on average, in terms of their overall health quality of life, as well as in their physical and emotional functioning.

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<sup>2</sup> CAB-20-MIN-0219.09 – COVID-19: Response and Recovery Fund Foundation Package: Vote Education

## The Evaluation and Feedback to Date

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11. In Term 1 2020, an interim evaluation of the programme was commissioned to assess the early impact of the pilot programme based on the priority outcomes of food availability, consumption, hunger reduction, wellbeing, and attendance.
12. The evaluation showed 'large benefits' from the programme for all learners in respect of food quality, and in reducing hunger, especially in the most disadvantaged learners. It also found that 'large gains' in mental wellbeing were made by the most disadvantaged learners. There was a 'significant decrease' in learners with low health quality of life, and learners, on average, experienced 'small but significant' improvements in their overall health, quality of life, and physical and emotional wellbeing.
13. Planning for an evaluation of the expanded lunches programme is underway. This second evaluation will seek to track the progress of larger numbers of the most disadvantaged learners, and the wider benefits of the programme, including to local economies. It will also seek to incorporate the voices of whānau, hapū, iwi, and the wider community.
14. Feedback from schools, kura and students have highlighted the difference the programme is making for not just them, but their wider whānau too.
  - Porirua College Principal, Ragne Maxwell has shared the benefits of the programme to the wider community, feeding back "we had one student enrol this year who hadn't attended school for the last two years but started in our Year 9. Every day he went home raving about the lunches and his older sister decided to also return to school, signing up with us." The programme has helped to improve overall attendance. After noticing students streaming into school for school at 12.45pm each day, the school decided to re-arrange their timetable. Ragne says they heard of success from some other schools that had changed lunch times, and that feeding students earlier improved learning.
  - The programme has made a significant impact on school communities throughout COVID. The Principal at Mana College, John Murdoch, shared his schools experience saying "the collaboration between our school and supplier has been particularly outstanding in this crisis. They are contracted to cater healthy lunches for students at Mana College. However, over the past week, they have been making meals in bulk, freezing them, and working with the Hauora team to deliver them to students in the community. Not only is this well outside their brief but is a model of excellence for the rest of the country. Anna and her team have kept students and whānau at the forefront of decision making. Inspiring stuff!"
  - Many of the schools involved are also using the programme as an educational opportunity to develop student's skills in horticulture, food preparation and nutrition. A student from Wairarapa Teen Parent Unit shared "our teacher shows us ideas, gives us skills and recipes so we can take it home and remake it for our children, all while learning healthy practises around cooking".
  - Head boy 9(2)(a) from Waitaki Boys' High school fed back that he had noticed a major shift since the school started providing nutritious meals. It's added a new layer of "brotherhood" at Waitaki Boys, and pupils were now more focused in class.

## Rapid Expansion and the Independent Quality Assurance Process

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15. Due to the rapid expansion of the programme, IQANZ (IQA) were commissioned by the Ministry to undertake an independent quality assurance review of the programme commencing in September 2021. There was a specific focus on ensuring the programme governance and management environment is robust and that appropriate management controls and benefits tracking processes are in place.
16. Successful implementation is key to realising many of the benefits of the programme, and the IQA report identified fourteen key areas where improvements needed to be made, such as a need for a more robust programme control environment and improved information management practices. The programme has addressed these and commissioned an independent assessment of the work that has been done on implementing the IQA recommendations.

## Assurance Assessment Findings – Schools and kura participating in the programme

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17. One outcome of the IQA report was commissioning an assurance piece specifically looking at the criteria used when inviting schools to join the programme since its inception.
18. The programme has referred to each group of schools joining the programme as 'Tranches' (refer to Appendix 1).
19. In the Cabinet Paper<sup>3</sup>, it was agreed:
  - a. The criteria for eligibility is top 25 percent of students (in Years 1 to 15) nationwide in schools with the highest concentrations of disadvantage, identified using the Equity Index.
  - b. To include additional schools (approximately 3 percent) to support network stability.
  - c. To adopt a 'no losers' approach to eligibility, whereby schools that enter the 25 percent are invited to join the programme and remain in the programme if their Equity Index changes.
20. In November 2020, Cabinet ([CAB-21-MIN-0079](#) refers) agreed that the programme's 'no losers' approach would be expanded to include schools who originally declined an invitation but then requested to re-join. It was agreed that the opportunity to re-join the programme at a later date would be reviewed in three years to ensure it was sustainable and fit for purpose.
21. We are seeking your approval on providing an annual opportunity for these schools to re-join the programme in line with any annual changes to the Equity Index. This will help to manage operational implications.
22. There are 954 schools who agreed to participate in the programme and as of Term 2 2022, 946 are delivering lunches. Of those schools who accepted the invitation to participate, this represents 37.6 percent of schools and 26.6 percent of students.

