



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Healthy School Lunches: Report Back and Proposed Approach for the Future of the Programme

Portfolio Associate Education (Hon David Seymour)

On 20 October 2025, following reference from the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee, Cabinet:

Report back on the new 2025 and 2026 delivery model

1 **noted** the progress and improvements made to the Healthy School Lunches programme throughout 2025, and that the Government is on track to achieve the forecasted cost efficiencies presented to Cabinet in September 2024 [CAB-24-MIN-0385];

2 **agreed** that the name of the programme be updated to 'Healthy School Lunches';

3 9(2)(f)(iv)

Sharpening the policy objectives

4 **agreed** that the policy objectives of Healthy School Lunches should reflect the problem this Government is trying to solve, and its priorities, and that the new primary objective is to mitigate the impact of food insecurity in school;

5 **agreed** that the policy also seek two sub-objectives:

5.1 to mitigate the immediate, negative impact of hunger on a student's ability to learn in schools; and

5.2 to mitigate the long-term negative effects of food insecurity on a child's physical, cognitive, and neurological development;

Delivering the best approach to mitigating the impact of food insecurity beyond 2027

6 9(2)(f)(iv)

7

9(2)(f)(iv)

- 8 **directed** the Ministry of Education to, driven by the lessons of piloting with business and working with experts, investigate how best to achieve the policy objectives of Healthy School Lunches, including considering:
- 8.1 which children and young people are the intended recipients of support;
 - 8.2 which delivery approach best achieves the objective of mitigating the impacts of food insecurity for this intended cohort, including:
 - 8.2.1 whether the objective of mitigating the effects of food insecurity is best achieved by providing food in schools only, or also in other contexts that reach children during the time they are not at school;
 - 8.2.2 whether there is a more effective way to reach the population at risk of food insecurity than the current approach, such as exploring a voucher-type solution and use of the Integrated Data Infrastructure database;
 - 8.3 what delivery looks like if the Government continues centrally delivering food to learners, including:
 - 8.3.1 the benefits and risks of combining Government food programmes in a single programme; and
 - 8.3.2 who should govern the programme in the future; and
 - 8.4 how this approach contributes to and aligns with the Government response to food insecurity in schools;
- 9 **invited** the Associate Minister to report back to Cabinet in 2026 with an update on the progress to date of the above work, and to seek further feedback.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Secretary's Note: This minute replaces SOU-25-MIN-0141. Cabinet agreed to amend paragraph 8.4.
