

## Report: Update on healthy drinks, food, and nutrition in schools

|                 |                                           |           |            |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| To:             | Hon Erica Stanford, Minister of Education |           |            |
| Cc:             | Hon Dr Shane Reti, Minister of Health     |           |            |
| Date:           | 5/12/2024                                 | Deadline: | 31/01/2025 |
| Security Level: | In-Confidence                             | Priority: | Low        |
| From:           | 9(2)(a)                                   | Phone:    | 9(2)(a)    |
| Role:           | Senior Policy Manager                     | METIS No: | 1339655    |

### Why are we sending this to you?

- In 2022, previous Ministers directed us to undertake further work on healthy drinks, food, and nutrition in schools, and Cabinet noted a duty to report back to Ministers on this work [CAB-22-MIN-0336 refers].
- This report gives you visibility of these past directions and the status of this work, in order to meet Cabinet's expectations.

### What action do we need, by when?

- We are seeking your agreement to not progress this work at this time because it does not align with your priorities.
- Please return the signed paper by Friday, 31 January 2025.

### Key facts, issues and questions

- Despite some initial work in late 2023, we have not progressed this work over the last year as we have been focussed on progressing Ministers' priorities and the Ministry's business as usual responsibilities.
- We do not recommend progressing this work at this time as it does not align with your priorities and we do not have sufficient available resource to progress it.

## Alignment with Government priorities

1. Work on healthy drinks, food, and nutrition in schools does not align with the Government's education priorities. However, the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027 identifies addressing diabetes, addressing poor nutrition, and reducing decayed, missing, and filled teeth in children as focuses for the Government in health<sup>1</sup>.

## Background

### There is a duty for school boards to promote healthy food and nutrition.

2. Healthy school environments can contribute to positive health outcomes for children. The Education (School Boards) Amendment Regulations 2022 state "The board of a school must promote healthy food and nutrition for all of the school's students"<sup>2</sup>. This means there is a duty for schools to *promote* healthy food and nutrition. However, there is no duty for schools to *provide* only healthy drinks, food, or nutrition.

### The public were consulted on a duty for schools to only provide healthy drinks.

3. Previous Ministers considered introducing an additional duty for schools to only provide healthy drinks. This work sought to reduce the consumption of sugar sweetened beverages, and therefore improve children's health outcomes and address health inequities. This work was initiated because:
  - 3.1. The consumption of sugars in sugar sweetened beverages contribute to 26% of the total sugar intake of children<sup>3</sup>.
  - 3.2. Research in New Zealand has highlighted sugars as contributing significantly to high rates of obesity, poor oral health, diabetes, and other health-related diseases<sup>4</sup>.
  - 3.3. Māori children are more likely to consume sugar sweetened beverages<sup>5</sup> and experience poor oral health outcomes<sup>6</sup>, compared to non-Māori children. This work could deliver positive outcomes in relation to *ōritetanga/equity* by contributing to redressing health inequities.
  - 3.4. Pacific children are more likely to experience poor oral health outcomes compared to non-Pacific children<sup>7</sup>.
4. From April to June 2022, the public were consulted on different options related to placing this additional duty. Most submitters supported placing an additional duty for primary and secondary schools to only provide healthy drinks [CAB-22-MIN-0336 refers].
5. Ultimately, previous Ministers decided against this approach. This was due to a lack of information around the potential barriers and impacts this duty may have on secondary schools [CAB-22-MIN-0366 refers].

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<sup>1</sup> [Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027 \(Ministry of Health\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Education \(School Boards\) Amendment Regulations 2022 \(New Zealand Legislation\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Sundborn et al. \(2015\) \(New Zealand Medical Association\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [New Zealand Beverage Guidance Panel \(2014\) \(Pacific Health Dialog\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [New Zealand Health Survey \(Ministry of Health\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Wai 2575 Māori Health Trends Report \(Ministry of Health\)](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Bula Sautu - A window on quality 2021: Pacific health in the year of COVID-19 \(Health Quality & Safety Commission New Zealand\)](#)

## **Previous Ministers directed us to undertake further work and report back.**

6. In August 2022, the previous Cabinet:
  - 6.1. noted that the Ministry has been directed to gather evidence about how to implement a duty to provide only healthy drinks in primary and secondary schools, and to report back to Ministers of Education, and
  - 6.2. noted that the Ministry has also been directed to investigate a potential joint work programme with the Ministry of Health on the provision of healthy food and nutrition in schools, and to report back to Ministers of Education and the Minister of Health.
7. These report backs were due in December 2023 [CAB-22-MIN-0336 refers]. However, in July 2023, the previous Minister of Education agreed to defer these report backs to December 2024. This was to reduce the burden on schools from new initiatives to implement and focus on other education priorities [METIS 1312837 refers].

## **Status of this work**

8. Despite some initial work in late 2023, we have not progressed this work over the last year as we have been focussed on progressing Ministers' priorities and the Ministry's business as usual responsibilities.
9. We are seeking your agreement to not progress this work at this time. This is because:
  - 9.1. this work does not align with your priorities,
  - 9.2. restarting this work would require the reallocation of some of the Ministry's staffing resource and have implications for work currently underway, and
  - 9.3. a potential additional duty may increase the burden on schools from new initiatives to implement. Not progressing this work at this time can better enable schools to focus on implementing your priorities, such as the refreshed curriculum.

## **Risks**

10. This work sought to reduce the consumption of sugar sweetened beverages, and therefore improve children's health outcomes and address health inequities. Ministry of Health officials have noted that the Government Policy Statement on Health 2024-2027 identifies addressing diabetes, addressing poor nutrition, and reducing decayed, missing, and filled teeth in children as focuses for the Government in health, and that there are connections between this work and these focuses.
11. There are health organisations and members of the public who support placing an additional duty on schools and further work on this topic (for example, as evident from the 2022 consultation). They may express concern about this work not progressing. However, clarity that this work will not progress allows officials to be transparent in our communications.

## Recommended Actions

The Ministry of Education recommends you:

- a. **note** that, in 2022, previous Ministers directed the Ministry to undertake further work on healthy drinks, food, and nutrition in schools and Cabinet noted a duty to report back to Ministers on this work.

Noted

- b. **agree** for the Ministry to not progress this work at this time because it does not align with your priorities.

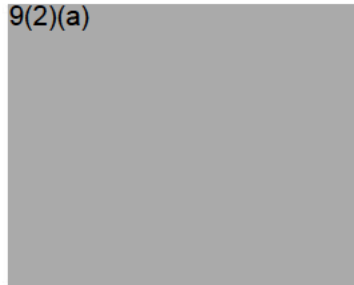
Agree / Disagree

### Proactive Release:

- c. **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this paper in full once it has been considered by you.

Agree / Disagree

9(2)(a)



**Senior Policy Manager**  
**Te Pou Kaupapahere**

05/12/2024

**Hon Erica Stanford**  
**Minister of Education**

17.12.24