



**Briefing Note:**

**Visit to Fairfield College to announce the national roll out and funding for the Access to Period Products Initiative on 18 February 2021**

<b>To:</b>	Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
<b>Cc:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	12 February 2021	<b>Priority:</b>	High
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1249874
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<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	Yes	<b>Round Robin:</b>	No

**Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

**Note** an event is planned to announce the national roll out of the Access to Period Products Initiative, including funding until June 2024.

**Note** that Fairfield College is the venue for the event, which will take place 18 February 2021.

**Note** that the Ministry will facilitate media access to the school on or before the event.

**Agree** that this Briefing will be proactively released after the national launch of the initiative.

**Agree / Disagree**

  
Katrina Casey  
Deputy Secretary  
Sector Enablement and Support

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Hon Jan Tinetti  
Associate Minister of  
Education

12/02/2021

## Summary

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- To mark the the national roll out of the Access to Period Products Initiative, including funding until June 2024, an event will be held on 18 February 2021 at Fairfield College, Chartwell, Hamilton.
- The event is an opportunity to showcase to the media and public:
  - a the national roll out (phase two) of the initiative
  - b funding for the initiative is secured until June 2024
  - c the participation of the 15 schools and kura in the Waikato phase one trial and learning from that phase
  - d benefits and aims of the initiative
  - e student voice and the positive response of students and whanāu to the initiative; and
  - f Government and community support and involvement in the initiative.
- Fairfield College is one of 15 schools to trial the free period products in the Waikato. Further information about the college is attached as **Annex 1**.
- The school's supplier, Organic Initiative (Oi) is a New Zealand company dedicated to choice and sustainability of products. They supply a wide range of products for student use. The school has trialled multiple methods of delivery, there is a vending machine of products within the library and the school nurse also holds a supply of products. Uptake is higher when the products are specifically assigned to students (versus self-referral). Supplier information is attached as **Annex 2**.
- You have been invited to meet with students and staff at Fairfield College that have already taken part in the phase one trial. A run sheet outlining the order of events is provided in **Annex 3**.

## Background

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- 1 The Access to Period Products initiative aims to provide 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. Supplier reports indicate that the uptake of students varied across schools. The initiative started to gain traction from Term 4, 2020.
- 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). Fairfield College's supplier is Oi.
- 4 The purpose of the trial was to have suppliers test out different delivery methods and products in schools, to understand student preferences and their overall thoughts on the initiative to ensure that we recognised their needs in the next phase.

- 5 Overall feedback from phase one has been positive. Students reported that they felt supported by their schools providing free period products. One supplier reported that students reported that the supply of products reduced their embarrassment around having a period.
- 6 We have seen that providing access to free period products helps remove barriers to attendance. The Nest Consulting report we commissioned highlighted that issues when dealing with periods included missing school. It is too early in phase one to identify whether the provision of period products has improved attendance.
- 7 A Youth19 survey released in February 2020 asked nearly 3,000 students who had started menstruating about their experiences of period poverty. It reported that over 21 percent of students in decile one schools had missed school due to lack of menstrual products, with 14 percent missing more than one day a month. Around 12 percent of year 9 to 13 students who were having periods reported difficulty accessing menstrual items due to cost, and 5 percent stated this happened once a month or more.

## National Roll Out

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- 8 Phase two involves the roll out of period products to all schools and kura across New Zealand who decide to opt-in to the initiative. A national procurement process will commence in March to source an appropriate on-going supply.
- 9 Product will be available prior to the end of Term 2 for schools and kura that opt-in by March of this year. For schools that opt in after this, product will be made available from Term 3 with a phased national implementation. Those schools and kura that do not initially choose to take up the initiative will continue to be able to opt-in to the initiative at a later date.
- 10 In the first instance, pads and tampons will be provided. These products are easy to use and appropriate for a broad range of students' age, developmental, and cultural needs in a schooling context.
- 11 Whilst reusable period products such as menstrual cups provide a low-impact, longer-term option for young people, they are not always suitable for the age range and cultural diversity of young people in schools. Some young people can find it challenging to use these at school and are uncomfortable carrying used products in their schoolbags.
- 12 For any future phases of the roll out, we will continue to consider sustainable product options as new products enter the market.

## Funding

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- 13 Funding of \$2.6 million for the first fifteen months of this initiative was met from the Prime Minister's Emerging Priorities Fund. Funding of approximately \$130,000 has been made available to provide products in up to fifteen schools in the Waikato for phase one.
- 14 Cabinet agreed to funding of 9(2)(i) until June 2024 for phase two of the initiative through an operating underspend in 2020/21 for the Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches programme.

