



# Strategic Intentions

2021-2025



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# Minister's foreword

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**Improving the lives and wellbeing of our tamariki is at the core of this Government's ambitions for New Zealand to be the best place to be a child.**

When I became Minister for Children at the end of 2020, I knew that in order for that to progress change needed to happen.

After establishing a Ministerial Advisory Board to advise me on a way forward, its report provided clear evidence that the current state protection system was not fit for purpose.

For too long Oranga Tamariki and the state has been put at the centre. A change is needed to instead place children and their whānau at the centre, with Oranga Tamariki working alongside the communities it serves as part of the ecosystem.

This has to happen, because communities know what is best for their children. With the right support, resource and guidance they can make things better for our most vulnerable.

As a Māori Minister, I am particularly concerned with getting things right for tamariki Māori who make up almost two-thirds of children in care. But I am firmly of the view that the system needs to work for all whānau.

To address the system's failures an action plan has been created with urgency.

This builds on the significant changes already made within Oranga Tamariki in its establishment phase and in response to previous reviews. It will lead to a fundamental shift with decision making and resources shifted to whānau and communities.

To accomplish all this Oranga Tamariki staff, particularly at the front line, need to be supported. That's why the action plan focuses significantly on the professional needs of staff.

We have a unique opportunity to truly bring the community to the fore and empower it to care for our children most in need. Oranga Tamariki has a crucial role to play in supporting this to happen.

I am satisfied that the information on strategic intentions prepared by Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children is consistent with the policies and performance expectations of the Government.



**Hon. Kelvin Davis** | Minister for Children  
6 October 2021





## Chief Executive's statement

At Oranga Tamariki, tamariki and whānau are at the heart of all that we do. We develop policies, services, and partner with others to provide care and support for tamariki. And as the steward of the child and wellbeing system we are also responsible for leading the system to improve outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi.

As Acting Chief Executive, it is my responsibility to oversee Oranga Tamariki as it commences its long-term transformation journey.

We know we need to make a fundamental and significant shift in the approach, operating model, and practice of Oranga Tamariki to be truly tamariki and whānau centred.

To do this, we have developed an Action Plan that draws together themes from across Hipokingia ki te Kahu Aroha Hipokingia ki te Katoa (the report of the Ministerial Advisory Board) as well as recommendations from previous reviews and the Waitangi Tribunal report.

This allows us to build on a strong, stable foundation over the next four years and beyond. I believe that delivery of the Action Plan will ensure Oranga Tamariki is in the best position to deliver better outcomes for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau, empower staff to excel, enable local approaches, and lead across the system.

My commitment for this time as Acting Chief Executive is to ensure the best outcomes for our tamariki and whānau. This is a big challenge and one that is a privilege to lead. I am confident that with the dedication, passion, and commitment of our kaimahi, partners, iwi, hapū, and communities and working together, it is a challenge that we will embrace successfully.

I'd like to close by repeating a quote from Tā James Henare which can be found in the Ministerial Advisory Board report: *"Kua tawhiti kē to haerenga mai, kia kore e haere tonu, he nui rawa o mahi, kia kore e mahi tonu"* – *"We have come too far to not go further, we have done too much not to do more"*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chappie TeKani'.

**Chappie TeKani** | Te Tumu Whakarae mō ngā Tamariki |  
Secretary for Children  
6 October 2021

## What we've heard

Oranga Tamariki and its predecessor agencies have been the subject of many reviews and inquiries, each echoing the same sentiment – that it is not the role of the Crown to raise tamariki, but the collective responsibility of whānau, hapū, iwi, and communities.

Over the past 18 months Oranga Tamariki has been the subject of several reviews resulting in recommendations across policy, legislation, and practice areas, as well as wider structural changes.

The organisational reset provides the platform to change how we work, and deliver more effectively to those we serve.

