



Education Report: Continuing the Access to Free Period Products in Schools and Kura Initiative

To:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Date:	23 November 2020	Priority:	High
Security Level:	Budget Sensitive	METIS No:	1244970
Drafter:	9(2)(a)	DDI:	9(2)(a)
Key contact and number:		DDI:	
Messaging seen by Communications team:	N/A	Round robin:	No

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to:

- provide you with a progress update on the Access to Free Period Products in Schools and Kura initiative;
- seek your direction about the future of the initiative;
- seek your agreement to pursue a pre-commitment from Cabinet for ongoing outyears funding for the initiative; and
- seek your agreement to public announcement for this pre-commitment.

Summary

- In March 2020, Cabinet agreed to a two-staged opt-in initiative to provide access to free period products (pads and tampons) in all state and state-integrated schools and kura [SWC-20-MIN-0014; CAB-20-MIN-0094]. Stage one includes implementation in 15 schools in the Waikato; stage two is a phased nationwide rollout. Funding for the initiative commenced in March 2020 and ends in June 2021.
- You were invited to report back to Cabinet on stage one of this initiative and proposed next steps by December 2020. Cabinet noted that we would seek ongoing funding for this initiative in Budget 2021, and this would be informed by your report back on stage one.
- Stage one of the initiative is now underway in 15 schools in the Waikato region. Delays due to the COVID-19 pandemic pushed out our timelines for implementation and stage two (national rollout) will be implemented from Term 2 2021 until the end of June 2021. This is to ensure we can incorporate the voices of young people, the sector and suppliers, as well as the findings from stage one into the national rollout.

- This has potential implications for the open tender and means we are only able to offer a short-term contract to suppliers with no guarantee of an extension. 9(2)(j)

9(2)(j)

- We are therefore recommending you:
 - agree to continue the initiative beyond June 2021;
 - seek a pre-commitment from Cabinet to ongoing funding of up to 9(2)(j) 9(2)(j) 9(2)(f)(iv) contingency and charged against Budget 2021; and
 - seek agreement from Cabinet to an early announcement of the continuation of the initiative.

Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- note** that in March 2020, Cabinet agreed to a two-staged opt-in initiative to provide access to free period products in all state and state-integrated schools and kura [SWC-20-MIN-0014; CAB-20-MIN-0094];
- note** that stage one of the initiative is currently operational in 15 schools in the Waikato region; however, the COVID-19 pandemic has delayed implementation and we are now working towards a Term 2 2021 nationwide rollout (stage two);
- note** that funding for the Access to Free Period Products in Schools and Kura initiative is time-limited until the end of the 2021 financial year and any continuation of the initiative will require additional funding and policy decisions from you, as outlined below;
- note** you were invited to report back to Cabinet on stage one of the initiative and proposed next steps by December 2020 [CAB-20-MIN-0094];
- agree** to continue the initiative to provide stigma-free access to period products in schools and kura nationwide, on an opt-in basis;

Noted

Noted

Noted

Noted

Agree Disagree

f. 9(2)(g)(i)

Noted

- g. **agree** 9(2)(g)(i)
9(2)(g)(i) of 9(2)(j)
to be 9(2)(f)(iv)

Agree Disagree

- h. **agree** to seek agreement from Cabinet to an early announcement of the continuation of the initiative, to enable a pre-Budget open tender process;

Agree Disagree

- i. **note** if we do not secure agreement to a pre-commitment and early announcement from Cabinet we will need to delay the open tender process until after the Budget 2021 process, and this will cause additional delays;

Noted

- j. **note** we will prepare a draft Cabinet paper for your feedback and provide this to you by 25 November;

Noted

- k. **agree** that this Education Report is not proactively released at this time because the information contained in this report is budget sensitive;

Do not release Release

But release once final
decisions are made



Katrina Casey
Deputy Secretary
Sector Enablement & Support

23/11/2020



Dr Andrea Schöllmann
Deputy Secretary
Education System Policy

23/11/2020



Hon Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education

29/11/2020

Background

1. In March 2020, Cabinet agreed to a two-staged opt-in initiative to provide access to free period products in all state and state-integrated schools and kura [SWC-20-MIN-0014; CAB-20-MIN-0094 refer]. Initial funding of \$2.592 million was charged against the Prime Minister's Emerging Priorities Fund to establish the initiative. This funding is time limited until the end of the 2020/2021 financial year.
2. Providing access to free period products to those who need it, in all state and state-integrated schools and kura is intended to:
 - reduce barriers to access to education;
 - improve child and youth wellbeing;
 - reduce financial strain on families and whānau experiencing poverty/material hardship; and,
 - promote positive gender norms and reduce stigmatisation of menstruation.
3. Providing access to period products for anyone who needs them within and across schools and kura will:
 - a. prevent stigma associated with material disadvantage, as availability within a school or kura would be universal, and young people living in hardship will not be singled out for support; and
 - b. recognise that genuine need is broad and is determined by access, ensuring that the children and young people who need period items have stigma-free access to them.
4. You were invited to report back to Cabinet on stage one of this initiative and proposed next steps by December 2020. Cabinet noted that we would seek ongoing funding for this initiative in Budget 2021, and this would be informed by your report back on stage one.
5. We understand from the Labour Party manifesto commitments that this is an initiative that you intend to continue, with a view to expanding.

