



## Briefing Note: Options to strengthen the future delivery of Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches Programme

<b>To:</b>	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>CC:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education Hon Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	13 October 2022	<b>Priority:</b>	Low / Medium / High
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<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	Yes / No	<b>Round Robin:</b>	Yes / No

### Purpose of Paper

The purpose of this paper is to:

- provide you with a summary of findings from recent Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunch programme evaluation
- update you on opportunities to support increased iwi and Māori engagement with the programme; and
- seek your feedback on three enhancement options for Ka Ora, Ka Ako post-2023, ahead of the November 2022 Cabinet report-back and provide advice on the future of the programme. Officials are available to discuss your feedback at your officials meeting on 17 October 2022.

### Summary

- The Ministry has received two draft evaluation reports that will inform the Cabinet report-back and advice provided. Overall, the evaluation findings support our advice to continue the programme. A summary of findings is attached at **Annex One**.
- Key results include:
  - overall improvements in mental, physical, emotional, social, and school functioning for most ākonga;
  - significant advantages in health quality of life and improving the nutrient intake of learners at lunchtime;
  - larger benefits for learners with the highest levels of food insecurity compared to other learners; and,

- high quality nutritional content of meals overall, and particularly for meals prepared within schools.
- We have identified a range of opportunities to support increased iwi and Māori engagement with the planning, implementation and reporting arrangements for Ka Ora, Ka Ako, including: developing national and local feedback loops for iwi and Māori; refining operational settings so iwi and Māori can have greater involvement in day-to-day planning and delivery of lunches; and strengthening overall reporting arrangements with a particular focus on equitable outcomes for ākonga.
- In the first instance, we intend to engage with the Mātauranga Iwi Leaders Group (part of the National Iwi Chairs Forum) to gain a better understanding of how iwi and Māori may wish to be involved in Ka Ora, Ka Ako in the future. This work will support practical action to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- There are three options to enhance the future delivery of Ka Ora, Ka Ako. We have previously provided you with a high level outline of these options. Given their complexity and the possible funding implications associated with each, we have provided further detail on each option for your feedback in **Annex Two**.
- We intend to draft the options presented in the November 2022 Cabinet report-back based on your feedback on this briefing. This will include further work to refine the indicative costings for each option.
- We would welcome the opportunity to discuss your feedback on the enhancement options at your officials meeting on 17 October 2022. Following this, a first draft Cabinet paper will be provided to your office on 20 October 2022. The final draft for consultation with your Ministerial colleagues will be provided to your office on 26 October 2022.
- You may also wish to discuss what support you would require if you would like to engage with the Prime Minister ahead of the Cabinet paper being lodged.

## Proactive Release

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a **agree** that this briefing is not published due to Budget sensitive content

**Agree / Disagree**

  
Tipene Chrisp  
**Group Manager**  
**Te Puna Kaupapahere**



Hon Jan Tinetti  
**Associate Minister of Education**

24 /10/2022

## Background

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1. You are scheduled to provide a report-back on Ka Ora, Ka Ako to the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee on 16 November 2022. As current funding for Ka Ora, Ka Ako concludes in December 2023, you have agreed to use the report-back as an opportunity to seek agreement on the future direction of the programme.
2. Pending Cabinet decisions on the future direction of Ka Ora, Ka Ako, the Ministry of Education (the Ministry) will progress a Budget Bid through the Budget 2023 process, if invited by Budget Ministers.
3. This briefing builds on a previous information update on options for the future direction of Ka Ora, Ka Ako (METIS 1294197 refers). Following this update, you indicated you were comfortable with the scope of options for advice on the scale of the programme in the future.

