



**Response from Oranga Tamariki to recommendations from
the Mana Mokopuna monitoring visit to:**

Kaahui Whetuu ki te Pito Care and Protection Residence

Visit date: 17-19 September 2024

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Introduction

Kaahui Whetuu ki te Pito (Kaahui Whetuu) Care and Protection Residence is located in Wiri, Auckland. The facility is owned and managed by Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki). The facility is for tamariki and rangatahi aged 10 to 17 years old, predominantly with a care and protection background who are placed in the custody of Oranga Tamariki.

Kaahui Whetuu is made up of one secure assessment hub which is designated as a place of detention and subject to the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT) requirements, and two community homes which are not places of detention and therefore not monitored under the OPCAT.

In September 2024, staff from Mana Mokopuna—Children and Young People's Commission (Mana Mokopuna) completed an unannounced monitoring visit to Kaahui Whetuu.

The facility has capacity to take five rangatahi. Under the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, the legal status which rangatahi are placed at Kaahui Whetuu include the below, though referrals for tamariki and rangatahi who have a Youth Justice legal status of 238(1)(a), (b) and (c) are also accepted into the community homes on occasion:

- section 78 – Custody of child or young person pending determination of proceedings or in urgent cases
- section 101 – Custody orders
- section 110(2)(b) - Additional guardianship orders
- section 139 – Temporary Care Agreement
- section 140 – Extended Care Agreement

The purpose of the visit was to assess the quality of services against the seven domains relevant to Mana Mokopuna's role as a National Preventive Mechanism under the OPCAT. The seven domains are:

- Domain 1: Treatment
- Domain 2: Protection systems
- Domain 3: Material conditions
- Domain 4: Activities and contact with others
- Domain 5: Medical services and care
- Domain 6: Personnel
- Domain 7: Improving outcomes for mokopuna Māori.

The draft OPCAT report for Kaahui Whetuu was shared with Oranga Tamariki on 19 December 2024.

Recommendations Summary

The December 2024 OPCAT report for Kaahui Whetuu examines the conditions and treatment of mokopuna and identifies seven recommendations. Mana Mokopuna did not find evidence of ill-treatment during their visit to Kaahui Whetuu.

We value the feedback we receive from Mana Mokopuna and use recommendations to make improvements. Mana Mokopuna have identified areas of concern and opportunities for improvement for Oranga Tamariki.

We continue to work towards ensuring consistent, quality practice, that is inclusive, collaborative, culturally responsive and meets the needs of tamariki and rangatahi.

Recommendations	Status
Oranga Tamariki Systemic Recommendations	
1. Provide clarity in terms of the strategic direction for Kaahui Whetuu moving forward. It is important kaimahi know with some certainty whether Kaahui Whetuu will continue as a Care and Protection residence or be repurposed to provide something different within the residence network.	Accepted
2. Finalise the Standard Operating Procedures for Oranga Tamariki residences with urgency, to ensure consistency of practice across all residences. Be clear about when the Residential Care Regulations 1996 apply and when they do not.	Accepted
3. Urgently address the lack of education delivered in the hub, so that all mokopuna can experience their right to education by accessing education appropriate to their age and to support their development.	Partially accepted
Facility Recommendations	
1. Ensure all kaimahi working directly with mokopuna have access to regular, external professional supervision. Clinical supervision should also be available to kaimahi who identify a specific need.	Accepted
2. The Residence Manager ring-fences a monthly budget amount to support community-based activity for mokopuna and regular resource upgrade (like games and DVDs) for mokopuna.	Accepted
3. Ensure kaimahi receive regular, on-going training focused on development needs that are self-identified to help better equip them to care for mokopuna. Examples raised by kaimahi include training in mental health for adolescents and training to enhance their trauma-informed practice approach.	Accepted
4. Investigate ways to increase mokopuna access to cultural programmes and activities, especially the carving programme and associated equipment already purchased.	Accepted

Response to Oranga Tamariki Systemic Recommendations

Below are the Oranga Tamariki responses to the systemic recommendations made in the Kaahui Whetuu OPCAT report.

