



PRESS RELEASE

14 May 2020

Major expansion of school lunch programme

A major expansion of the free and healthy school lunch programme, funded through the COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund, will see around 200,000 more New Zealand children get a free lunch every school day and creating an estimated 2,000 more jobs.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern says the COVID-19 pandemic has hit many families hard, meaning there is an urgent and increasing need for support.

“A full stomach makes all the difference to a child’s learning, so we have moved quickly to fund a major expansion of the school lunch programme – which will also create jobs,” Jacinda Ardern said.

“The programme will expand over the next year, from feeding nearly 8000 students currently to around 200,000 students by Terms 2-3 in 2021. It will target students in schools with the highest disadvantage.

“Providing a free and healthy lunch at school is one way to help make New Zealand the best place in the world to be a child and to make that difference immediately,” Jacinda Ardern said.

Education Minister Chris Hipkins says \$216.7 million in operating and \$3.9 million in capital expenditure has been allocated over the next two years to fund the expansion.

“The expansion will build on the current phased roll out, which is on track to deliver free healthy school lunches for up to 21,000 students in Years 1-8 by the end of this year.

“The scale of expansion means work is needed to prepare and scale up during Term 3, including hiring local people and building systems and processes that reduce compliance costs on providers and improve data security.

“Based on what we already know from the way the programme is working, it’s estimated that around 2,000 jobs in local communities will be created from the expansion,” Chris Hipkins said.

Minister for Children Tracey Martin said that providing the lunches had a direct benefit to the children and their local communities.

“This is another way of helping these families and school communities at a time when every extra bit of assistance is important.”

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