**Table 1: Indicative costings for continuing the initiative**

Operating input	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	Total
Period Products	9(2)(j)				
Staffing FTE	.083	.487	.410	.416	1.397
Education resources	9(2)(j)				
Total Operating					
Total Capital					

### Communications Material

- 15 The Ministry will provide communications support to Fairfield College, including assistance with media queries. The Ministry will also ensure that local events to mark the announcement of the national roll out are photographed and made available for use in all our internal and external channels.
- 16 A communications plan has been developed to provide an overview of communications planned for this event and is attached as **Annex 4**.
- 17 A suite of communication materials including a media statement, talking points, key messages and FAQs are attached as **Annex 5**.

### Proactive Release

- 18 We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

## Annexes

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- Annex 1: Fairfield College, Chartwell, Hamilton
- Annex 2: Supplier Information
- Annex 3: Runsheet
- Annex 4: Communications Plan
- Annex 5: Media Statement, talking points, key messages and FAQs

## Annex 2: Supplier

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### 1 Organic Initiative (Oi)

- Oi is New Zealand's only certified organic cotton range of period products.
- To begin, Oi visited the school campus, meeting with key stakeholders including the student body. Presentations and discussions were held with all students covering the basics of period poverty, health and well-being, the importance of this initiative and period product options.
- Each student received samples of the complete range through a pillow pack (containing one of each product from the core range) and a purse pack (containing one of each product from the Oi Girl range and the Oi Guide to Periods with helpful information from their Chief Medical Officer).
- Every student was taken through the online and paper ordering processes, and they could then order their customised pack of products. They also trialled distributing products through the School Nurse as opposed to students placing orders.
- Oi provided a full range of their products, including tampons, pads and liners, as well as menstrual cups.
- They work with charities and social enterprises around New Zealand to help eliminate period poverty.
- During lockdown Oi, in conjunction with their partners including KidsCan, Dignity NZ, Civil Defence, Women's Refuge, delivered over 40,000 packs of pads and tampons to girls in need.

## Media statement

18 February 2021

### Free Period products to be available in all schools and kura

Free period products will soon be available to students in all New Zealand primary, intermediate and secondary schools and kura opting to receive them, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and Associate Education Minister Jan Tinetti announced today.

Speaking at Fairfield College in Hamilton, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the national roll out of free period products to all schools and kura will begin in June 2021 with funding secured until June 2024.

The free period products initiative was piloted in 15 schools and kura in the Waikato region (including Fairfield College). Around 3200 young people were provided with period products during the pilot. The most popular distribution methods were dispensers, helping yourself from a central stock at the school, bulk collecting products or order forms.

“Young people should not miss out on their education because of something that is a normal part of life for half the population. Feedback from students during the pilot was that period products should be available for all who need them, when they need them,” Jacinda Ardern says.

The positive response from schools and students to the programme, has encouraged us to expand the initiative to all New Zealand schools and kura,” Minister Tinetti says.

“The first roll out of period products will be in June 2021, towards the end of Term 2. Planning is underway for a phased roll out. The Ministry of Education will work with suppliers to manage this.”

“Issues with periods at school include embarrassment, stigma, missing classes, being ‘caught out’ without product, cost, lack of knowledge and discomfort.

“Feedback also noted that providing choice was important, both in types of products and the way they are accessed. Students also said they 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,” Minister Tinetti says.

Prime Minister Ardern said removing barriers that prevent healthy, active, educational outcomes for children and young people, is an important part of the Government’s Youth and Wellbeing Strategy.

“Providing free period products at school is one way the Government can directly address poverty, help increase school attendance, and make a positive impact on children’s wellbeing.”

“We want to see improved engagement, learning and behaviour, fewer young people missing school because of their period, and reduced financial hardship amongst families of participating students, Jacinda Ardern said.

“The free period products in school’s initiative is the latest in a series of Government programmes to reduce barriers to education for all students and their whānau. Others in the

series include healthy free school lunches, the abolition of exam fees, and the replacement of school donations,” Minister Tinetti says.

Prime Minister Ardern and Minister Tinetti thanked all 15 Waikato schools and kura for their participation and contribution to the scheme.

“You have allowed us to make sure that the products we provide and how we provide them will meet the diverse range of needs of students, schools and kura throughout the country.” Minister Tinetti said.

Ends



## Talking points for Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Prime Minister

Children's wellbeing is a key issue for this Government. This is because we know that children and young people who feel safe and confident in themselves and in their learning environment best engage and achieve in education, in work and in life.

