

Eat right[®] Be bright

WHO ARE WE?

Eat Right Be Bright is a volunteer led, community based not for profit trust. Our mission is for every child in Aotearoa to be nutritiously fed at every school, every day. So that every child can have the best and most equitable opportunity to achieve at school and in life.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. A school lunch programme is integral to the education of our children in New Zealand.** Children have a right to an education, to receive nutritious foods and have knowledge of nutrition. Healthy and nutritious food is indispensable to good health into adulthood and a good education. A school lunch nourishes the mind, body and spirit so that our children can be put in the best position to access their education equitably and reach their full potential. This benefits all New Zealanders in the short, medium and long term.
- 2. A universal school lunch programme ensures no child is left out,** capturing all those in need and free from stigma. Moreover, the health and education uplifts of a universal school lunch programme benefit all children in New Zealand, wherever they are.
- 3. A universal school lunch programme needs to be resourced properly** through regular and secure funding from central government. Programmes are not sustainable or effective if run solely on charity, volunteers, donations of food or in using up the time of teachers.
- 4. To maximise the health and education benefits** of a universal school lunch programme, school lunches should be fresh and freshly made and required to comply with health and nutritional guidelines.
- 5. Communities of schools,** together with the parents and children within them, should be empowered to decide the exact implementation of a school lunch programme to suit their locality and the cultures of the children within them via policy guidelines, funding and resources. Communities would partner with professional nutritional and implementation advisors to deliver their goals successfully and sustainably.
- 6. A universal school lunch programme needs to be monitored and evaluated to ensure the health and nutritional standards of the food** provided are being maintained and ensure the health and education objectives are being met.

OUR AIM:

Secure legislation to provide public funds and resources for all children in New Zealand at school and in early childhood education (ECE) to receive a daily fresh, healthy, nutritious and delicious lunch.

WHY IS A GOVERNMENT FUNDED SCHOOL LUNCH NEEDED?

- **Investment case for school feeding:** World Food Programme (WFP) working with World Bank calculates that for every US\$1 spent on a state sponsored school feeding programme, US\$3-US\$8 is returned in terms of benefits to health and education. School feeding is an investment in human capital rather than a social cost (State of School Feeding, WFP, 2013). It will benefit all New Zealanders.
- **Food poverty and health:** 27% of children in New Zealand are living under the poverty line (Child Poverty Monitor 2017). Minimum wage earning/beneficiary families need to spend up to 52% of their income to purchase a basic healthy diet (Otago University Food Costs Survey 2011). Higher rates of diabetes, obesity, infectious diseases, fatigue, poor mental health, greater psychological stress and poor academic development in children are found where healthy food is less accessible. In addition, cheap, accessible food is energy rich meaning that around a third of children are malnourished but obese (“Number of New Zealand children hospitalised with malnutrition doubles as food costs bite” by Kirsty Johnson, Herald, 19 Sept 2017). This does currently and will put an increasingly chronic strain on the public health system.
- **Charities are stretched:** The existing charities/social investment businesses cannot keep up with demand and should not continue to shoulder the burden that they do in perpetuity. It is arguable whether the food any of them are providing can be considered a healthy nutritious lunch, on a daily basis. They are also fighting for the same donations from the community and from businesses, which cannot be cost efficient or reliable, especially in the event of another economic shock. Public funds and resources are required for a country-wide, holistic, nutritious school lunch programme.

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WHY ALL CHILDREN IN NEW ZEALAND?

- **Food insecurity outside lower decile schools:** We know that there are children who have no lunch at all schools, including up to decile 10. A universal system is the only way to capture every child in need.
- **Free from stigma:** A universal system not only captures every child, it reaches them free from stigma. Anecdotal evidence informs us that the emotional impact of being the child at school without food is devastating; the sense of shame is long lasting into adulthood.
- **Health benefits for all:** Making a truly health and nutritious lunch is tricky for everyone. A study of lunchboxes in the UK in 2016 found that only 1.6% met nutritional standards (Harper et al, Leeds University, UK 2016).
- **Educational benefits for all:** In universal school lunch pilot projects in UK, learning outcomes went up as well as attendance. This was greater in children from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Teachers also reported that behaviour improved. (Dimpleby and Vincent, School Food Plan, UK, 2013)
- **Social cohesion:** Also in the same schools/pilot project studies, teachers reported that the children eating together fostered a greater sense of social cohesion. In a study of a New Zealand hot lunch programme in Auckland, children reported feeling valued by society (Massey University study of Feed the Need programme, 2016). In Japan, classes take it in turn to serve the other children and clean up promoting social responsibility.
- **Economies of scale:** If all children have a school lunch as of right, take-up will be high (Dimpleby and Vincent, School Food Plan, UK, 2013) and as a consequence cost per meal reduces.

SAVINGS

- **The World Bank states that improving nutrition contributes to** increased productivity, economic development, and poverty reduction by improving work capacity, cognitive development, academic performance, and health (through reducing disease and mortality).
- **New Zealand is currently spending** \$2.15bn p.a. treating adult obesity and type 2 diabetes, this cost is set to rise by 7% over the next 5 years.
- **New Zealand also spends** \$46m on all hospital dental costs. \$14.7m of that was spent on 6600 children under 12 who had teeth extracted last year under general anaesthetic. This figure does not account for the cost of the 89,000 children under 15 who had one tooth removed last year.
- **In addition, poor nutrition contributes to loss** of productivity, losses in schooling, and increased health care costs, all of which the World Bank estimates cost several billion dollars a year in terms of lost GDP.

