

22 January 2026

s9(2)(a)

Tēnā koe s9(2)(a)

Thank you for your email, received on 15 December 2025, to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) requesting information on all documents that informed Written Parliamentary Question (WPQ) 51767. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

You have requested:

[...] Under the OIA Act I request in full all documents that informed WQ 51767

- *eliminate abuse and improve safety in care, and*
- *address the disproportionate number of Māori and Pacific children and young people in care.*

51767 (2025). Teanau Tuiono to the Minister for Children: What contributions, if any, has the Minister or any office they are responsible for made to inform the Government's position on the upcoming United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in its 23rd and 24th periodic UN reviews by date and title?

Hon Karen Chhour: I am advised Oranga Tamariki provided information to the Ministry of Justice requested by the CERD Committee on measures to: eliminate abuse and improve safety in care and address the disproportionate number of Māori and Pacific children and young people in care.

There are seven documents that have been identified as in scope of your request, as listed below:

- Appendix One – Oranga Tamariki input for the Ministry of Justice on 13 June 2025
 - Theme: Children and young people
 - BI-1605 UN Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination Report.
- Appendix Two: Oranga Tamariki input for the Ministry of Justice on 20 October 2025
 - Māori and Pacific Children in Care

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- Appendix Three: Oranga Tamariki input for the Ministry of Justice on 19 November 2025
 - Youth Justice
 - High Rates of Incarceration Among Māori and Pacific Peoples
 - Māori and Pacific Children in Care version 2
- Appendix Four: Oranga Tamariki responses to additional questions from the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) committee on 27 November 2025

Oranga Tamariki may make the information contained in this letter available to the public by publishing this on our website with your personal details removed.

I trust you find this information useful. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise them with Oranga Tamariki. Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Information about this is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or by contacting them on 0800 802 602.

Nāku noa, nā

Rachel Groves
Acting General Manager
System Policy and Governance
System Leadership

Appendix One: Oranga Tamariki input for the Ministry of Justice on 13 June 2025

Theme: Children and young people

CERD/C/NZL/CO/21-22

33. The Committee is alarmed by reports of the alleged abuse of children in foster care or State institutions that is alleged to have included physical, sexual and emotional abuse. The reports focus on a period of approximately 40 years, during which time up to 100,000 children were in care, the majority of whom were Māori children. The Committee notes the State party has expressed its intention to compensate victims. However, the Committee is concerned that such an approach by the State party will fail to expose the systemic problems that may have existed. The Committee is also concerned that Māori children are still more likely to be placed in government care. It notes that the recent amendments to the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 (through the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Oranga Tamariki) Legislation Act 2017) provide certain safeguards for children in care but concerns remain about, among other things, a parliamentary proposal to send young offenders to a military-style boot camp for a year (arts. 2, 5 and 6).

34. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Immediately set up and empower an independent commission of inquiry into abuse of children and adults with disabilities in State care from 1950 to 1990, with the authority to determine redress, rehabilitation and reparations for victims, including an apology from the State party;

(b) Take effective steps to reduce the number of Māori and Pasifika children in State care, including through the policy of “whānau-first” placement for Māori children.

