



**Briefing Note:** **Access to Period Products in Schools and Kura Initiative**

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| <b>To:</b>                                    | Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education |                     |         |
| <b>Cc:</b>                                    | Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education         |                     |         |
| <b>Date:</b>                                  | 7 December 2020                                  | <b>Priority:</b>    | High    |
| <b>Security Level:</b>                        | In Confidence                                    | <b>METIS No:</b>    | 1245411 |
| <b>Drafter:</b>                               | Gary Basham                                      | <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 Briefing**

The purpose of this briefing is for you to:

**Note** the background, progress and next steps for the Access to Period Products Initiative.

**Agree** that this Briefing will not be proactively released at this time because it contains commercially sensitive information.

**Agree / Disagree**

**Summary**

- This briefing outlines the background and progress to date for the Access to Period Products Initiative. Key findings that will inform next steps and the future direction of the initiative are also summarised.

  
Katrina Casey  
Deputy Secretary  
Sector Enablement and Support

7/12/2020

Hon Jan Tinetti  
Associate Minister of  
Education

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## Background

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1. Periods are a fact of life for half the population. According to analysis of the 2014/15 NZ Health Survey, 48 percent of young people are menstruating by the start of secondary school<sup>1</sup>, and more than 95 percent are menstruating by the end of Year 13.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, we know that young people don't always have access to the sanitary products they need to manage their periods at school so they can engage in meaningful learning.
2. There are a range of reasons why young people may not have access to period products. It may be because their family cannot afford sanitary products, they want to avoid the embarrassment and stigma of asking others for them, or because, given the reality of being a young person with their period, some are simply caught unprepared.
3. Recent analysis undertaken by researchers at the University of Otago, using Census data and the New Zealand Deprivation Index, found 94,788 young people aged 9 to 18 from the country's poorest households may be unable to afford to buy sanitary items and could therefore be staying home and not attending school when they have their period.<sup>3</sup>
4. Findings from the Youth19 Survey<sup>4</sup> found 12 percent of year 9 to 13 ākonga who menstruate reported difficulty getting access to period products due to cost.
5. Findings from a 2018 KidsCan survey<sup>5</sup> about period poverty found that 29 percent of respondents aged 15 to 17 years had missed school or work due to not having access to period products and just over half of all respondents had at some point found it difficult to access period products due to cost. Without access to period products, respondents used unsuitable alternatives including toilet paper, rags, old cloths, and disposable nappies.
6. Not having access to period products when they are needed causes anxiety, discomfort and embarrassment, and reinforces stigma.
7. Barriers to accessing period products, whether due to poverty or hardship, stigma or simply being unprepared, are detrimental to the wellbeing of our children and young people and their whānau. Providing access to free tampons and pads to those who need it, in all state and state-integrated schools and kura will improve child and youth wellbeing. It will also promote positive gender norms and reduce the stigmatisation of menstruation.
8. Providing access to free period products will reduce financial strain on families and whānau experiencing poverty/material hardship. This is one way to make an immediate difference for families and whānau hit hard by the COVID-19 global pandemic and most impacted by the economic downturn.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> The Period Place suggest that wider statistics show that of students who menstruate, this is 80 of secondary, 30 of intermediate and 15 percent of primary.

<sup>3</sup> Forthcoming publication. As reported at [stuff.co.nz/life-style/well-good/117197654/period-poverty-nearly-100000-girls-at-risk-of-missing-school?cid=app-iPhone](https://stuff.co.nz/life-style/well-good/117197654/period-poverty-nearly-100000-girls-at-risk-of-missing-school?cid=app-iPhone)

<sup>4</sup> Youth19 Period Poverty Fact Sheet prepared by Youth19 project team  
[youth19.ac.nz/publications/2020/2/19/period-poverty-fact-sheet](https://youth19.ac.nz/publications/2020/2/19/period-poverty-fact-sheet)

<sup>5</sup> [kidscan.org.nz/news/kidscan-survey-exposes-extent-of-period-poverty-in-new-zealand](https://kidscan.org.nz/news/kidscan-survey-exposes-extent-of-period-poverty-in-new-zealand)



9. Removing barriers that prevent healthy, active, educational outcomes for children is also part of the Government's Child, Youth and Wellbeing Strategy, and this initiative complements more than 75 initiatives included in this when it launched in 2019. It sits alongside other initiatives such as Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches Programme, cheaper visits to the doctors and the school donations scheme.

## The initiative

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10. In March 2020, Cabinet agreed to a two-staged opt-in initiative to provide access to free pads and tampons in all state and state-integrated schools and kura.
11. 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 (June 2021).
12. The intention of the initiative is to reduce barriers to accessing period products, whether due to poverty, hardship, stigma or being unprepared.
13. The Cabinet paper [SWC-20-MIN-0014; CAB-20-MIN-0094] outlined the indicative timeline to implement the initiative, which was based on an expected public announcement shortly after Cabinet's agreement. This 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.
14. Due to COVID-19, the public announcement of the initiative and our ability to work with schools and kura and suppliers were delayed. This has had a corresponding impact on our timelines to implement the initiative, outlined below.

