

Hon Chris Hipkins

MP for Remutaka

Minister for COVID-19 Response

Minister of Education

Minister for the Public Service

Leader of the House



Ref: OIA0104

12 April 2021

Liam Hehir

fyi-request-14926-8a5aaeaf@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Liam

Thank you for your email of 15 March 2021 requesting the following information:

- *Can you please advise what information, if any, is gathered by the Ministry of Education about the amount of food supplied under the programme is wasted? That is, not used in meals actually consumed by schoolchildren and disposed of as refuse?*

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

I am aware that the Ministry are in the process of evaluating the programme, which includes understanding food consumption/waste. This is in a pilot phase at present and therefore no further detail can be applied.

I understand that for the Ministry to evaluate/monitor this programme they are differentiating between food waste (food that is started then rejected) and surplus food (extra meals that are not required). Surplus food is able to be redistributed and is either eaten on the day, taken home by students or distributed to a food charity (by the school or supplier).

I have been advised by the Ministry that there may be times where there is a surplus of food as part of the programme, for example when students are absent from school. Where schools and kura have chosen to outsource to a supplier, the issue of surplus lunches can be raised with the supplier in the first instance and may be addressed by adjusting the number of orders. Suppliers can also provide information about which foods should be disposed of if not eaten straight away, and which can be safely sent home with children.

Once lunches have been delivered, or where lunches are prepared onsite, any surplus food is managed by each individual school or kura. The Ministry encourages food to be redistributed where it is safe to do so, which could include sending kai home with students, or sharing with neighbouring schools, kura, early learning services or the local community.

Schools providing their own lunches are being encouraged by the Ministry to move towards a zero-waste policy. The Ministry of Education guidelines require schools to reduce food wastage through menu planning, stock management, and use of leftovers if it can be done safely. Schools need a plan to deal with food wastage, e.g. composting, and are encouraged to minimise packaging and reduce the use of plastic food wrap and single use cutlery and tableware. Suppliers are also asked to consider solutions to minimise waste as part of the tender process and most are now working with pig farms to manage this waste.

It is understood that it can take some time for the students to get used to eating new types of nutritious food. As a result, the Ministry are expecting to see food waste, with the expectation this will decrease over time. Some of the larger suppliers are collecting the waste to analyse what students are rejecting and this is feeding into their ongoing menu planning.

Thank you again for your email. You have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review this decision. You can do this by writing to info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CH', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Hipkins
Minister of Education