

# Oranga Tamariki Response to *Outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau*

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Response from Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children to  
Aroturuki Tamariki – Independent Children’s Monitor *Outcomes  
for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and their whānau in the oranga  
tamariki system* report for 1 July 2023 – 30 June 2024

June 2025

## Response to the first report from Aroturuki Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) acknowledges the annual report from Aroturuki Tamariki | Independent Children's Monitor's (the Monitor) on the performance of the oranga tamariki system (the system) in respect to outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau.

This is the first report from the Monitor under section 24 of the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022. We thank the Monitor for the insights into the lives and experiences of tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau.

We agree that outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau in the system need to be improved. We also agree there is more to be done by Oranga Tamariki and across the system to achieve this. We have previously acknowledged this as the Monitor is aware. We have serious concerns about how the system is defined in the report, which we address in more detail below. We are disappointed there was not a stronger focus in the report on the roles of all agencies who share responsibility for improving outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau.

Oranga Tamariki has a large programme of work underway to improve outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau. This work includes improving Family Group Conferences (FGCs), strengthening cultural capability for Oranga Tamariki kaimahi, the holistic youth justice initiatives the Monitor calls for, and partnering with iwi and Māori organisations to deliver better services and support to Māori.

Decentralising and devolving services to iwi, Māori and communities is the long-term organisational direction of Oranga Tamariki. It is pleasing to see the Monitor recognise the positive early results and successes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, from this work. It is also encouraging to see the positive comments from our partners themselves. Given this is the direction Oranga Tamariki is already taking, it is disappointing that the Monitor has not included the positive early signs from these partnerships in its key findings.

Improving outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori is a priority for Oranga Tamariki and we have actions already underway to address this. We will continue to progress this important work, including:

- Our focus on working with the other children's agencies to deliver on the Oranga Tamariki System Action Plan.
- Engaging with partners and iwi Māori to ensure practice, policy and performance is focused on improving outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori.
- Enabling more effective locally led services to provide early intervention leading to improved outcomes.
- Our Implementation Plan, focusing our organisation on core business, to ensure the safety and wellbeing of tamariki, rangatahi and whānau.
- A focus on reducing serious and persistent child and youth offending through our Reducing Youth Offending Programme. This is a governmental priority under Government Target 3.
- A significant investment in the Frontline Technology Systems Upgrade (FTSU).
- The implementation of tools and resources from our Practice Approach to support practice that is relational, inclusive and restorative in our practice with all tamariki and whānau.



Below we respond to the report and its findings in more detail.

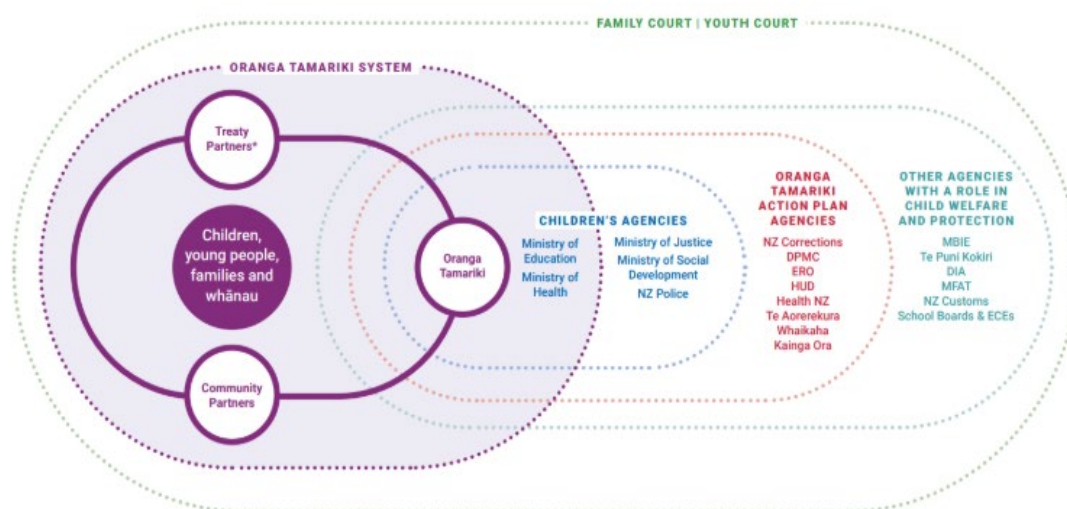
## The oranga tamariki system

We agree with the Monitor that all agencies that make up the system are responsible for supporting early intervention, to prevent unnecessary escalation of tamariki and rangatahi Māori entering care. Outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori will not improve until the whole system works together better.

The system is defined in different ways throughout the report. In its analysis, the Monitor focuses primarily on the role of Oranga Tamariki, or the role of the New Zealand Police and Oranga Tamariki.

The system is defined in legislation under section 9 of the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act.<sup>1</sup>

As the diagram below illustrates, the system is wider than Oranga Tamariki (the government agency) and includes iwi, Māori and community providers and other Children's agencies. The Oranga Tamariki System Action Plan (OTSAP) agencies and other agencies also have important roles in child welfare and protection, as well as youth justice responses.



