



TWO FUTURE TRUCKIES?: A fully-laden logging truck visited Wairoa Primary School on Wednesday. The 'Wood is Good' programme visits primary schools across the motu to educate students about log transport, including safety. Driver John Namana, left, is pictured with Wairoa Primary School student Santanah Tuhi. Sitting up behind them is student Zakrya Paul.

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POTENTIAL CUT BACK LOOMS

THE POTENTIAL cut back of lunches in schools programmes would be devastating to tamariki.

That is the main response from school principals across Wairoa to comments made by ACT Party leader and associate minister of education, David Seymour.

Mr Seymour says the programme Ka Ora, Ka Ako could be headed for the chopping block and sees the programme as wasteful public spending. The programme costs about \$325 million annually and it feeds about 220,000 students nationwide.

Tiaho School principal Lisa Grant says it is no surprise that the Government is looking to cut costs.

"They want to save money by literally taking money out of the mouths of our babies. We invested money into creating an internal model where our school employs two amazing staff who create beautiful nutritious lunches for our tamariki daily."

That has seen a rise in attendance at the school.

"Attendance has improved, our tamariki and their ability to focus on their learning is better, and they are getting really adventurous at trying kai that is a new flavour."

The school also has Breakfast in Schools and Fruit in Schools programmes supported by Kids Can for snacks says Ms Grant.

"We know that if our tamrariki are in a hurry in the morning or if whānau are in between pay days, there is always kai here at kura to fill up with — or top up on — before the day starts.

"No judgements, no questions — they know where the bowls and toaster are.

"To not have these services available will create anxiety — next-level worries — and it'll mean whānau will have to make choices between food, power or rent."

She says the school will find a way to fundraise to continuing feeding tamariki if it leads to that.

Tiniroto School principal Melanie Haller tautoko (supports) Ms Grant's comments.



WAIROA NEEDS IT: Wairoa school principals do not want to see Ka Ora, Ka Ako — a lunches in school programme — face funding cuts from the Government.

"It would be devastating for our tamariki to lose this. In addition, for us, it's about providing healthy, nutritious kai that is guaranteed every day."

The school has a chef that is available for four days, with Ms Haller cooking on the fifth day.

"In addition, we use the 'garden-to-table' model and we have fresh, organic and some heirloom plants to contribute to our healthy lunches. If this programme ends up in the bin, what are we to do with all our beautiful produce?"

"Yes, we can send it home, but the learning will be lost and the effort that goes into growing our veggies would seem wasted."

Putere School has had to play the waiting game says principal Roni Nepia. "We qualified last year but were put on a waiting list. I believe it would have been beneficial to the school and the wider community."

Wairoa St Joseph's Primary School principal Jo Doyle says her students run to line up and collect their lunches.

"They love it and we are noticing a lot more students are eating lunches with the programme.

"The lunches are also quite healthy too."

The school used to have a provider make their lunches, but now it has an iwi hapu model.

Ms Doyle says it would be a shame if the service was no longer supported from the Government.

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