

TALKING PERIODS WITH THE PRIME MINISTER

It's been a few days since we popped down to see the Prime Minister in her office to talk about periods.

(Isn't it fantastic to live in a country with a Government that is so accessible, and so engaged with community groups and charities like The Period Place!)

First up - we want to hugely and seriously thank both the [Hon Julie Anne Genter](#), the [Minister for Women](#), and [Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern](#), [Prime Minister](#), for their personal and professional support of the goal to reach period equity in Aotearoa.

After the cross-party supported breakfast in Parliament in November 2019, with [Julie Anne Genter](#), [Willow-Jean Prime](#), [Louise Upston](#), [Lousa Wall](#), the rest of the [Positive Periods team](#), the [YOUTH19 Rangatahi Smart Survey team](#), [Dr Sarah Donovan from the University of Otago, Department of Public Health](#), and other attendees, the PM said that she saw Period Poverty as a "personal issue" for her, on top of her role as [Minister for Child Poverty Reduction](#). We *knew* that this meant things would change in this country for everyone who gets a period, and bloody heck hasn't it.

Here's an overview of the main talking points from our meeting in the Prime Ministers office on June 3rd. (I can't believe I just typed that, am I really living right now or is this all a dream).

1. The Period Place questioned how culturally responsive the process had been to get the Free Period Products in New Zealand Schools program up and running. The Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said that yes, there had been consultation with Māori to provide guidance on tikanga, and ensure that Māori ethical principles are upheld with the program.

We have asked the Government to provide us with the details of all who were consulted in this process, so that we can come together and amplify our voices, research, and knowledge collectively.



2. The Prime Minister shared that the funding for the initial program ([beginning with 15 schools in the Waikato from Term 3, 2020](#)) is coming from her personal fund! Kicking it off with her own allocated money does two things, 1) it gets the bloody ball moving, 2) it highlights to Government, and the country, how serious she is about working to solve this issue, and ensures that the Ministry that then takes the lead on this (the Ministry of Education) knows the relevance of this issue for the leader of our country, and will therefore make sure it's a priority for them to manage once her funding runs out

The PM recognised the irony of using the Prime Minister's Emerging Priorities Fund to cover what is certainly not an emerging issue, but that she's bloody proud to be able to shine her powerful light and use her own budget to bring the attention to this issue that it deserves. Snaps for JA 🍷🍷

3. The Minister for Women, the Prime Minister and the Government recognise the importance of language, and the power it has to include or discriminate. Choosing genderless language in regards to the announcement, and rollout of this huge life-changing and life-affirming program was an action performed on purpose, to ensure that all menstruators feel supported and validated in this process.

We at The Period Place have always used the terms 'Menstruators' or 'People with Periods' to include all genders who bleed - we don't even have a pun good enough to express our utter joy and thankfulness that the country we live in supports, validates and sees the variety it its people.

4. The Positive Periods team ([Dignity NZ](#), [The Period Place](#), [Nest Consulting](#) and [Wā Collective](#)) all asked questions about the decision to start the program with disposable products with no allocation for period education. The Prime Ministers answers included:
- After consultation with selective groups, disposable products have been chosen to start the program because they are the products currently being used by the majority of school-aged menstruators
 - Brands that create period products and period packaging that are free from plastic should be favoured in the procurement process
 - Brands that are New Zealand owned/made in New Zealand should be favoured in the procurement process
 - The infrastructure requirements for sustainable period product use for every student is vast and will take time to implement. For example, to manage menstrual cups: each cubicle having something like a bidet hose to rinse menstrual cups and a small basin to wash hands before exiting the toilet. And to manage period underwear: ensuring students have running water at home and the facilities to wash and line dry their underwear (this is made harder for those in transitional housing, who live in cars or no fixed abode, who use a laundromat, etc.)
 - The Government recognises the importance of education being delivered alongside the delivery of period products, however, the nature of the first allocation of funds coming from the PM herself does not allow for this - hopefully the Ministry of Education can pick this up in 2021.

*The Period Place advocates for the use of organic, plastic-free disposable products when able, and for sustainable options like period underwear (both Sarah and Dantka use these, amongst other products), menstrual cups, reusable pads and liners, and other forms of long-term sustainable and reusable products **when able**. Above all, we advocate for autonomy and choice. We believe that an individual should be shown all period products available on the market, and to make the choice to manage their own period in the way they want to. This is what we will be advocating for in 2021 as we continue to liaise with the Government on the rollout for Free Period Products in New Zealand*

Finally, we provided the Prime Minister and the Minister for Women with a study that was published earlier in May 2020 showing why comprehensive education and products must be delivered together for true change. [You can find the summary of the thesis article here on our website](#). Education on period cycles and period products, including disposable and reusable products, will be another issue that The Period Place continues to advocate for within Government as this rollout begins and continues.

5. The Prime Minister shared that she has spoken to other Pacific Leaders (notably in Fiji) about the issue of Period Poverty across the Pacific, and the need for this issue to be "picked up" at a multi-country Pacific level.

Co-found and CEO of The Period Place, Danika Revell, is a committee member of [Pacific Women's Watch New Zealand](#). Under its special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (United Nations), Pacific Women's Watch (NZ) is mandated to make the voices of women in Pacific states heard more loudly at the international level. Danika has already talked to members of PWWNZ about the Prime Minister's request.

HUGE progress has been made towards achieving period equity here in Aotearoa. Yeah, there's still a bloody long way to go, but we want everyone to stop for a moment, raise a menstrual cup and cheers the person closest to you.

We are living through history right now. We are living under a Government that genuinely cares about people with periods, and is just as excited to be working with schools, community groups, charities, businesses and individuals to change the way periods are managed, as we all are with them.

If you have any questions about our meeting, about what's to come, or just want to get in touch to say "hi", head over to our contact page, or find us on social media (links are in the footer).

We can't wait to talk to you.

