



Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee

Minute of Decision

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Minister for Children's Priorities for Oranga Tamariki

Portfolio **Children**

On 24 July 2024, the Cabinet Social Outcomes Committee:

- 1 **noted** that the Minister for Children intends to establish the following four priorities as part of public accountability for Oranga Tamariki, and to enable the agency to focus on its core purpose:
 - 1.1 ensuring the safety of children and young people;
 - 1.2 supporting caregivers;
 - 1.3 addressing youth offending – in particular accountability for the Government's Better Public Service Target three on reducing the number of serious and persistent offenders by 15 percent by July 2029;
 - 1.4 improving complaint management and practices.

Jenny Vickers
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon David Seymour
Hon Nicola Willis (Chair)
Hon Dr Shane Reti
Hon Erica Stanford
Hon Paul Goldsmith
Hon Louise Upston
Hon Mark Mitchell
Hon Tama Potaka
Hon Matt Doocey
Hon Nicole McKee
Hon Casey Costello
Hon Penny Simmonds
Hon Karen Chhour
Hon Nicola Grigg

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Officials Committee for SOU
Office of the Minister for Tertiary Education and Skills

Office of the Minister for Children

Social Outcomes Committee

Minister for Children's priorities for Oranga Tamariki

Proposal

- 1 This paper formalises my priorities and reporting expectations for Oranga Tamariki to support public transparency and accountability.

Executive Summary

- 2 As Minister for Children, it is my expectation that Oranga Tamariki is relentlessly focused on its core purpose of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- 3 I want to ensure there is an agreed set of priorities that supports Oranga Tamariki to achieve this, with clear accountability and reporting to ensure the agency's progress is transparent.
- 4 Starting in the 2024/25 financial year, Oranga Tamariki will be required to report quarterly on key priorities. These priorities are:
 - 4.1 ensuring the safety of children and young people
 - 4.2 supporting caregivers
 - 4.3 addressing youth offending – in particular accountability for the Government's Better Public Service Target three on reducing the number of serious and persistent offenders by 15 percent by July 2029
 - 4.4 improving complaint management and practices.
- 5 Oranga Tamariki will also report on my legislative priorities, which include the repeal of section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act, the introduction of a Young Serious Offender (YSO) declaration, the establishment of military style academies, and improvements to the safety of residential care – as well as progress against the Government's savings target and appropriation measures.
- 6 I have chosen these priorities after extensive discussions with stakeholders, which have informed my views about the areas Oranga Tamariki needs to focus on to make the biggest difference to the safety of children and young people.
- 7 Through a regular survey, Oranga Tamariki will listen to its staff and key stakeholders (including children and families, Oranga Tamariki caregivers, strategic partners, and contracted providers) – and respond by taking action based on that feedback.

Relation to government priorities

- 8 I intend to set performance indicators for Oranga Tamariki to prioritise areas for improvement and support public transparency and accountability. Benchmarking targets for critical frontline services will help set standards and drive resource to where it matters most – providing quality social work and caregiving to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children.
- 9 My priorities for Oranga Tamariki align with the expectations and priorities of the coalition Government. Reporting will include performance standards and indicators against priority areas mentioned in paragraph four above.

Oranga Tamariki performance reporting will be made publicly available on a quarterly basis, aligned to key priorities

- 10 Starting in the 2024/25 financial year, Oranga Tamariki will produce public quarterly reporting on progress against key priorities. Performance for the fourth quarter will be provided through the Annual Report with full year figures.
- 11 In October 2024, Oranga Tamariki will publish its updated Strategic Intentions for the 2024/25 – 2029/2030 financial years. The Strategic Intentions will reflect the priorities for reporting outlined in this paper, alongside the longer-term view and stewardship responsibilities of Oranga Tamariki.
- 12 I propose to return to Cabinet after a year of reporting against these performance indicators, to ensure ongoing scrutiny of Oranga Tamariki operations, and an opportunity to further lift standards or focus on other priorities as they emerge.

Ensuring the safety of children and young people

- 13 Children and young people deserve to feel safe and loved. Ensuring the safety of children and young people is my top priority as Minister.
- 14 As Aroturuki Tamariki – Independent Children’s Monitor has noted, social worker visits help keep children and young people in care safe as it allows them to see firsthand how things are going. There has been no statistically significant change over the three years the Independent Children’s Monitor has been reporting on visits to children and young people in care, despite assurances from Oranga Tamariki that this would be a priority.
- 15 I need confidence that visits to children and young people in care are occurring regularly. I expect Oranga Tamariki to report foundational aspects of practice that position them to ensure greater compliance with regulatory obligations, including the National Care Standards, and the needs and expectations of children and young people in care.
- 16 When a Report of Concern is made, it is essential for the safety of the children and young people involved that this is investigated in a timely manner. When a critical or very urgent Report of Concern is made, a child or young person may have been seriously harmed, or may be at risk of being seriously harmed.

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17 Accordingly, I expect reporting to measure:

17.1 Frequency of visits – the percentage of children and young people in care who have been visited by their social worker at least once in the last eight weeks to ensure their ongoing safety and wellbeing. This will provide confidence that visits to children and young people in care are occurring regularly, to help ensure they have an opportunity to safely share any concerns they may have.

