



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.

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SUBMISSION TO THE CHILD AND YOUTH WELLBEING STRATEGY

ON BEHALF OF TE OHU MANA RANGATAHI

“E WHAKAMĀUI MAI I TŌKU MANA MOTUHAKE”

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INTRODUCTION & TE OHU MANA RANGATAHI

1. We thank the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet’s office for the opportunity to convey the voices of communities we serve in relation to the proposed Child and Youth wellbeing strategy. We see the establishment of this framework as fundamentally necessary to the progress of this nation regarding the wellbeing of Māori children and young people.
2. It is not only indicative of a representative commitment to improve and enhance the wellbeing of all New Zealand Children, but also provides an opportunity to show genuine obligation to the wellbeing of all New Zealand Children and Young People. We see this framework as a fundamentally necessary conversation for our communities and Aotearoa Society at large.
3. Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi was formed over 2011/2012 as a response to the seventh goal of the ‘I Am Auckland’ document. This goal “*rangatahi tū rangatira (all rangatahi will thrive)*” is focussed toward acknowledging Te Āo Māori (Māori world-view) by working with rangatahi (young Māori) to ensure the needs, wants and aspirations of rangatahi within the Tamaki Makaurau precinct.

4. Having developed and evolved over the past 6-7 years, Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi is now established as a rangatahi-developed and rangatahi-led collective made up of rangatahi who represent various communities, organisations and groupings, with an invested interest and commitment in the affairs of rangatahi advancement regionally, nationally and globally.
5. Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi operates to deliberately provide platforms, spaces and opportunities for our rangatahi voice to be shared, actioned and be of influence. Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi is the verified authentic entity for ensuring the voices of rangatahi are heard within Tamaki Makaurau and serve as a conduit between pakeke and rangatahi, facilitating the intergenerational divide to curate solutions which consistently enhance the wellbeing of whānau, hapū, iwi and hāpori.
6. Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi acknowledges the courage of the DPMC to willingly accept that New Zealand is not currently the best place in the world for children, and for taking actions to rectify this. We recognize that the social climate of New Zealand is not presently one in which all New Zealander's thrive.
7. In part, we write this submission to reinforce the feedback that has been resounding clear across the Māori population. We also provide an authentic rangatahi māori perspective, lending our voices to that which we believe will be effective in the ongoing development of the Child and Young People Wellbeing strategy.
8. Enhancing child and youth wellbeing requires a concerted effort to acknowledge the widespread and diverse communities who fit the bill of "children and young people". In this case a silver bullet approach will not suffice. Certainly, given the historical context that one-size-fits-all approaches have often propagated disparities between populations with varying cultural and social structures (Human

Rights Commission, 2012), we advocate for this consideration to be at the forefront of any initiatives implemented within the confines of this framework.

9. The health, social, education and justice issues that have plagued Māoridom at disproportionate rates over the past two centuries, are borne of a system which has been unable to situate itself within the confounds of Te Āo Māori, inflicting racism at the interpersonal and institutional levels alike, the possibility of a thriving Māori nation was never anticipated by the crown. Ultimately, we understand that a grafting of Māori concepts to an insidiously failing system for Māori, will not result in better outcomes for New Zealanders. If we are expected to effect positive change for all New Zealanders, this will require courageous acts and widescale transformation across the social, education, justice and health systems.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

12. We wish to make it abundantly clear in the first instance that we support a child wellbeing strategy in principal. We do however, offer the following key recommendations to ensure that – from policy to practice – this framework serves the wellbeing of all New Zealanders, now and into the future.
13. As Māori, we are not merely stakeholders, but are tangata whenua, and therefore, we are tiriti partners, and therefore we consider that this submission should be weighted so.
14. The development of this framework heralds a necessarily radical approach to improving the wellbeing of children and young people in New Zealand. We recommend that a Tamariki Māori wellbeing strategy be developed alongside or within this strategy, holding the same weight and value as the strategy proper, in reflection of a genuine tiriti partnership.