## Progress to date

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### Implementation of stage one

15. 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 was delayed by one term and commenced Term 3 2020 in all 15 schools and kura. This delay has meant Term 4 is the first full term that the initiative is operational in these schools and kura.
16. 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. A list of schools and kura included in stage one can be found in Annex 1.
17. As a result of the initiative, 3,200 ākonga in these 15 schools and kura have received free period products. Pads and tampons are being provided.
18. Five suppliers were invited to provide product in a closed tender. They were chosen because they have significant experience in period products and are currently involved in period poverty programmes. They are: Oi, The Warehouse Group, KidsCan, Kimberly Clark (Kotex) and Asaleo Care (Libra).



19. Suppliers were allocated a selection of schools and a similar number of total ākonga.
20. The suppliers are taking different approaches to provide access to the period products, generating rich insights into a range of approaches to providing access. These include:
  - a) ākonga being provided sample purse packs and forms to order products which can be done electronically and/or manually
  - b) pre-made packs, bulk product deliveries and a coupon system
  - c) ākonga distributed samples and subscription kits in their school assemblies – ākonga make their order and pick up their products from a school collection point determined by the school coordinator and student leaders
  - d) dispenser system into schools with some product made available at other distribution points, such as the main office or school nurse.

#### **Feedback to date**

21. The implementation approach to test and learn through stage one and prioritise feedback prior to any wider roll-out has been well received. This approach has allowed us to work with a small group of schools and kura and take the time to hear from ākonga, teachers, whānau and wider stakeholders which has been welcomed by those taking part.
22. As part of stage one, we engaged a consultancy firm experienced in working with young people and schools and kura on menstrual health to engage with ākonga and educators. Nest Consulting facilitated focus groups with ākonga and staff and conducted follow up surveys with ākonga and whānau to gather data and feedback.
23. Key insights from Nest included the following:
  - a) Choice in the types of period products made available and the mechanisms to access them is important to young people.
  - b) Pads have been confirmed as the preferred product type, although ākonga have expressed a need for a variety of types of pads and the option to have access to tampons too. There is no one size fits all for schools, kura and ākonga. There is also an increasing interest in sustainable options, particularly period underwear.
  - c) Young people regularly voiced the need for privacy and for access to the products be discreet.
  - d) The preferred method was a two-tiered system – accessing product through a dispenser unit supported by bulk personalised delivery.
  - e) There is widespread acknowledgement that periods are stigmatised; young people in particular would like to see more open conversations in schools and communities about menstrual health.
  - f) There is a need for education and information about menstruation and period products for young people of all genders.
  - g) There is a need for information and education for school staff about the initiative, period products and menstrual health in general.
  - h) Some young people want their whānau and community to receive information about the period product choices, particularly about newer options such as reusable products.

24. In parallel, the Ministry has also been consulting with key sector organisations including Dignity New Zealand, The Period Place, Sanitary Products in New Zealand Schools, and other government organisations such as the Ministry for Women, the New Zealand Defence Force and the Department of Education and Training, Victoria, Australia. The sector continues to be engaged and highly supportive of this initiative. There is also a recognised need for the provision of period products for young people who have left school.

## Next Steps

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25. Given the delayed start of stage one and the importance of listening and learning from young people to inform the roll-out, the implementation stage two is delayed 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.
26. The timing of stage two will impact our approach to procurement. Funding for the initiative currently ends in June 2021, meaning that we are only be able to offer potential suppliers a very short-term contract (less than three months) with no guarantee of an extension. Our current suppliers indicate that a contract of this length would be an issue. There would not be sufficient time for them to recover upfront costs on items like product dispensing units, and given the uncertainty about an extension, it would not provide an incentive to give their best and final price.
27. A confirmed longer-term contract would ensure we can attract more suppliers, result in a more competitive tender process, introduce economies of scale and therefore offer better value for money. It would also ensure continuity of supply of period products to schools and kura already taking part in the programme.
28. **9(2)(f)(iv)**
29. Once the future direction, funding and procurement approach is confirmed a subsequent briefing paper will be provided. This will include a detailed implementation plan and timings for the roll-out of stage two.

## Proactive Release

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30. We recommend that this Briefing is not released at this time because it contains commercially sensitive information.

## Annex

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Annex 1: Table one: schools and kura included in stage one of the initiative

Proactively Released



Annex 1: Table one: schools and kura included in stage one of the initiative

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| South Waikato             | Te Awamutu Intermediate                                      |
| South Waikato             | Te Kuiti High School (Alternative Education Managing School) |
| South Waikato             | Tokoroa High School  |
| Hauraki/Thames Coromandel | Paeroa College (Alternative Education Managing School)       |
| Hauraki/Thames Coromandel | Te Kauwhata College  |
| Hauraki/Thames Coromandel | Thames South School  |
| Waikato                   | Fairfield College  |
| Waikato                   | Raglan Area School   |
| Waikato                   | Fraser High School   |
| Matamata Piako            | Te Wharekura o te Rau Aroha                                  |
| Matamata Piako            | Te Wharekura o te Kaokaoroa o Patetere                       |
| Matamata Piako            | Putaruru College   |
| Hamilton City             | Peachgrove Intermediate                                      |
| Hamilton City             | Nga Taiatea Wharekura  |
| Hamilton City             | Tai Wananga  |

*The names of schools and kura have not yet been publicly released, but they have all been contacted and confirmed they are happy for their names to be publicly released.*