Providing free period products in all our school and kura is one way the Government can directly address poverty and make a positive impact on children's wellbeing.

As you know, Phase One of the period poverty initiative has involved a mix of 15 urban and rural schools and kura from the Waikato region, providing up to 3,200 young people with period products, including full primary, intermediate, area and secondary schools, and four Māori medium kura.

I am now proud to announce that, from the success and support for this initiative from the Waikato schools and kura that took part, free period products will be rolled out nationally to all schools and kura that choose to opt-in to the programme.

And that funding is available to June 2024 to support this phased roll out.

The initiative responds to various calls we have heard for a government-funded initiative to address period poverty in schools and kura.

Periods are a fact of life for half the population of our country.

Despite this, young people don't always have access to the products they need to feel comfortable at school, engage in their learning, and manage what should be a normal and healthy part of life.

There are a range of reasons for this.

It may be because of cost, to avoid the embarrassment and stigma of asking for products, or sometimes young people do not have the necessary products to hand.

Students also miss out on sporting and cultural activities, affecting their achievement and wellbeing. They can endure the embarrassment of not being supported to properly manage what is a normal, healthy fact of life.

We want to see improved engagement, learning and behaviour, fewer young people missing school because of their period, and reduced financial hardship amongst families of participating students.

All students who need products benefit, whatever the reason, and there is no need to single out those who need it more than others.

The need is for every young person who has a period including young women, girls, transgender and gender diverse youth.

Environmental sustainability is a key consideration of the initiative. We will work with suppliers on opportunities to minimise the plastic packaging and contents of disposable pads and tampons.

Being able to go to school every day is important for overall wellbeing.

It provides an environment where children and young people can grow and learn, build social connections and a sense of belonging, and develop their potential. It has long-term impacts for health, employment opportunities and life choices.

Removing the barriers that prevent healthy, active, educational outcomes for children and young people is all part of the Government's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

Making period products available in all our schools and kura is the latest in a number of Government initiatives to improve the wellbeing of all our students and to reduce the barriers to education faced by them, their parents, and their whānau.

Other important wellbeing and cost reducing initiatives include:

- Supporting schools to cease requesting school donations in return for increased Government support
- Removing exam fees
- The Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches programme which served over 3 million lunches to around 42,000 students in almost 200 schools by the end of 2020. And Term 1 2021 has seen another 303 schools and 84,000 students join the programme.

As part of the Budget 2020 Wellbeing Package, the Government also announced another \$200 million worth of initiatives to improve student and teacher wellbeing across New Zealand in the wake of COVID-19. These initiatives include:

- \$50 million for early learning services, schools and kura to help improve attendance and to manage any wellbeing needs directly related to COVID-19
- Almost \$33 million to deliver new Curriculum Lead positions to work directly with schools and kura to help support wellbeing in schools.
- Around \$76 million for large secondary schools and kura to have greater access to guidance counsellors to help deal with learners' mental health and wellbeing issues arising from COVID-19.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Waikato students, teachers and principals, including all of you at Fairfield College for your participation and support for the first phase of this important initiative for the children and young people of New Zealand.

## Talking points for Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education

To the staff and students of Fairfield College thank you for the warm welcome extended to us today.

I especially want to acknowledge you all for supporting the first phase of the Government's initiative to introduce free period products to students in the last year.

Periods have always been one of those subjects that traditionally we have shied away from discussing, it has always been one of those treated as one of those embarrassing subjects that is talked about quietly – if at all.

Yet periods are a fact of life for half the New Zealand population. Therefore, access to period products is a necessity - not a luxury.

We know for example, from our research, that more than 90,000 students may stay home when they have their periods, because their families simply cannot afford product.

We also know that students are sometimes just 'caught out' without products at school, regardless of their situation at home and that barriers to access exist for students in all deciles.

We also know that lack of access, or poor access, to period products can affect students' achievement, attendance, wellbeing and engagement. For example, around 1 in 12 students report having missed school due to a lack of access to period products.

It is the involvement of 15 Waikato schools like Fairfield College that has led to us announcing today that we will be providing period products to all primary, secondary schools and kura across the country who opt-in to this initiative.

We know from talking to students and staff in the Waikato initiative that period products should be available for all who need them, when they need them.

Students and staff also told us that providing choice in the type of product available and how students access period products was also important.

I was pleased to see that overall students, staff and supplier opinions of the trial programme run in Waikato initiative were overwhelmingly positive.

Students told us that there's not enough information provided by schools - many did not receive education especially at primary school and as a result did not have any information about menstruation before their first period.

Students also wanted education on period wellbeing, period products and the issues associated with period discomfort to be delivered, to all genders, to reduce the stigma and increase empathy and understanding of those who don't have periods.