15. To ensure the sustainability of this strategy, and as an indication of genuine commitment, we recommend that a cross-parliament taskforce be established to ensure that the development, implementation and evaluation of this framework is steadfast, beyond the tenure of the government of the day. It is of critical importance that politicking does not position itself as a barrier to the wellbeing of children and young people in New Zealand. This framework needs to be able to transcend the borders of parties, sectors and institutions in the efforts of the crown to guarantee an achievable vision of child wellbeing in New Zealand.
16. To quote one of the most insightful government documents, Puāo te atatu states that “at the heart of the issue is a profound misunderstanding or ignorance of the place of the child in Māori society and its relationship with whānau, hapū, and iwi structures”. Such a statement rings truer than ever in the context of this strategy in that, every effort has been made to include the words “family and whānau”, recognising the value of such entities, whilst simultaneously exhibiting an abysmal failure to appropriately identify the concept of “whānau”, and thus failing to contextualise the place of the child within the systems of whānau, hapū and iwi.
17. We suggest that this can be remedied through a deliberate conversation. It has been resoundingly clear throughout the feedback to this strategy that Māori fail to see themselves within the landscape of this plan. An approach which continues with the framework along its current trajectory, in spite of this can only be viewed by Māori as a continued breach of the right to equal citizenship and protection of taonga, guaranteed to Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
18. The status of our most disenfranchised can be indicative of the overall state of our nation. Statistics show us that Māori are indeed, the most disenfranchised as a population, across all wellbeing indicators. An equitable approach will no doubt result in an unequal distribution of resources across

the populous of children and young people, but will no doubt yield better outcomes overall, contributing to New Zealand being the best place in the world for children and young people.

19. We commend the DPMC for their efforts to consult widely with children and young people all across Aotearoa, however, the involvement from rangatahi Māori, or lack thereof, is evident in the current construction of the framework. We therefore advocate for deliberate partnership with Māori rangatahi in the ongoing development of this framework, that does not amount to “consultation”, but rather is genuine in intent and action.

20. We specifically recommend that a hui be hosted for rangatahi Māori across the motu to share in their aspirations for the wellbeing of children and young people, framed by the worldview of rangatahi Māori themselves. We advocate that the following rangatahi roopu be invited to this hui, with the intent to create a rangatahi taskforce which oversees the development, implementation and ongoing evaluation of this framework:

- a Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi
- b Nga Kuaka marangaranga
- c Matike Mai Aotearoa Rangatahi Roopu
- d Te Kahui Rangatahi & Tribal Futures
- e Ngaa Rangatahi-a-Iwi
- f Ka Eke Poutama

21. We acquiesce that it is the responsibility of the adult generation to operate from such a framework, whilst our role as rangatahi is to provide an aspirational framework that we see as being able to safeguard and enhance the lives of our children and young people. Strategy isn't for young people, but rather a reminder to pakeke of what it is to be young.

22. Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi affirms its position that children are but products of the environments within which they are nurtured, being continuously shaped by the overlapping ecosystems which inform how one interacts with the world. The resulting outcome is the capacity of the child to, at some point, identify their own entity, borne of their environment, and therefore be defined by that identity. Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi affirms that, with the birth of every child is the opportunity to redefine humanity. In this recognition lies a depth of understanding as to the importance of policy as an influencing factor on the wellbeing of the child.
23. On this basis, we see a deficit-based framework as being potentially catastrophic. Thus, we further advocate that a wellbeing framework should not be deficit based, instead focussing whole heartedly on ensuring that all indicators are framed towards their intended positive outcome.
24. We as a nation of children and young people have experienced instances such as the use of “The Ministry for Vulnerable Children”, whereby the government felt justified in shaping the lives of children through stigmatising their engagement with the state. Such diplomacies have revealed the ignorance of the government to the fundamental importance of the environment in enhancing the life of the child.
25. On this front, we recommend that any language which holds any such negative resemblance be removed from the document. Deficit based language can not only be detrimental to the lives of children and young people, but is also a powerful influence on the mindset and behaviours of those tasked to execute the intended outcomes of the framework, from policy through to practice.
26. Whilst we submit to the fact that this strategy is not “for” young people, but rather “in the name” of young people, we still hold that this needs to be an aspirational framework, with subsidiary documents

having the ability to measure the harsh realities and quantify the progress of the government against the aspirations of young people.

