



8 February 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 – Hillcrest Remand Home**

In October 2023, your monitoring team visited the Hillcrest Remand Home (Hillcrest) 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 22 December 2023, you provided your draft OPCAT report for Hillcrest to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) for review and comment. Our response to the factual accuracy was shared with your office on 19 January 2024.

Oranga Tamariki have accepted all 10 recommendations. Please find enclosed our response to the recommendations following your visit.

It was particularly pleasing to note your finding that the leadership team at Hillcrest have developed a strong culture within the home based on Maōri concepts and values that have enhanced and strengthened rangatahi relationships. It was also great to hear that Hillcrest exemplifies how rangatahi with a legal status of s 238(1)(d) under 24/7 supervision and care can engage in meaningful and positive activities enhancing the oranga of rangatahi within Hillcrest and the community.

Oranga Tamariki are proud of the work we do to ensure that rangatahi at Hillcrest experience high quality service provision. It was wonderful to hear the kaimahi at Hillcrest described as such a committed, skilled, talented and caring group of people and it is clear that rangatahi benefit from their support. We also acknowledge the progress this report records against the recommendations from August 2021. It is pleasing to note the good progress made between visits. The only recommendation where progress has not advanced as much concerns visibility to rangatahi of their rights and access to advocacy. This is again raised as a recommendation following your October 2023 visit, and you will note in our response we have work underway to

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further address this. We value the insight that you have provided through your observations.

I also acknowledge the range of observations made about the importance of the social work support that is provided to young people in Hillcrest and recognise that there is more work to do. It was pleasing to hear that in some cases staff and rangatahi experienced positive and collaborative ways of working but concerning that this is not more consistent. I have taken particular note of the two examples shared in the report, one of the engagement with a site staff member about financial decisions and the other about a young person's belongings being transported in a black rubbish bag. This falls well short of the standards we expect of our staff.

As you note in your report, the context of young people on remand can be challenging given the often compressed timeframes and whilst we acknowledge the uncertainty rangatahi can face as a result of non-agreed Family Group Conferences, remand and bail decisions, these young people are subject to a justice process. While we have a vital role to play in ensuring the rights and interests of rangatahi are upheld in these processes, in many cases Oranga Tamariki is not the ultimate decision maker.

We acknowledge the areas in your report that require further work to progress. This includes enhanced access to outings, improving the education programme, ensuring there are no barriers accessing primary medical care and a strengthened focus on transitioning out of the home. We will continue to work to resolve these matters, and you will see in our response the work we have underway to achieve this. Whilst the response largely focusses on what we have done or will do to continue to strengthen policy and guidance settings, this must be seen within a broader context of professional development and practice improvement which is a core and ongoing part of our broader work programme. It is important for me to note however, that Oranga Tamariki cannot meet the health, education and wellbeing needs of tamariki alone and we have a strong dependency on other parts of the Oranga Tamariki system to ensure the right services are made available to them. Your insights will contribute to the work we have underway with our partners in these areas including through the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan.

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  
Deputy Chief Executive | Quality Practice & Experiences