


























DOING WHAT'S RIGHT FOR MOKOPUNA

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM
THE UNITED NATIONS TO
IMPROVE MOKOPUNA RIGHTS
IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND



HERE'S A LIST OF ALL THE
**RIGHTS UNDER THE
 CHILDREN'S CONVENTION:**

ARTICLE 1  CHILDREN ARE UNDER 18	ARTICLE 2  ALL CHILDREN HAVE RIGHTS ALL THE TIME	ARTICLE 3  WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU	ARTICLE 4  MAKING YOUR RIGHTS A REALITY	ARTICLE 5  FAMILY GUIDANCE AS YOU GROW UP	ARTICLE 6  LIFE, SURVIVAL & DEVELOPMENT	ARTICLES 7+8  RIGHT TO IDENTITY & NATIONALITY
ARTICLES 9+10  LIVING WITH YOUR FAMILY	ARTICLE 11  YOUR RIGHT TO BE PROTECTED FROM ABDUCTION	ARTICLE 12  HAVING YOUR SAY	ARTICLES 13+14  FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, THOUGHT AND RELIGION	ARTICLE 15  FRIENDS, GROUPS AND CLUBS	ARTICLE 16  YOUR RIGHT TO PRIVACY	ARTICLE 17  YOUR RIGHT TO INFORMATION
ARTICLE 18  PARENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES	ARTICLE 19  YOUR RIGHT TO BE FREE FROM ALL VIOLENCE	ARTICLE 20  PROTECTION IF YOU CAN'T BE WITH YOUR FAMILY	ARTICLE 21  YOUR RIGHTS IF YOU'RE ADOPTED	ARTICLE 22  YOUR RIGHTS AS A REFUGEE	ARTICLE 23  YOUR RIGHTS IF YOU HAVE A DISABILITY	ARTICLE 24  YOUR RIGHT TO FOOD, HEALTH & THE ENVIRONMENT
ARTICLE 25  REVIEW OF YOUR TREATMENT IN CARE	ARTICLES 26+27  YOUR RIGHTS TO A GOOD STANDARD OF LIVING	ARTICLES 28+29  YOUR RIGHTS TO EDUCATION	ARTICLE 30  CULTURAL, RELIGIOUS & LANGUAGE RIGHTS	ARTICLE 31  YOUR RIGHTS TO REST, PLAY, CULTURE & ARTS	ARTICLE 32  NO HARMFUL WORK	ARTICLES 33-38  YOUR RIGHTS TO BE PROTECTED FROM HARM & EXPLOITATION
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KIA ORA!

HAVE YOU HEARD ABOUT CHILDREN'S RIGHTS?

Children's rights ensure **ALL MOKOPUNA** are heard and have what they need to grow up loved, safe, healthy, and happy. The Government has committed to the Children's Convention to make Aotearoa New Zealand **a GREAT PLACE FOR ALL MOKOPUNA.**

This booklet lets you know what the Government must do to help **all mokopuna live their best lives.** In our country, the Chief Children's Commissioner and others stand up for children's rights, making sure the Government always considers what's best for them under the Children's Convention.

We use the term 'mokopuna' to refer to all children and young people under the age of 18, and we use either term based on the purpose or context. 'Mokopuna' brings together 'moko' (imprint or tattoo) and 'puna' (spring of water), describing that we are descendants, and we need to think across generations for a **better present and future.**

We extend a huge thank you to the 31 mokopuna that were involved in the design of this booklet.
ngā MIHI NUI KI a KOUTOU!

Published for the
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS SYMPOSIUM,
 hosted by the
CHILDREN'S CONVENTION MONITORING GROUP
 on August 1st, 2024



THE CHILDREN'S CONVENTION

The Convention on the Rights of the Child is a **SPECIAL** document that sets out the rights of all children under the age of 18. Human rights are the basic standards for all people to live in dignity and be **TREATED FAIRLY**.