The Ministry has received two draft evaluation reports that will inform the Cabinet report-back and advice

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### Overall, the evaluation findings support our advice to continue the programme

4. A summary of findings from the following evaluations is attached at **Annex One**:
  - a. a Ministry-led research piece on the nutritional value of Ka Ora, Ka Ako lunches; and,
  - b. an external evaluation investigating the impacts Ka Ora, Ka Ako has on wellbeing (secondary schools only), attendance (all year levels), and stories of greatest change for whānau.
5. The findings of the evaluations show significant positive impacts overall in terms of ākonga wellbeing, food security, and the nutritional value of Ka Ora, Ka Ako meals. Key findings include:
  - a. significant advantages in health quality of life, physical functioning, emotional learning, school functioning, social functioning, and mental wellbeing compared to students in non-programme schools;
  - b. excellent progress in improving the nutrient intake of learners at lunchtime;
  - c. larger benefits for learners with the highest levels of food insecurity compared to other learners;
  - d. high quality nutritional content of meals overall, with consistently higher nutritional contribution to daily requirements in meals prepared within schools (internal model schools) than in meals delivered by external suppliers.
6. There were two areas where evaluation findings were unexpected:
  - a. *Ākonga Māori wellbeing*: Compared to peers in schools with Equity Index scores that place them just outside of eligibility for the programme, Māori learners in schools receiving Ka Ora, Ka Ako lunches had better physical functioning but worse mental wellbeing, and no changes to overall health quality of life, emotional, social or school functioning. It is unclear why ākonga Māori have not experienced the same benefits overall as non-Māori students or why ākonga Māori are experiencing worse mental health than their peers in other schools. Further work is required to understand these findings, including their relationship to Ka Ora, Ka Ako. It is also important to note that these findings do not represent changes from a baseline measure for the ākonga involved, but rather are a measure of wellbeing relative to peers in schools with slightly higher scores on the Equity Index.

Evidence shows that kaupapa Māori approaches are critical to addressing inequities and in meeting the needs of diverse Māori communities. Evaluation of the Iwi and Hapū Partnership model of delivery and the impact of Ka Ora, Ka Ako on Māori overall is underway, with results expected in July 2023. We intend to explore possible reasons for the previous evaluation finding on ākonga Māori mental wellbeing directly with ākonga Māori through this evaluation.

There is also a significant body of evidence which shows that when students' identity, language and culture are valued and reflected as part of school life, their wellbeing and sense of belonging are enhanced. In line with this existing evidence, we expect that increasing Māori involvement in Ka Ora, Ka Ako (for example through the Iwi and Hapū Partnership model) would be likely to improve the programme's ability to respond to and engage ākonga Māori.

- b. *Attendance:* Feedback from schools and kura in the programme has frequently attributed increased attendance directly to the provision of food in schools through Ka Ora, Ka Ako. However, the evaluation data did not show a statistically significant link between Ka Ora, Ka Ako and increased attendance. Ka Ora, Ka Ako was not designed as an attendance initiative and there are a variety of possible methodological reasons for the incongruence between school and kura feedback and the evaluation findings (see **Annex One** for more detail).

- 7. We are working to finalise both evaluation reports and will share these with you when complete.

## We have identified a range of opportunities to strengthen iwi and Māori engagement with Ka Ora, Ka Ako

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- 8. We have identified a range of possible iwi and Māori interests in Ka Ora, Ka Ako through sources such as engagement feedback on the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy; Ka Hikitia and feedback from Māori involved in the delivery of the programme (including staff at the Ministry, schools/kura, and iwi and hapū suppliers).
- 9. Iwi and Māori interests span a wide range of potential Te Tiriti o Waitangi themes. For example, there may be Te Tiriti interests in kai security (including the connections between kai and whenua); economic development; community cohesion and resilience; te taiao and kaitiakitanga; and the role of the maramataka, mātauranga Māori, and te reo Māori in the education system. Around 47% of ākonga receiving Ka Ora, Ka Ako lunches are Māori, meaning the programme reaches around 104,330 ākonga Māori. There are likely to also be broader Māori interests in the inequities for Māori wellbeing and food security.
- 10. Through our analysis, we have identified opportunities to support increased iwi and Māori engagement in the planning, implementation and reporting arrangements for Ka Ora, Ka Ako, such as:
  - a. establishing national and local feedback loops to inform policy and operational improvements to Ka Ora, Ka Ako;
  - b. refining operational settings and providing guidance to schools and suppliers to enable iwi and Māori (including ākonga and whānau) involvement in the day-to-day planning and preparation of lunches; and,
  - c. publishing annual planning and reporting on Ka Ora, Ka Ako outcomes with an emphasis on equity for ākonga.
- 11. We intend to progress discussions with the Mātauranga Iwi Leaders Group in the first instance to gain a better understanding of their interests in Ka Ora, Ka Ako and how we can strengthen our working arrangements with iwi and Māori at both national and local levels. This approach will support practical action to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- 12. An initial kaupapa Māori evaluation of Ka Ora, Ka Ako will be complete by July 2023. This will provide research evidence on the impact of the Iwi and Hapū Partnership model of delivery specifically and the impact of the programme more broadly on Māori. The evaluation will also look at the extent to which the model meets our Te Tiriti obligations for partnership with Māori. Officials will provide further advice on our Te Tiriti obligations within the programme following this evaluation.