Students also wanted information about periods, period products, and other practical approaches for managing periods such as tracking and knowing when and who to reach out to for help and advice.

They especially wanted teaching staff to have more information to increase their understanding of students' needs whilst menstruating.

Information such as how to use product, length of time to use product and how to dispose of product was important.

Most students said they wanted to be able to access period products discretely in washrooms and toilets, rather than having to ask a teacher. I think this is perfectly understandable given privacy and stigma concerns.

All of these things have been taken into account as we begin the phased roll out of free period products to schools and kura throughout the country.

While there are education resources available, their quality is variable and there is a lack of consistency and confidence from teachers that use them.

The Ministry of Education will look at how best to address this gap. The Ministry will also look to partner with health educators, organisations and young people to increase the quality of information available to schools and students.

We thank Fairfield College staff and students for your contribution to helping us provide free period products in schools and kura so they are available for all whom need them when they need them.

Kia ora tatou.

## Key messages

### Why the need

- » Periods are a fact of life for half the population – according to analysis of the 2014/15 New Zealand Health Survey, 48 per cent of girls are menstruating by the start of secondary school, and more than 95 per cent are menstruating by the end of Year 13.<sup>1</sup>
- » Findings from the Youth19 Survey<sup>2</sup> found 12 per cent of year 9 to 13 students who menstruate reported difficulty getting access to products due to cost.
- » Access to period products is a necessity, not a luxury.
- » There is a need for equitable access to period products for all children and young people, in a way that responds to all their diverse needs, including cultural perspectives.
- » The need is for every young person who has a period including young women, girls, transgender and gender diverse youth.
- » There are a range of reasons why young people may not have access to period products. It may be because of cost, to avoid the embarrassment and stigma of asking for products, or sometimes young people are simply caught without the necessary products to hand.
- » Recent analysis undertaken by researchers at the University of Otago, using Census data and the New Zealand Deprivation Index, found that 94,788 9 to 18 year olds from the country's poorest households may be unable to afford to buy period products and could therefore be staying home when they have their period.<sup>3</sup>
- » Poor access to period products, education and facilities, can affect students' attendance and engagement at school. Approximately one in twelve students reported having missed school due to lack of access to period products. This trend is worse for lower decile schools, but barriers to access exist for students in schools of all deciles.
- » Students also miss out on sporting and cultural activities, affecting their achievement and wellbeing. They can endure the embarrassment of not being supported to properly manage what is a normal, healthy fact of life.
- » Māori and Pacific children and young people are more likely to be in communities facing greater social economic challenges and therefore disproportionality impacted by having limited access to period products.
- » The initiative upholds, honours and gives practical effect to Te Tiriti | The Treaty, respecting the position of Māori as tangata whenua, in order to support equity and remove barriers to access, for all tamariki to thrive and flourish in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- » As a result of COVID-19, we know that some families and whānau will be facing increased financial stress. This initiative will contribute to the range of approaches Government is taking to mitigate the impacts of socioeconomic disadvantage and to reduce child poverty.

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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> Youth19 Period Poverty Fact Sheet prepared by Youth19 project team  
<https://www.youth19.ac.nz/publications/2020/2/19/period-poverty-fact-sheet>

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

## **Intent of the initiative**

- » The access to period products initiative aims to provide free access to period products in all schools and kura across New Zealand.
- » We know that many families cannot afford period products for their children and young people. And that nearly 95,000 9 to 18-year olds may stay at home because they cannot afford period products.
- » Providing access to free period products to those who need it, in all state and state-integrated schools and kura will:
  - reduce barriers to access and improve school attendance, sports involvement and tertiary participation
  - 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.
- » The outcomes we want to see include improved engagement, learning and behaviour, fewer young people missing school because of their period, and reduced financial hardship amongst the families of participating students.
- » Providing products on a universal basis has several advantages. It minimises any stigma associated with being unable to afford essential products, with being embarrassed to approach an adult, with just being unprepared, or simply for having a period at all. All students who need products benefit, whatever the reason, and there is no need to single out those who need it more than others.
- » Targeting an initiative based on need would require a process to confirm eligibility. This can add to cost and complexity whilst discouraging uptake, even among those who are eligible, meaning some children and young people needing products miss out.
- » Providing products to all students also reinforces the message that periods are a normal part of life, and that everyone should have access to essential products so they can take part in their normal everyday activities.
- » This initiative 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.

