



## **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](mailto: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.

<b>Contact Name:</b>	9(2)(a)
<b>Email Address:</b>	
<b>Phone Number:</b>	
<b>Organisation Name:</b>	OKE Charity
<b>Organisation description:</b> (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>OKE connects South Auckland schools and communities to grow mighty kids through outdoor classrooms.</p> <p>OKE has built seven outdoor classrooms/school gardens to date, giving over 4,000 Kiwi kids across South Auckland, access to a sustainable “outdoor classroom”.</p>
<b>Executive Summary:</b> (Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)	<p>It is great to see the introduction of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. OKE wholeheartedly supports aiming for New Zealand to be the best place in the world for children.</p> <p>This submission supports the principles, proposed outcomes and focus areas set out in the Strategy. As a charity, OKE has experience working collectively with communities to improve the wellbeing of children. This submission sets out in more detail OKE's experience of activity implementation in the focus areas to achieve the proposed outcomes.</p> <p>Based on our observations, there is the passion, belief and creativeness within New Zealand society to make the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy a success! The key will be bringing this energy together, to make Aotearoa the best place in the world for children</p>

## Submission Content

OKE connects South Auckland schools and communities to grow mighty kids through outdoor classrooms. Starting in South Auckland, we work with schools who are keen to get growing their own school garden by helping them make it happen. The OKE squad brings together teachers, parents, local businesses and volunteers to deliver a working bee with the school, which enables a garden to be built in just one day (our “Growing a Future” programme). We have so far built seven school gardens (and refurbished one school garden), giving over 4,000 local kids access to a garden.

From the moment we completed the first school garden at Papatoetoe West School in February 2015, OKE has been learning about the benefits these spaces provide to both schools and their local communities. The work we do at OKE supports the focus areas and proposed outcomes of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and can also help measure and track the impact of this strategy.

The wellbeing of children is paramount for OKE, it is why we do what we do. Initially our intention was to provide children with a way to grow their own fresh food. Over time, as more gardens have been built, we have observed how these spaces are used for much more than nourishment. These gardens are spaces for children to relax, enjoy getting their hands dirty and feel valued for their efforts. When in the garden the children feel as nurtured as the plants they grow and have a sense of belonging as they learn skills passed down over centuries. The gardens are inspiring places to learn and develop. Nature is a great tutor and provides teachings sometimes lost in curriculum alone. The genuine smiles of triumphant harvests are something to behold.

### Focus areas and proposed outcomes

OKE has experience in activity consistent with a number of the focus areas within the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy to achieve the proposed outcomes. These are set out in more detail below:

Focus area: 3 (59.11) Children have positive interactions with peers and others outside the home

Proposed outcomes:

Communities, including at school and online, are safe and supportive, with children protected from victimisation

When the OKE garden was built at Weymouth Primary School, the children were very enthusiastic about the garden but needed some guidance on how to get started. OKE enlisted the support of <sup>9(2)(a)</sup> from the wider community to give the children support. <sup>9(2)(a)</sup> knowledge and personality quickly helped build a solid relationship with the children. Through the initial working bees and connecting the schools to those in the community for ongoing support OKE has seen intergenerational relationships develop to support children being safe in their communities (refer for

example:<https://www.joe.org/joe/2002october/a3.php>)

Focus area: 9 (59.13) Children have opportunities for civic engagement and environmental awareness

Proposed outcomes:

Children and young people feel connected to their family, whānau and communities, and are actively included in schools, communities and society

Children and young people care about and recognise their responsibilities to others, and contribute positively at home, school and in their communities

Children and young people are empowered to engage on matters of civic and environmental importance

Papatoetoe West was the first garden OKE built and over the years a great relationship has built between the school and the charity. Over time the school has used the garden as a hub for their sustainability and environmental projects. In October 2018, the school achieved EnviroSchools Silver status. It was a real privilege to see how knowledgeable the children were of their environment, the impacts of climate change and how they were intending to have a say on making the world a better place.

Right from the start children are encouraged to provide input into the development of the garden space. This quickly engages the children and provides them with a sense of inclusion in the whole process. The gardens are the children's space and are encouraged to decide on what to grow, how to learn and the best use of the produce from the garden. As an example, the children at Bairds Mainfreight Primary recently decided the produce from their garden be used in a local community food station, providing food for their community. A clip on this from Maori TV can be viewed here:  
<https://www.maoritelevision.com/news/regional/south-auckland-open-pantries-unite-community>.

