



29 April 2024

Dr Claire Achmad
Chief Children's Commissioner
Mana Mokopuna | Children and Young People's Commission
Sent via email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe Dr Achmad

Draft OPCAT Report – Puketai Care and Protection Residence

In December 2023, your monitoring team visited the Puketai Care and Protection Residence (Puketai) 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 6 March 2024, you provided your draft OPCAT report for Puketai to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) for review and comment. Our response to the factual accuracy was shared with your office on 21 March 2024.

Oranga Tamariki have accepted all nine recommendations. I am pleased to advise that your recommendation relating to residence radios has now been actioned and residences have new radios available. Please find enclosed our response to the recommendations following your visit.

It was pleasing to note your findings that Puketai kaimahi maintain a high standard of trauma-informed practice that meets the needs of tamariki and rangatahi, and also role model the high standard of care expected of those working in a residence. Kaimahi work hard to promote positive relationships by setting firm, healthy boundaries to encourage pro-social behaviour and provide stability. This is seen alongside other findings that Puketai kaimahi relationships with tamariki and rangatahi are positive, and there is good tamariki and rangatahi engagement in education and extra-curricular activities. It is always wonderful to hear of tamariki and rangatahi speaking highly of kaimahi, as was observed during the visit, and this is something the Puketai team can be proud of.

It was particularly pleasing that your team found that Puketai leadership promotes a positive workplace culture, leading to the high retention of kaimahi who are experienced and can provide continuity of care for tamariki and rangatahi. Many have

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been in their roles for more than five years, with some over 10 years, meaning that kaimahi are experienced, supported, and well trained which ensures tamariki and rangatahi care is of a high quality and consistent across all shift teams.

I also acknowledge the observations that tamariki and rangatahi from out of area had inconsistent communication and face-to-face contact with their social worker. It has been disappointing to see social worker visits as a recurring theme in recent OPCAT reports. The fact that these tamariki and rangatahi have been placed in a secure residence sees them as some of the country's most vulnerable children, which should warrant more frequent visits. The shortage in front line social workers does not help our endeavours to ensure staff meet the minimum standards in visiting tamariki and rangatahi, but it is still disheartening that this continues to be a recommendation. I do note that Puketai staff have done all that they can to support those tamariki and rangatahi who are from out of the region, and that strong bonds and positive relationships have been built with Puketai kaimahi.

To try and address the varying levels of contact, earlier this year Oranga Tamariki redeployed some registered social workers from non-frontline roles to support sites and enable a focus on core areas of social work practice. This included visits to tamariki and rangatahi in care. This mahi assisted in reducing overdue work in most areas where staff were redeployed. However, I accept this is only an interim solution, and there is still much to be done in this area. I am confident that my colleagues in Service Delivery are considering a number of measures which we have noted in the enclosed response.

I think it is a fair assessment that the absence of regular social worker visits may lead to "rushed" transitions for tamariki and rangatahi into and out of residence, which has also been noted as an OPCAT recommendation. I acknowledge that improvement regarding social workers visiting tamariki and rangatahi in residences may help improve transition planning for when they go back to their whānau and communities.

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 Kounga o te Mahi me ngā Wheako
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