



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:	Shakti Community Council Inc.
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>Shakti Community Council Inc. is a community-based organisation that aims to facilitate and ensure the good health and overall well-being of New Zealand’s migrant and refugee communities through culturally competent services within a culturally appropriate environment. Shakti has been working with women, children and youth for the past 23 years to address family violence in Asian, Middle Eastern and African communities with its roots in a support group set up by and for migrant and refugee women in 1995.</p> <p>Shakti was initially established to support ethnic women overcome the barriers that come with migration as well as the bonds of cultural oppression imposed on them for generations. Over the years, the group has grown throughout New Zealand and Australia with several member organisations in Auckland, Tauranga, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin, Sydney and Melbourne.</p> <p>Currently Shakti is the largest single provider of specialist domestic/family violence intervention, prevention and awareness services for Asian, African and Middle Eastern communities (ethnic migrants and refugees) in New Zealand.</p> <p>The primary area of work is women’s rights, human rights, awareness, intervention and prevention of domestic/family violence. Shakti s services include a culturally competent 24-7</p>

	<p>crisis line for women, ethnic women’s refuges (5), counselling and therapy, life skills programmes, family casework, youth advocacy and prevention programmes, legal advocacy, family conferencing, and community workshops to create awareness of family violence.</p> <p>Lobbying for social change within communities has been an integral aspect of Shakti’s advocacy work and within that we seek to challenge the cultural acceptance of domestic/family violence within our communities as well as cultural practices that oppress and violate women and children. We endeavour to be a catalyst for positive social change.</p> <p>Shakti Community Council Inc. is approved and accredited with Child, Youth & Family (CYF) as a national umbrella organisation and holds various government funding contracts. Some of the member organisations are individually CYF- approved and NZQA approved as well.</p> <p>Every year we provide support to approximately 1000 women and 700 children from ethnic migrant and refugee families in New Zealand.</p> <p>On the advocacy and lobbying front, Shakti was instrumental in the government introducing the Domestic Violence Category for victims of Domestic Violence under the New Zealand Immigration Act. We continue to be consulted on matters relating to migrant and refugee communities by various New Zealand government departments, ministries, universities, international universities, and other national and international bodies.</p>
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Executive Summary:
(Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)

Migrant and refugee populations are growing and the younger generation are increasingly diverse in ethnicity and culture. This submission encourages the consideration of children and youth well-being from the perspectives and experiences of Asian, Middle Eastern and African communities in Aotearoa.

The diversity of cultures and the challenges of racism, intergenerational cultural conflict, discrimination, family violence, forced marriage, honour-based violence require acknowledgment in the strategy to build a future for children and youth where they are safe, can lead lives of dignity to fulfil their full potential, and have a sense of belonging.

This submission recommends co-designed strategies and response frameworks in consultation with migrant and refugee children and youth to respond to these challenges through a strengths-based approach.

The framework of intersectionality to take into account the multiple forms of privilege and marginalisation of young people and children's experiences is required to develop solutions.

Culturally specific services, strategies and responses are necessary to achieve greater well-being for the growing diversity of children and youth in Aotearoa/New Zealand and agencies working with children and youth will require adequate resourcing and funding from the government.

Submission Content

1. Strategy one: 'Children and young people are safe and nurtured in their families, whanau and homes,' should be more inclusive of the structural support provided to nurture families and encourage this focus.

a. The environment a child or young person grows up in is conducive to their physical and mental wellbeing, and their ability to successfully thrive within society. This means looking after the parents and caregivers of our young people is imperative to achieving this focus.

b. Violence can come in many different forms, physical, sexual, financial, spiritual, emotional and mental. The language used to describe familial issues are often mainstream and not representative of the diverse and growing ethnic New Zealand population. Forced marriages and under-aged marriages are a growing issue among the ethnic community affecting the lives of several young New Zealanders every year. Yet, there is lack of acknowledgement and governmental support within this area. Being more inclusive with language and issues related to diversity and translating these to political action ensures children and young people of all backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities are nurtured and safe.

c. Current government responses and policies to address child abuse through Oranga Tamariki can increase the level of violence experienced by young people and children. Children feel disempowered in the process as an external organisation which has little understanding of their culture or relationship with their family members make decisions for the intervention.

d. Family Court custody decisions can often contravene the safety of children. We notice an institutional bias that is racial and gendered towards Pākehā fathers despite the children having witnessed abuse or experienced abuse directly from the fathers when the mothers have been migrant women.

e. Immigrant children and youth tend to adapt and acculturate faster than adults into a new culture. The mental health effects of juggling two different cultures and expectations and the harm of intergenerational cultural conflicts on children and young people's well-being needs to be acknowledged. For many children and youth from immigrant backgrounds, the family and community expectations and constraints placed on them can make it difficult to participate fully in society. Intergenerational cultural bullying is the exertion of power by an adult through the forms of control, emotional guilt-tripping, threats, comparison and psychological abuse to pressure youth and children to conform to a rigid cultural ideal.