27. We understand that it is the responsibility of the adult generation to operate from such a deficit framework, whilst our role as rangatahi is to provide an aspirational framework that we see as being able to safeguard and enhance the lives of our children and young people. This strategy should hold true for both, with the mainframe being accessible for ALL New Zealanders, and the stark and inhuman indicators of our failures to as a nation to meet the needs of our children be ratified in policy and workplans.

28. We advocate that the initiation of Child and Young People wellbeing strategy trigger the dis-establishment of other associated siloed strategies, in lieu of the amalgamation into one single cross-sector strategy. We take exception to the view that in order to improve child wellbeing, each sector of society must operate from their own frameworks. The first indication of an ability to see this strategy through will be the willingness of all departments of the executive to work together towards a shared outcome.

29. We understand the potential of data to define the lives of the people that exist behind the data sets. Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi wishes for the public, primarily children and young people, to be involved in the development of the evaluation framework for this wellbeing strategy. Furthermore, we understand the importance of the lives of children and young people being used as data to service outcomes for the government. We urge the DPMC to ensure that statistical analysis is done from a perspective that continuously humanises the process of evaluation, and places the child and their whānau at the heart of every evaluation.

PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FROM TE OHU MANA RANGATAHI

30. In recognising that we take exception to the framework in its current form, we as Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi propose an alternate framework, amalgamating all of the recommendations provided throughout this document into a framework which is founded on a Māori worldview. An alternative model recognises that merely aiming for “equality”, or providing “equitable access” within the constraints of a continuously oppressive system for Māori will only serve to continuously fail the wellbeing of Māori. This model provides a degree of separation from the current system which has consistently failed Māori children for more than 150 years, instead focussing on nurturing the systems within which the child and young person exists and thrives.
31. Our proposed strategy and framework aims to provide an alternative lens and worldview to the “Child Wellbeing Strategy” that is currently being developed by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Although we support, in principle, the fundamental necessity of a wellbeing strategy for children, our position in forming this proposal is to address the inability for the current strategy to reflect the values, practices and belief systems of Te Āo Māori or an indigenous worldview. Therefore, this proposed strategy and framework derives from traditional knowledge systems and philosophies, and are translated into modern and current solutions for the wellbeing of our children. It also aligns with the principles, statements and articles from supporting documents; Te Tiriti o Waitangi, He Whakaputanga – Declaration of Independence, Puaō Te Āta Tu, UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and NZ Covenant for our Nations Children.

32. 1987 heralded a new dawn with the release of Pūao te atatu. Highlighted within pūao te atatu, and still relevant today is that “at the heart of the issue is a profound misunderstanding or ignorance of the place of the child in Māori society and its relationship with whānau, hapū, iwi structures”. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that “for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding”. This is reflected in our belief that whānau are a natural phenomenon, which implies whānau as a system, not a unit.
33. The framework we propose is all encompassing and collective driven. The desired outcomes outlined within the proposed child wellbeing strategy can easily fall within these domains, allowing for a model which is all inclusive according to the current worldview underpinning the document, whilst expanding its scope to be inclusive of all indigenous nations.
34. Our proposed framework acknowledges the systems and environments intrinsically bound to the wellbeing of the individual, recognizing that in order for the individual to flourish, the child is dependent on five systems, as outlined below:
35. **Whenua: Source of sustenance, sustainability and stability**
- All children require a source of sustenance, sustainability and stability to safekeep their wellbeing, a source of ‘earthing’ – this wellbeing domain we refer to as **WHENUA**. Whenua in the māori language not only refers to the land, but also refers to the placenta. It makes a critical reference to the two systems upon which a child is dependent in ensuring that they have what they need to thrive – the womb of the mother and the sanctuary of the land, both critical environments tasked in ensuring the wellbeing of the child.