Almost every country has agreed to make the Children's Convention a reality. In Aotearoa New Zealand, our Government has agreed that all mokopuna have the rights set out in the Children's Convention.



THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The Committee is a group of **EXPERTS** from all over the world that looks at how children's rights are being protected in different countries.

To find out what's happening in different countries, they look at reports and information and talk with people, including mokopuna themselves. The Committee wants to know how different groups of children experience their rights day to day, what's going well & what's difficult for children.

It then makes some suggestions about how the Government can improve things for children. These suggestions are called **CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS**.

In 2023, the Committee put together its **Concluding Observations** for Aotearoa New Zealand. It said that some good progress had been made by our Government, including improvements in child protection and youth justice, the creation of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, and new ways to measure and report on child poverty.

SO, HERE ARE THE
**COMMITTEE'S
 CONCLUDING
 OBSERVATIONS
 FOR AOTEAROA
 NEW ZEALAND...**



SPECIFIC AREAS OF CONCERN

The Committee asks our Government to **URGENTLY** do better for:

 A collection of nine circular illustrations, each representing a specific area of concern for Māori children. Each illustration is accompanied by a text label in a white box:

- Mokopuna Māori**: Illustration of a Māori woman's face with a heart symbol.
- Mokopuna who face discrimination**: Illustration of a person with their hand covering their face in distress.
- Mokopuna who experience violence**: Illustration of a person's face with a hand holding a knife near their neck.
- Mokopuna living away from their whānau**: Illustration of a person's face with a house in the background.
- Mokopuna living in poverty**: Illustration of a person's face with a shopping basket containing an apple and a pencil.
- Mokopuna whaikaha (disabled children)**: Illustration of a person's face with a house in the background.
- Mokopuna in youth justice**: Illustration of a hand holding a gavel.

RESPECT FOR YOUNG VOICES

Mokopuna have a right to **HAVE THEIR SAY** in decision-making.

The Committee asks that our Government includes young voices in all official decisions that relate to their lives, such as custody cases, child protection, youth justice, education, immigration and the environment. As well as anything else that matters to them, like climate change goals.

They want mokopuna to be involved in the Government's planning and decision-making.

They also recommend that information about child protection laws should be widely available, and that the justice system is more accessible for children.

NON-DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination is when someone treats another person unfairly or differently because of things like their race, gender, religion, or other traits.

You should never be discriminated against for **any reason**,

including your ethnicity, gender, language, religion, opinion, social or economic status, sexual orientation, birth or any other aspect of your family or identity.

The Committee is concerned that discrimination happens a lot for Māori, Pasifika and other groups of children and young people, and asks our Government to prioritise action against racism and other forms of discrimination.



LAWS & POLICY

Some of our laws, like the **Oranga Tamariki Act** and the **Children's Act**, mention the Convention on the Rights of the Child, but the Committee thinks the Government should do more to focus on children's rights, including:



Ensuring the Children's Convention is fully part of our laws



Training people on the Children's Convention, especially people in Government who make decisions affecting mokopuna



Making sure children can be part of developing laws and policies that affect them.

CIVIL RIGHTS & FREEDOMS

Civil rights are the rules that make sure everyone is treated fairly. They include things like voting and freedom of speech.

The Committee made suggestions about better protecting the following mokopuna rights:

- Identity
- Privacy & access to information
- Voting and ensuring active participation, especially if the voting age is lowered to 16.

They also encouraged the Government to make sure children are safe online and in the digital environment.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Overall, the Committee said Aotearoa New Zealand should be doing better for children across all areas of their lives. This includes the Government getting good information about children's lives and experiences so it can understand what mokopuna need and improve planning and budgeting for them.

The Committee says the budget should include money for all mokopuna, **ESPECIALLY THOSE** who need extra help.



THIS PAGE IS FOR
YOU
TO COLOUR!