Recommendation

If this strategy is to ensure children and young people are safe and nurtured

within their families, we believe:

i. Oranga Tamariki should adequately fund culturally specialist agencies working with children and youth experiencing family and domestic violence. This funding should support both prevention and intervention work in addressing issues of family violence affecting children and youth including forced and child marriage, honour-based violence, witnessing violence and intergenerational cultural bullying. This funding should cover the costs of casework support, counselling and prevention programmes.

ii. There is a need for more inclusive language around what violence may look like that is more representative of the issues affecting different ethnic populations in New Zealand. Education on consent and healthy relationships should include consent for marriages, for young people to know their rights in this country.

iii. The development of more child-centric models for responding to abuse and violence in the family requires culturally specific approaches co-designed with young people from ethnic minority migrant and refugee backgrounds. Oranga Tamariki responses to child abuse should be open to policy changes and require community consultation with children, young people and adults who work with them to develop a more effective response to ensure the safety of children and youth from Asian, Middle Eastern and African backgrounds.

iv. Support for culturally specialist services and programmes to bridge intergenerational cultural gaps for migrant and refugee families for the well-being of children and youth, for more open and respectful communication between generations.

2. Strategy six: ‘Children and young people experience improved equity of outcomes, with services helping address the impact of poverty, low socioeconomic status and disadvantage’

a. Action towards greater equity in outcomes is extremely important. We invite you to consider incorporating the effects of discrimination and marginalisation. For single mothers who have left abusive relationships, the discrimination in employment and housing will have intergenerational effects on their children. Migrant women who have been brought over for marriage, then experiencing domestic violence are often in a more vulnerable position and economically disadvantaged when they have been isolated, face language barriers or due to their immigration status, find difficulties to find employment. The economic independence and status of single parents who face discrimination based on ethnicity, culture, language ability, immigration status and gender needs consideration for the well-being of children and youth.

b. Similarly to poverty, low socioeconomic status and disadvantage, young people who experience discrimination, whether it be racial, homophobic or gender-based, these lead to immense disparities in the health and wellbeing of young people and the opportunities they are presented. The sense of belonging for migrant and refugee young people is often disrupted with migration, many young people feel isolated, feeling like they need to assimilate into the dominant culture and have their culture and language devalued in school contexts and within the health care system.

c. There are substantial disparities in the number of school counsellors found in schools across New Zealand depending on the decile system. These counsellors are consequently over-worked and are unable to provide the needed support to all students. Often these counsellors are not representative of the diverse student population and can be a barrier in help-seeking for students who feel their needs and issues may not be understood. Especially young people from migrant or ethnic backgrounds who may be experiencing problems that are not often understood or acknowledged within the dominant western model of harm as being unacceptable or problematic.

d. Children exist in a family context and are dependent on guardians, caregivers, parents or family members, thus poverty needs to be considered holistically. The issue of housing stability, affordability and quality needs further strategies to ensure safe, warm and healthy homes. Single mothers with small children from migrant and refugee backgrounds often face discrimination in accessing housing from landlords/private rentals or long waiting times to receive offers of Housing NZ houses. The discrimination against parents and family members have flow on effects for the well-being of children and youth.

e. Employment discrimination based on immigration status, language ability, ethnicity, religion or cultural background affects young people at working age and their family members who are responsible for economic provision. For improving the socio-economic outcomes of children and youth, the strategy cannot be divorced from improving opportunities for employment for their family members.

f. Welfare benefits for single mothers should not be sanctioned if they can not name the father of the child.

Recommendation

If this strategy is to ensure children and young people experience improved

equity of outcomes, we believe:

- i. There is a strong need for the inclusion of services for specific cultural needs of young people from Asian, Middle Eastern and African cultures.*
- ii. More equitable funding across schools to ensure equal opportunities for students to access appropriate counsellors.*
- iii. Greater diversity and adequate ratio of school counsellors that better represents the diversity of students within a school.*
- iv. Address discrimination and affordability of housing, rent caps and affordable rental homes for families on low incomes.*
- v. Campaigns to address racism in NZ society and particularly in employment, encouraging diversity in workplaces and governance boards in gender and ethnicity.*