36. **Mātauranga: Process of accessing and transmitting knowledge**

MATAURANGA is referred to as ‘knowledge, comprehension, or understanding of everything existing in the universe (visible and invisible)’. Mātauranga recognises the inherent value of experiential learning and living knowledge systems as well as institutional knowing’s transmitted through cellular memory. Expressed as the sum of individual and collective experiences with the environment, mātauranga encapsulates the importance of the milieu- namely whānau, hapū, iwi and hāpori - as critically influential structures, consistently shaping the environment that the child emulates, and thus uses to model their own practices. Mātauranga further affirms the infinite aptitudes of children, and gives permission for excellency in any such forms as it may arise for the child or young person. The assurance of mātauranga means that children and young people have organic means of accessing and transmitting knowledge, with the genesis of that knowledge being rooted in archaic methodologies, transcending generations.

37. **Te Reo: Our source of sharing, expressing and communicating our experiences about the world**

TE REO purposes itself as a fundamental essence of communication – the linguistic quantification of our visual, auditory, tactile, gustatory, and olfactory interactions with the environment- a vital means of transmitting and effecting the manifestation of mauri in all things. Beyond the carnal composition of thought and construction of language, Te Reo, within the context of a māori worldview, allows for sharing and expression of one’s observations of the world. It acknowledges the language of nature, of the forests, the seas, the winds, and the silence. It is the tool that conveys traditions and values, and beyond being merely a mode of communication, Te Reo informs thought processes and defines realities. The presence of Te Reo within the lives of children and young people begins to shape their realities about the world, and to thus, define their destiny.

38. **Hauora: Source of spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical wealth.**

As a system which recognises every degree of wellbeing from an infinitely holistic perspective, **HAUORA** reaches beyond the superficial facets of “healthy” and beckons an alternate worldview of what it is to flourish, to connect and to be encompassed by toiora – or complete wellbeing.

Hauora reflects the intricate and complex nature of the realms of wairua (spiritual), ngākau (emotional), hinengaro (intellectual) and tinana (physical) wealth –each existing independently, exhibiting a distinguished trademark, whilst simultaneously operating eco-systemically, inextricably linked with each other. Where ngākau is solely responsible for instinct and intellect, it is also connected to emotional stability within the realm of spirituality. Equally, Intellectuality as a stand-alone realm speaks to a level of consciousness and intelligence, beyond mere mental functioning. This realm is also connected to ngākau, in that both ngākau and hinengaro are required for the individual to be aware of their own emotional capacity. Tinana concerns individual behaviour and bodily integrity, however, it is hyperlinked to all other realms (wairua, ngākau, hinengaro, tinana) in that the physical realm manifests itself as a culmination of all other aspects’ realms of toiora.

Hauora is infinitely bound to the wellbeing of the collective, with the wellbeing of the collective ultimately determining the hauora of the individual. A Māori worldview of hauora equips children and young people with the means to heal intergenerational trauma, and counteracts against such implicating factors responsible for the current health status of Māori. At its core hauora systems cater to the health of the child, through ensuring that in every interaction the child has about the world, it is one which guarantees their wellbeing.