HOW TO ACHIEVE OUR AIM?

- Via a broad coalition of support from the charity sector, academics, educators, politicians.
- Create public support via traditional and social media and a petition.
- A tri-sector pilot project to trial a universal healthy school lunch programme for New Zealand.

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“ children are entitled to receive adequate nutritious foods and clean drinking-water, and to have a knowledge of nutrition ”

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

SCHOOL FOOD PROGRAMMES AROUND THE WORLD

United Kingdom – Population 66m. Obesity 25-27% (NHS/OECD).

2 course hot meal. Free for all up to 8 years old since 2014. Pilot projects of UFISM say 23% increase in consumption of vegetables and fruit, and 18% drop in crisps (Source: School Food Plan, 2013). Pilot projects also state a 3-5% increase in learning Maths and English as well as reports from teachers that student's behaviour improved.

Sweden – Population 10m. Obesity 16% (OECD).

Since 2011 the Swedish school law stipulates that school lunches must be nutritious, thus equal a third of the recommended daily intake of energy and nutrients. Lunch free for all 7-16 years old.

Finland – Population 5.5m. Obesity 22%.

(WHO Europe). Free lunches for all. Packed lunches are banned in schools. Finnish students have the highest levels of reading, maths and science globally (Programme for International Student Assessment).

Japan – Population 127m. Obesity 4.5%.

School lunches are designed by nutritionists. 35% of ingredients are sourced locally. Parents pay \$4-4.30, meals are subsidised for low income families. Changes were made to the school programme in 2005 and 2008 in order to use school lunches to teach healthy eating/traditional Japanese balanced diet. These changes have had a positive impact with the child obesity rate declining and a reduction in students suffering from eating disorders.

Italy – Population 60m. Obesity 17%.

Parents pay \$5, 20% discount if more than one child attending school. Also 25% discount available for low income families, free for poorest families. In some areas food is prepared in school kitchens, in other areas they are prepared in central hubs. In Rome, produce is provided by city allotments.

Brazil – Population 207m. Obesity 17.9%.

Since 2009 all children enrolled in public school should receive school meal. School meals are required to provide at least 30% of daily nutritional requirements. The levels of sugar and salt in each item on the menu have to be within nationally set limits.

United States – Population 323m. Child Obesity 17%.

In response to high obesity levels, in 2010, the US Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) mandating school lunches to meet new nutritional standards set by the Institute of Medicine. Parents pay for lunches. 30% receive lunch for free or subsidised cost. Since HHFKA, children eat 16% more vegetables and 23% more fruit at lunch (Source: USDA 2014 report). A study by The Brookings Institute (2017), states that children in California displayed a 4% average increase in end of year test scores. This average increases to 40% for students from low income families.

France – Population 66m. Obesity 15.6%.

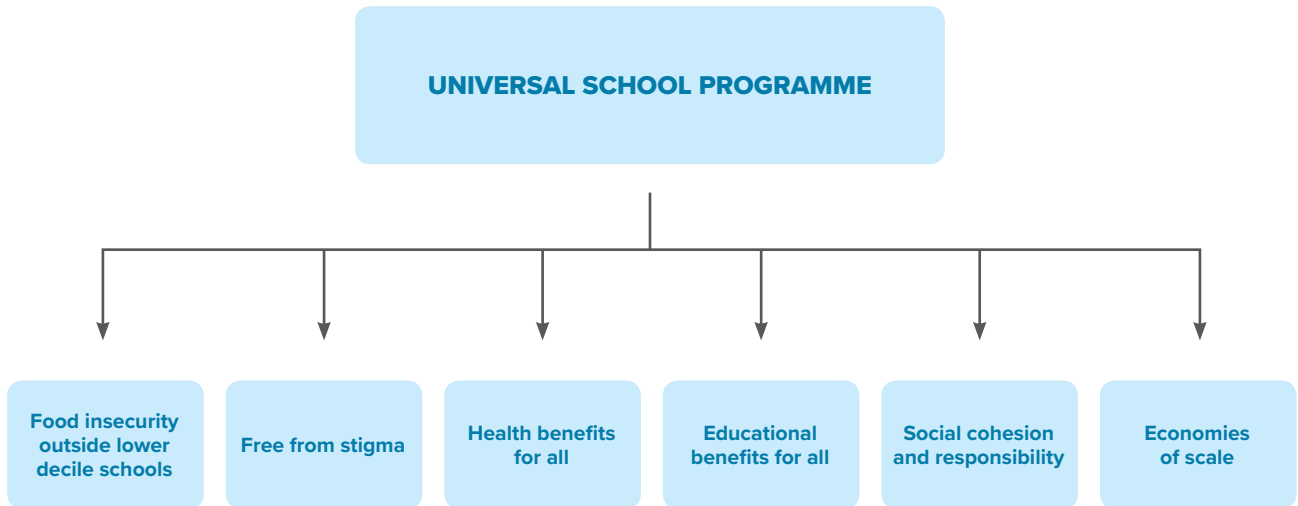
Cafeterias are in 90% of schools. 50% of costs are covered by the Government. The rest is paid for by parents: means tested based on parent's employment. Children are served 3-4 course meals which are prepared at school or in satellite kitchens.

Canada – Population 36m. Obesity 29% (OECD).

No national programme. Some First Nation communities, are starting school food programmes to tackle food poverty and keep alive traditional food/culture.

Research provided by – Harper, C., Mitchell, C., Wood, L. (2008). The provision of school food in 18 countries. School Food Trust.

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POLICY FRAMEWORK