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<sup>3</sup> CAB-21-MIN-0079 - Continuing the Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches programme

23. A further 46 schools were invited into the programme on the basis of Network Stability and Exceptional Circumstances (refer to Appendix 2). Network Stability” (33 schools or three percent as per the Cabinet Paper) includes those in close proximity to other participating school(s) and Exceptional Circumstances” (13 schools) includes those where regional insights or other exceptional circumstances provided evidence to support their inclusion.
24. There were also 42 schools invited that originally declined the invitation to participate in the programme. 13 schools have since reconsidered and asked to re-join the programme.

### The next group of schools and kura - Tranche 6

25. Tranche 6 is the next group of schools to be invited (or re-invited) into the programme (refer to Appendix 3) and is comprised of three sub-groups.
- 6A - Eligible schools not in the programme**
26. We have identified four schools that met the original Equity Index eligibility criteria but have not previously been invited. These schools are currently being invited into the programme.
- 6B – Schools that declined the invite but have since reconsidered**
27. 13 schools that were eligible and were invited to join the programme but declined the original invitation have since reconsidered.
- 6C – Schools that declined the invite and have not reconsidered**
28. There are 29 schools who originally declined the invite to join the programme and have to date not reconsidered. In fairness to these schools, they should be given an opportunity to reconsider so that they can be included at the same time as 6B schools.

### Assurance Assessment Findings – Staffing for the programme

29. The assurance assessment has identified a need for an additional eight staff, as well as extensions to five existing contracts. Including these roles, the forward view of the programme is 57.1 FTE as of October 2022.

### Financial Implications

30. The Government has committed \$257,807,000 to the 2022/23 financial year and \$129,259,000 in the 2023/24 financial year until 31 December 2023.
31. The application of the ‘no losers’ approach has ongoing financial implications for the programme.

33. An IPET has been requested to move the current financial year underspend to subsequent years. This has been approved in principle by Treasury, and by Cabinet - \$28m for School Lunches in Non-Departmental. This funding will be used for the Tranche 6 schools to be invited (or re-invited) into the programme. The IPET funding is subject to the year-end audit requirements (which confirms there is underspend before the budget is transferred to the outyears as part of October Baseline Update).
34. To enable Tranche 6 schools to start lunch delivery in the 2022 school year, we will start the process of inviting Tranche 6 schools now. We consider it a low risk to start committing the funding now as if the full amount is not approved after year end, there should still be sufficient funding to start re-inviting schools. In 2022/23 there is \$3.3m of built-in contingency to cover any unforeseen expenditure and inflation has been built-in at 7%.
35. There may also be financial implications as a result of annual changes to the Equity Index. It is too early to assess the potential impact of this but any additional schools becoming eligible to join may require additional funding to be sought.
36. Ongoing price increases particularly relating to food and fuel costs continue to put pressure on our suppliers to provide lunches that meet nutritional requirements. The Ministry is continuing to work through how we can support our suppliers but ongoing price increases will impact the programme budget.

#### Next Steps for Improvement

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37. Now that the programme is in a steady state our focus is on building and improving internal processes, particularly our assurance processes.
38. A second evaluation of the expanded programme is currently underway. The evaluation will investigate wellbeing in secondary school students, attendance across all year levels, and present case studies on stories of greatest change for whānau. This is particularly important in the current climate, with students, especially senior students, having been disengaged in their education during COVID lockdowns. Ka Ora, Ka Ako is just one of a number of initiatives that supports the reengagement of students in education.



39. Other changes, such as improving processes and systems to better streamline day-to-day tasks, such as invoicing, are also being made.
40. The Ministry is underway with work on the strategy for continuing Ka Ora, Ka Ako which will provide you with options for continuing Ka Ora, Ka Ako as part of long-term baseline funding.

### Proactive Release

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41. We recommend that this Education Report is not released at this time due to the commercial sensitivity of the information provided.