### **Pūao-Te-Ata-Tū**

Released in 1988, *Pūao-te-ata-tū* (Daybreak) was an investigation into how the Department of Social Welfare and the Crown could achieve and deliver an approach that could meet the needs of Māori in policy, planning, and service delivery.

*Pūao-te-ata-tū* reaffirmed Māori solutions for Māori clients as best practice, the right of whānau to look after their tamariki, the role of matua whāngai in the original purpose for family group conferences, and the value of restorative justice processes.

### **Waitangi Tribunal Inquiry**

The Waitangi Tribunal (the Tribunal) report *He Pāharakeke, He Rito Whakakīkinga Whāruarua Oranga Tamariki Urgent Inquiry* (Wai 2915) makes several findings about the failures of the care and protection system and Treaty breaches post 2017.

The report finds that there are persistent and significant disparities that are a direct consequence of the Crown's intrusion into the rangatiratanga of Māori over their kāinga. The Tribunal's primary recommendation is that the Crown steps back and allows Māori to reclaim their space and to realise rangatiratanga over their kāinga. It also acknowledged that there was a role for the Crown in protecting tamariki from the worst types of harm, but we need to fundamentally look at how and when this role is exercised.

[To learn more, visit Tribunal releases report on Oranga Tamariki | Waitangi Tribunal](#)

### **Ministerial Advisory Board**

*Hipokingia ki te Kahu Aroha Hipokingia ki te Katoa* report (Te Kahu Aroha) reaffirms the findings and recommendations from the previous reviews and inquiries outlined above. It builds upon the aspirations outlined in *Pūao-te-ata-tū*.

The Ministerial Advisory Board provided three overarching recommendations for change:

- a. In order to lead on prevention of harm to tamariki and their whānau, collective Māori and community responsibility and authority must be strengthened and restored
- b. In order to work collaboratively with Māori, community organisations and other government agencies, the purpose of Oranga Tamariki must be clarified
- c. A National Oranga Tamariki Governance Board is established to oversee the diversity and depth of changes needed.

The Ministerial Advisory Board also made recommendations on improving our use of performance data, evidence, and oversight of system quality.

Te Kahu Aroha articulates a vision to strengthen the papakāinga, setting us on a course to realise the aspirations of *Pūao-te-ata-tū*. We must work differently to help rebuild the papakāinga and enable and empower tamariki, rangatahi, whānau, hapū, iwi, and our communities. The Government has set out an action plan for Oranga Tamariki to work towards that vision.

[To learn more, visit Government to transform Oranga Tamariki | Beehive.govt.nz](#)



### Other reviews

We have been the subject of other reviews resulting in recommendations covering policy, legislation, and practice, as well as wider structural changes. Across the various recommendations, there are some recurring themes that identify key areas for change. We must:

- Be a better partner
- Strengthen the role of the Chief Social Worker and ensure that our social workers have the training and support to work to the highest professional standards
- Enable regions so decisions are made closer to tamariki and whānau
- Empower all our staff to be the best they can be
- Ensure that tamariki, rangatahi, whānau and communities we work with are at the centre of everything we do.

[To learn more, visit Reviews and inquiries | Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children](#)

### Moving forward

This document sets out how Oranga Tamariki will transition to achieve the vision set out in the Cabinet paper (SWC-21-IN-0117 and CAB-21-MIN-0302 refers) and Te Kahu Aroha through the Government’s action plan.

Our focus now is to transition the agency and the supporting system to one that better meets the needs of tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau – a system that is more locally-led and centrally-enabled. To achieve this, working in partnership is essential, as well as balancing safety and wellbeing needs with shifting focus to prevention.

We will build on the work already completed and speed some things up to enable and empower communities and whānau to support their needs and aspirations.

### Progress to date

On 1 April 2017, Oranga Tamariki was established and began an ambitious journey to transform the care and protection system, triggered by the 2015 Expert Advisory Panel Report and associated Oranga Tamariki Act reforms. Since our establishment, we have begun to:

- Improve the way we work with tamariki and whānau
- Improve the ability of our staff to support tamariki in ways that work for them
- Change how we work with Māori and others to deliver solutions and services.