## **Initial implementation of the initiative**

- » We are taking a phased approach:

### **Phase one**

- » Phase one involved fifteen schools and kura from the Waikato region, providing up to 3,200 young people with period products. These are a mix of urban and rural based schools including kura, full primary, intermediate, area and secondary schools. Four Māori medium kura took part with a high number of Māori students attending the other schools.
- » We wanted to work with a small group of schools and young people to start with, so we are sure that the products we provide, and the way they are provided meet their needs, and to refine the design and implementation of the wider roll out.
- » It is important that we understand the barriers to accessing products and the diverse experience and cultural perspectives of all young people, so we can provide the right products in the right way. We will continue to work with young people to understand their experiences and the approach that works for them.

- » We worked with five suppliers to test a mix of different pad and tampon products, and ways for students to access these products. These suppliers were identified through a closed tender process for their significant experience in period products and existing involvement in period poverty programmes.
- » Each supplier was allocated selected schools of varying size to supply products to.
- » Products were delivered to schools and kura during Term 3 and 4 2020. The first roll out of products to schools and kura began during September 2020.
- » A research and consulting firm worked in parallel to independently engage with students on their experiences of menstruation, the barriers they currently face, and ideas on how to overcome them. This will include students at the fifteen Waikato schools and kura, schools who are already providing products, and schools currently not providing any products.

### **Phase two**

- » Learnings from the first phase will inform the second phase of implementation and the requirements for the subsequent open tender process.
- » The second stage will be the phased roll out of the initiative to all schools and kura across New Zealand on an opt-in basis. Schools will be asked to opt-in by the end of March. Product will be introduced from the end of Term 2 onwards.
- » In the first instance, pads and tampons will be provided. These products are easy to use and appropriate for a broad range of students' age, developmental, and cultural needs in a schooling context. Whilst reusable period products such as menstrual cups provide a low-impact, longer-term option for young people, they are not always suitable for the age range and cultural diversity of young people in schools. Some young people can find it challenging to use these at school and are uncomfortable carrying used products in their schoolbags.

Those schools and kura that did not opt-in to the initiative by the end of March will still be able to do so at a later date.

### **Ongoing development**

- » As product is introduced into schools and kura, we will be considering how we can support the use of alternative products, including menstrual cups and eco-friendly sanitary underwear. We will also explore options for more sustainable waste management.
- » We will also explore how we can strengthen wider education on periods for both students and the adults around them including teachers, parents and whānau.

### **Working with others**

- » The initiative is responding to various calls we have heard for a government-funded initiative to address period poverty in schools and kura. Our online education conversation, the Kōrero Mātauranga, told us that many people saw child poverty as a key barrier to educational success.
- » We are also working closely with selected schools and kura, young people, charitable organisations, social enterprises, and other stakeholders to understand what is currently in place and develop and test the best way of providing products in schools.

- » This includes engaging with a range of children and young people to understand the barriers to accessing products and the most effective mechanisms to support them to access products.
- » Environmental sustainability is a key consideration of the initiative. We will work with suppliers on opportunities to minimise the plastic packaging and contents of disposable pads and tampons.
- » Consultation with these key stakeholders will inform any subsequent nationwide procurement process and the subsequent progressive roll out of the initiative to all schools.

### **Funding**

- » Funding of \$2.6 million for the first fifteen months of this initiative was met from the Prime Minister's Emerging Priorities Fund. Funding of approximately \$130,000 has been made available to provide products up to fifteen schools in the Waikato for Phase One.
- » Cabinet agreed to fund Phase Two of the initiative up until June 2024 through operating underspend from the Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches programme.

### **Wider wellbeing**

- » Access to period products is just one way to remove barriers that prevent children and young people regularly attending school.
- » Being able to go to school everyday is important for overall wellbeing. It provides a safe environment where children and young people can grow and learn, build social connections and a sense of belonging, and develop their potential. It has long-term impacts for health, employment opportunities and life choices.

### **Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy**

- » Removing barriers that prevent healthy, active, educational outcomes for children and young people, is also part of the Government's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.
- » Children and Young People having what they need is one of the key outcomes from the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.
- » Providing free period products at school is one-way government can directly address poverty and positively impact children's wellbeing.
- » The provision of period products in school's initiative complements more than 75 initiatives included in the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy when it was launched last year. It sits alongside other initiatives such free school lunches, cheaper visits to the doctors and the school donations scheme that will help families with the costs of essentials.
- » This will contribute to achieving the strategy outcome that children and young people have what they need, including material wellbeing. This also supports the key priority in the strategy:
  - Reducing child poverty and mitigating the impacts of poverty and socio-economic disadvantage.



## Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

### Child poverty

#### **Why can't families provide these products for their own children and young people?**

There are many reasons why families and whānau may not be able to provide period products for their children, often through no fault of their own. For families who struggle with living costs, the additional cost of these products can be a real challenge. The embarrassment of asking adults can also sometimes be a barrier for young people. Sometimes periods just happen whether children and young people are prepared or not, regardless of their situation at home.

Whatever the reason, access to period products is a necessity, not a luxury. The need is for every young person who has a period including young women, girls, transgender and gender diverse youth. It is important to provide options that meet this need, so that all children and young people can engage in education and their other regular activities.

#### **Why is the Government taking on the caregiver role and providing Period Products in schools? Isn't this a role for families?**

We know that many families cannot afford period products for their children, and that nearly 95,000 9 to 18-year olds may stay at home because they cannot afford period products.

Providing period products for young women can also increase wellbeing and improve attendance and engagement in school and other everyday activities, including sports, cultural activities, and work. Removing barriers that prevent learning, developing and involvement for children and young people, is also part of the Government's Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

The Ministry of Education will be working with young people, schools and kura, and with parents and whānau to ensure all learners can access these products in a safe, culturally appropriate, accessible and non-stigmatising manner.

#### **The Warehouse has period items from \$1 a box. With this and other initiatives in the sector, is there really a need for this?**

More affordable options for families are welcome and this and other community initiatives help to relieve the financial pressure on families. However, cost is not the only barrier preventing children and young people from accessing the products that they need. The stigma of asking adults, at home or at school, can be a barrier. For some families and young people, such as those in rural communities, getting to a store or community initiative may not be straightforward. Schools can be a stable, safe, and consistent location for young people to access period products.

### **About access to period products in schools and kura**

#### **Why should we provide period products in schools?**

Poor access to period products can affect students' attendance and engagement at school. Students can endure the stigma of not being supported to properly manage what is a normal, healthy fact of life and miss out on learning, sporting and cultural activities, affecting their achievement and wellbeing. Approximately one in twelve students reported having missed school due to lack of access to period products.

### **What's the outcome we want for students and families?**

Providing access to free tampons and pads to those who need it, in all state and state-integrated schools and kura will:

- reduce barriers to access
- 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.
- The outcomes we want to see include improved engagement, learning and behaviour, fewer young people missing school because of their period, and reduced financial hardship amongst the families of participating students.

### **How will this initiative support tamariki and rangatahi Māori and Pacific children and young people and their families and whānau?**

The Ministry has consulted with Māori and Pacific children and young people, whānau and families as part of the trial, to understand their perspectives and how best the initiative can meet their needs. We continue to look for opportunities to gather feedback to inform ongoing delivery. This will include talking about cultural perceptions and approaches to menstruation, types of period products, and different ways to access products.

### **Who did you consult with about the initiative?**

A small number of schools and kura were consulted during the development of the initiative. We also drew on research findings and consultation with others, including with the Government of Victoria. This confirmed that there is a need for period products amongst students.

Part of the implementation of the first phase of this initiative involved working closely with selected schools and kura, young people, charitable organisations, philanthropic and social enterprises, and other stakeholders to understand what was in place, and develop and test the best way of providing products in schools. This included engaging with a diverse range of children and young people to understand the barriers to accessing products and the most effective mechanisms to support them to access products.

Conversations with suppliers and key stakeholders have been ongoing throughout the first phase, and this consultation will help inform the nationwide procurement process and the subsequent roll out of the initiative to all schools that opt-in.

### **Is this initiative based on models used overseas? If so which ones, and why?**

The approach we took needed to work well within the New Zealand school system, which is why we are not directly implementing an approach designed overseas. Our school populations are diverse, and we wanted to ensure that all children and young people with periods have access to the products they need. Because of this, we will continue to work with schools and kura to tailor our approach. We will also connect with other key stakeholders, including non-government organisations, advocates and philanthropic organisations.

### **Why are we providing to all students? Why not targeted to only those most in need?**

Providing products on a universal basis has several advantages. It minimises any stigma associated with being unable to afford essential products, with being embarrassed to approach an adult, with just being unprepared, or simply for having a period at all. All students who need products benefit, whatever the reason, and there is no need to single out those who need it more than others.

Targeting programmes based on need also requires a process to confirm eligibility. This can add to cost and complexity whilst discouraging uptake, even among those who are eligible, meaning some children needing products miss out.

Providing products to all students also reinforces the message that periods are a normal part of life, and that everyone should have access to essential products so they can take part in their normal everyday activities.