Progress to date

6. The Cabinet paper outlined the indicative timeline to implement the initiative, based on an expected public announcement shortly after Cabinet's agreement. The indicative timeline was:
 - a. Stage one: implementation in 15 schools and kura in the Waikato education region in Terms 2 and 3 in 2020.
 - b. Stage two: national roll-out on an opt-in basis to all schools in New Zealand, with phased implementation from Term 4 in 2020 and full implementation in Term 2 in 2021.
7. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the public announcement of the initiative and our ability to work with schools and suppliers were delayed. This has had a corresponding impact on our timelines to implement the initiative, outlined below.

Implementation of stage one commenced during Term 3 2020

8. As a result of the delayed public announcement of the initiative and the closure of schools under COVID-19 Alert Levels 3 and 4, a rolling implementation of stage one commenced towards the end of Term 3 2020, in all 15 schools in the Waikato region. This delay means Term 4 is the first full term that the initiative will be operational in these schools.
9. The schools and kura are a mix of primary, intermediate, area and secondary schools in urban and rural areas. There are four kura kaupapa Māori involved in stage one, and a high proportion of ākonga Māori attending the other schools.
10. Five suppliers were invited to participate in a closed tender. The first delivery of period products to schools and kura began during September 2020 (late Term 3). The suppliers are taking different approaches to providing access to the period products, generating insights into a range of issues.

The initiative has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from those involved and generated valuable insights

11. The implementation approach to test and learn through stage one prior to a wider roll-out, as well as to prioritise the voices of young people and staff, has been well-received.
12. We have contracted a consultancy organisation experienced in working with young people, schools and kura on menstrual health to engage with students and educators on the stage one roll-out. In particular, we want stage two, the nationwide roll-out, to be informed by the views and experiences of young people and educators on the barriers and solutions to ensuring equitable and stigma-free access to period products in schools and kura.
13. While engagement is ongoing throughout the implementation of stage one, we have some initial findings relating to product choice and access, stigma of menstruation and access to information and education. We have heard that:
 - choice in the types of period products made available and the mechanisms to access them is important to young people
 - young people regularly voiced the need for privacy and for access to the products be discreet;
 - there is widespread acknowledgement that periods are stigmatised, and young people would like to see more open conversations in schools and communities about menstrual health;
 - there is a need for education and information about menstruation and period products for young people of all genders;
 - there is a need for information and education for school staff about the initiative, period products and menstrual health in general; and,
 - some young people want their whānau and community to receive information about the period product choices, particularly about newer options like reusables.

We are delaying implementation of stage two until Term 2 2021

14. Given the importance of listening and learning from young people during stage one to inform the roll-out, we have delayed the implementation of stage two until Term 2, 2021.

The findings from stage one, including factors such as take-up and cost of products, preferred dispensing methods, are necessary to inform the design of the initiative and the procurement for the nationwide roll-out.

15. Delaying stage two will impact the timeline for procurement. Procurement will need to be undertaken during Term 1 2021, with implementation therefore commencing in Term 2 2021. As funding for the initiative currently ends in June 2021, we would only be able to offer a very short contract for less than 3 months with no guarantee of an extension beyond this. 9(2)(j)

9(2)(j)

16. As such, 9(2)(f)(iv) for the initiative and agreement to a pre-Budget announcement. A confirmed longer-term contract would ensure more suppliers participate in the tender process, resulting in a more competitive tender process, economies of scale and therefore better value for money. It would also ensure continuity of supply of period products to schools and kura.
17. If we do not secure agreement to a pre-commitment to funding and an early announcement prior to the formal Budget 2021 process, then we will need to delay the procurement until after May 2021.

Options for the Future of the Initiative

18. As time-limited funding for the initiative is coming to an end, you need to decide whether to continue the initiative. There are two options for the initiative: continuing with nationwide implementation or discontinuing the initiative altogether. If you choose to continue to initiative, decisions also need to be made about funding the initiative.