39. **Tikanga: Source of protecting safety and maintaining peace and harmony.**

Proliferated in the era of Māui, and existing since time immemorial, **TIKANGA** occurs within the constructs of kawa, or natural law. Kawa stabilises the role of the environment as a constant, a dependable, upon which we (humanity) as teina to the environment can rely upon, thus being able to institute the tikanga paradigm – or, our freedom of interaction within the structures of the environment – to uphold safety. The fundamental purpose of tikanga is to ensure the protection of whakapapa and therefore, tikanga primarily operates to safekeep the wellbeing and livelihood of our tamariki, given they are the immortality of our whakapapa. Tikanga implies the deliberate existence of safety, through the provision of environments which ensure that children are loved, nurtured and cared for. All mechanisms of tikanga are void of “rule” or “control” with the only safety requirement being the maintenance of peace and harmony in accordance with the collective. Contrary to western systems of law, tikanga fails to recognise property rights, instead preferencing kaitiakitanga as the pivotal and defining role of the collective. This is an indispensable consideration in attempting to understand the māori worldview in that tikanga is the amalgamation of collective roles, and responsibilities. The construct of tikanga affixes the ability of the child to identify their own entity, and in doing so, allows for the development of autonomy within the child, in the context of their whānau, hapū and iwi.

He tāonga te tamaiti, whakatipu, arohaina

the child is precious to be loved and nurtured

WHENUA

LAND

Our source of sustenance, sustainability and stability

Whānau enjoy a proper and high standard of living.

Whānau are encouraged, supported and resourced to act as kaitiaki over their traditionally owned, or otherwise occupied, lands, territories, resources, water and coastal areas.

All members within the whānau receive a living wage.

Whānau have access to affordable and livable high standard living.

MĀTAURANGA

EDUCATION

Process of accessing knowledge systems

Whānau are encouraged, supported and resourced to protect and maintain access and practices of their traditional and/or cultural knowledge systems.

Whānau are educated, supported and resourced to ensure nurturing, loving and supportive environments for their hapū māmā during pregnancy (before birth) and the first 7yrs of the child.

Whānau environments enjoy the highest standard of education, learning and development.

Whānau environments are encouraged, supported and resourced to ensure positive and achievable engagement in education and skills based training, learning and development.

TE REO

LANGUAGE

Our source of sharing and expressing our worldview

Whānau are encouraged, supported and resourced. with the means to ensure the protection of cultural connection and identity.

Whānau environments have the appropriate resources to educate and express their views.

Civics education is accessible for whānau to consciously participate in civic society.

HAUORA

HEALTH

Our source of spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical wealth

Whānau have equitable access to the current NZ health system.

Whānau environments are supported and resourced to access traditional medicines and practices.

Whānau environments enjoy the highest standard of physical and mental wellbeing.

Whānau are educated, supported and resourced to ensure nurturing, loving and supportive environments for their hapū māmā, inclusive of fathers and/or caregivers, during pregnancy and in the first 2yrs of the child.

Processes and practices of healing intergenerational trauma are encouraged, supported, resourced and made accessible for whānau.

TIKANGA

LAW/LORE

Our source of maintaing and protecting peace and harmony

Whānau environments are safe and nurturing.

Whānaungatanga is a common practice within whānau environments.

Whānau are able to explore within environments that ensure physical safety.

All members are valued and supported within the whānau environment.

Whānau are supported to develop resilience and maintain an emotional stability.

FRAMING OF WELLBEING

40. In the event that our above proposal is completely ignored, we wish for the below recommendations to be taken into consideration:
41. As per point 5.1 of the cabinet paper on the Child Wellbeing Strategy Workplan and Budget Implications, we re-iterate that we don't believe that the framework in its current format does enough to give greater emphasis to:
- "Better reflecting te ao Māori, the important context of family, whānau and culture in children's lives and the importance of love and play".
42. We take particular exception to the inclusion of "Love and Play" (as above), as a part of the same point about "better reflecting Te Āo Māori, the important context ...in children's lives". To include both in the same point speaks directly to the failure of Te Āo Māori to be reflected in this strategy. It beckons a fundamental flaw of only being able to perceive Te Āo Māori as a mere concept, as opposed to its true orientation as a manifestation of everything that makes the child Māori.
43. We believe that the DPMC's framing of wellbeing, whilst not incorrect, is incomplete. The framing of wellbeing contextualises the strategy in the image of a "well" child or young person, however, these wellbeing domains bargain a gross miscarriage of the systemic structures which operate about and interact with the child, oblivious to the consciousness of the child. We agree that children and young people: Need to be loved, nurtured and safe; have what they need; belong, contribute and are valued; are happy and healthy and; are learning and developing. We see these wellbeing indicators as forming part of the vision rather than being indicative of domains of wellbeing.

