

FOREWORD FROM THE MINISTER FOR CHILD POVERTY REDUCTION

We are working to make New Zealand the best place in the world to be a child or young person. A place where every one of our tamariki and rangatahi are safe, healthy, can dream big and are empowered to reach their full potential.

While many young New Zealanders already experience this, we want to make this a reality for every child and young person. That's why our Government has taken significant and enduring steps to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people in New Zealand.

The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, launched in August 2019, sets out what is important for child and youth wellbeing – as told by both experts in the field and 6,000 children and young people themselves.

They told us what makes for a good life, what needs to change and what we, alongside others, can do to create that change.

Underpinning everything we do as a Government is a commitment not to shy away from, but tackle, the long-term challenges our country has faces.

Some of these are the same challenges the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has previously highlighted, and I am proud of the work we are doing to address them.

Significant investment and ongoing work across government is now targeted at addressing child poverty, family violence, inadequate housing, and improving learning support and mental health services. This underscores how important it is to work across the board when it comes to supporting our young people and addressing the range of challenges they face.

For example, we have increased family incomes for our lowest earners, introduced a universal child payment for the parents of new-borns, expanded our Free and Healthy School Lunch programme so that by the end of 2021, at least 200,000 children across the country will be enjoying a nutritious lunch for free, and we are rolling out free period products in schools across New Zealand. We also introduced the Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 to hold all future governments accountable to an ongoing focus to reduce child poverty.


Within our first three years, we reduced poverty across all nine child poverty measures under the Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018, and we have exceeded one of our first three-year targets. We have made progress, but there is more to do to achieve our plan of more than halving child poverty within 10 years.

ANNEX TO NEW ZEALAND SIXTH PERIODIC REPORT UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD – MINISTERIAL FOREWORDS

The past couple of years have been challenging. The COVID-19 pandemic and the associated disruptions and changes continue to affect the wellbeing of children and young people. COVID-19 has had a particular impact on children, young people and their families who were already experiencing disadvantage. The challenge of COVID-19 has only strengthened our resolve to improve equity of outcomes for these groups.

I am proud of our achievements to date, but the work is far from done.

Our children and young people need us to keep working hard to ensure New Zealand is a place where they feel safe, are healthy, can dream big and have those dreams realised.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jacinda Ardern', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern

Minister for Child Poverty Reduction

2021

FOREWORD FROM THE MINISTER FOR CHILDREN

Over the last five years, we have made significant changes to put children and young people's safety and wellbeing first. In 2017, we established Oranga Tamariki – Minister for Children (Oranga Tamariki). Oranga Tamariki has a critical role in achieving the vision set out in the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy to make New Zealand the best place in the world for children and young people. We strive to ensure that children are in safe and loving homes and that tamariki (children) and rangatahi (young people) Māori are thriving under the protection of whānau (family), hapū (wider family) and iwi (community). Putting children and young people's safety and wellbeing first will help them go on to lead successful lives.

When Oranga Tamariki was established, there were significant improvements required to support our goals, particularly in lifting the quality of care for children and young people in the State care and youth justice systems. Over the last three years we have focused on working together with Māori partners to expand some functions and develop more collaborative or enabling ways of working with partners and communities.

This Government made a significant change to the care and protection system by implementing the National Care Standards Regulations in 2019. They set out the standard of care every child and young person in care needs, and what caregivers can expect when they have children or young people in their care. These explicit care standards reflect our serious commitment to ensuring all children and young people in State care are safe. Embedding the National Care Standards into our practice is an ongoing process.

Oranga Tamariki has also developed 13 Whānau Care partnerships with iwi and kaupapa Māori organisations so tamariki needing out of home care can be cared for by their whānau, hapū and iwi, and remain connected to their whakapapa (genealogy).

As part of changing how we work with Māori, Oranga Tamariki has signed eight strategic partnership agreements with iwi and Māori organisations, and actively works with other potential strategic partners. Each strategic partnership is unique and reflects differing iwi priorities to meet the needs of their tamariki, whānau, and hapū.

The drivers that often lead to Oranga Tamariki involvement in the life of family and whānau are broad and overlapping. We remain committed to reducing long-standing disparities in outcomes for, and the disproportionate representation of, tamariki and rangatahi Māori throughout the care, protection and youth justice systems. Addressing the underlying causes and impacts of these drivers and supporting and empowering families and whānau to safely

ANNEX TO NEW ZEALAND SIXTH PERIODIC REPORT UNDER THE UNITED NATIONS
CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD – MINISTERIAL FOREWORDS

care for their own children requires societal change, with effort across social and justice sector agencies, and partnerships with iwi, Māori and communities.

We aimed to address some of these drivers, particularly in the context of COVID-19, by increasing the funding and availability of welfare support to reduce pressure on caregivers looking after children. Caregivers – all those looking after someone else’s children both in and outside the state care system do a hugely important job that needs to be recognised and supported.

The nature of the work of Oranga Tamariki means that there must be monitoring and oversight to provide assurance that we are doing our work well and that we are improving. The Independent Children’s Monitor currently monitors Oranga Tamariki compliance and quality of services under the National Care Standards and has annual reporting requirements to support continuous improvement. Further work to improve oversight of the system is underway, including the monitoring of services and supports delivered under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989.

Despite the work done to date to establish Oranga Tamariki and improve its operations, there are still significant and serious concerns that need to be addressed to improve outcomes for children, young people, and whānau. Future work will have a strong focus on improving the care and protection system, as well as developing stronger partnerships with Māori, and enabling Māori and communities to find the best solutions for their own children, young people, and whānau.

We all have a role to play in ensuring tamariki all around New Zealand are happy, safe and thriving. I am honoured to be part of a Government that is willing to prioritise work that helps to make New Zealand the best place in the world to grow up.



Hon Kelvin Davis

Minister for Children

2021