While these changes have been significant, we recognise there is still much more to do.

## Who we are

### Our vision

All children are safe, loved and nurtured by whānau, hapū, and iwi, supported by thriving communities.

### Our purpose

To ensure that all tamariki are in loving whānau and communities where oranga can be realised.

### Our role

**Oranga Tamariki has two roles:**

A **high performing, highly trusted statutory care and protection and youth justice agency** that works in an integrated way with other agencies and communities.

An **enabler and coordinator for Māori and communities**, to empower them to put in place the support, the solutions, and the services they know will work for their people to prevent tamariki coming to our attention.

Articulating our two core roles more strongly, responds to a key recommendation of the Ministerial Advisory Board and enables greater focus in our mahi.



## Our values

Our values were gifted to us by tamariki, and across our practice are at the centre of how we do what we do. Our six core values are:



We put **tamariki** first  
We will challenge when things are not right for the child



We respect the **mana** of people  
We listen, we don't assume, and we create solutions with others



We believe **aroha** is vital  
It keeps us focused on what's right



We value **whakapapa**  
Tamariki are a part of a whānau and community



We are **tika** and **pono**  
We do what we say we'll do



We recognise that **oranga** is a journey  
We understand the long-term impacts of our actions today



### Our commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, Te Tiriti o Waitangi

We are committed to giving effect to the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi by:

- Being a better partner with Māori, whānau, hapū, iwi and communities
- Supporting Māori to achieve rangatiratanga over their kāinga
- Actively protecting Māori tamariki and rangatahi from harm
- Addressing the disparities between Māori and non-Māori
- Implementing our obligations under Section 7AA.

Our approach and our response to our Te Tiriti o Waitangi commitments must be created in partnership with Māori, whānau, hapū, iwi, and communities.

### Functions and responsibilities

We are responsible for:

- Responding to concerns for child safety and wellbeing, including the duty to coordinate prevention services
- Statutory care and protection services for children and young people
- Youth justice services using restorative practice, including upholding the rights of victims of youth crime
- Transitioning young people to independence from state care and youth justice
- Adoption services, including domestic adoption, responding to requests for information from parties to an adoption, and inter-country adoption
- Funding and contracting services to support the wellbeing of children and young people
- Meeting the needs of children and young people in our care, including their safety and wellbeing

- Providing responsive and timely complaint mechanisms and support for residence grievance panels.
- Approving and supporting whānau and caregivers to provide safe, stable loving care for tamariki in care.

In carrying out these duties, we:

- Implement the Government's policy direction (including their partnership commitments) through policy and legislative functions
- Provide leadership to the children's social services system through legislative functions
- Are an active participant in cross-Government work including the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, Family and Sexual Violence Joint Venture, and Rangatahi Courts
- Are a responsible custodian of data and information for tamariki, rangatahi and whānau.

### Legislation and international commitments

Oranga Tamariki administers the following statutes solely or jointly with other agencies:

- Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 (also called the Children's and Young People's Well-being Act 1989)
- Children's Act 2014 (with the Ministry of Education)

Oranga Tamariki has functions under a range of statutes, including:

- Adoptions Act 1955
- Adoptions (Inter-country) Act 1997
- Adult Adoption Information Act 1985
- Care of Children Act 2004.

### Our International Commitments

We have an obligation to uphold people's rights, including those set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability.



## Who we're here to support

Oranga Tamariki is here for all children and young people in New Zealand, to uphold their rights to be safe, loved, and nurtured when their whānau can't do it on their own. How we and our partners provide support looks different for each child and young person.

For a small number of children who need it most, we have a clear statutory role to respond when serious harm has or is likely to occur, there is insecure care, or to respond to youth offending.

