



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:	[Please include if you are submitting on behalf of an organisation]
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?)	
Executive Summary: (Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)	Good sleep and circadian health is essential to young peoples' wellbeing. We can and should promote and support good sleep and circadian health.

Submission Content

Sleep and circadian health are essential aspects of mental and physical health. Although often overlooked, strong evidence links sleep health to wellbeing.

Children and youth are at a vulnerable stage for poor sleep health. Sleep undergoes substantial developmental changes, the most drastic of which occur from birth through adolescence. There is also a significant delay in circadian timing which during puberty which makes it difficult for adolescents to thrive in the socially enforced time.

Insufficient and poor quality sleep are major issues among youth. Physiological and psychosocial changes throughout childhood and young adulthood directly contribute to this, and some are modifiable.

Sleep is intricately linked to mental health including emotion regulation, depression, anxiety, and suicidality. It also affects learning, memory, attention, and creativity, with obvious implications for success at school. Even a small amount of sleep loss (missing a nap) affects emotional responses as early as 3 years old and throughout development.

Sleep is critical for physical health, e.g. growth, immune function, and metabolic health. It is also essential for overall public health because it is strongly linked to issues such as alcohol and substance use and motor vehicle crashes.

There is a troubling trend toward using hormones and medications to address sleep issues in young people before implementing internationally accepted best practice behavioural treatments. Few people are trained to support healthy sleep and circadian health in young people in Aotearoa New Zealand and there is no public funding to support this. We are behind our peers in this regard.

Supporting efforts to promote and improve sleep health among youth is essential to improving youth wellbeing and will yield an excellent return on investment. We can and should make an effort to promote and value good sleep health from an early age. Where to start:

- *Implement sleep friendly policies, e.g. delaying school start times.*
- *Teach about sleep in schools and early childhood education centres.*
- *Educate and support parents to promote good sleep health.*
- *Value sleep and circadian health on a social level.*
- *Address the social influences which contribute to inequities in sleep health.*
- *Train healthcare professionals, school employees, and support persons in sleep and circadian health.*
- *Involve sleep enthusiasts in developing the wellbeing strategy.*

I commend the Government for valuing and strategising about youth wellbeing.

Mentioning sleep in proposed focus area 10 is a good start. This submission is informed by clinical and research experience with sleep health in children, adolescents, and young adults in Aotearoa New Zealand and the United States. I am happy to provide further input moving forward.

Sincerely,

9(2)□(a)

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.