### **Why do we need to reinvent the wheel? Why can't we just implement what has been developed in other countries?**

We need to work with schools and kura to design an approach that works within the New Zealand school system. Attempting to implement a centrally designed approach based on approaches and experience overseas will not necessarily work: our school system is decentralised, our school populations are diverse, and we are including primary and intermediate schools in our initiative.

The Ministry continues to talk with our counterparts overseas to learn from their initial implementation experiences and outcomes. This will also inform the approach as we move forward.

### **Aren't schools already busy and we're asking them to do more?**

Taking part in the initiative is not compulsory. Schools can decide if it is in their best interests to participate. Feedback from schools indicates that access to period products is already a concern, with some schools already using their own resources to offer some products to students. This initiative will reduce or minimise costs to schools. While initially implementing the initiative may require some time from schools, our long-term goal is that implementation will require minimal time from school staff.

### **Phase one: Waikato trial**

#### **Which schools were the first to receive period products during Term 3, 2020?**

The access to period products initiative began during Term 3 2020 in fifteen Waikato schools and kura providing products to around 3200 students. We wanted to work with a small group of schools and young people to start with, so we are sure that the products we provide, and the way they are provided, meet their needs. The initiative is now being expanded to all state and state-integrated schools, on an opt-in basis.

#### **Why did the first stage only involve a few schools?**

We wanted to work with schools, kura, young people and others to find the best way to deliver period products to young people and understand more from young people about what the barriers are. This gave us the opportunity to evaluate different approaches and refine and improve the initiative before expanding to other schools and kura across New Zealand.

#### **Why these schools in the Waikato region?**

A regional focus ensures that we can better support participating schools, reduce overhead and evaluation costs, whilst learning more about what is involved in providing period products to a range of schools. The Waikato region provided a wide mix of settings across a relatively small geographical area.

While there are several regions facing particular socio-economic barriers where children and young people would have benefitted from free period products, it is important we first work to make sure that we are providing the right products in the right way. Therefore, it was agreed that the scope would be limited to the Waikato in the first instance.

### **How was the initiative implemented?**

Five suppliers with significant experience in period products and who are currently involved in period poverty programmes were identified to take part in a closed tender process for the first phase and have been providing products to fifteen schools across Waikato since the beginning of Term 3 2021.

Suppliers distributed products in various ways with a focus on engaging students in the design of their approach. At some schools and kura, students ordered their preferred products for up to three months to take home, with additional product available at school for emergencies. Other schools had dispensers installed or product available in the bathrooms for students to access discretely. The first phase of this initiative is being extended until the end of Term 2 2021 to ensure there is no lapse in product for these students.

### **What was the feedback from the trial?**

The feedback from the trial was overwhelmingly positive with students emphasising they felt heard and cared for. Students also valued having choice, both in product and how it was made available to them. Schools have also reported a shift in culture at school as the provision of product is beginning to reduce the stigma around periods for their students.

### **Implementation**

#### **What do we need to do as a school to sign up?**

To opt-in to the initiative school leaders simply fill an online response form (link to come) and we will be in contact with further information on timing and next steps once the Government procurement process is complete.

#### **Does the initiative include primary, intermediate and secondary schools?**

Yes, the initiative will be available to all state and state-integrated schools and kura. Research shows the average age young people start menstruating is decreasing, and access to period products in primary and intermediate, as well as secondary, is needed. In Phase one, these are a mix of urban and rural based schools including kura, full primary, intermediate area and secondary schools. There are four Māori medium kura involved, whilst a high number of Māori students are attending the other schools.

#### **How many children and young people will be able to access free period products under this initiative?**

Uptake will depend on how many schools and kura opt-in and how many students access the offer. Phase one has provided access to period products for up to 3,200 young people. Research from the University of Otago indicates that almost 95,000 9 to 18-year olds from the country's lowest income households may be unable to afford period products. The first phase of delivery to fifteen Waikato schools and kura has helped us to get an idea of likely uptake across the country.

#### **Does the Ministry of Education have an estimate in mind of how many schools will be likely to opt-in to this initiative in 2021?**

Initial research indicates up to 80 percent of schools and kura are likely to opt-in. Phase one, providing to the fifteen schools and kura in the Waikato region, will help inform the detailed implementation plans and also contribute to our analysis of expected uptake.

#### **Will this require staffing in schools?**

The initiative may require some initial input from schools as the supplier sets up, however once this is complete, the supplier will facilitate the distribution of products with minimum burden on schools.

Young people often are embarrassed to talk to adults so we will work with schools on the best way to deliver period products that minimises interactions with staff.

