



## 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>	Stacey Shortall
<b>Email Address:</b>	9(2) (a)
<b>Phone Number:</b>	
<b>Organisation Name:</b>	Who Did You Help Today
<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>Who Did You Help Today is about unleashing the magic of helping so that social good grows in New Zealand.</p> <p>Structured as a charitable trust, Who Did You Help Today operates with three trustees, one part-time employee and three part-time contractors. Who Did You Help Today is about creating connections that empower communities to work as one and make New Zealand the best place in the world for our children.</p> <p>Two of the Who Did You Help Today projects have a specific focus on developing innovative grassroots solutions to tackle entrenched social issues in New Zealand.</p> <p><i>Homework Club</i> provides opportunities for children who live in material hardship to be further positively engaged with their education and empower them to gain more of the skills, knowledge and capabilities to be a lifelong learner.</p> <p><i>Mothers Project</i> seeks to ensure that imprisoned mothers are provided with the support, assistance and education they need to help maintain critical connections with their whanau, and enable children to access their mother's emotional support.</p> <p><i>HelpTank</i> is another of Who Did You Help Today's projects. As New Zealand's first home-grown digital platform that matches community causes with skilled professionals to enhance collective capability to achieve social change, HelpTank brings together</p>

	<p>capability with need in our country so that people reconnect for good, including with issues affecting children.</p>
<p><b>Executive Summary:</b> (Please provide a short summary of the key points of your Submission - 200 words)</p>	<p>Reducing child poverty and enhancing child wellbeing will come from working collectively and implementing programmes that provide our children with an equal opportunity to learn, to be educated and to maintain the critical intimate relationships they need to succeed.</p> <p>The feedback and input provided by Who Did You Help Today focuses on two of the five draft wellbeing domains which we have particular interest in:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When our children and young people are learning &amp; developing; and</li> <li>2. When our children and young people are loved, nurtured &amp; safe.</li> </ol> <p>The statistics around our children’s wellbeing are well known.</p> <p>At least one in ten New Zealand children live in material hardship and it is critical that we give those children the support to become lifelong learners, make it possible for them to overcome hardship, close gaps and build a better future for not only themselves, but also their whanau, their communities and their country.</p> <p>With attachment, positive interaction and lifelong learning, our children have the opportunity to reach their full potential and will be able to positively contribute to society</p> <p>Who Did You Help Today welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Child Wellbeing Strategy and provide insight into the programmes being run by the organisation. We fully support the Government’s commitment to reducing child poverty and enhancing child wellbeing.</p>

## Submission Content

### Introduction:

Who Did You Help Today firmly believes that attachment, positive interaction and lifelong learning assists in improving the lives and prospects for all New Zealanders and will contribute to New Zealand being the best place in the world for our children.

The statistics are well known – one in four children in New Zealand live under the income poverty line and at least one in ten New Zealand children live in material hardship. There are over 20,000 children in New Zealand who are affected by parental imprisonment. At any given time there are around 770 women in New Zealand prisons and it is estimated that approximately 87% of female prisoners are mothers.<sup>1</sup>

These statistics place some of our children at significant risk for adversity.

One of the most consistent associations in developmental science is between economic hardship and compromised childhood development.<sup>2</sup> It is also known that children's educational outcomes are strongly influenced by low income socio-economic status.<sup>3</sup>

However, many children who experience childhood poverty do well in later life. While the evidence highlights the negative outcomes associated with low socio-economic status, it is important to note that chronic poverty may hinder a child's chance of success rather than determine a path of diminished outcomes.<sup>4 5</sup>

The 2017 UNICEF Report Card ranks New Zealand 38th out of 41 countries for good health and wellbeing and identified serious concerns about the disparities to education, reflecting the huge gap between our highest-performing and lowest-performing school students and issues with children in state care and the criminal justice system.

The development of this strategy is our opportunity to come together and enhance existing successful work programmes and develop new projects to ensure all children are given equal opportunity to overcome hardship, form positive relationships, close gaps and build a better future for themselves and their whanau.

Who Did You Help Today fully supports the vision, desired outcomes and proposed focus areas of the draft Child Wellbeing Strategy. It is in everyone's best interests that we make New Zealand the best place for our children and we all need to be accountable to ensure this vision is achieved.

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<sup>1</sup> Families Commission Report, June 2015

<sup>2</sup> National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000, p.275

<sup>3</sup> Ferguson et al., 2007

<sup>4</sup> National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000

<sup>5</sup> Brainwave Trust Aotearoa 2018, The Experience of Child Poverty, Hilary Nobilo, MMH (Perinatal and Infant), PGDipChAd, PGCComChH

## **Achieving the vision by ensuring all children and young people are learning & developing:**

It is vital that all children in New Zealand have equitable access to education and have the opportunity to learn and develop, and that this is not hindered by their socio-economic or poverty status.