## We are seeking your feedback on options to enhance Ka Ora, Ka Ako

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13. There are three areas of options to enhance the delivery of Ka Ora, Ka Ako that officials consider could be included in the Cabinet report-back and, subject to Cabinet approval, be progressed through a Budget 2023 Bid:
- 9(2)(f)(iv)
  - further supporting the Iwi and Hapū partnership model of delivery; and,
  - maintaining the current ratcheting approach to eligibility based on the Equity Index.
14. A brief outline of each option is provided below. Further detail on the rationale and a high-level indication of the funding that would be needed for each of these options is outlined in **Annex Two**. We recommend seeking Cabinet agreement in principle to progress each of these options through a Budget 2023 Bid. This will rely on the Bid being invited by the Minister of Finance. Each of these options support the intent of Ka Ora, Ka Ako and will provide reinforcement to the objectives and future direction of the programme.
15. We would like to discuss your feedback on the enhancement options at your officials meeting on 17 October 2022.

9(2)(f)(iv)

## Further Supporting the Iwi and Hapū Partnership Model of Delivery

20. This option would seek additional funding through Budget 2023 to further support 9(2)(f)(iv) the Iwi and Hapū partnership model. 9(2)(f)(iv) :

a. 9(2)(f)(iv)

b.

c.

d.

21. These options respond to the inequities in areas such as food insecurity and wellbeing for ākonga Māori and recognise the wealth of evidence on the effectiveness of kaupapa Māori solutions and initiatives for realising Māori aspirations. Supporting Māori capability and capacity development alongside supporting schools/kura to choose the Iwi and Hapū partnership model is one approach to increasing the options for kaupapa Māori service provision.

### Maintaining the Current Ratcheting Approach to Eligibility Based on the Equity Index.

22. This option proposes maintaining the current approach to school/kura eligibility for Ka Ora, Ka Ako. Eligibility for school/kura participation in Ka Ora, Ka Ako is based on providing lunches to the 25 percent of ākonga in schools and kura facing the greatest barriers to educational achievement, based on the Equity Index. In addition, some schools are invited to participate to ensure local consistency (such as when all of the other schools in the area are part of the programme) and prevent network disruptions due to ākonga changing schools to access the lunches.
23. The current approach to eligibility agreed by Cabinet (SWC-21-MIN-0021) is that there are 'no losers', meaning that schools whose students make up the 25 percent facing the greatest barriers to educational achievement are invited to join the programme, and those that depart based on their students no longer falling within the 25 percent are able to maintain their position in the programme. The opportunity to join the programme is also maintained for schools who are invited and then decline to participate, to join the programme later if they decide to.
24. This approach to eligibility means we can continue to provide lunches to schools and kura with ākonga most in need, while ensuring schools and kura do not lose lunches year by year for potentially small changes in student population (which may reverse in following years). Retaining the opportunity for schools and kura to decline to join the programme and later reconsider allows them time to consult with their community and encourages participation only when they are ready to commit to the programme.

### Next Steps

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25. We intend to draft the options presented in the November 2022 Cabinet report-back based on your feedback on this briefing. This will include further work to refine the indicative costings for each option.
26. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss your feedback on the enhancement options at your officials meeting on 17 October 2022.
27. A first draft Cabinet paper will be provided to your office on 20 October 2022, while the paper is undergoing external agency consultation. The final draft Cabinet paper for consultation with your Ministerial colleagues will be provided to your office on 26 October 2022.

