



6 June 2023

Judge Frances Eivers
Children's Commissioner
Office of the Children's Commissioner
Sent via email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe Judge Eivers

Draft OPCAT Report – Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi

In February 2023, your monitoring team visited Te Poutama Ārahi Rangatahi (Te Poutama) to monitor the safety and wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi. This monitoring visit was completed as part of your role as a National Preventive Mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

On 2 May 2023, you provided your draft OPCAT report for Te Poutama for our review and comment. The residence is managed and operated by Barnardos, and the report has been shared with them. We have worked collaboratively with Barnardos to respond to the draft report, and their response is appended.

Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) accepts the five systemic recommendations made in your report. Please find enclosed our response to these recommendations. Barnardos have responded separately to these, alongside the five facility recommendations.

Your positive findings and the evidence noted of the positive relationships, excellent therapeutic model of care, the centrality of voices of mokopuna, the quality of assessments and the involvement of whanau are valued insights. In our recent relationship hui with your office, it was again pleasing to hear such positive feedback about the care provided for mokopuna at Te Poutama, and the acknowledgement of the quality of work being done. We commend Barnardos on the quality of the care that is provided for mokopuna.

In line with your systemic recommendations, we acknowledge the need to improve the property management process, and to complete the property upgrades and respond to maintenance issues. The kitchen has been repaired and refurbished, and the installation of the water cooler and fountain is on-track to be completed later this month.

IN-CONFIDENCE

In August 2021, a project, Manaaki Kōrero, commenced a review of the Oranga Tamariki feedback and complaints systems. Manaaki Kōrero is a project that involves Oranga Tamariki partnering with VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai to enable tamariki, rangatahi and whānau to co-design feedback, complaints, information, advice, and assistance processes that are 'fit-for-whānau'. It also addresses Action 1.4 of our Future Direction Plan.

While this co-design work is underway, Oranga Tamariki began implementing a set of immediate improvements to the residential grievance process based on feedback from tamariki and rangatahi in September 2022. The improvements include:

- Improving the language and accessibility of tools/resources.
- Developing multiple mechanisms to support tamariki and rangatahi to make a complaint.
- Improving investigation standards and training for kaimahi.
- Increasing the profile of advocacy in residences.
- Teaching self-advocacy as a social skill.

We are working with VOYCE – Whakarongo Mai to update forms with simplified language and more visible advocacy options; scoping of a phone option for grievances; scoping of a programme of work to teach self-advocacy as a social skill; developing a new training package to strengthen investigations; holding training workshops with kaimahi to strengthen recording and reporting for all complaints processes; and working to strengthen the understanding of grievance advocacy with improved resources and communication.

We also want to assure you that work occurring nationally on our Future Direction Plan and response to the Ministerial Advisory Board's Residence Review, will result in further operational solutions over time. This work is an organisational priority.

As our response demonstrates, there is considerable ongoing work underway which will contribute to further improvements in the quality of care provided for mokopuna at Te Poutama and all Oranga Tamariki Residences generally, which will strengthen the areas your report identified. We will share updates with you and your team as this work progresses.

I trust you find this information useful. If you have any questions or would like further information, please feel free to contact me on [REDACTED] or alternatively Julie Miller, General Manager Monitoring and External Relationships on [REDACTED]

Nāku noa, nā



Nicolette Dickson
Tumu Tuarua | Te Kōunga o te Mahi me ngā Wheako
Deputy Chief Executive | Quality Practice & Experiences