### Annexes

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Appendix 1 – Timeline of Ka Ora, Ka Ako (refer separate document)

Appendix 2 – Schools Included with Regional Guidance

Appendix 3 – Tranche 6 Sub-Groupings as of 16 March 2022

## Appendix 2 – Schools Included with Regional Guidance

School Name	ID	Network Stability	Exceptional Circumstances
Apanui School	1684		
Bulls School	2343		
Fernlea School	2842		
Frasertown School	2562		
Inglewood School	2177		
Kakanui School	3755		
Kamo Intermediate	1029		
Karamea Area School	300		
Kimi Ora School	514		
Longburn School	2388		
Manchester Street School	2390		
Moturoa School	2203		
Murchison Area School	299		
Ohaeawai School	1058		
Ohakune School	2410		
Pahiatua School	2945		
Papatoetoe East School	1427		
Papatoetoe North School	1429		
Papatoetoe West School	1431		
Piopio Primary School	1895		
Pompallier Catholic School	1082		
Riverton School	4008		
Ross Intermediate	2440		
South Auckland S D A School	4140		
St Bernadette's School (Hornby)	3521		
St Claudine Thevenet School	3018		
St Joseph's Catholic School (Onehunga)	1494		
St Joseph's Catholic School (Opotiki)	1950		
St Joseph's School (Dannevirke)	2676		
St Mary's School (Milton)	3831		
St Patrick's School (Invercargill)	4020		
St Pius X School (Titahi Bay)	3022		
St Teresa's School (Featherston)	3023		
Takitimu Primary School	398		
Te Kāpehu Riccarton School	3485		
Te Kauwhata Primary School	2005		
Te Puke Primary School	2016		
Titahi Bay School	3045		
TKKM o Nga Mokopuna	1143		
TKKM o Toku Mapihi Maurea	1589		
Totara North School	1116		
Waimate Centennial School	3573		
Waitaki Girls' High School	366		
Westport South School	3236		
Whakatane High School	144		
Whitney Street School	3071		

## Appendix 3 – Tranche 6 Sub-Groupings as of 16 March 2022

School Name	ID	Tranche Sub-Group	School Roll Count (July 2021)	Status
6A: Schools that were eligible as at the 2019 EQI assessment but are not currently included in the Programme				
Chisnallwood Intermediate	3314	A	696	Currently being invited
Pitt Island School	3476	A	8	
Te Tipua School	4027	A	24	
Tokomaru School	3046	A	103	
6B: Schools that were eligible as at the 2019 EQI assessment, originally declined their invite to the Programme, but have since reconsidered.				
Allenvale Special School and Res Centre	3275	B	143	Schools have asked to re-join
Awatapu College	198	B	812	
Carlton School	2345	B	245	
Cobden School	3322	B	83	
Edgecumbe School	1711	B	204	
Eketahuna School	2835	B	118	
Hikurangi School	1014	B	191	
Mana Tamariki	465	B	70	
Otaika Valley School	1068	B	145	
Salisbury School (Nelson)	525	B	1	
Te Kura Maori-a-Rohe o Waiohau	2062	B	75	
Te Kura o Mātihetihe	1046	B	31	
Waitakere College	44	B	1355	
6C: Schools that were eligible as at the 2019 EQI assessment, originally declined the invite to the Programme, and have not reconsidered				
Cullinane College	190	C	310	Schools not yet asked to re-join
Te Aute College	232	C	50	
Queens High School	384	C	380	
TKK Motuhake o Tawhiuau	463	C	71	
Halswell Residential College	522	C	8	
Porangahau School	730	C	74	

School Name	ID	Tranche Sub-Group	School Roll Count (July 2021)	Status
South Auckland Middle School	876	C	179	
Blomfield Special School and Resource Centre	1007	C	124	
Kamo School	1030	C	477	
Kohukohu School	1035	C	44	
Mangamuka School	1037	C	22	
Rawene School	1093	C	66	
TKKM o Ruamata	1165	C	229	
Bruce McLaren Intermediate	1238	C	307	
East Tamaki School	1264	C	199	
Fairburn School	1271	C	511	
Kaiaua School	1323	C	25	
Yendarra School	1580	C	277	
Southern Health School	1631	C	11	
Firth School	1719	C	205	
Maromaku School	2102	C	21	
Ramanui School	2226	C	52	
Awapuni School (Palmerston North)	2339	C	100	
Mangamahu Primary School	2391	C	4	
Sanson School	2443	C	26	
Putorino School	2658	C	17	
South Featherston School	2993	C	51	
Wharenui School	3591	C	323	
Blind and Low Vision Education Network NZ	4156	C	55	