#	Issue	Responsible Agencies	Existing information	Additional/updated information required
1.	Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care	CRO OT MSD Justice (any other relevant agencies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Royal Commission of Inquiry into Historical Abuse in State Care and in the Care of Faith-based Institutions (Royal Commission) report Whanaketia – Through pain and trauma, from darkness to light, was tabled in Parliament on 24 July 2024. Deaf, disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori (Māori disabled people and their whānau) and people with learning disabilities have been a significant focus in the inquiry. In particular, the report recommends significant change to care safety processes, organisational arrangements, and structures for the regulation, monitoring and commissioning of services including disability support services. The Government is continuing to consider and respond to the Royal Commission’s recommendations. The recommendations are complex, and it is important they are considered carefully and respectfully. Since July 2024, the Government has broadly accepted the findings of the Royal Commission and a Crown Response Office has been established to drive the Government’s ongoing response. The Prime Minister apologised to all those who were abused and neglected in care in Parliament on 12 November 2024 and announced that decisions on a new redress system for survivors of abuse in care will be taken across 2025. While that work is undertaken, the Government has invested additional funding for existing redress processes to ensure they are more responsive to survivor needs and have more capacity to resolve their claims. The Government has also established a fund to enable local authorities to honour those who died in care and are buried in unmarked graves, and to strengthen survivor-led initiatives that support those in need. Legislation has also been introduced which includes a range of measures to improve safety in care and the Government confirmed that a National Remembrance Day will be held on 12 November 2025. The Government has agreed a redress process for 	<p>Update on the resourcing and progress implementing all recommendations of the Royal Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The care and protection system has undergone significant legislative and practice changes since the events considered by the Royal Commission and New Zealand’s last report to the CERD Committee in 2018. This has included the establishment of a significant independent external monitoring regime, including dedicated roles performed by the Children’s Commissioner, the Independent Children’s Monitor and the Ombudsman in relation to children in care, as well as Grievance Panels for Oranga Tamariki residences. Oranga Tamariki is committed to making further improvements as recommended by the Royal Commission to prevent abuse in care, and has moved quickly to amend the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 (the Act) to improve safety in its secure residences through the Responding to Abuse in Care Legislation Amendment Bill (the Bill). The Royal Commission had heard evidence about searches in residences being undertaken without proper procedures and protections. The proposed amendments focus on search powers in secure residences. The Bill will repeal the authority to conduct strip searches of children and young people and introduce personal search plans for each child or young person, setting out how they would like to be searched and by whom. The introduction of personal search plans provides for a trauma-informed approach, and aligns with the recommendation for fit-for-need and individualised care (recommendation 78). In secure youth justice residences, the Bill will enable universal searches on entry, meaning residents, visitors and staff may be searched prior to entering. This can keep

		<p>survivors of torture at the Lake Alice Child and Adolescent Unit, resolving a historic inequity in previous Lake Alice settlements and setting up urgent financial assistance to Lake Alice survivors who are terminally ill. Decisions on an improved redress pathway for survivors of abuse in care will be taken across 2025.</p> <p>(ICESCR Fifth Periodic Report)</p>	<p>children and young people safe from violence and abuse and prevent the entry of harmful items. Where searches must occur, they must be carried out in the least invasive way possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Care-experienced young people consulted on these search proposals considered universal searches to be equitable and fair. To assure families, whānau and community that the searches will not inhibit their connection to young people, the Bill prevents people from being denied entry simply for handing over a harmful item. <p>Additional information on secure residences and amendments to search powers</p> <p>Secure residences are environments with lockable gates and secure perimeters that prevent a child or young person from leaving. There are two types of secure residences – secure youth justice residences and secure care and protection residences.</p> <p>Secure care and protection residences provide for the care of children and young people with complex care needs and behavioural challenges, typically aged between 10 to 16-years old. The Family Court has placed these children and young people in the custody of the chief executive of Oranga Tamariki because it is satisfied that the child or young person is in need of care and protection.</p> <p>Secure youth justice residences provide for the care of children and young people involved in the youth justice system, typically aged between 14 and 17-years-old. However, these residences can also care for 12 to 13-year-olds, and 18 and 19-year olds under particular circumstances. To be placed in these residences means that a child or young person has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> been arrested and placed in the custody of the chief executive of Oranga Tamariki; been charged with an offence, awaiting trial and ordered by a Youth Court or High Court judge to be placed in the custody of the chief executive; had their charges proven before the Youth Court and ordered to complete a supervision with residence order; or been found guilty of an offence in the District Court or High Court and sentenced to imprisonment, and are serving out that sentence in a residence rather than in prison. <p>Some amendments in the Bill apply to all secure residences, and some apply only to secure youth justice residences. In all secure residences, the Bill:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> repeals the authority to strip search children and young people; clarifies that the time limit that a child can be placed in secure care¹ prior to needing Judicial oversight to extend their placement is no more than three consecutive days (whether continuous or not); and introduces an approved search plan for each child or young person placed in a secure residence, which sets out their needs and preferences about how they are searched and by whom. <p>The Bill requires search plans to be complied with, unless the chief executive of Oranga Tamariki considers it impracticable or there is another good reason to depart from them. This discretion is</p>
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¹ Secure care means containment in a residence within a locked room or enclosure with visible physical barriers. The secure care unit is used as an intensive response when a child or young person presents a risk to themselves or others.