## Annexes

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Annex One: Summary of evaluation findings

Annex Two: Overview of options to enhance the delivery of Ka Ora, Ka Ako

Annex Three: School survey feedback: internal vs external delivery models

Proactively Released

## Annex One: Summary of evaluation findings

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1. The Ministry of Education has undertaken a suite of evaluation and other research to support our advice to Cabinet on the future of Ka Ora, Ka Ako, including:
  - a. a nutrition analysis of Ka Ora, Ka Ako lunches;
  - b. an independent evaluation investigating the impacts Ka Ora, Ka Ako has on wellbeing (secondary schools only), attendance (all year levels), and stories of greatest change for whānau; and,
  - c. kaupapa Māori evaluation on the impact of Ka Ora, Ka Ako and the Iwi and Hapū Partnership delivery model on Māori (currently in the co-design phase with results due July 2023).
2. A summary of findings for the nutrition evaluation and the independent evaluation are presented below.

### Nutrition Evaluation

#### **Background**

3. A nutrition evaluation was conducted on Ka Ora, Ka Ako meals between Term 3 2021 and Term 2 2022 by the Ministry of Education. This evaluation provides an objective assessment of whether the lunches provided are 'nutritious' by national and international standards. Improved nutrition is one of the key pathways to achieving improvements in educational engagement, learning and wellbeing and therefore analysing the nutritional value of the lunches provided is an important component in determining whether Ka Ora, Ka Ako is achieving its objective of improving child wellbeing.
4. Nutrition guidelines for Ka Ora, Ka Ako have been in use since June 2020, based on the Ministry of Health's guidance for food and drink in schools. The guidance is based on a traffic light system which classifies food items as red, amber, or green. Ka Ora, Ka Ako meals should consist of mostly green category ingredients (items that are a good source of nutrition, are generally lower in saturated fat, salt and sugar, and are mostly whole and less processed), with the inclusion of amber items limited to 25 percent or less of the meals. Red items are not permitted, due to poor nutritional value.
5. The evaluation analysed the nutritional content of 302 Ka Ora, Ka Ako meals from approved menus. The lunch suppliers covered by the 302 meals included in this analysis, provide 161,999 students with lunches on any given day (74.9 percent of ākonga receiving a Ka Ora, Ka Ako lunch). Meals were selected at random from the menus submitted by suppliers' between Term 3, 2021 and Term 2, 2022. Of the 302 meals, 240 lunches were provided by external suppliers and 62 were prepared by a school or kura.
6. Suppliers were selected at random using the list of suppliers for each participating school. Once all the data was entered, it was checked against the list of suppliers for each year group. Meals were added or removed where necessary to be representative and ensure that meals from each of the top ten suppliers were included as they cover a large number of ākonga, schools and kura participating in Ka Ora, Ka Ako. The data was then quality checked and peer reviewed before being analysed.

#### **Findings**

##### *Ka Ora, Ka Ako meals overall provide high quality nutrition*

7. Overall, the analysed meals from Ka Ora, Ka Ako menus were nutrient dense and had a range of high-quality nutritious foods to help support growth, development, wellbeing and learning. A large proportion of the analysed nutrients surpassed the 33 percent recommended target for daily intake, based on Nutrient Reference Values (NRV). The majority of those that did not meet the target were very close to meeting the target (falling between 30-33%).
8. Of the nutrients that did not meet the target, it is recommended that carbohydrates, calcium, and iron are increased in the meals to closer align with international standards. Energy levels in the analysed meals were low in all age groups, compared to the NRV target and to international standards.



9. A sub-analysis comparing nutritional content of internal model meals (n=62) with the external model meals (n=240) showed that internal meals had a consistently higher nutritional contribution to daily requirements than the external meals provided in the same year group. The nutrient contributions from the meals were compared against the New Zealand/Australia NRV.

*Meals prepared in schools are larger and more nutritious than meals provided by external suppliers*

10. In addition, internal model meal weights on average were significantly higher than external model meals, but this did not substantially increase the energy content of the internal model meals, implying that the additional food in the internal model meals is nutrient-dense rather than calorie dense. This is reflected by the higher nutritional content of these meals.
11. Where both internal and external model meals did not meet the target for nutrients in some age/sex categories, the internal model remained consistently higher. This occurred for iron, iodine, and magnesium. Both models scored under target for calcium across all categories, and this was the only nutrient under target in which internal model meals did not consistently outperform external model meals. There was no category for which the internal model meals did not meet the target while the external model meals did.