17.2 Timeliness around reports of concern – the percentage of critical (within 24 hours) or very urgent (within 48 hours) reports of concern, addressed within these timeframes. This will demonstrate whether Oranga Tamariki is responding to reports of concern within appropriate timeframes based on the level of risk identified.

Supporting caregivers

18 Caregivers play an essential role in provide safe, loving, and stable homes for children and young people who, for whatever reason, are not able to live with their family. They open their hearts and their homes to look after our most vulnerable. However, too often I have heard stories from caregivers who say they do not feel supported by Oranga Tamariki so they can meet the needs of the children and young people they are caring for. It is important that caregivers are given support to enable them to provide a safe and loving home.

19 I intend to explore what changes, both legislative and non-legislative, can be made to make caregiving more attractive and allow caregivers to make more everyday decisions regarding the children and young people they care for. This includes improving the rights and responsibilities of caregivers to give them more autonomy.

20 I expect success in supporting caregivers to be measured through:

20.1 A rolling survey of Oranga Tamariki caregivers, which asks questions such as how likely they would be to recommend becoming a caregiver to friends and family, and whether they are thinking about stopping being a caregiver for Oranga Tamariki.

Addressing youth offending

21 The Government is clear that addressing serious youth offending is a priority. Government Target 3 is focused on a 15 percent reduction in the total number of children and young people with serious and persistent offending behaviour by July 2029. We're committed to creating more tools to respond to the most serious and persistent young offenders. This includes the establishment of military-style academies and the creation of a new YSO declaration.

22 Reducing child and youth offending requires cross-agency commitment and support for delivery. I've asked Oranga Tamariki to dig deeply into root

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causes, be innovative, and to be disciplined in directing resources to where they will have the greatest impact on outcomes.

- 23 Oranga Tamariki will facilitate the implementation of a cross-agency delivery plan to achieve the Target. This will include the participation of providers with appropriate capability and expertise to influence reductions in serious youth offending. I will approve the delivery plan for Target 3 as the lead Minister. There will be public reporting by the Prime Minister in July 2024.
- 24 Oranga Tamariki will lead and deliver the military-style academies, working with providers where they have appropriate capability and expertise, and alongside other government departments in a multi-agency approach to ensure it is a well-rounded programme.
- 25 The pilot for a military-style academy is expected to begin operating from late July 2024. It will have a military-style component as well as a rehabilitative and trauma-informed care approach to help the participating young people turn their lives around and reduce their risk of reoffending. Legislation providing options for the future operation of military-style academies will be introduced alongside the YSO declaration.
- 26 This programme will deliver the real change needed for many youth offenders. It will show them there are consequences for their actions, but also that with a disciplined and structured environment they can turn their life around.
- 27 I will progress legislation to introduce a new YSO declaration, targeting the most serious and persistent young offenders. I expect Oranga Tamariki to work in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and New Zealand Police to facilitate this, in line with commitments in the Speech from the Throne.

Improving complaint management and practices

- 28 People should be able to provide feedback to Oranga Tamariki and be treated fairly and respectfully, with their words heard and actioned when necessary. This will be measured by:
 - 28.1 The proportion of complaints audited that were handled in a way that fully met Oranga Tamariki standards. This will show if assurance activities for complaints are effective and leading to improvements in complaints practice.

Risks

- 29 There is a risk that Oranga Tamariki does not meet the standards and targets set out in this paper. However, on balance I consider that the agency must be held accountable to the expectations I have set. I will be having regular conversations with officials to monitor progress and to address any issues in delivery as they arise.

Next steps

- 30 Oranga Tamariki will start public quarterly reporting against the priorities and measures in this paper in the 2024/25 financial year. This will be produced after data becomes available at the end of each reporting period and will be published on the Oranga Tamariki website.

Cost-of-living Implications, Financial Implications and Legislative Implications

- 31 There are no cost of living, financial implications or legislative implications associated with the reporting of performance priorities. Reporting will include delivery against legislative changes and the government's fiscal savings programme.

Population Implications

- 32 There are no direct population impacts of this paper as it relates to reporting against existing policy measures and funding, although with refreshed focus.

Use of external resources

- 33 There are no external resource implications associated with the proposals in this paper. I am clear that Oranga Tamariki has the resources required to provide performance reporting.

Consultation

- 34 The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet has been informed.

Communications

- 35 I intend to announce my priorities and reporting expectations for Oranga Tamariki through a press release.

Proactive release

- 36 This paper will be proactively released within 30 business days of decisions being confirmed by Cabinet.

Recommendations

The Minister for Children recommends that the Committee:

- 1 **Note** the intention to establish four priorities as part of public accountability for Oranga Tamariki and to enable the agency to focus on its core purpose:
- 1.1 ensuring the safety of children and young people
 - 1.2 supporting caregivers
 - 1.3 addressing youth offending – in particular accountability for the Government's Better Public Service Target three on reducing the number of serious and persistent offenders by 15 percent by July 2029

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1.4 improving complaint management and practices.

Authorised for lodgement.

Hon Karen Chhour

Minister for Children