LIVING AND DEVELOPING

The Committee said our Government should address the **ROOT causes** of things that get in the way of children living their best lives and reaching their full potential, such as **POVERTY AND INEQUALITY**.

SAFETY OF MOKOPUNA

The Committee asks our Government to:



Collect better information about mokopuna who experience violence, including domestic abuse, bullying, and sexual harm. This will help create plans and improve services to prevent and stop violence, particularly against mokopuna Māori, Pasifika and Rainbow mokopuna, and mokopuna whaikaha



Make sure that mokopuna and whānau know how to get help if they are feeling unsafe or experiencing violence



Make it easy for children who have been hurt to get help, like through counselling, to heal and feel safe again and to get justice



Work closely with community groups and pay for programmes that help families and communities prevent and deal with child abuse and violence.

They also made recommendations about **ending** child marriage and urged the government to protect the rights of intersex children.

MOKOPUNA WHAIKAHA

The Committee is **VERY WORRIED** that **DISABLED CHILDREN** are more likely to face violence and abuse, and that their families struggle more with poverty and poor housing.

It asks our Government to:



Help mokopuna whaikaha and their whānau by improving support services in communities and providing accessible, affordable and healthy homes



Improve public education about disabilities to make our society more inclusive, and teach mokopuna whaikaha, their whānau and doctors about disabled children's rights



Provide good job training and education that supports disabled young people, especially when they move from school to work

Make a law that stops mokopuna whaikaha from being sterilised without their consent



Make sure mokopuna whaikaha can participate in decision-making and planning that affects them, especially in Government



Do a survey to learn more about mokopuna whaikaha, and do it regularly to understand what they need.

CARING FOR MOKOPUNA

The Committee made recommendations about **COMMUNITY LED** and **CULTURALLY RESPECTFUL** care, protection and youth justice services and supports for mokopuna and their whānau.

They also said our adoption laws need to change so they protect mokopuna rights.

The Committee advised that if children must be removed from their home, it should be for the shortest time possible, with good support and a way back to the care of their whānau and community.

It asks our Government to **URGENTLY**:



Invest more in solutions led by Māori communities to stop mokopuna Māori being put in homes away from their whānau, hapū and iwi



Support whānau, parents and caregivers to look after mokopuna so fewer children go into care



Make sure mokopuna and whānau have a say in decisions about care, respecting their culture and community



Give enough resources and training to those responsible for mokopuna in care



Regularly ask mokopuna in care about what life is like for them, and make sure they can safely report any problems like harm, neglect, or abuse.



HEALTH & WELLBEING

The Committee recommends a focus on **IMPROVING CHILDREN'S HEALTH** by:

Expanding vaccination programmes, enforcing standards for healthier rental homes, promoting breastfeeding, and strictly enforcing rules against smoking.

It asks our Government to:

Address mental health inequalities for Māori, Pasifika, and Rainbow youth, and improve access to affordable, timely and high-quality mental health and suicide prevention services.

Make sure there is comprehensive sex education in schools, and that all adolescents receive confidential and accessible sexual health information and services, including contraceptives.

The Committee was very worried about how many mokopuna still experience poverty, food insecurity and unhealthy housing. They asked the Government to prioritise healthy homes for mokopuna particularly for mokopuna Māori, Pasifika mokopuna and mokopuna whaikaha.



Despite efforts to reduce child poverty, many children, especially Māori and Pasifika, still experience food insecurity and unhealthy housing. The Committee stresses the need for ongoing action, enough resources, and clear criteria for healthy homes and social housing to improve children's wellbeing.

The Committee urges the Government to **INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE**, especially Māori, Pasifika, and those from low-income backgrounds, in planning and decision-making to address the impacts of **CLIMATE CHANGE**.