## **Independent Evaluation: Food Security, Wellbeing, and Attendance**

### ***Background***

12. The Ministry commissioned an independent evaluation from Standard of Proof. The key evaluation question for this research asked: What difference does Ka Ora, Ka Ako make for learners in terms of wellbeing (for secondary school students) and attendance, and in particular for those most disadvantaged learners.
13. When establishing the evaluation, the key evaluation question used the term 'disadvantaged.' We now consider this term to be imprecise and likely to contribute to a deficit narrative. We are working with the evaluator to be more refined in the final report.
14. The evaluation used a range of methods, with evidence coming from a survey of secondary learners' wellbeing (with participants from inside and outside of programme schools), Ministry of Education school attendance data across all year levels, and case studies which demonstrated how the programme has benefitted some schools, suppliers, and whānau. This included administrative data from 73 Ka Ora, Ka Ako schools and 81 non-programme schools, wellbeing surveys from 6,387 secondary learners in Ka Ora, Ka Ako schools and 4,307 secondary learners in non-programme schools, and case study interviews with eight schools receiving the programme.

### ***Findings***

15. The evaluation report describes Ka Ora, Ka Ako as a "resounding success" overall in improving food security (alleviating hunger and improving nutrition) and enhancing learner wellbeing. Findings showed benefits were seen particularly for those experiencing the challenge of not having access to sufficient food at home. Key findings include:
  - a. excellent progress in improving the nutrient intake of learners at lunchtime
  - b. increased food security for learners overall
  - c. large wellbeing effects for secondary school learners
  - d. significantly happier and healthier (average) learners across all age groups, with learners more able to learn and engage at school
  - e. larger benefits for learners with the highest levels of food insecurity compared to other learners.

16. Information from the earlier pilot evaluation shows that the average primary and intermediate learner made small but statistically significant gains in emotional and physical functioning, and overall quality of life. When combined with the wellbeing results from secondary students in the larger evaluation, the results demonstrate happier and healthier learners. Longer term benefits are not yet known, but research suggests that effects from the programme may lead to more equitable outcomes for learners with the highest levels of food insecurity and positive lifelong benefits for the other learners.
17. However, the results differed for ākonga Māori. Compared to peers in other schools, Māori learners receiving Ka Ora, Ka Ako lunches had better physical functioning but worse mental wellbeing, and no changes to overall health quality of life, emotional, social, or school functioning. It is unclear why ākonga Māori would be worse off in terms of mental wellbeing because of the programme and have not experienced the same benefits overall as non-Māori students. Further work is needed to understand these findings and officials consider sense-making with ākonga Māori could be a first step.

### *Food Security and Consumption*

18. The research shows that of secondary learners sampled (including both learners currently in schools receiving Ka Ora, Ka Ako, and learners in non-programme schools) 2.6% (n=271) never had enough food available at home to feel just right, 4.7% (n=493) had sufficient food at home just one or two days of the previous week, and 8.8% (n=926) of these learners had sufficient food for about half of the week.
19. More than half of the secondary school learners in Ka Ora, Ka Ako schools had sufficient food in schools every day (54%), compared to 40% of their peer respondents without free lunches having daily access to sufficient food.
20. Of note, the two secondary groups being compared one included a group just inside of the Equity Index eligibility threshold, and a control group just outside of it. This means that the levels of deprivation are likely conservative and schools/kura with higher levels of deprivation would likely have greater proportions of learners who never or rarely have access to enough food at home.
21. Both the pilot and programme Ka Ora, Ka Ako evaluations, using different methodologies with respective younger and older aged cohorts, showed the Ka Ora, Ka Ako learners consume vegetables more frequently and snacks less frequently at school, as well as consuming a wider variety of vegetables. These diets could have far-reaching benefits for individuals, as studies suggest that these habits could persist into adulthood and lead to more advantageous outcomes.