3. Strategy seven: ‘Children and young people are free from racism, discrimination and stigma.’

a. A large proportion of bullying takes place within the school environment and among young people with an online presence. Focusing on the environmental contexts where discrimination, racism and stigma can fester, can provided targeted action. The Youth 2000 surveys carried out in 2001, 2007 and 2012 by the Adolescent Health Research Group at Auckland University found rates of cyberbullying to be on the rise.

b. Racial bullying is a major problem within schools and should be incorporated within the strategy. The Education report in 2018 (Education matters to me: key insights), found that young people reported experiencing racial bullying not only from peers, but from their teachers as well. This report strongly recommended the government to consider the students comments when developing the statement of National Education and Learning priorities and there should be more direct consultation with the students. We also believe, the CYWS policy should better reflect the needs and experiences of our young people. (See full report: <http://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/FINALOCC-Case-study-of-Education-matters-to-me.pdf>)

Recommendation

If this strategy is to ensure children and young people are free from racism, discrimination and stigma, we believe:

- i. The existing guidelines and legislations on bullying in New Zealand schools should be considered when working towards this strategy, and these guidelines should be a focus of improvement to change this bullying culture within schools.*
- ii. The strategy should include targeted action towards reducing racial bullying, both within schools and online.*
- iii. That any strategy relating to young people and their lived experiences, should be co-designed by young people.*

4. Strategy thirteen: ‘Children and young people are supported to make positive decisions.’

a. This strategy requires a greater discussion around what is needed for young people to feel supported in making positive decisions, especially when it comes to sexual health and wellbeing. For young people to be “considered and informed,” requires them to have access to consent, sexual health and violence prevention educational programmes that are appropriate and culturally considerate. However, access itself is not enough. These programmes need to be delivered from a space of cultural, gender and ethnic diversity. The implementation of mainstream programmes into spaces where young people come have differing lived experiences and values can be further harmful and isolating.

Recommendation

If this strategy is to ensure children and young are supported to make positive decisions, we believe:

- i. Sexual health, consent education and family violence prevention programmes should be delivered in schools and in a culturally appropriate manner.*
- ii. The strategy should be more strengths-based and mana-enhancing, rather than simply being prescriptive.*

5. Non-permanent resident children and young people

a. *There should be a section on the rights of non-PR children and youth born or living in New Zealand, and their rights in this country regarding accessing education and healthcare.*

b. *When a policy is clearly relating to all children and young people, the document should be inclusive of all young people living in New Zealand, irrespective of the different residency status. Especially when the language used in this strategy adds to this perception, for example, “New Zealand is the best place in the world for children.”*

Recommendation

If this strategy is to include the wellbeing of all children and young people, we believe:

i. *This should include the rights for non-permanent resident children and young people.*

6. Service diversity for youth development

a. *For CYWS to achieve its desired outcomes, requires the collaboration of services that cater for the diversity among the youth population, whether this be ethnic, cultural, gender, sexual or neurodiversity. Understanding, acknowledging and supporting these organisations that represent different groups are important to ensure inclusivity and that the five wellbeing domains are achieved.*

b. *The wider youth development sector need to be part of the solution and should be part of the decision-making. Bridging the gap between grassroots and policy is crucial to ensure that our policy serves those it was intended for. After all, policy can never protect those it was never intended to serve.*

Recommendation

If this strategy intends to ensure youth development and wellbeing, we believe:

i. *Resourcing of the youth development sector to be strengthened to support the implementation of the CYW strategies.*

- *Governmental support and funding for community organisations that serve groups with differing needs. E.g. services that are ethnically and culturally appropriate.*

- *Greater collaboration with such organisations to understand the diversity*

and differing needs of children and young people living in New Zealand, especially when creating policies that affects all children.

7. Greater diversity in the problems and solutions suggested within the CYWS policy.

a. The ethnic diversity among children and young people have been changing drastically over the last decade and the CYWS policy should better reflect this in the strategies towards achieving the overarching focuses.

b. The national ethnic population projections in New Zealand indicate that the Asian population (0.54 million in 2013) will increase to 0.90-1.02 million in 2025, and to 1.16-1.38 million by 2038. Children and young people form a large proportion of this group. The Chinese and Indian population are two major ethnic groups that have been suggested to have major population growths (Statistics New Zealand, 2017).

c. Intersectionality is often sidelined and can further marginalise already vulnerable children and young people. Therefore, diversity should remain central, both in terms of the young people the policy serves, and the solutions and strategies used to achieve wellbeing for all children.

Recommendation

If this strategy intends to serve all children and young people, we believe:

i. Strategies should ensure the intersectionality of our young people and celebrate the diversity that allows young people to feel valued and have a sense of belonging.

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