Focus area: 10 (59.4) Children and whānau are empowered to maintain healthy lifestyles for children

Proposed outcomes:

Children and young people have the best possible physical health, and health status is not a barrier to living a good life

Children and young people have strong networks of trusting, caring relationships with family, whānau, peers, communities and school

The OKE gardens which have been built to date have provided many families with access to a garden and fresh produce which they may not have had. A big element of the gardens is that the children see their parents, teachers and community building the gardens for them through our Growing A Future Working Bee. This gives the parents the opportunity to provide a healthy lifestyle resource for their children. The children are empowered to

nurture what grows in their garden. Studies have shown many healthy lifestyle benefits from gardening - from increased fruit and vegetable intake, improved mental health and promotion of a physically active lifestyle (refer, for example: <http://horttech.ashspublications.org/content/23/5/589.full>)

Focus area: 11 (59.9) Disabled children have improved opportunities and outcomes

Proposed outcomes:

Children and young people have the best possible physical health, and health status is not a barrier to living a good life

Neurodisability and neurodiversity are recognised, with children and young people receiving quality services and support

Whilst building the garden at Manurewa Central School <sup>9(2)(a)</sup>, we were introduced to <sup>9(2)(a)</sup> children on the autism spectrum. When we first met, these <sup>9(2)(a)</sup> shared a single raised garden bed to spend time with their teacher aide. Since the new garden was built, they now use the garden for a lot more learning and can use the space as a place to escape the classroom noise and concentrate on learning what nature has to show them. Gardening is used by organisations such as [thrive.org.uk](http://thrive.org.uk) to work with those with disabilities to improve: physical and mental health; communication and thinking skills; and ability to mix socially, make friends and learn practical skills.

Focus area: 12 (59.14) Children's mental wellbeing is supported

Proposed outcomes:

Children and young people experience mental wellbeing, are supported to cope with life's challenges and to heal and recover from trauma

Once the gardens are built and the growing has commenced, members of OKE regularly visit the schools to view progress. We are always greeted with excited genuine smiles. The gardens have a capacity to make children happy, through various means, even the simple task of weeding has a positive impact on mood. Feedback from both teachers and parents is that the garden is a space for children to escape a negative environment (both internally and externally to the school). Initial studies have shown a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing from participating in hands-on nature based activities (refer, for example: <http://dro.deakin.edu.au/view/DU:30003638>)

Focus area: 15 (59.10) Children are thriving socially, emotionally and developmentally in the early years (around 2 to 6 years)

Proposed outcomes:

Children and young people are positively engaged with and achieving in education, and building skills and knowledge for life and learning

Children and young people have developmentally appropriate opportunities outside the

classroom that build confidence and important life skills

So far, OKE has worked with South Auckland primary schools. The gardens have been used by all age groups in these schools, from school starters to school leavers. The gardens are great spaces for the age groups to interact and learn from each other. The garden which OKE built at Reremoana Primary Schools was actually a joint project with Early Learning Wattle Cove, with the younger children visiting the garden on a weekly basis and being shown around the garden by the Reremoana students. Gardening can help development of children in the early years (refer for example: [https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/gardening\\_with\\_young\\_children\\_helps\\_their\\_development](https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/gardening_with_young_children_helps_their_development))

Focus area: 16 (59.15) All children have an equal chance to gain the skills, knowledge and capabilities for success in life, learning and work

Proposed outcomes:

Children and young people develop resilience, and emotional, behavioural and communication skills at home and in education, and are equipped to make successful transitions, including to primary school, secondary school, and into adulthood

Children and young people are positively engaged with and achieving in education, and building skills and knowledge for life and learning

Children and young people have developmentally appropriate opportunities outside the classroom that build confidence and important life skills

One of the reasons which OKE started to build school gardens, was because the majority of schools in South Auckland didn't have access to these spaces. What may well be taken for granted in other parts of New Zealand, aren't all that common in South Auckland communities. Once given the opportunity, we have seen children thrive in a garden environment and pick up all manner of skills - educational, life lessons and social understanding. A focus for OKE is to develop pathways from early education right through to tertiary education. Manurewa is a great example, with OKE involved with both Manurewa Central Primary and Manurewa High School.

## **Evaluation and Measurement**

OKE has received constant positive feedback from the gardens which have been built. Teachers suggested that OKE develop an education resource to help them teach how to use the gardens once they were built. OKE took this on board and developed an augmented reality application, which provides a season by season, week by week guide on how to use the garden. This is an invaluable resource for those using the garden, as well as for OKE, as it enables the charity to capture data, which can be used to measure the impact of the garden. This may also be a great resource for the team behind the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. The great advantage of an app, is that as well as using it in the schools OKE currently work with, schools around New Zealand (even globally) can use the resource and data can be captured for a nationwide impact study.

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.