



Q+A: Compass Group joins the "School Lunch Collective" from Feb 2025

Who is the "school lunch collective" and how does this work?

Compass NZ, Gilmours and Libelle are the formal collective, however we will be enabled by many suppliers and partners across the country. Compass has assumed the role of the conductor of the collective, with agreements with the government, Gilmours, Libelle and suppliers, to bring the best of our expertise, together. This collective could not happen without us coming together.

Why has this "collective" been selected?

Together, we have strengths across the value chain, from sourcing, manufacturing, distribution, menu development and delivery to schools. Together we have common values and a desire to create a meaningful contribution to key society and community needs.

How can we deliver a solution for \$3, which is the government's mandate?

You can only achieve this through scale, efficiency, removing unnecessary mark ups and waste across the value chain. The program is a commercially viable model, with the above principles in place. As such, we've worked with the government to simplify the menu, simplify the model and ensure that we deliver a solution that integrates into the value chain that exists today.

You've had performance issues in the past with ka or ka ako?

Compass Group has been part of Ka Ora Ka Ako for four years and has longstanding relationships with schools in the programme. We've learnt a lot in that time and have been able to adjust our approach to respond and deliver to the highest quality. The meals we produce under this new partnership will meet the agreed nutritional guidance, are consistently and appropriately sized, and meet the expectations of schools and students. We are very passionate and proud to be part of the School Lunch Collective, helping the next generation to learn.

How is this new model of school lunch system going to work for schools?

Our online ordering system is crafted to streamline the Healthy School Lunch Programme. This is used successfully every day in the Ka Ora Ka Ako School Lunches programme, so for schools, there will be minimal change to how they order their school lunches. We're also going to be offering schools training throughout Term 4 so they feel confident using the system before Term 1.

How do parents know their children are being fed nutritious meals?

The School Lunch Collective has nutritionists and dietitians involved in menu development. They undertake nutritional analysis of recipes, and evaluate and monitor production of the meals to ensure they meet the agreed nutritional guidance.

What will the meals look like?

Family favorites will appear on a rotating, term by term menu, with most meals in the program being delivered, hot, ready to eat every day. The hot meals are the most loved meals for the kids, and these are also the most efficient to produce, while also ensuring they meet the required nutritional guidelines. They will appear in a ready to eat tray, at a temperature that is ready to consume. We will also have a range of cold meals, that will be reviewed and changed from term to term.

How many job losses will there be because of the change in provider?

We can't answer that as we're not across the details of how many providers were involved in the previous programme. However, we will be complying with the legislative requirements.

How will the collective make this partnership work?

The collective share a deep commitment to fuelling our Tamariki and setting them up to learn and thrive. We can deliver both quality food and cost-effectiveness through bulk purchasing, streamlined logistics and supply chain, as well as a network of trusted supply partners, wholesalers, and distributors.

Compass Group has over 30 years of experience providing high-quality food services across various sectors, combined with Libelle's experience of over 20 years in the Education sector, and through the strength of network and food supply of Gilmours, we are well-equipped.

The collective works in partnership with a range of suppliers, local community and Iwi partners to consistently deliver the food to schools. Collectively they have partnerships with over 700 SMEs, including both local and national providers.

Has Compass committed to hire staff who currently work in the programme for other suppliers and are now facing job losses? If so, how many staff might be hired in this way?

Under the vulnerable employee transfer provisions, the School Lunch Collective will offer all eligible 'vulnerable' employees, who elect to transfer, from the various current providers employment.

What is the operational model?

Food is produced at scale in a central production unit, with the highest focus on food safety and quality. It's then distributed to a number of central production kitchens across the country. These meals are finished and delivered to the school, hot and ready to eat, the day of consumption.

How will we ensure food safety is not compromised?

Compass, Gilmours and Libelle operate with the highest level of focus around food safety. Compass has a very strong digital health and safety tool that will be applied at every step of the value chain, to ensure best practice standards are never compromised.

How difficult was it to win the contract? What were the challenges in achieving the set price of \$3 while maintaining portion sizes and nutritional standards?

The RFP process from the Ministry was thorough and robust. Bringing the three businesses together allows us to benefit from economies of scale. The \$3 price is achievable through supply chain savings and partnerships with our trusted supply partners, wholesalers, and distributors. The real challenge came as we tried to really push the boundaries of what the Collective was able to do at the price point.

How will the consortium work in practice?

The three businesses in the collective have extensive networks, experience, and expertise across the sector and we know each other well. Between us we've got a range of facilities across the country and we'll be utilizing them all in different ways in a hybrid approach.

How many new staff will be required for the contract and will it be Compass or Libelle employing them?

We are still working through this at the moment, but can confirm details at a later date.

Will the consortium pay staff working on the programme the living wage as is currently the case?

All staff who predominantly work within the school lunch programme will continue to be paid at least the living wage.

Where are the meals made?

The lunches are produced in a modern centralised food manufacturing facility.

Who are they made by?

The lunches will be made by Compass and Libelle.

How are they delivered to the school?

The lunches will be delivered to schools through a distribution network of trucks and vans. Lunches are delivered to the schools in the Cambro Go-Box insulated carriers which are purpose made to maintain temperature for extended periods of both hot and cold lunches.

How are they stored?

Once produced the lunches are immediately dispatched to a holding facility for picking, packing and delivery to regional satellite sites and into the distribution network.

How long after creation are the meals consumed by the students?

The timeframe for consumption of lunches will vary according to type of lunch, production scheduling and the varying school lunch times.

How much of the food will be sourced locally?

We partner with a number of local providers to ensure we source produce locally as much as possible. We partner with the likes of Te Rarawa, Ngati Hine and Ngati Porou on the sourcing of local vegetables and meat, further expanding our commitment to supporting local produce.

How much wastage will there be?

We have a responsibility to manage our impact on the environment and are continually looking for more efficient ways of working. We are focused on four priorities: food waste, single-use plastics, plant-forward meals, and reducing carbon emissions. Everything we do to reduce our impact is underpinned by our Environmental Management System and delivered according to the ISO 14001:2015 standards.

What lunch trays will be used?

We will use Libelle's aluminum meal trays which are recyclable and one of the safest ways to transport food. Both the large and small meals will be contained in the same size meal tray, which means we can save on packaging, as well as heat and transport more meals at once, saving energy and resource.

What happens to the lunch trays after use?

Lunch trays are taken back by your lunch provider, cleaned, and sent off where the aluminum is recycled to be repurposed.