



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.

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Organisation Name:	Methodist Alliance
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>The Methodist Alliance is a formal alliance of Methodist Missions, parishes and community based social services and trusts, including cooperating ventures. This grouping constitutes a major provider of a range of services for children, young people and their families.</p> <p>The Methodist Alliance brings together a number of large social service providers such as Lifewise in Auckland, Wesley Community Action in Wellington, Christchurch Methodist Mission as well as local community services provided by individual parishes. It includes new social service organisations, for example, Siaola Vahefonua Methodist Mission, the Samoan Synod within the Methodist Church and Te Taha Māori.</p> <p>The Methodist Alliance is grounded in a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the bi-cultural journey of the Methodist Church of New Zealand - Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, where Te Taha Māori and Tauīwi work in partnership.</p>

Executive Summary:

(Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)

We support the Government's approach to children's and young people's wellbeing as interwoven with the wellbeing of the family and whānau and the need for a holistic approach.

We recommend the strategy should include:

- A definition of wellbeing and we have provided some for consideration.
- Explicit reference to young people in the vision statement, #11 and #15
- Voices of children, young people and their whānau should be taken into account in measuring the outcomes and include subjective measures.
- Specific references to spiritual wellbeing
- Placement with family and whānau is given priority for children and young people in need of care and protection, and appropriate supports are put in place for them.
- An outcome to reduce rates of child abuse, neglect and family violence.
- Rates of bullying be reduced.
- An outcome specifically relating to reduction of child and youth suicide.
- Development and learning should be to the child and young person's fullest potential
- Initial focus should include secure, affordable, good quality housing.
- Adequate resourcing of non-government agencies.
- A wide range of stakeholders are included in the action plans.
- Non-government representation on the governance group.

Submission Content

1. The Methodist Alliance supports the New Zealand Government on the work undertaken in the proposed outcomes framework for the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

This work closely aligns with the Methodist Alliance's vision for a just society in which all people flourish.

Framing of wellbeing

2. Wellbeing is not defined in legislation nor in the draft strategy. We **recommend** that a definition of wellbeing is provided and provide some definitions for consideration:
 - a. Wellbeing is a balancing process between skills and resources needed to thrive and challenges faced.
 - b. Wellbeing is when every individual reaches their potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and is able to make a contribution to their community.¹
 - c. Wellbeing is the balancing process between the psychological, social and physical resources and skills needed to meet a particular psychological, social and/or physical challenge.²

Proposed vision statement

3. We note the vision statement "New Zealand is the best place in the world for children" is limited to children and does not include youth. We **recommend** that the vision statement is amended to include young people and should read New Zealand is the best place in the world for children and young people."
4. While the definition of children includes children and young people up to age 18, and for those transitioning from State care, up to aged 25, it would be more inclusive to explicitly include young people in the vision statement.

Seven principles that underpin New Zealand Government's approach to child wellbeing

5. The Methodist Alliance supports these seven principles and in particular we support the specific reference to the foundational role of the Treaty of Waitangi. However we suggest that this is expressed as Te Tiriti o Waitangi as it is demonstrating Te Reo Māori on the face of the document.

¹ Based on the WHO definition of mental health.

² Dodge, R., Daly, A., Huyton, J., & Sanders, L. (2012). The challenge of defining wellbeing. *International Journal of Wellbeing*, 2(3), 222-235.

6. We support the second principle which acknowledges that the wellbeing of children and young people is intertwined with the wellbeing of the family and whānau. The wellbeing of the whole family and whānau needs to be considered when looking at the wellbeing of children and young people. Stresses on the family and whānau, such as poverty, housing, addiction issues, need to be reduced to ensure that all members of the family and whānau are able to thrive.
7. We **recommend** that the voices of children and young people are also taken into account in measuring the outcomes. While #5 includes children and young people in the development and implementation of the strategy, it is not explicit that they will have a say when these outcomes are measured.
8. The principles refer to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as underpinning the strategy. Articles 17, 23, 27, and 32 refer to the child's spiritual wellbeing and development; however the draft child wellbeing strategy is silent on this.
9. Most Māori models of health include taha wairua/wairuatanga or spiritual health and recognises that health is related to unseen and unspoken energies.³ Māori do not separate physical health and wellbeing from those of the mind, spirit and family/whānau.⁴
10. Spiritual wellbeing is defined as the values and beliefs that determine the way people live, the search for meaning and purpose in life, personal identity and self awareness.⁵ For some people this may be linked to a particular religion while it many not be for others.
11. We **recommend** that specific reference to spiritual wellbeing is included in the strategy. Eg. "Children and young people experience *spiritual and* mental wellbeing and are supported to cope with life's challenges and to heal and recover from trauma."
12. We support the inclusive statement of the last principle which states the collective responsibility to nurture children, young people and their carers. We recommend consistent wording in relation to families, whānau and caregivers is used throughout the document. This will ensure that caregivers are recognised when there is not a formal genetic or familial tie to the child or young person.