Recommendation 1

Provide clarity in terms of the strategic direction for Kaahui Whetuu moving forward. It is important kaimahi know with some certainty whether Kaahui Whetuu will continue as a Care and Protection residence or be repurposed to provide something different within the residence network.

Response

We acknowledge the importance of providing clarity regarding the strategic direction for Kaahui Whetuu. The restructure of Oranga Tamariki in 2024 established the Youth Justice Services and Residential Care group. Since its formation, the leadership team have been determining strategic priorities for the year ahead and look to confirm timeframes for these. Additionally, we will be considering the learnings from the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care, and also international examples of best practice including residences that lend themselves to therapeutic care.

Once the strategic direction has been determined, we will need to clarify the criteria for admission to the Kaahui Whetuu Hub, and to ensure these criteria are met prior to any admission.

We accept this recommendation and are committed to providing clarity on the strategic direction for Kaahui Whetuu. We will provide you with a further update when the strategic direction has been set.

Recommendation 2

Finalise the Standard Operating Procedures for Oranga Tamariki residences with urgency, to ensure consistency of practice across all residences. Be clear about when the Residential Care Regulations 1996 apply and when they do not.

Response

Over the last 12 months, around 40 new Youth Justice Residence Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been published on the Practice Centre and implemented. We also have a further 40 SOPs in various stages of development, sign out or being prepared for implementation. These SOPs provide clear guidance to residential kaimahi across a wide number of day-to-day activities and operational scenarios. While there is currently a focus on completing Youth Justice SOPs, Care and Protection SOPs will soon be progressed. We intend to use our learnings from the development of the Youth Justice SOPs to progress the Care and Protection SOPs, and due to the efficiencies gained from the work we have already completed, we expect a quicker process with regards to defining practice expectations, publishing and implementing the SOPs.

Recommendation 3

Urgently address the lack of education delivered in the hub, so that all mokopuna can experience their right to education by accessing education appropriate to their age and to support their development.

Response

All rangatahi have the right to education. Oranga Tamariki and the Ministry of Education are jointly working on National Service Guidelines for education provision and support for tamariki and rangatahi placed in care and protection and youth justice residential care services. This is expected to be completed by end of June 2025.

There is acknowledgement that further action needs to be taken to ensure that rangatahi have access to education while at the hub. All rangatahi who are placed at the hub should have access to education through a course, a local school, or through Kingslea School.

Kingslea School currently provides education to other Oranga Tamariki rangatahi in the community, and therefore currently has a full roll. Referrals to Kingslea School are considered in relation to the current group dynamics due to the complexity of all rangatahi who attend.

There are significant benefits for tamariki and rangatahi to be engaged in mainstream education. Kaahui Whetuu is working closely with Oranga Tamariki education advisors and Ministry of Education advisors to build relationships with local schools. Kaahui Whetuu are committed to providing information to schools on each rangatahi, to support the school to understand rangatahi needs, for example, what helps rangatahi regulate to stay focused in class and what helps to de-escalate. One primary school has partnered with Kaahui Whetuu by attending multi-agency hui with rangatahi on their roll. They are clear on the safety plan and transition goals and have engaged in transitions to new schools when rangatahi move to a new area for a longer-term placement.

At times, rangatahi refuse to attend any form of education programme. In these instances, kaimahi work closely with rangatahi to arrange alternative activities within the residence that are education-based. Kaimahi are careful to ensure that activities are useful for rangatahi but are not an incentive for them to continue to refuse to engage with other education services.

We partially accept this recommendation as while we consider we have a role in ensuring rangatahi are enrolled in an education programme and supported to have access to education while they are at Kaahui Whetuu, it is also a responsibility of the Ministry of Education to be providing and ensuring access to education.

Response to Oranga Tamariki Facility Recommendations

Recommendation 1

Ensure all kaimahi working directly with mokopuna have access to regular, external professional supervision. Clinical supervision should also be available to kaimahi who identify a specific need.

Response

It is important that all kaimahi working with tamariki and rangatahi have access to regular professional supervision. Kaahui Whetuu leadership recognises that this is an area requiring focus.

It is not considered necessary or appropriate for all kaimahi to have external or clinical supervision unless identified as necessary for their professional registration requirements (eg. social worker, psychologist) or a specific need has been identified. This would need to be considered on a case-by-case basis by the Residence Manager. Youth workers are provided supervision by their line manager which at times can be in the form of live coaching whilst on the floor.

