



Proactive Release

Submissions on the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

August 2019

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has released the following submission received during its public consultation on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Some of the information contained within this release is considered to not be appropriate to release and, if requested, would be withheld under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

- Where this is the case, the information has been withheld, and the relevant section of the Act that would apply, has been identified.
- Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Key to redaction codes and their reference to sections of the Act:

- **9(2)a** – Section 9(2)(a): to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people.

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Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy – Submission Template

This document is intended for individuals or groups who wish to make a formal submission on the child and youth wellbeing strategy.

Please complete this template and email it to: childandyouthwellbeing@dpmc.govt.nz

A guide to making a submission is available on the DPMC website <https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy>

Submissions will close on **Wednesday 5 December**.

Please provide details for a contact person in case we have some follow up questions.

Contact Name:	9(2)□(a)
Email Address:	
Phone Number:	
Organisation Name:	AUT Master of Human Rights – Class of 2018
Organisation description: (tell us about your organisation – i.e. who do you represent? How many members do you have? Are you a local or national organisation?)	<p>We are a group of six students, completing our final research paper through the Auckland University of Technology, on the rights of resettled youth from refugee backgrounds to participate in decision making processes in accordance with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.</p> <p>Our Guidance Statement: To empower the voice of resettled youth from refugee backgrounds that will promote their agency and value their opinions and direct lived experience. We will focus on identity, culture, the use of 'refugee' as a label and what it means to be a New Zealander from their perspective.</p> <p>Recommendations will also be provided regarding how and when to engage with this group.</p>
Executive Summary: (Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)	<p>This submission is based on research undertaken this year with approximately 30 youth from refugee backgrounds. The submission content will focus on the wellbeing domain 'belong, contribute & are valued' and numbers 7, 8 and 9 of the proposed focus areas. Our research directly links with the 5th principle relating to children's and young person's voice being heard and views being taken into account in developing and implementing the Strategy.</p> <p><u>Our full research report is available on request.</u></p> <p>Overwhelmingly, youth have advised through this process that they do have opinions and they do want to have them heard in a way that is genuine and allows them to feel valued. Although all youth who participated in our research held citizenship, and many have lived here since infancy, there were notable comments made regarding what it means to be a New Zealander, and how their culture could best be showcased within their community.</p> <p>Resettled youth from refugee backgrounds do want to participate in decision making processes, however, our reserach finds a tendency for this group to feel</p>

	<p>over consulted by government departments and academics, without appropriate care and consideration given to their opinions, experience and culture which can at times result in consultation processes appearing tokenistic rather than genuine.</p>
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Submission Content

The AUT Master of Human Rights Class of 2018 submit in support of the development of this important strategy for child and youth wellbeing.

The overarching vision of 'Making New Zealand the best place in the world for children' is not just aspirational, but achievable if the correct measures are put in place to ensure accountability and importantly, the direct involvement of children and young people in this strategies implementation.

Section 46. of the Cabinet Paper: Child Wellbeing Strategy – Scope and Public Engagement states that children's wellbeing encompasses multiple and overlapping domains. This submission supports the identified scope and provides commentary specifically relating to the 'connectedness' aspect with particular regard to children and young people who have been resettled from a refugee background (hereafter referred to as **YRB**).

We spoke directly with this group of youth and professionals who work alongside them to ascertain their views on questions such as "What does it mean to be a 'Kiwi'?" and "What does the word refugee, mean to you?" as well as questions relating to previous research or consultation experiences that they have had and the processes that were used to gather their input.

There are direct links between our research findings and three of the sixteen proposed focus areas on which this submission is made. For the consideration of Cabinet, we respectfully submit the following:

7. Children and young people are free from racism, discrimination and stigma.

YRB face stigma and discrimination in many areas of society

The young people who participated in our study hail from refugee backgrounds but have resettled in New Zealand, many when they were very young, however, the stigma of the word 'refugee' remains with them making it hard for them to live as a 'Kiwi'. One participant spoke of the stigma that the refugee title carries; "Refugee is translated very badly in some country like homeless people, but it actually is a characteristic to people who took a brave step in their life for their family."

