



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:	VOYCE Whakarongo Mai
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?)	We are VOYCE Whakarongo Mai, an independent, non-government organisation that advocates alongside tamariki and rangatahi in care. We empower young people by amplifying their voice and enabling opportunities for them in their communities. We also collect and collate the individual and collective voice of this very important group in Aotearoa.
Executive Summary: (Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)	<p>Uncertainty, dislocation, disconnectedness, trauma and a lack of security, negatively impacts on wellbeing and development. These will be present to some degree for all tamariki atawhai (children and young people currently in care or who are care experienced).</p> <p>The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy must prioritise the children and young people who we stand beside; and initiatives made accessible and maximised for these young people to even begin to meet the degree of wellness and success that other non-care experienced groups have access to.</p>

Submission Content

Our Submission is focused on the health and wellbeing of the more than 7000 children and young people (at any one time) who come into the care of the state – Oranga Tamariki. The voices of members of the care experienced community have contributed significantly to this submission. We have also supported a number of tamariki atawhai in making their own personal submissions.

We agree that all children and youth in Aotearoa should be able to expect as a minimum standard of living ‘love, needs being met, belonging & being valued, happiness & health, learning & development.’

The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy needs to explicitly acknowledge that tamariki atawhai are a cohort that have experienced significant stigma and discrimination. It is important that they are not further labelled negatively. Childhood maltreatment is not a disorder. However those exposed to early adverse experiences during their formative and developmental years should be identified as a ‘priority’ group for all current and new initiatives for tamariki and rangatahi.

Early identification of trauma (and sequelae) needs to be considered the ‘practise rule’ rather than the exception, due to the fact that a majority of tamariki atawhai will have experienced maltreatment and/or abuse. In spite of this, maintaining connectedness with whānau is important whilst safety is obviously paramount. Early identification of a trusted adult or adults is the mainstay of our practice here at VOYCE Whakarongo Mai. This practise should be part of all therapeutic interfaces with any young person, encouraging a systemic and strength-based approach. No child in New Zealand exists in isolation.

With regards to tamariki atawhai, the social as well as financial cost of not intervening at the appropriate levels and time, will be significant. Childhood maltreatment can have numerous negative sequelae. These could include physical problems such as obesity (Danese & Tan, 2014), psychopathology with poorer outcomes (Nanni et al 2012), compromised academic achievement and deminished economic productivity (Currie and Widom, 2010).

Support exiting care is critical; and has been highlighted by tamariki atawhai as a source of angst. Educational and vocational opportunities with on-going support need to be in place as well as security for housing. Tamariki atawahi deserve access to means of identification, including a bank account in their name, an IRD number and a birth certificate; opportunities which other children and young adults have ready access to. We see these as necessities of citizenship that are critical and should be readily available with reduced restraint and bureaucracy. For tamariki atawhai a good standard of material wellbeing should be expected also.

Equitable outcomes requires inequitable inputs. The implementation of prioritisation of need over fair and equitable inputs needs to be monitored rigorously by the relevant government entities i.e. Oranga Tamariki, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of

Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education and Treasury. Legislative enablers and drivers are pertinent to the success of this.

As articulated best by one of the VOYCE Whakarongo Mai Youth Council Members and agreed with by all, *“first and foremost we have to consider that our government system in the ways it handles and sees young people most of the time needs to **change**. When I say change I mean see children as children and not a number or a specific ethnicity. That’s where ideally change would start; but as in right now, what we need the community to work on is loving these children and young people [in care]. Being there to support them in any way possible and having funding to help that process. Encouraging our youth to work; giving them the work experience or study, what ever they wish to do. Engage in meaningful conversations that our youth and young people remember and can take away with them [make all interactions purposeful]. Working with the families of our rangatahi to help ensure all their needs are meet financially, emotionally and spiritually as well. Keeping our future generations connected to their ethnicity so they have a sense of identity.”*

References:

- Danese,A & Tan M. (2014). Childhood maltreatment and obesity: systematic review and meta-analysis. *Molecular psychiatry* 19,544-554
- Nanni v et al. (2012) Childhood maltreatment predicts unfavourable course of illness and treatment outcome in depression: a meta-analysis. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 169,141-151.
- Currie, J and Widom CS (2010) long-term consequences of child abuse and neglect on adult economic well-being. *Child maltreatment* 15, 111-120.

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.