For a larger group at risk of harm, we work to enable communities and whānau to support the needs of tamariki and rangatahi, and prevent the need for a statutory response.

We strive to be accessible and inclusive for all tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau, regardless of background, ethnicity, ability, gender, and orientation.

### Child & Youth Wellbeing Strategy

The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy sets out a shared understanding of what's important for child and youth wellbeing, what government is doing, and how others can help. It serves to drive and align policy work and action across government to improve the wellbeing of all children and young people up to the age of 25 across six broad outcome areas:

#### Children and young people...



Are loved, safe and nurtured



Have what they need



Are happy and healthy



Are learning and developing



Are accepted, respected and connected



Are involved and empowered

[To learn more visit Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy | Child and Youth Wellbeing](#)





## What we're doing differently

### Listening to the voices of whānau, children, and young people

We value the voice of experience, which informs how we work. From a wide range of sources and surveys, rangatahi and tamariki have told us what is important.

Whānau have told us that they want; responsive, respectful, two-way communication, and relationships with social workers that are real and genuine. Whānau 'experience' needs to be acknowledged and respected.

We will continue to listen to tamariki and rangatahi, and their whānau so that their needs, aspirations, and experiences are informing what we do and how we do it.

### What is important to rangatahi and tamariki?



Feeling cared for



Knowing your ancestry (whakapapa)



Feeling accepted for who you are by the people you live with



Knowing your culture and where you come from



Having good relationships with your whānau, hapū and iwi



Having a place where you feel like you belong



Having a say in important decisions



Feeling hope for the future



Feeling loved

### **Focusing on quality practice**

At the core of our statutory role is the profession of social work and our social work practice, supported by a range of other professions. The strategic intent set out in this document will only be achieved through a workforce of skilled and trusted practitioners, clear on their statutory role and operating confidently in a practice context.

We will focus on quality practice through models that support whānau decision making; supervision which strengthens social work judgement, accountability, and wellbeing; understanding the quality of our practice with tamariki and whānau; and a new framework to guide our practice.

Our new practice framework provides a road map for practitioners in their work with tamariki and whānau. It supports our practitioners to uphold the rights of tamariki and whānau in their practice, see children in the context of their connection to whānau and whakapapa, and to consider safety concerns through a broader, more holistic lens of wellbeing.

### **Continuing our Focus on the National Care Standards**

We continue to work on meeting our obligations to tamariki, rangatahi, and the people caring for them under the National Care Standards.

In recent years, new Government funding was invested so we could develop resources and build the workforce, capability, and infrastructure needed to meet the National Care Standards. That work programme is ongoing. While we have made progress, the experience of children, young people in care and the people who look after them still needs to improve.

In particular, our intent is to better understand and meet the full range of needs of tamariki and rangatahi in care, and to better understand and support children and young people with disabilities and high and complex needs.

A key shift to improve the quality of care for children and young people is the move to smaller, less institutional, and therapeutic environments connected to children's and young people's communities, instead of the current larger residential environments.

### **Focusing on prevention**

Increasingly there are calls for whānau to be supported earlier, through community led responses, enabled by statutory agencies, that are trusted to step in and support when needed.

Prevention can mean different things. For Oranga Tamariki, prevention is for those at risk of harm, preventing the need for a statutory care, protection or youth justice response. For tamariki and rangatahi in care, or regularly coming to the attention of Oranga Tamariki, prevention is avoiding

future harm through responses that are therapeutic and restorative.

Our belief is that the best strategy for prevention is enabling and strengthening family, whānau, hapū, and iwi to provide safe, stable loving care for tamariki. For this, we will enable communities to put in place the support, the solutions, and the services they know will work for their people to prevent tamariki coming to our attention.

### **Shifting to locally led, centrally enabled**

Locally led means decision-making happens as close as possible to tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau. Over time, we want to move to a way of working where decision-making and resources are shared with communities. There will need to be a balance between local responses and national consistency.