EDUCATION

When it comes to education, the Committee asks our Government to:



Let young people have meaningful input into decisions that affect them at school



Make sure that education is inclusive for all children & that mokopuna whaikaha have their rights to education met



Address racism and bullying, with a priority focus on mokopuna whaikaha, mokopuna Māori, Pasifika and Rainbow mokopuna



Strengthen te reo & tikanga Māori & history education in schools



Ensure that children have a say in how schools are run & set up



Set up a panel to make sure children are not unfairly removed from school



Make sure families know about the subsidies available for early childhood education.






SPECIAL PROTECTION MEASURES

The Committee said **MORE** needs to be done to meet the rights of **MOKOPUNA MĀORI**.

They are worried about the higher sickness and mortality rates for Māori babies, youth suicide rates, overrepresentation of Māori children in state care and their experiences of violence.

It urges our Government to:

-  Address issues that prevent mokopuna Māori from exercising their rights, like poverty
-  Make sure schools and youth justice respect the identity of mokopuna Māori and involve them in decisions affecting them
-  Involve mokopuna Māori in developing plans against racism.

The Committee asks our Government to:

DO MORE to uphold the rights of **ASYLUM-SEEKING, REFUGEE, AND MIGRANT** mokopuna to stay with **THEIR FAMILIES**.

It also said the Government must provide services like healthcare, education and legal aid for these mokopuna.

The Committee is **WORRIED** about children in paid work and asks our Government to:

Educate schools, parents and employers about child labour laws and establish a way for children to safely report when they are treated unfairly at work.

Ensure children in work are protected and that the laws on age, hours, conditions, education, and health are followed.



YOUTH JUSTICE

The Committee is concerned that the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Aotearoa New Zealand is **BELOW INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS**, and that our youth justice system is not child-centred.

It asks our Government to:

-  Change the law so nobody under 14 years old can be charged with a criminal offence
-  Stop holding mokopuna in police cells & reduce the number of mokopuna held on remand in youth justice residences
-  Make sure that when mokopuna are kept in detention, it is in a place that meets international rules, with access to education and healthcare
-  Stop sending 17-year-olds accused of crimes to adult courts and make sure they go through the youth justice system instead
-  Create a plan to eliminate the inequality in the youth justice system for mokopuna Māori who are placed in care or sentenced more often than other mokopuna
-  Invest in more community-based residences for mokopuna.



WHAT'S NEXT?

Our Government needs to work on the recommendations from the Committee and now it has a **TO-DO LIST** to meet the rights of mokopuna!

It must report to the United Nations about its progress on children's rights in the lead up to the next Concluding Observations. The Committee will check how things have improved for mokopuna in Aotearoa New Zealand in about 8 years.

Over this time, Mana Mokopuna - Children and Young People's Commission and the Children's Convention Monitoring Group will be monitoring how the government is doing on children's rights. The Chief Children's Commissioner, working together with mokopuna and communities, will be advocating for the 2023 Concluding Observations to be actioned!

Remember, our Government holds the greatest responsibility, but we all play a part in ensuring our country is a good place to grow up. So that all children's rights are respected for **all mokopuna, all the time.**

YOUR VOICE MATTERS!

If you think **MORE** needs to be done, you could write to your local MP with your concerns and ideas. You could also do a project on children's rights at school, or start a club!

We encourage you to keep learning about children's rights. Remember, **YOU HAVE A RIGHT TO HAVE A SAY** in decisions that impact you!



To learn more about your rights, please use the **QR CODE** on the last page.

COLOUR IN THIS LAST PAGE
AND USE IT AS A POSTER!

SHARE IT WITH THE
CHIEF CHILDREN'S
COMMISSIONER

WITH THE HASHTAG
#MOKOPUNARIGHTS



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THIS RESOURCE IS A SUMMARY OF THE
2023 CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.
 TO READ THE FULL TEXT, PLEASE USE
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LET MANA MOKOPUNA
 -CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S COMMISSION
 KNOW WHAT MATTERS MOST
 IN YOUR WORLD ANYTIME
@CHILDRENSCOMMNZ



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