### *Health and Wellbeing*

22. Secondary students in schools receiving Ka Ora, Ka Ako demonstrated on average significant advantages in health quality of life (3.7% advantage), greater physical functioning (2.9%), greater emotional learning (5.2%), greater school functioning (3.6%), greater social functioning (3.6%), and greater mental wellbeing (6.4%) compared to students in non-programme schools.
23. The positive benefits to wellbeing seen in secondary students receiving Ka Ora, Ka Ako lunches were the most pronounced for those with the highest level of unmet need. The secondary school learners who were in schools receiving Ka Ora, Ka Ako and rarely had enough food at home saw significantly higher wellbeing in all areas than similar learners who rarely had enough food at home in schools not receiving Ka Ora, Ka Ako. Differences observed were greater health quality of life (14.4% higher), greater physical functioning (16.4%), greater emotional functioning (12.1%), greater school functioning (20.0%), greater social functioning (9.3%), and greater mental wellbeing (14.1%).
24. In other words, in addition to having higher health quality of life and better mental wellbeing, secondary school students in schools receiving Ka Ora, Ka Ako lunches were better able to pay attention and keep up in school more frequently (school functioning), had greater energy and ability to undertake day-to-day physical activities (physical functioning), had a lower frequency of problems with feelings of sadness, anger, or fear (emotional functioning), and reported a lower frequency in problems with friendships (social functioning) when compared with peers in non-programme schools.
25. Some of the schools in the comparison group (not receiving Ka Ora, Ka Ako) were providing some other form of free or subsidised breakfast or lunch to learners. If these schools are removed from the

study, the wellbeing gain findings are profound – in some cases doubling the benefits of the programme. When looking at the most disadvantaged students, secondary learners in Ka Ora, Ka Ako schools realise between 11-40% better wellbeing across ten different constructs than those learners who do not have any food provided by their school. Most notably, the 14% benefit in mental wellbeing shifts to a 40% benefit when the comparison group excludes schools that provide some food programme to learners.

26. The prevalence of need was also reduced in secondary schools with Ka Ora, Ka Ako, with 8.4% fewer learners having low overall health quality of life and being at risk of impaired health quality of life.
27. For Māori learners specifically, there were no significant benefits or losses in terms of overall health, quality of life, emotional, social or school functioning for learners in the programme compared to learners in other schools. Māori learners receiving school lunches had worse mental wellbeing than peers not receiving school lunches. However, Māori learners receiving school lunches had better physical functioning than peers not receiving school lunches.

#### *Attendance*

28. Feedback from schools and kura in the programme has frequently attributed increased attendance directly to the provision of food in schools through Ka Ora, Ka Ako. For example, an average of 53 percent of external model schools and 78 percent of internal model schools have responded 'yes' to a school survey question asked each term on whether the programme has resulted in a positive shift in student attendance. However, the evaluation did not find a link between Ka Ora, Ka Ako and increased attendance.
29. One possible reason for this is linked to the characteristics of the sample of learners included in the evaluation. The evaluation looked at attendance for learners in schools either just above or just below the eligibility threshold of the Equity Index. They were not the schools with the greatest level of need, but rather learners were in schools with just sufficient, or nearly sufficient, levels of deprivation to be eligible for the school lunch programme. The attendance results may demonstrate that there was not sufficient need in these schools to detect any significant impact at the population level, but do not necessarily mean there is no impact on learners in schools with the highest levels of community deprivation.
30. Due to insufficient data at the time of reporting, it could not be determined if the programme affected attendance for learners with the highest level of food insecurity. The required data to address this information will likely be available from November 2022.

## Annex Two: Overview of options to enhance the delivery of Ka Ora, Ka Ako

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1. There are two layers of options for the future of Ka Ora, Ka Ako. The first layer addresses the scale of Ka Ora, Ka Ako delivery. We provided advice to you on these options through METIS 1294197.
2. The second layer provides three options to enhance the delivery of the programme:
  - a. 9(2)(f)(iv)
  - b.
  - c. maintaining the current ratcheting approach to eligibility based on the Equity Index.
3. The figures presented below for each option are simplified estimates intended to be indicative of cost. We will continue to further refine the cost estimates of all the options that are included in the report-back following your feedback.