Being centrally enabled will bring national alignment across what is happening in different areas, help coordinate a national system including calling for action from other agencies, and ensure cost-efficiencies for services and functions that should be provided nationally.

### **Engaging with Communities**

We will be engaging internally and externally on our direction and how we will get there – we want communities, whānau, hapū, iwi, tamariki, rangatahi, and our staff to be part of our new direction.

### **Working in partnership**

Local, innovative ways of working in partnership that are currently in place show what the future statutory care, protection and youth justice system could look like.

Working in partnership is one way we will give effect to our future direction:

- Working closely with communities means we are better able to meet the needs of the communities and whānau we serve
- By taking a whānau-centred approach, we can respond to reports of concern in a way that may prevent harm and the need for a statutory response
- By reducing demand for current or future statutory responses, we can reinvest more into strengthening whānau (prevention)
- By building partner capability, relationships, and trust, we can create a pathway towards sharing resources and decision-making.

Across these, there is a need to build a shared vision, culture, and understanding of roles in the partnership.

# How we'll get there

## How we'll get there

To implement the Government's Action Plan, significant change will need to occur throughout the organisation. These are the areas we are focused on to enable us to move towards our vision:



### Organisational Blueprint

To support and deliver transformation, we need a structure that aligns functions to best effect, has clear accountabilities, and supports joined-up approaches across functions that need to work together.



### People and culture

The long-term success of transformation hinges on the creation of a culture that acts as an accelerator of positive change.



### Social work practice

We will enhance the mana of social workers across both the agency and the wider care and protection sector, so we can better support tamariki, rangatahi and whānau needs.



### Relationships, partnering, and decision making

To put children and whānau at the centre of the system, we will build required levels of trust and capability, alignment, and transparency to achieve authentic and genuine partnership and participation, including the participation of tamariki and rangatahi.



### Data, insights and evidence

Ensure robust data, research, and information flows that support ongoing transformation. This includes ensuring our understanding of how tamariki are experiencing care is current, accurate and equitable.



### Investment

As an underpinning enabler for all of the above, investment choices will need to be aligned. These may be resourced from existing appropriations and/or from new investment.

[To learn more visit our Future Direction Action Plan](#)

## Who we work with

We know we cannot do our work alone. It is not the role of the Crown to be a parent, rather the responsibility of whānau and collective responsibility of community, hapū, and iwi. Some of the key groups we work with that share our vision include:

- **Te Tiriti partners** – Enabling partner-led solutions, increasing opportunities to work together and to involve whānau, hapū, and iwi in decision-making. Types of partnerships can include: Strategic Partnerships Agreements, Memoranda of Understanding, Relationship Agreements and others.
- **Caregivers** – Providing loving homes for tamariki across the country, we recognise them and provide support to nurture tamariki in care. Increasingly, we support caregiving whānau and caregivers in Whānau Care models.
- **Partners** – Those who we partner with in communities for better outcomes e.g., NGOs, iwi and Māori organisations, plus grassroots communities, informal whānau supporters, and community networks who are connected to the tamariki, rangatahi, whānau, and communities we are here to support.
- **Providers** - Those who provide a service e.g., NGOs, iwi, and Māori organisations who provide services.
- **Children's agencies** – The statutory children agencies are Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, New Zealand Police, and Ministry of Social Development who also support the strategy for improving children's wellbeing.
- **Other supporting agencies** – Including Te Puni Kōkiri, Department of Corrections, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Youth Development, Ministry for Pacific People, and local government.
- **Our monitors** – The Independent Children's Monitor, the Ombudsman, and the Office of the Children's Commissioner. These three entities oversee the Oranga Tamariki system, holding us to account to ensure we're doing what we should to enable tamariki and rangatahi to reach their potential and thrive.
- **VOYCE Whakarongo Mai** – An independent advocacy service for care experienced tamariki and rangatahi.
- **Advisory groups** – The Māori Design Group, Pacific Panel and Youth Advisory Group advise on how we change.
- **International counterparts** – Notably in the Asia Pacific region and with a focus on the movement of children across borders.

