



**New Zealand House of Representatives**  
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

## **Petitions Committee**

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Petihana

54th Parliament  
September 2026

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# **Petition of Tanya Waikato: Cancel the school lunches contract with the School Lunch Collective**

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Presented to the House of Representatives  
by Greg O'Connor, Chairperson

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# Petition of Tanya Waikato

## Recommendation

The Petitions Committee has considered the petition of Tanya Waikato—Cancel the school lunches contract with the School Lunch Collective—and recommends that the House take note of its report.

## Request to revert school lunch contract to local providers

This petition was signed by 17,418 people. It was presented to the House by Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan on 21 October 2025, and requests:

That the House of Representatives urge the Government to cancel the school lunches contract with the School Lunch Collective (coordinated by Compass Group NZ) and reinstate contracts with the local providers who were providing school lunch services before term 1 2025.

## Education and Workforce Committee’s report on the Petition of Matilda Otter-Lowe

We note that this petition raises similar issues to the Petition of Matilda Otter-Lowe regarding the school lunch programme, which was considered by the Education and Workforce Committee in late 2025. The petition requested that the House of Representatives urge the Government to reinstate the previous school lunches programme. The committee’s report can be found on the Parliament website.<sup>1</sup>

## Current school lunch model

Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches Programme was launched in 2019 to provide nutritious lunches to students in the greatest need of support. From Term 1 in 2025, most participating composite schools and full primary schools moved to a new provision model with lunches provided through the School Lunch Collective, coordinated by Compass Group NZ.<sup>2</sup>

## Comments from the petitioner

Tanya Waikato provided a written submission raising concerns about child safety, food quality and reliability, service failures, transparency, and the displacement of local providers and community kitchens. She recommended that the current contract with Compass Group NZ be cancelled.

The petitioner provided the Ministry of Education’s response to a request under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) on 27 June 2025 as an appendix to her written submission. It referred to 947 formal “contacts” related to the programme recorded by the ministry between

<sup>1</sup> [Report of the Education and Workforce Committee on the Petition of Matilda Otter-Lowe](#), November 2025.

<sup>2</sup> More information about the programme, school eligibility, and delivery models can be found on the [Ministry of Education website](#).

27 January and 17 April 2025.<sup>3</sup> Reasons for these contacts included late or failed deliveries, food safety and suitability issues, special diets, under-supplied meals, foreign objects in food, allergies, and six cases where children were injured or required medical treatment. Ms Waikato also referred to an incident at Haeata Community Campus involving mouldy lunches and emphasised that these incidents highlighted a need for stronger oversight.

Ms Waikato recommended that:

- the contract be cancelled immediately
- an independent safety and performance audit be ordered
- contract performance data be publicly released
- contracts with community-based food providers be restored
- an independent complaints register be established
- automatic suspension be required where injuries occur.

## Comments from the Ministry of Education

We invited the Ministry of Education | Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga to make a written submission. The ministry told us the change to the provision model followed Cabinet decisions in April and September 2024, and the change was intended to improve the cost-effectiveness of the programme.

The ministry said that, given the time since implementation, cost inflation, and rising public expectations, it would be difficult to reinstate the previous model or previous providers. It also noted that the current School Lunch Collective contract expires in December 2026.

The ministry acknowledged the incidents referred to by the petitioner but noted that the School Lunch Collective delivered more than 18 million meals during the 2025 school year. The ministry said nutrition standards have not changed from previous years, that all providers must meet standards for grains, protein, vegetables, and minimum meal weights, and the ministry actively monitors whether lunches meet those standards.<sup>4</sup>

The ministry said that the early complaint and incident data reflected the introduction period for the new model, and that the full-year data showed a consistent decline in dissatisfaction. It also said that information about the School Lunch Collective's performance is available online.<sup>5</sup>

## Our response to the petition

We thank Tanya Waikato for bringing her concerns to Parliament. We acknowledge the importance of the programme to students, families, schools, and communities, and the strong public interest reflected in the number of signatures the petition received.

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<sup>3</sup> A "contact" refers to any notification from a school, such as a call, email, or in-person conversation with ministry staff.

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Health, Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Healthy Children and Young People (aged 2–18 years), February 2015.

<sup>5</sup> The School Lunch Collective regularly reports performance on its website.

We acknowledge the ministry's view that reinstating previous arrangements would be difficult, and that the current contract expires in December 2026. We consider it important that the ministry continue to monitor safety, nutrition, delivery performance, complaints, and special dietary requirements. We expect that the ministry will consider these matters when making further decisions about the delivery of the programme after the current contract ends.

We recommend that the House take note of this report.

## **Appendix**

### **Committee procedure**

The petition was signed by 17,418 people on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan on 21 October 2025 and referred to us that same day. We met between 29 January and 3 September 2026 to consider it. We received written submissions from the petitioner and the Ministry of Education.

### **Committee members**

Greg O'Connor (Chairperson)  
Hon Andrew Bayly (from 1 July 2026)  
Kahurangi Carter (until 11 February 2026)  
Greg Fleming  
Paulo Garcia (until 1 July 2026)  
Celia Wade-Brown (from 11 February 2026)

### **Related resources**

The documents we received as evidence in relation to this petition are available on the [Parliament website](#).