9(2)(f)(iv)

Proactively Released

Proactively Released

## **Maintain the Current Ratcheting Approach to Eligibility through the Equity Index**

### ***Background***

22. Eligibility for school/kura participation in Ka Ora, Ka Ako is based on providing lunches to the 25 percent of ākonga facing the greatest barriers to educational achievement, based on the Equity Index. As of 2023, the Equity Index will be recalculated annually, meaning there may be changes in which schools/kura have ākonga who fall within this 25 percent target.
23. The current approach to eligibility agreed by Cabinet (SWC-21-MIN-0021) is that there are 'no losers', meaning that schools that enter the 25 percent are invited to join the programme, and those that depart the 25 percent are able to maintain their place in the programme. The opportunity to join the programme is also maintained for schools who are invited and then decline to participate, to join the programme later if they decide to.

### ***Proposal and Rationale***

24. This approach to eligibility ensures the following:
  - a. inviting schools that fall into the Equity Index threshold ensures that we are continuing to provide lunches to schools and kura with the ākonga most in need.
  - b. allowing schools that fall outside of the Equity Index threshold over future years to maintain their position in the programme ensures schools do not lose lunches year by year for potentially small changes in student population (which may reverse in following years). Not allowing this may discourage investment in the programme and have negative impacts on school network stability if ākonga shift to schools/kura where the programme is available. In addition, schools put significant effort into establishing their programmes and being excluded from the programme – potentially for a short period – may damage the relationship built with the Ministry.
  - c. Retaining the opportunity for schools and kura to decline to join the programme and later reconsider allows them time to consult with their community and encourages participation only when they are ready to commit to the programme.
  - d. Maintaining the annual intake opportunity for schools and kura who have previously declined to enter the programme provides for Ministry FTE and operational efficiencies.

## Costs

25. This approach means the programme will slowly expand and become more expensive as the Equity Index changes (and if schools that have declined reconsider). Based on the most recent Equity Index refresh, we forecast schools with 3,000 new ākonga will become eligible in 2024, at an additional cost of approx. \$3.90 million per year.
26. There are currently 22 schools with around 2,800 ākonga that have declined to join the programme. If they were all to reconsider, this would represent an additional yearly cost of around \$3.64 million.
27. There is potential for year-on-year variability to the schools/kura and number of ākonga who are eligible for Ka Ora, Ka Ako with Equity Index refreshes. We expect the variability and the total number of newly eligible schools to decrease over time, and it is likely that 2024 will represent the largest change and increase in eligible schools.
28. Current forecasts are that by Term 2 of 2028, the number of ākonga the programme would cover would increase by 7.32 percent relative to current numbers (if all eligible schools/kura joined the programme). We are working to understand what percentage of the forecast total 2028 student population this would represent to include in the November report-back. However, given the lack of history of the Equity Index, we do not yet know if there will be smaller or larger changes than expected in future years. The potential for variability would likely increase if Cabinet decided to scale up the programme and decrease if the programme is scaled down.
29. To maintain this approach to eligibility, we may need to:
  - a. build forecast Equity Index changes or contingency funds into a Budget 2023 bid (if progressed); or,
  - b. have a demand-driven mechanism to access funding to support new schools and kura coming onboard.



### Success of programme

In Term 1 2022:

- 76.9% of *external* model schools rated programme success as 4 or higher.\*
- 94.3% of *internal* model schools rated programme success as 4 or higher.

\*on a scale of 1 - 5

### Student engagement

In Term 1 2022:

- Approximately 8.6% of students at *external* model schools reported as **not taking part** in the programme.
- Approximately 4.8% of students at *internal* model schools reported as **not taking part** in the programme.

### Student outcomes

Since beginning surveys:

Internal model schools have rated overall positive shifts in student outcomes at approximately 23% **higher** than external model schools.

This is seen consistently across all four major measures, as shown in the comparisons to the right (averaged across all surveys).

#### "Positive shift in student engagement"

18%

75% of *external* model schools responded "yes"

93% of *internal* model schools responded "yes"

22%

#### "Positive shift in student behaviour"

67% of *external* model schools responded "yes"

89% of *internal* model schools responded "yes"

30%

#### "Positive shift in student achievement"

40% of *external* model schools responded "yes"

70% of *internal* model schools responded "yes"

25%

#### "Positive shift in student attendance"

53% of *external* model schools responded "yes"

78% of *internal* model schools responded "yes"