Group supervision is provided on office days through TELUS Health as part of a kaimahi ora package Kaahui Whetuu have developed in conjunction with the Oranga Tamariki Wellbeing Team. The Kaahui Whetuu leadership team will continue to support youth workers to understand that group supervision with TELUS Health is also a form of external supervision.

Recommendation 2

The Residence Manager ring-fences a monthly budget amount to support community-based activity for mokopuna and regular resource upgrade (like games and DVDs) for mokopuna.

Response

We acknowledge the need for community-based activities, and a budget to regularly replace and upgrade resources. There is currently an approved monthly budget for community-based activities. The Residence Manager ensures that funding is available for activities for rangatahi. The Residence Manager and all Kaahui Whetuu kaimahi consider what activities are reasonable and cost-effective for rangatahi; Kaahui Whetuu leadership is therefore careful to ensure there are a range of activities available, role modelling to rangatahi the different activities they can access in the community.

The Residence Manager also has a budget for upgrading resources such as games and DVDs. Unfortunately, some of the popular resources are damaged by rangatahi, and a plan must be made for how these will be replaced. At times, this does mean waiting until the following month if the budget has already been exhausted.

We accept this recommendation and consider it to be complete.

Recommendation 3

Ensure kaimahi receive regular, on-going training focused on development needs that are self-identified to help better equip them to care for mokopuna. Examples raised by kaimahi include training in mental health for adolescents and training to enhance their trauma-informed practice approach.

Response

We acknowledge the importance of kaimahi having access to regular, ongoing training that focuses on development needs to support kaimahi to care for rangatahi, and it is our view that kaimahi do have access to ongoing training in mental health and trauma-informed practice.

Kaimahi are provided with Safety Interventions, a trauma-informed crisis prevention programme. They also have access to the Alert Program workshop which has been developed with a strong emphasis

on trauma-responsive practice. Training and guidance provided on safety and support plans are filtered through the Alert Program Framework.

Kaahui Whetuu leadership is focused on building the suite of training available to support trauma-responsive practice. The leadership team recognises that office days when training can occur is on a three-weekly cycle. There are often other operational requirements to consider in those office days and attendance fluctuates significantly. The leadership team continues to work with kaimahi to work through barriers they may have to attending training and ensure training being offered is accessed and prioritised by kaimahi.

Kaahui Whetuu has a primary focus of building consistency across all teams regarding their approach, boundaries, rules, interpersonal relationships, and holding to the structured day. The leadership team recognises this can be difficult across a rotating roster with several kaimahi. The focus on improving these basic practices establishes a better platform for further professional development and external training opportunities.

We accept this recommendation and consider it complete as kaimahi already have access to training.

Recommendation 4

Investigate ways to increase mokopuna access to cultural programmes and activities, especially the carving programme and associated equipment already purchased.

Response

We recognise there is room for growth in building cultural capability regarding specific activities and cultural programmes. Tikanga and kawa is highly regarded and prioritised at Kaahui Whetuu especially for admission to and discharge from the service. Kaahui Whetuu is building capability with working with Pacific Island and other international cultures, especially the cultures of rangatahi and kaimahi who are currently involved with Kaahui Whetuu.

Kaahui Whetuu has also been exploring cultural activities in the community. There is access to kapa haka, local marae engagement, Cook Island dance groups and other activities. Cultural programmes will continue to be offered to rangatahi who express interest. There are commonly some rangatahi who are understandably uncertain about the level of engagement they want in cultural programmes, and kaimahi will work with these rangatahi to ensure they have an awareness of the opportunities available, and that there is an understanding of what support they might need to get involved. Language weeks are celebrated across the Kaahui Whetuu network which includes experiences with cultural dances, art, language, and kai.

We acknowledge that a carving shed would be a welcomed resource; however, the use of this is limited to skilled kaimahi available to run carving programs. We note that while the current kaiwhakaako has significant carving skills, these skills are not a requirement of the role, and future kaimahi in this role may hold skills in other areas.

We accept this recommendation, however, consider it to be complete.