### **How will students access the products?**

This will depend on the procurement process and supplier(s) contracted. We anticipate this will draw on methods tested in phase one, including dispensers, order forms and bulk supply. We have learnt from phase one that students really value choice, both in distribution method and product, so will work with suppliers on how best we can meet students' needs.

### **How will you source period products for schools? How can suppliers get involved in the initiative?**

We will be running an open tender process on the Government Electronic Tender Service (GETS) from late March. This is designed to promote open and fair competition in the New Zealand market.

Suppliers interested in getting involved can register for this service at [gets.govt.nz/](https://gets.govt.nz/) to be notified when the tender is posted.

### **What are the details of the open tender?**

The tender requirements will be informed by initial engagement with potential suppliers through the procurement process and from the learnings from phase one of the initiative. We will work with suppliers to design a solution that best meets young people's needs, delivers products as quickly and simply as possible, and offers value for money. We are looking to contract supplier(s) for a minimum of two years.

### **When will product be available for students?**

Once a supplier or suppliers have been identified, we will take a phased approach to introduce products into schools and kura. The first will receive products by the end of Term 2 with delivery continuing to roll out throughout the year. Those schools and kura that opt-in by the end of March will be included in the first phase of implementation. Schools and kura will be kept informed about the timing of the phased roll out.

### **What is the role of Boards of Trustees?**

We would expect them to be closely involved in decisions about whether to opt-in to the programme.

### **Is the initiative compulsory?**

At this stage, taking part in the initiative will be a school or kura decision and will not be compulsory. We are providing period products to schools and kura on an opt-in basis so that schools can assess whether to offer period products to students and what is the best way to do this for their community. Initial feedback indicates that access to period products is already a concern for a number of schools, and we expect uptake to reflect this.

### **Why is the initiative offered on an opt-in basis?**

Offering the initiative on an opt-in basis recognises that needs will vary across schools, kura and communities, and that schools and kura are best placed to assess local interest and demand. It provides access and choice for any school that identifies a need, including schools where a need may not be so obvious. For example, we know of a number of single sex boys' schools that partner with other local schools for particular classes or across year groups and include students of more than one gender.

### **What if schools and kura are already providing period products for their students?**

Schools and kura can choose to opt-in to the initiative. We know some have already established ways to provide period products to students, including through charitable providers and/or by using their own resources.

### **Products and disposal**

#### **What types of products will be available?**

Initially, funding will provide pads and tampons. These are easy to use and suit a broad range of students, especially in a schooling context. Whilst other reusable products can provide a longer-term more environmentally friendly option, they are not always suitable for the age range and cultural diversity of young people in schools. Some young people can find it challenging to use these at school and are uncomfortable carrying used products in their schoolbags.

As this initiative progresses, we will explore how we can support the use of sustainable options and provide additional products, such as reusable menstrual cups and period underwear. We intend to engage with charitable organisations, philanthropic and social enterprises, and others to explore how we might widen the variety of products available and educate young people on these options.

#### **Will the initiative include making sustainable products available?**

In the first instance, pads and tampons will be provided. These products are easy to use and appropriate for a broad range of students' age, developmental, and cultural needs in a schooling context. As the initiative develops, we will explore opportunities to support the use of sustainable and reusable options alongside educating students around these products.

#### **What about the provision of bins?**

The implementation process will establish the roles and responsibilities for the day-to-day management of the initiative including appropriate disposal. This is planned to start later this year.

#### **Are there particular health and safety considerations?**

It is important that children and young people menstruating have access to appropriate and safe period products. Research indicates that people who do not have the products they need are often forced to use unsafe or unreliable alternatives, such as newspaper or rags, which increase the risk of infection. Hygienic disposal of pads and tampons through the use of bins, is already a managed by schools. Health and safety information will be provided with products provided to students.

## **Funding**

### **What will it cost to supply period products to every school in New Zealand?**

We have done some preliminary costings however, these are commercial-in-confidence at this stage. We first need to tender for the supply, delivery, and distribution of the products. Final costings will be determined by factors such as the cost of supply and distribution, the number of schools opting in, the percentage of students who take-up the offer, and the mode of in-school access.

### **How can I find out more?**

Contact [accesstoperiodproducts@education.govt.nz](mailto:accesstoperiodproducts@education.govt.nz) or visit [education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/wellbeing-in-education/access-to-free-period-products/](https://education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/wellbeing-in-education/access-to-free-period-products/).

### **Is there a cabinet paper and will you be releasing it?**

Cabinet has approved the initiative and its funding. We are not releasing the Cabinet Paper at this time because it includes commercial sensitive information that we will be using to run the nationwide open tender process. Once the tender process has concluded, the paper will be released.