



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).

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Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

Public Issues, Methodist Church

12 December 2018

Contact

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Warm greetings

Normally Public Issues prepares submissions with a policy analysis focus.

In this case the submission is based on discussions with youth and adults working with youth. These are intended to inform policy and we include a summary of additional policy matters in this submission.

We are mindful of the more detailed policy analysis contributions of the NZ Council of Christian Social Services and the Methodist Alliance and see these as complementary with this submission.

Themes discussed by youth leaders

Te Reo

There should be provision for Te Reo in all schools

Te Reo is also about tikanga; it is about care for people and land and waters; it includes values of hospitality and respect for others. It gives space for bringing people together and story-telling and recognizing the gifts and contribution of each person.

The space for telling our stories is important for youth wellbeing.

Children Youth, Families

You can't separate children and youth from family wellbeing. Family wellbeing needs much more support, and there is special need for parenting support. One of the youth leaders works with parents of young children and she saw high levels of stress amongst young mothers. She mentioned the importance of good food. The wellbeing of parents and children is closely intertwined.

Mental health

There was a lot of discussion about self-worth – especially for girls. Girls have amazingly low self esteem despite all the attributes of youthful attractiveness, beauty and appearance of confidence.

Suicide. Pacific youth suicide is not the only critical concern. It is also an Asian problem – including Korea. For immigrants it is an issue of belonging.

Tools for wellbeing – more mental health services are needed including more availability of psychiatrists – without having to go through the hoops of referrals by GP's.

Social Networks Schools Community

There was discussion that focussing on the wellbeing of the 'individual' child or young person is insufficient. There is value in relationships and in young people being recognized as part of the community.

Connections with community falls down... few schools are actively engaged with their communities.

Social media is the main mode of social connection – facebook is the way to know about events and invitations. There is almost no escape from social media – even if you disconnect you know someone else who is on it so you stay connected. There was long discussion of how people present themselves on facebook... whether you can tell when a friend is in trouble or needs help.

Future – issues

Young adults have no prospect of buying a house. Even if you get a job there are few long term rewards.

Some youth / secondary students are very concerned about sustainability and the future of the planet. They spoke of being vegan for the environment and climate justice

They want plastic waste stopped – looking for real change away from a consumerist society.

The youth leaders we met are involved with sustainability and would like to see more detail about 'children living in sustainable communities' in the Wellbeing Strategy - in terms of how to achieve this. Sustainable means being sure of having healthy food, living in a good house without having to move, having enough income to have family, whanau, fanau to stay, and it means access to parenting support. Sustainability also means rivers that we can enjoy for swimming and fishing and picnics.

They asked the question 'Do we have a future?' Responsibility for climate change needs to be included in child and youth wellbeing

Youth Voice

Our youth informants brought up the value of young people having a voice in decisions that affect them. They were also mindful of Maori tikanga and Pacific cultural protocols to be respected in the ways in which young people are invited to bring their ideas and experiences to wellbeing discussions.

An example of young people being given opportunities to contribute to their school community: 'Te Ao Tawhito' – a year 1-13 inner city school in Christchurch. This was given as an example of youth voice with the theme of youth involvement in decision-making about themselves for youth empowerment. Examples are:

- Parent-teacher interviews are held with students
- Every applicant to attend the school is given a face-to-face interview with a Board member, staff person and a current student

- Every school leaver is given 5 minutes to speak at end of year ceremony and a staff member speaks of the student's contribution to the school.

This school uses the public library as its school library.

Discrimination and Racism

At a community level dialogues on cultural differences need to be facilitated. As communities become more diverse we have more opportunities to reflect on migration, colonization, cultures. Increased opportunities for non-Maori to learn Te Reo and about Te Ao Maori needs to include more about colonization and the way this shapes Aotearoa today.

