



17 June 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 – Korowai Manaaki Youth Justice Residence

In February 2024, your monitoring team visited the Korowai Manaaki Youth Justice Residence (Korowai Manaaki) to monitor the safety and wellbeing of rangatahi. This monitoring visit was completed as part of your role as a National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

On 15 May 2024, you provided your draft OPCAT report for Korowai Manaaki to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) for review and comment. Our response to the factual accuracy was shared with your office on 24 May 2024. Thank you for providing feedback to that response on 7 June 2024.

Oranga Tamariki have accepted the 11 recommendations; please find enclosed our response to the recommendations following your visit.

It was pleasing to note that the threshold for torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment (ill-treatment) was not met during the visit to Korowai Manaaki and I understand that from verbal feedback provided to the team at the time at the visit that whilst very serious and persistent concerns remained, your staff were able to notice some improvements. The concerns you raise about kaimahi practice at Korowai Manaaki, and a lack of stable leadership are acknowledged, and we are continuing to work hard to address these. As noted in our response, we have provided a notice to all staff resetting expectations of them, are in the process of implementing new Standard Operating Procedures and have reviewed and are continuing to strengthen our induction programme. Some of the interactions you described between rangatahi and kaimahi are of real concern. Where your team identified more specific safety and wellbeing concerns, immediate steps have been taken to ensure that these are being fully addressed.

IN-CONFIDENCE

An Incident Management Team (IMT) for residences was stood up last June to support, coordinate, and drive the collective work required across our residences and community-run homes, overseeing the immediate response to any specific concerns that are raised about the safety and wellbeing of rangatahi. The work of the IMT was carried through until September, and Oranga Tamariki's Residences and Homes workstream has incorporated the learnings from the IMT into its work programme.

We have recently provided a Grievance Panel quarterly report insights piece to all monitors including yourselves, giving an overview of the residences work programme including the implementation of the Residences and Homes pilot at Te Puna Wai o Tuhinapo youth justice residence. It is intended that the pilot will include enhancements to the nature of plans rangatahi have, and transitions of young people entering and exiting residences. The pilot started on 9 May 2024, and I note that Mana Mokopuna recently visited that facility in May in its role as a NPM under the OPCAT.

The Make Safe Work Programme was initiated and approved in February 2024. The objective of this programme is to deliver a consolidated programme of identified critical operational or safety related initiatives within the residences and homes space focused on improving the care of young people. Many of the programme activities are scheduled for delivery within 6 to 12 months, but some will take longer as part of phased approval and delivery cycle. The priority for this team is implementing the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's). Priority SOP's have been identified, and are in the final stages of being operationalised, along with training and implementation.

Our next insights piece will include updates on the residences work programme and should be available at the end of July.

I acknowledge the observations about the amount of contraband coming into the residence. The Korowai Manaaki team are working closely with Corrections to develop a Memorandum of Understanding for use of drug dogs and handlers to facilitate searches, and practice is being strengthened with the pending introduction of clear bags. Communication of the expectations and rules for visitors to residence has also been strengthened and specifically skilled kaimahi are now in place to manage visits. However, we remain clear that to completely address this issue, regulatory change is required and work is underway in relation to this.

It was disappointing to hear that some tamariki and rangatahi from out of area had not had an in-person visit with their social worker in several months. Social worker visits have been 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.

We continue to look at solutions, including those previously used, to 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, including 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 the area. I know that Service Delivery are looking at a number of measures which we have noted in the enclosed response.

IN-CONFIDENCE

It was pleasing to note your findings that medication errors have decreased, communication has improved with daily 'stand up' hui, that there were no concerns raised about access to medical staff, and that there has been good progress with all kaimahi spoken to having completed Te Waharoa induction training.

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