Numerous studies exist that show reading with children helps them learn to speak, interact and bond in a meaningful manner, not to mention the empowerment they get to understand more of the world around them. According to the Education Review Office (ERO), “reading proficiency is a gateway to the world.” In fact, engaging and reading with a child is widely accepted as providing a strong foundation for lifelong learning.

Engaging and reading with children facing hardship in our country need not be restricted to formal schooling and paid teachers. Because Who Did You Help Today believes that we can all play a part in helping these New Zealand children to be lifelong learners, the organisation has implemented Homework Club, a programme whereby low decile primary schools throughout New Zealand are partnered with volunteers from local businesses, firms, departments or agencies.

Established in 2014, Homework Club is a successful programme that centred around the child. It has run in 11 primary schools around New Zealand (with several new Clubs scheduled to begin in Term One 2019) and involved hundreds of volunteers from around eight organisations including law firms, accounting firms, government departments and other agencies.

The work programme is simple. Run after school on a weekly basis during term time volunteers engage and read with students. Through conversations, volunteers and students are exposed to new ideas and insights, furthering the lifelong learning of not only the child but also the volunteer.

While there are many established community groups that assist students with homework and afterschool activities, Homework Club brings with it a unique approach. We create genuine partnerships between organisations and a school in their community. In addition to helping support the school and teachers with students’ learning, we have seen relationships grow and deepen to find more ways to help and learn about each other.

Offshore research shows that after school work programmes like Homework Clubs can be a way to extend a child’s learning experience in ways perhaps not possible during the school day. Such research also indicate that students in after school programmes are less likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence, or otherwise engage in inappropriate behaviour.

The American educational reformer, John Dewey once wrote that ‘education is not preparation for life; education is life itself.’ As New Zealand strives to improve the lives of those children living in hardship here, we should take the opportunity to improve their

education journey by tapping into the corporate sector and other volunteers to help them become lifelong learners.

At the very essence of Homework Club is the ability for positive engagement with children and young people to assist them in achieving in education, build skills and knowledge for life and learning.

We would be very interested in sharing our insights and learnings from the work programme and exploring the opportunity to expand the Homework Club concept throughout New Zealand to benefit more children.

**Achieving the vision by ensuring all children & young people are loved, nurtured & safe:**

Over 20,000 New Zealand children are affected by parental imprisonment. That is 20,000 children who may experience poor well-being as a result of not being part of a supportive, loving family environment, feeling isolated, lonely and even unloved.

At any give time there are roughly 770 women in New Zealand prisons and, according to a June 2015 Families Commission report, around 87% of these women are likely to be mothers. Based on offshore research, that same report stated that “disruption to a child’s living and caregiving arrangements are more likely to occur when their mother (who is often the sole custodian) is imprisoned. Most mothers in prison lived with their children before incarceration, often in a single-parent household. It is estimated that two-thirds of imprisoned mothers are the sole custodial parent before incarceration.”

Once inside, it can be extremely difficult for mothers to maintain meaningful relationships with their children. This inability to continue the critical connection can sometimes result in negative behaviour by mothers while behind bars and does little to motivate good behaviour post-release. But, most significantly, children suffer the loss of their mother’s emotional support and loving bond.

Children with an imprisoned parent are known to be at risk of poor social outcomes. Such children are at least five times more likely to end up in prison than the children of never-imprisoned parents.

Mothers Project, a work programme implemented by Who Did You Help Today and one of New Zealand’s largest prison volunteer programmes, assists mothers and their children to maintain those critical relationships. Volunteer lawyers work to open up lines of communication, help mothers know who is caring for their children and enable those children to have a meaningful connection with their parent.

To date around 500 mothers, who are parents to approximately 1,500 children have been helped through this work programme and numbers continue to grow each month. Around 120 volunteer lawyers have signed up to assist mothers and their children.

Education of these prisoners, and help for their children, will help to create the safer communities that we all want to live in. Engagement in positive programmes that teach self-esteem, respect, accountability, family responsibilities and even parenting will mean life skills are learnt that help them live crime free. Overseas research supports the clear link between such programmes and reduced re-offending.

Again, we would welcome the opportunity to share our learnings and insights from this valuable work programme and discuss how Mothers Project can assist in achieving the Government's desired outcome of ensuring that all children are loved, nurtured and are safe.

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.