A person in the Public Issues network rang today about the children in State Care article in the DomPost today (12 December) – expressing deep shock at the story and the difference between Maori and Pakeha children taken into care – and the rising level of Maori children taken into state care. Wellbeing has to be concerned with prevention of risk and of abuse, neglect and harm.

Further Policy Issues

Poverty

Recognizing that the Child and Youth Wellbeing strategy sits within the Child Poverty Reduction Act we emphasise the priority of eliminating child poverty. This is a structural issue that is linked to inequality and market-driven economics. We commend the direction of change towards a stewardship oriented economy.

Mental Health

The Mental Health Inquiry published 4 December 2018 highlights the link between poverty and mental health. Mental health needs income for wellbeing, secure and affordable housing, education and employment – with the means to contribute to communities.

Some of the wellbeing issues raised by youth clearly refer to a more individual focus on mental health (ie the need for psychiatrists), whereas issues of youth engagement in, and contributions to communities are significant for mental health and wellbeing.

Public Issues contributed to the VUW Amanda Wolf and Jonathan Boston Roundtable on Relational Wellbeing and will continue to an interest in relational values.

Pacific Child and Youth Wellbeing

Family violence is an issue prioritized by Pacific communities in the Methodist church. Family violence needs to be addressed through culturally attuned workshops and services. The unemployment, education and housing profiles of Pacific People in Aotearoa New Zealand are indicators of disproportionate disadvantage.

A 2014 study by Mariot and Sim¹ showed 5.5% Europeans were unemployed compared to 16% Pacific people. Housing costs of 30% or more of income were 26% for European compared to 41% for Pacific households; School leavers with NCEA level 2 showed 82% pass rate for Europeans compared to 68% Pacific students.

¹ Mariot and Sim https://www.victoria.ac.nz/sacl/centres-and-chairs/cpf/publications/working-papers/WP09_2014_Indicators-of-Inequality.pdf

While the attention to Maori wellbeing is fully supported, this needs to go hand in hand with wellbeing strategies for Pacific Island peoples.

A network of Pacific Island church leaders has been initiated as a reference group for Pacific Peoples' wellbeing in Canterbury. This network is engaging with the Minister of Pacific Peoples 'Aupito William Sio and East Christchurch MP Poto Williams.

Relational Wellbeing

The legacy of 20-30 years of market oriented economics has pulled New Zealanders towards individualized concepts of wellbeing. For example, Education and Health are assessed on individual measures. Even suicide is counted in individual terms whereas it is likely to include isolation and relational pressures.

Family wellbeing is also about quality of relationships; it is knowing family stories and histories; it is about the ability to be involved in communal and whanau and fanau events and cultural gatherings. Recreational activities, holidays and extended family relationships are part of wellbeing across all the domains of mental health, sustainability, developmental needs, aspirations, security and safety.

We support further work to develop a basis of relational wellbeing and the means to recognize this in policy – through measures, as well as through recognition of non-measurable attributes.

Governance

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Public Issues supports governance level involvement of iwi/Maori in designing and implementing child poverty reduction strategies and the child wellbeing strategies. This specifically means a decision-making role, rather than advisory or consultative roles for Maori.

Multisector governance.

We advocate for the involvement of NGO's in the Child Wellbeing Strategy, and for the voice of youth – including youth who are not those who speak from positions of privilege. Privileged young people are more likely to find ways to be heard. We recommend contacts through Marae, through churches, through youth networks so that the voice of young people who have wellbeing challenges are brought to the table.

We fully endorse cross sectoral governance design with the involvement of the Office of the Commissioner for Children, Oranga Tamariki, the Crown-Māori Relations Unit in the Ministry of Justice, Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry for Pacific Peoples, the Ministry for Women and the Social Investment Agency), Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education.

Conclusion and Public Presentations

Public Issues welcomes any further opportunities to be involved in the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy including attend Select Committee. In particular Pacific leaders in the Methodist church, including youth leaders, have further contributions to make on child and youth wellbeing.

Thank you for the agreed time extension.

Warm regards

Betsan Martin