44. In our view, the genesis of this strategy is child centric, and therefore eco-centric – fundamentally flawed in that it views whānau as a limb of the child, as opposed to a vital organ, whereby the child’s survival and indeed flourishing is contingent on the success of said whānau systems. We submit that these wellbeing domains are ego-centric, deteriorating the critical importance of the determinants of wellbeing, and failing to recognise the eco-systems.
45. In even attempting to take on a “Te Āo Māori” approach, it is important to understand that, within this world view, the first context should always be whānau. The “Whānau” concept, in accordance with Te Āo Māori, is an interdependent system bound to the values, histories and traditions of our tipuna. In opposition to the family unit, whānau disintegrates the notion of the nuclear family, solidifying its purpose as a source of sustenance and protector of our natural wellbeing systems.
46. We suggest the following expression of concepts, which are not merely concepts, but are eco-systems, upon which all people are premised to need to thrive. In undertaking an analysis of more than 300 surveys with rangatahi Māori, Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi sees the following “wellbeing domains” or systems as being important eco-systems, upon which rangatahi have the ability to thrive.
- Whenua: Source of sustenance, sustainability and stability
 - Maturanga: Process of accessing our transmitting knowledge
 - Te Reo: Our source of sharing and expressing our worldview
 - Hauora: Source of spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical wealth.
 - Tikanga: Source of protecting safety and maintaining peace and harmony.

FEEDBACK TO VISION STATEMENT

47. We want New Zealand to be the best place in the world for Children. We do however, have an unprecedented concern, as indigenous peoples to Aotearoa, in that, New Zealand is the only place in world for Māori children and Young People. For us of Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi, it is not about being the best place in the world, and rather transcends any such measurable visions.
48. Our vision, as rangatahi indigenous to this land, and infinitely bound to this land, through our systems of hauora, te reo, tikanga, matauranga and whenua, is one which recognises New Zealand as the only place in the world capable for and responsible for our sustainability and flourishing.
49. Aotearoa was once a utopia for children and young people, we believe this to be the result of the way in which Māori perceive children, not as property of their father, but rather, recognising their status as taonga, with an archaic right to wellbeing, and as a central and integral part of an eco-system, their wellbeing inextricably bound to the wellbeing of whānau, hapū and Iwi systems.
50. We therefore, see the following as being an appropriate vision for that of the Child wellbeing framework, as indicated in our proposed framework:

“HE TAONGA TE TAMAITI, WHAKATIPU, AROHAINA”

The Child is precious, to be loved and nurtured.

51. This whakataukī elicits a hyper-awareness to the fact that all children are very delicate, tender, precious and momentarily gifted to our care. Our precise role and responsibility of care is to ensure prepared environments that cultivates, nurtures, loves and actively protects the wellbeing of our children. Te Āo Māori deems this to be a reality when the integrity of our whānau systems are thriving by upholding and maintaining the five foundational building blocks of our whare.

CONCLUSION

52. If the opportunity arises Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi would welcome the opportunity to present to this submission in person.

53. We once again thank the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet for the opportunity to contribute to the progress of this framework, as a ground-breaking piece of work in outlining the future of children and young people in Aotearoa.

Ngā Mihi,

Te Ohu Mana Rangatahi,

9(2)(a)