## Oranga Tamariki Action Plan

The Oranga Tamariki Action Plan is a statutory accountability mechanism that requires Chief Executives of children's agencies (see left) to set out how we will work together to improve the wellbeing of the core populations of interest to Oranga Tamariki, and work to the requirements of the Children's Act 2014. The Oranga Tamariki Action Plan should ensure that the effort and resources of Crown agencies are available to meet the needs of children.

The Oranga Tamariki Action Plan sits under the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (CYWS) and must be guided by its principles and give effect to the CYWS outcomes. Once the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan has come into effect, the Chief Executive of each children's agency must jointly report on its implementation annually.



## How we'll know we're on track

### Outcomes Framework and Performance Framework

Our Outcomes Framework identifies the key shifts in outcomes we want to see, and how we will achieve these, through the delivery of our operating model. Developed in 2018, it is a living document that we expect will be updated and changed as our strategy evolves.

Our Performance Framework links to our Outcomes Framework, and details, for each set of services, what would need to be true for us to have confidence that our activities were making the right difference. It directs us to consider both the quantity and quality of our work, as well as the equity of its distribution and impact. This equity focus enables us to separate out our performance for priority populations.



Outcomes Framework | Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children

## Specific requirements under Section 7AA

Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act mandates specific duties in legislation for the Chief Executive including:

- Ensuring that the policies and practices of the department have the objective of reducing disparities
- Ensuring that the policies, practices, and services of the department have regard for mana tamaiti, whakapapa, and whanaungatanga
- Requiring the department to seek to develop strategic partnerships with iwi and Māori organisations

We measure our progress in meeting these obligations through the annual [Section 7AA report: Section 7AA Report | Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children](#)

### Tamariki Māori are connected to, and nurtured by, whānau, hapū and iwi



#### Ensuring Participation in Decision Making

We will ensure early participation of whānau, hapū, and iwi in decisions affecting tamariki Māori



#### Preventing Entry into Care or Custody

We will work with whānau to prevent the entry of tamariki Māori into state care or a youth justice response



#### Placing with Whānau, Hapū and Iwi

We will preference placements for tamariki Māori, and their siblings, with members of whānau, hapū and iwi



#### Supporting Identity and Belonging

We will support tamariki Māori to establish, maintain, or strengthen cultural identity and connections to whānau, hapū, and iwi



#### Leaving Care or Custody

We will support, strengthen, and assist tamariki Māori and their whānau to prepare for return home or transition into the community

The mana tamaiti objectives (above) show how the organisation will give practical effect to these obligations, whilst the Section 7AA Quality Assurance Standards provide guidance for those designing and delivering policies, practices, and services.

## Regular reporting

Alongside the annual Section 7AA report, we produce several publicly available reports on the performance of Oranga Tamariki, including:

- The Annual Report, in which we measure performance against standards agreed as part of our annual appropriations
- The Quarterly Report to the Minister on performance against the Outcomes Framework
- Annual reporting on the findings of Te Tohu o te Ora (voices of children survey) - Te Mātātaki
- Regular reporting on the Safety of Children in Care
- Regular reporting to Cabinet on the impact of Budget 19 spending
- A report back to Parliament on meeting the needs of children and young people (Section 448B), due by 1 July 2022

Further reporting on performance is undertaken by the Office of the Children's Commissioner and the Independent Children's Monitor.

## Evidence of impact

The Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre works to build an evidence and research base that supports us in understanding wellbeing and improving outcomes for Aotearoa New Zealand's children and their whānau.

This includes building a strong evidence base that strengthens the design and implementation of projects and programmes, so we can be confident they are contributing positively to the wellbeing of children and their whānau.

[See: About our research | Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children](#)



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