



## Briefing Note: Access to Period Products Initiative – Key findings from the trial and update on next steps

<b>To:</b>	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	4 February 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	Low / Medium / High
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1249868
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<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	Yes / No	<b>Round Robin:</b>	Yes / No

### Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

**Note** the key learnings from phase one of the Access to Period Products Initiative.

**Note** information on phase two, the wider rollout to all schools and kura across New Zealand who opt-in to the initiative.

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

Agree / Disagree



Katrina Casey  
Deputy Secretary  
Sector Enablement and Support

4/2/2021



Hon Jan Tinetti  
Associate Minister of  
Education

7/02/2021

## Background

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1. The Access to Period Products Initiative aims to provide free access to period products in all schools and kura across New Zealand.
2. The initiative commenced as a phased approach in Term 3, 2020. Phase one involved 15 selected schools and kura in the Waikato region (up to 3,200 young people) being provided with period products. There are four kura kaupapa involved in phase one, and a high proportion of Māori students in the other schools.
3. Five suppliers were selected through a closed tender process and were each allocated schools and kura to provide products and test distribution models. These suppliers 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).
4. Nest Consulting Ltd were engaged to facilitate focus groups with students and staff, and to do follow up surveys with students and whānau.
5. The Ministry also engaged with community groups such as The Period Place and Dignity New Zealand, other government agencies including the Ministry for Women, the Victorian Government of Australia and other interested parties, including academics.
6. The purpose of the trial was to have suppliers test out different delivery methods and products in schools, to understand ākonga preferences and their overall thoughts on the initiative to ensure that we recognised the needs of students in the next phase.

## Lessons from Phase One

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### Nest Consulting Ltd

#### ***Who was consulted?***

7. Research was conducted through focus groups involving 283 young people in years 5 to 13. There were 19 discussion groups within eight pre-selected schools across the Waikato ranging in decile from 2 to 5. Each focus group was led by an experienced facilitator.
8. Research was conducted through face to face discussion and individual questionnaires (with both multiple choice and open-ended comment boxes) completed online.
9. Staff at each school were interviewed to capture their opinions and experiences about how they perceived students managed their periods and their thoughts on the practicalities of accessibility to period products.
10. The online questionnaires were also sent, via schools and kura, to whānau and communities for comment.

#### ***Key findings***

11. Gaining the student voice was essential in understanding how and what to supply to reduce period poverty and the stigma around periods. The overall feedback was that period products should be available for all who need them, when they need them.



12. Current issues around dealing with periods included embarrassment, stigma, missing school, being 'caught out' without product, cost, lack of knowledge and pain.
13. Asking a member of staff for products was embarrassing in some cases, though less so for younger year groups. For older students, making products available via dispenser machines or discretely placed in or near the bathrooms, and accessing bulk product from a direct source was positively received.
14. Providing choice was important, both in types of products and the way it can be accessed.
15. Opinions of the scheme were almost entirely positive.

#### ***Education***

16. There is insufficient information provided by schools, and not all students receive any period education at home.
17. Many ākonga did not receive education at primary school and as a result did not have any information about menstruation before their first period.
18. There was a strong desire for menstrual education to be delivered, to all genders, to reduce the stigma and increase empathy and understanding for those who do not have periods.
19. Students wanted information about periods, period products, and other practical elements of managing their period such as tracking and knowing when and who to reach out to for assistance.
20. Students expressed a desire for teaching staff to be provided with period information to increase the understanding of students needs whilst menstruating.
21. Information such as toxic shock syndrome, insertion/use of product, length of time to use product and how to dispose of product was important.

#### ***Product feedback***

22. Disposable pads were the most popular product choice.
23. Of sustainable products discussed, students were most interested in disposable organic pads/tampons and period underwear. Many students were not aware some sustainable options existed.
24. While ākonga were interested in being environmentally aware and sustainable, the idea of menstrual cups or washable pads was not well supported. Lack of education around these products was also seen as a barrier to their use.

#### ***Delivery method feedback***

25. The most popular methods were dispensers, helping yourself from a central stock at the school, bulk collecting products or order forms.
26. Order forms provided students with choice and, as a result, students were able to order product that suited their individual needs which they valued. Students liked the flexibility of having both an order form system and a dispenser as the delivery method.
27. Dispensers by themselves were also well received. The advantage being that period products were available at the time and place where they would most be needed, and students did not feel embarrassed having to ask a member of staff.

28. Asking a staff member, such as the school nurse, was preferred by primary and intermediate students, but older students were clear they preferred more private access.

#### **Supplier feedback**

29. Suppliers trialled several dispensing methods, including:
- Using an order system, both manual and online, through a method such as order cards. Orders could be collected, for example, from the nurses office/health centre, or distributed at a school assembly.
  - Delivering product in bulk, for three months at a time.
  - Using dispensers.
30. At the beginning of the initiative, suppliers engaged with their schools and kura through:
- Completing a face to face visit, working with each school management team to determine delivery method and product mix.
  - Issuing students with an educational purse pack or sample kit containing a mix of products and educational information.

### **Extension of Phase One**

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31. Phase one has been extended for Term 1 and 2, 2021. This is to ensure that we have an ongoing supply of period products to the trial schools and kura while we plan for the second phase.
32. We have extended contracts with the five suppliers and continue to work closely with these schools to deliver period products.

### **Implementation of Phase Two**

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33. Phase two involves the rollout of period products to all schools and kura across New Zealand who decide to opt-in to the initiative.

#### **Engagement with schools and kura to opt-in**

34. Following the proposed Government announcement of the extension to the initiative on Thursday 18 February 2021, the Ministry will communicate to all schools and kura to provide information to support their decision whether to opt-in to the initiative.
35. Work is underway to design collateral, including a digital brochure, that will provide information to decision makers on the programme and encourage them to opt-in. We will also be reaching out to schools and kura through the School Bulletin and the Education Gazette.
36. Schools and kura who choose not to opt-in initially will have the opportunity to do so later and we will continue to communicate with the sector about the initiative.

### **Procurement process**

37. Alongside the engagement with schools and kura, the Ministry will run the procurement process.
38. We will be issuing an Advanced Notice on Government Electronic Tendering Service (GETS) to inform potential suppliers of an upcoming tender, which will be an opportunity for interested suppliers to engage with the Ministry before the tender goes live later this month.
39. The tender will go live in March 2021, with contracts being agreed between the supplier/s and the Ministry in June 2021.
40. The first rollout of period products will be in June 2021, towards the end of Term 2. Planning is underway for the rollout, which will be a phased rollout. There are decisions to be made around this, and we will be working with the supplier or suppliers around how best to manage this.

### **Education**

41. While there are education resources available, their quality is variable and there is a lack of consistency and confidence from teachers that use them.
42. The Ministry will work closely with our curriculum design team on how best to address this gap. We will also look to partner with health educators, organisations and young people.

### **Next Steps**

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43. Speech notes and a press release for the school visit will be with your office and the office of the Prime Minister on the 12 February.

### **Proactive Release**

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