We recommend continuing the initiative, on an opt-in basis, and seeking a pre-commitment from Cabinet to ongoing funding

19. Our experience in implementing stage one has reaffirmed our position that stigma-free access to period products in schools and kura is important to the wellbeing of children and young people, and an important step towards de-stigmatising menstruation and promoting positive gender norms. While the initiative will support the Government's work to mitigate the impacts of socioeconomic disadvantage, the universality of the initiative is key to its integrity.
20. If you agree to continuing the initiative, we also strongly recommend 9(2)(f)(iv) and agreement to an early announcement of this decision. This will enable us to proceed with procurement for the nationwide rollout prior to Budget 2021 announcements.
21. As outlined above, a pre-commitment and early announcement are key to undertaking a competitive tender process that ensures value for money and maintains continuity of the supply of period products.

There is also an option to discontinue the initiative

22. We recommend against discontinuing the initiative. We consider the problem we sought to address, a lack of reliable, stigma-free access to period products, persists. This is likely to have been exacerbated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on

employment, and therefore the material wellbeing of children, young people and their whānau.

23. Discontinuing the initiative would see many children and young people continuing to face barriers to accessing period products when they need them. Furthermore, the establishment of the initiative, combined with the Labour Party manifesto commitment to continue the initiative¹, has created expectations from young people, schools and communities that the programme will continue. Discontinuing the initiative could therefore create a reputational risk for the Government and the Ministry.

Proposed Approach to Continuing the Initiative

24. We propose 9(2)(f)(iv)

9(2)(j)

25. 9(2)(g)(i)

9(2)(g)(i)

In Victoria, the scheme is in around approximately 1,500 schools and modelled on 80% take up by approximately 311,000 female students with a budget of AUD\$20.7m over four years.

26. 9(2)(g)(i)

9(2)(g)(i)

We have based our costings on the following assumptions, which have been informed by stage one of implementation and discussions with the Victorian Department of Education:

- 9(2)(j) in response to the initial findings from stage one (while the initiative will be available to all state and state-integrated schools and kura, we do not anticipate universal take-up across schools and kura);
- The percentage of students who menstruate gradually increases from Year 5, in line with analysis of the 2014/15 New Zealand Health Survey²;
- Product usage modelling developed by the Victorian Department of Education for their similar scheme, which was publicly supported by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists;
- 9(2)(j)
- 9(2)(j)
- Up to 4 FTE to manage the procurement, implementation and communication of the initiative

¹ The Manifesto states: *Labour will continue to roll out our programme to address period poverty through providing free access to period products in schools, and will look to expand this programme.*

² Donovan, S. & Telfar-Barnard, L. (2019). 'Age of first menstruation in New Zealand: findings from first ever national-level data and implications for age-appropriate education and support', *New Zealand Medical Journal*, 132(1500) pp100-102.

• 9(2)(j)

Table 1: Indicative costings for continuing the access to free period products in schools and kura initiative

	\$m – increase				
Vote Education Minister of Education	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25 & outyears	Total
Period products and dispenser	9(2)(j)				
Departmental staffing	.656	.511	.517	.525	2.209
Education resources	9(2)(j)				
Total Operating	9(2)(j)				
Total Capital	9(2)(j)				

There is a need for quality assurance and support when it comes to education resources

27. We have heard from young people, educators and suppliers through stage one that there is a need for more quality information and education resources on menstrual health and product use. We know there are many education resources available; however, we understand there is difficulty for educators in assessing the quality of the resources.
28. There is work being undertaken within the Ministry to improve the delivery of the curriculum through frontline support. From Term 1 2021, Curriculum Leads will work in partnership with schools, kura, centre-based early learning services and kōhanga reo to embed high-quality teaching and learning approaches to mental health, wellbeing and healthy relationships in learning programmes and local curricula. Education on menstrual health will be included.
29. While in the medium-term, frontline curriculum support will equip educators with the capabilities to navigate and assess these materials, we recommend an approach in the short term to ensure access to quality curriculum resources and information for educators, children and young people.
30. We propose to undertake a quality assurance process of menstrual education curriculum resources, to allow us to recommend and endorse those that are culturally responsive, high-quality and safe to schools and young people. This will involve working with health educators, organisations and young people to identify and assess the resources needed. This work cannot be funded through baselines due to the significant work programme underway in the Early Learning and Student Achievement business unit.

31. We will also work to ensure education resources are available to teachers and students through existing methods such as Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) website and the School Leavers Toolkit.

Next steps

32. If you agree to continue funding the programme, as outlined above, we will provide a draft Cabinet paper to you for feedback by 25 November, aiming for you to take this to the Cabinet Business Committee on Wednesday 9 December. The paper will incorporate your report back on the initiative and, subject to your agreement, a proposal for a pre-commitment to ongoing funding.
33. We will prepare communications materials for an announcement and continue planning for an open tender process in February/March 2021.
34. We recommend you forward a copy of this paper to the Minister for Child Poverty Reduction and discuss your decision with the Minister for Child Poverty Reduction and Associate Minister Tinetti.