We are disappointed there was not a stronger focus in the report on the roles of all agencies who share responsibility for improving outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau, and until this happens, we do not think the findings as detailed in this report can be substantiated.

## Evidence to support findings of worse outcomes for tamariki Māori involved with the oranga tamariki system

The Monitor states that the more involved tamariki and rangatahi become in the system, the worse their long-term outcomes. This implies that involvement with the system causes worse long-term outcomes, rather than simply correlating with broader factors. This statement appears to be based on data from a cohort of 27- to 30-year-olds, and on outcomes including likelihood to die in a vehicle accident. Given this cohort experienced the care system 10 to 15 years ago, we are unclear of the merits

<sup>1</sup> [Section 9 of the Oversight of the Oranga Tamariki System Act](#)

of drawing conclusions about the care system today from their experiences. The lack of counterfactual evidence means this cannot be substantiated and should not be a focus in the report.

We know that the challenges faced by tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau involved with the system are often complex, compounding, and intergenerational, including the combined impacts of poverty, racism and discrimination, long-term unemployment, low income, poor housing, unaddressed physical and mental health needs, alcohol and drug abuse, and family violence.<sup>2</sup> Given these broad socio-economic factors, it is unclear how the Monitor has concluded the poor outcomes experienced are a result of engagement with the system, rather than the compounding effect of all these factors.

Our own analysis shows that for children aged 5 to 17, there does not appear to be a statistically significant difference between Māori children and children of 'Other' ethnicities with regards to first placement entry following recent FGC or family/whānau agreement (FWA). For children aged 0 to 4, Māori children appear to be less likely than children of 'Other' ethnicities to enter placement for the first time following an FGC/FWA.<sup>3</sup>

We have also found that a greater proportion of Māori tend to have worse wellbeing outcomes than non-Māori regardless of whether they have had a care placement in their lives or not. However, the disparity in wellbeing outcomes for Māori compared to non-Māori appears to be less for those with care placement experience than the rest of the population.<sup>4</sup>

### **Reports of concern are a key intervention point for tamariki and rangatahi Māori.**

Oranga Tamariki does not determine the demographics of the children and young people that are referred to our services. We receive ROCs from members of the public or other professionals based on their concerns.

We agree that ROCs are a key intervention point for tamariki and rangatahi Māori. However, there are many opportunities for intervention when tamariki and rangatahi come to the notice of the system more generally, for example, at early childhood education, school or through visiting health services. In our view, all parts of the system have a role to play in responding to and addressing needs or safety concerns, often long before a ROC is made.

Oranga Tamariki reviews every ROC it receives to ensure the right action is taken. This includes referring to community providers and not unnecessarily bringing whānau into the system.

The report refers to high thresholds for investigation and further action. These thresholds are determined by legislation – whether tamariki or rangatahi Māori come into the care and protection of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki is a legal decision made by the Family Court.

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<sup>2</sup> [Oranga Tamariki System Action Plan](#)

<sup>3</sup> Page 40: [Section 7AA-report-Improving-outcomes-for-tamariki-Maori-2024.pdf](#)

<sup>4</sup> Page 39: [Section 7AA report 2023](#)



### **Family group conferences are not always carried out as intended which can mean tamariki and rangatahi Māori don't always get the services they need**

The Monitor has recognised that Family Group Conferences are not always carried out as intended, and there are opportunities to access resources that are not always capitalised on. We agree this is an area where improvement is needed.

Oranga Tamariki has recently developed new training packages to improve the skills of kaimahi in facilitating Family Group Conferences and coordinating the right support at that time. The use of hui ā-whānau (meetings with whānau to inform decisions) help to strengthen relationships and prepare whānau for the Family Group Conference, ensuring whānau relate to wrap-around services. Marae and iwi agencies are used more frequently to provide tikanga based support that meets the needs of the whānau.

### **Earlier intervention and more holistic youth justice initiatives are needed to reduce offending**

The Monitor suggests that more holistic youth justice initiatives for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau would be helpful to reduce offending and prevent escalation through the system. Oranga Tamariki agree that it is important for agencies to work together more effectively and address behaviours that could lead to offending.

Oranga Tamariki is focused on the reduction of serious and persistent youth offending. Youth offending is being addressed through the Reducing Youth Offending Programme and forms a part of the Government's wider set of measures to help improve the lives of all New Zealanders. Initiatives within the programme hold tamariki and rangatahi who offend to account, while also supporting them to address the issues contributing to their offending. These initiatives will help to prevent offending by supporting the wider whānau, working with our community partners to provide cultural support and breaking intergenerational cycles of trauma that often lead to involvement with the oranga tamariki system. We continue to enable communities to support whānau by utilising our early preventions models, such as Fast Track, or Kotahi te Whakaaro (an award<sup>5</sup> winning initiative).

### **Conclusion**

Oranga Tamariki will continue to focus on the many positive initiatives the Monitor identified, including continuing to grow our strategic partnerships, progressing Enabling Communities initiatives, improving FGCs, more holistic youth justice initiatives, and building kaimahi cultural capacity and connections with te ao Māori.

We will also continue to advocate for the needs of tamariki and rangatahi Māori in care to be met by other system agencies.

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<sup>5</sup> [About the New Zealand POP awards | ASU Center for Problem-Oriented Policing](#)