³ <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/maori-health/maori-health-models/maori-health-models-te-whare-tapa-wha>

⁴ Ibid

⁵ <http://health.tki.org.nz/Teaching-in-HPE/Health-and-PE-in-the-NZC/Health-and-PE-in-the-NZC-1999/Underlying-concepts/Well-being-hauora>

Proposed outcomes for children & young people

Safety – children are safe, and feel safe

13. We believe that priority should be given to placing children and young people, who are in need of care and protection, with their family and whānau as stated in the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 Children’s and Young People’s Well-being Act 1989.⁶
14. We **recommend** that an additional bullet point is added which states, “Placement with family and whānau is given priority for children and young people who are in need of care or protection and appropriate support and assistance put in place for them.”
15. We believe more work needs to be done to support parents and caregivers to create homes which are free from abuse, neglect, and family violence.
16. As Aotearoa | New Zealand has high rates of abuse, family violence and youth suicide, we support the specific reference to children and young people living in homes which are free from abuse, neglect and family violence.
17. We **recommend** an outcome that specifically relates to a reduction in New Zealand’s rate of child abuse, neglect and family violence is included.
18. We **recommend** that the third bullet point also references family violence and reads, “Adults enjoy good mental health, including freedom from severe stress *and violence*, misuse of alcohol and drugs.”
19. We **recommend** that the reference to children in care includes reference to support and reads, “Children and young people in care have a safe environment and relationships of care, *support*, trust and connection.”
20. We **recommend** that the reference to bullying is strengthened to read, “Bullying in school and recreational environments is addressed *and the rates of bullying reduced.*”

Security – children enjoy sufficient financial, natural and social resources to thrive

21. We support the security outcomes related to affordable quality housing. We **recommend** that “secure” is included in relation to housing.
22. We support the security outcomes relating to the reduction of child poverty and equity of services.

Connectedness – children understand who they are, where they belong, and their connection to whānau, culture and community

23. We support the connectedness outcomes framework and focus areas as drafted.

⁶ Part 2, Section 13 Principles, clause 2 (d).

Wellness – children enjoy the best physical and mental health

24. We **recommend** that this includes spiritual wellbeing as stated above to be inclusive of Māori models of health and wellbeing.
25. We recognise that some children, young people and those caring for them can find it difficult to make healthy decisions about food, exercise and sleep because of the environments they live in. Therefore we **recommend** that the wording is changed to include this and read, “Children, young people and those caring for them *live in an environment which promotes healthy lifestyles and* have the knowledge, and resources, to make healthy decisions about food, exercise and sleep.”
26. We **recommend** the second bullet point under #10 should include young people.
27. We **recommend** that #12 include specific reference to spiritual and suggest the following wording, “Children’s and young people’s *spiritual* and mental wellbeing is supported.”
28. We also **recommend** the first bullet point under this focus area is amended to read: “Families and *whānau* are equipped to provide a supportive home environment that promotes children’s and young people’s *spiritual* and mental wellbeing.”
29. We **recommend** an outcome that specifically relates to the reduction of child and youth suicide.

Development – children have the skills and knowledge to live good lives and meet their aspirations

30. We **recommend** that spiritual wellbeing is specifically acknowledged in this area. We suggest the following wording for the second bullet point under #15, “Children build resilience, self-control, and *spiritual* and mental wellbeing.”
31. We **recommend** that young people are referred to and the words “to their fullest potential” is added to the first bullet point under #15 which would then read, “Parents, families, whānau and communities are supported to provide loving, stimulating environments for children *and young people* to develop and learn *to their fullest potential.*”

16 Potential focus areas

32. We support the six areas proposed for the Government’s initial focus being:
 - Child poverty is reduced, in line with the Government’s intermediate and ten-year targets
 - Children experience optimal development in their first 1000 days: safe and

positive pregnancy, birth and parenting (conception to around 2 years)

- Children are thriving socially, emotionally and developmentally in the early years (two to six years)
- Children are safe and nurtured, in their whānau and their homes
- Children's mental wellbeing is supported
- Children are free from racism, discrimination and stigma

33. However we **recommend** an urgent need to addition of an area relating to secure, affordable, good quality housing. The well documented housing shortage needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The lack of safe, secure, affordable healthy homes negatively impacts on the health and wellbeing of children, young people and their whānau.

Measurement of outcomes

34. We are interested to know how children's and young people's voices will be recorded in measuring the progress on the outcomes. There is a need for subjective measures to ensure that their voices are heard, their lived experiences captured and their insights recorded. We realise that collecting information from children raises ethical issues and the involvement of caregivers may introduce bias.

35. The United Kingdom uses the Good Childhood Index to ask children how happy they are in relation to ten areas.

36. We support the inclusion of feedback from children, young people, their families and whānau on their wellbeing.

37. We **recommend** that subjective measures where people assess how their lives are going are included in the measurement of outcomes.

38. We **recommend** a consistent approach across government and non-government agencies. We note that the Cabinet paper on Child Wellbeing acknowledges the work of government and non-government agencies in the success of the strategy.

Funding of the non-government sector

39. Non-government agencies work across all wellbeing domains and these services range from prevention and early intervention to intensive support services including care. It is therefore critical that the non-government sector is adequately funded to continue to provide these services. We **recommend** that non-government agencies are adequately resourced to support the government's priority areas and the wider needs of the community to ensure the wellbeing of children, young people and their families.

Operational action plans

40. We note the Cabinet paper states that the Wellbeing Strategy will inform the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan and the potential for a child poverty reduction action plan. We support the creation of both these action plans as it is not clear how the desired outcomes in the Wellbeing Strategy will translate into an integrated and meaningful cross-sector action plan. We **recommend** these action plans should include the whole range of stakeholders: the government sector, the community based sector (social and health services), families, whānau, the business sector and the private sector, to ensure that New Zealand society as a whole is held to the high standard of achieving the aspirational vision.

Governance and responsibility

41. We **recommend** there is non-government representation on the governance group responsible for the wellbeing strategy. The Cabinet paper makes numerous references to the knowledge, insights and ideas coming from outside Government it would seem prudent to include representation from the community sector in the governance group.

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.