It is crucial that we as a country make progress on this focus area and we support its inclusion as a focus area for the wellbeing strategy. Students when reflecting on what it means to be a 'Kiwi' made comments such as: "... I consider myself a refugee. If I got more acknowledged by people in NZ to say I was Kiwi, I could be proudly, but it makes me feel like a wannabe."

It is our responsibility to listen and allow youth with these unique lived experiences to provide expert commentary on what works and what doesn't, for the desire to feel at home is strong in this group with many responding to the same question by stating they felt 'welcome' and that being a 'Kiwi' means 'kindness' and 'a sense of excitement'.

8. The cultures of children, young people and their families and whānau are recognised, enhanced and supported.

"I feel proud when people talk about our culture and religion because they are taking our country into consideration"

The discussions held with YRB showed culture being viewed in many different ways, showing that culture is viewed as something unique to each individual or family unit by most as opposed to each nationality or religion. "Culture reminds me of the place I was born. Culture means where I am from and it always stays with me" wrote one participant.

Another participant wrote about the fluidity of culture "... as time goes, people change thus impacts the cultural norms of society."

When implemented, the requirement of the strategy to focus on the enhancement of culture, noting that the culture is dictated by the individual rather than traditional stereotypes, will help to ensure the wellbeing of these young people by empowering them to express their opinions in society allowing for a higher level of participation, acceptance and pride.

This focus point is crucial for recognising culture, recognises identity, allowing children and young people to be who they want and express that in whatever way they are most comfortable.

9. Children and young people have improved opportunities for civic engagement and environmental awareness.

Young people of refugee background want to participate in decision-making

Civic engagement has tremendous potential benefits for the enablement and empowerment of YRB voice and participation.

Our research with professionals who work closely with this group revealed that participating in research has the potential to be an empowering process if undertaken with care. YRB want to participate in decision-making processes about issues that matter to them as is their right under Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

However, most respondents did not think that there was adequate access to platforms or opportunities to help people from refugee backgrounds to express their opinions on issues that matter to them.

When the views of YRB are deliberately sought after and encouraged, it creates a platform for them to have a voice and for that voice to be listened to.

With regards to research and consultation processes one participant stated that "they feel empowered that they have a voice on topics that are about them. They feel valued that someone chose to do research on topics that affect them. They enjoy sharing their stories with someone else who is there to listen."

Rules of engagement: be sensitive, be respectful, be creative

However, it has become clear that while YRB want to participate, they are also increasingly over-consulted.

Refugee sector professionals, who often act as gatekeepers to research access to YRB, say that researchers can do better when engaging with this vulnerable and marginalised group.

It is paramount to have their wellbeing at the centre of any engagement. Every researcher must consider the research benefits for the participant and community.

Many refugee sector professionals have observed that while researchers have good intentions, they can sometimes be disconnected to the complexities of refugee communities. Researchers must consider how the research process and outcomes can affect youth and their families.

For example, the impact of intergenerational conflict or asking questions that participants may not be ready to answer.

Researchers are encouraged to be creative while collecting data about refugee background youth. Consider alternative methods of engagement beyond the standard one-to-one or focus group interview. Creative

methods such as those that involve art or sport can help support the empowerment of participants while gathering the necessary information needed for advocacy.

This is best summarised by one participant who stated that researchers must “leave your ego at the door and put the participants’ wellbeing at the heart of your research.”

Conclusion

We support the implementation of the proposed strategy and encourage Cabinet to take into consideration the above comments made with particular regard to YRB who are engaged, opinionated and welcomed contributors to New Zealand society.

Please note that your submission will become official information. This means that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet may be required to release all or part of the information contained in your submission in response to a request under the Official Information Act 1982.

The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet may withhold all or parts of your submission if it is necessary to protect your privacy or if it has been supplied subject to an obligation of confidence.

Please tell us if you don’t want all or specific parts of your submission released, and the reasons why. Your views will be taken into account in deciding whether to withhold or release any information requested under the Official Information Act and in deciding if, and how, to refer to your submission in any possible subsequent paper prepared by the Department.