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				<p>necessary for staff to respond to changed circumstances – for example, if it becomes impossible to follow a search plan because the staff member preferred to conduct a search is no longer employed in the residence.</p> <p>Any departure from an approved plan, and the reason for it, must be recorded in the daily log of a secure residence. The Bill also enables regulations to prescribe the reasons considered good reasons to depart from a plan.</p> <p>In secure youth justice residences only, the Bill:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • specifies a list of items that are considered harmful in these residences, including any drug, alcohol or intoxicating substance, and any offensive weapon; • allows for everyone to be searched on entry for unauthorised items and authorises the use of imaging technology scanners in searches.
2	Children in State Care and the OT Act	OT MSD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oranga Tamariki is taking a more rigorous approach to contracting to ensure its investment of \$500m in social services goes where it is needed to have the greatest impact on the most vulnerable children and young people across New Zealand. Oranga Tamariki is shifting to prioritise core business including statutory services such as Youth Justice, Care & Protection, Transition Services and family violence sexual violence services. FY2025 is the start of an ongoing programme of work to realign investment to where it is needed most. • Oranga Tamariki launched Our Strategy in 2024 and has developed an ‘Implementation Plan 2024/2025’. The Strategy defines the purpose of Oranga Tamariki as to serve those children, young people and families who come to the state’s attention through the care and protection or youth justice systems. • The focus areas of Oranga Tamariki are to deliver on its core purpose, culture change and getting the basics right. Delivery on the core purpose of Oranga Tamariki involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ timely responses to reports of concerns and missing children ○ supporting caregivers ○ reducing youth offending by 15 percent by 2030 ○ improving complaint management practices. • The Oranga Tamariki National Care Standards (introduced in 2019) require that each child’s needs are assessed and an individualised ‘All About Me Plan’ is developed and regularly reviewed. The plan must include support for the child’s culture, belonging and identity, connections to family and other significant people, play and recreation, health and education. Oranga Tamariki has a system in place for self-monitoring its compliance with these standards. <p>(ICESCR Fifth Periodic Report)</p>	<p>Updated data on the number of Māori and Pasifika children in state care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entries into care have decreased significantly since 2017/2018 for all children of all ages and ethnic groups, with the lowest record in 2021/22. The largest decrease in entries into care over that time was for tamariki Māori, particularly pēpi Māori. Since then, entries have begun to increase with a notable increase for tamariki Māori in 2023/2024 compared to non-Māori. • In the financial year 2024 there were 5413 children and young people in the custody of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki. Of these children and young people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3080 were Māori • 603 were Māori and Pacific • 325 were Pacific • 1399 were New Zealand European and Other • 6 did not have a primary ethnicity specified. <p>[See attached Excel spreadsheet for additional data]</p> <p>Update on steps taken to reduce the number of Māori and Pacific children in care and improve the care system with a focus on cultural appropriateness and maintaining whānau connections</p> <p><i>Cultural appropriateness</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Minister for Children is advised by a Ministerial Advisory Board made up of leaders and representatives of Māori to ensure that independent advice on cultural appropriateness is provided to the Minister about Māori in the care and protection or youth justice systems. Oranga Tamariki also has a Pacific Panel made up of Pacific leaders providing advice on cultural appropriateness to Oranga Tamariki decision-makers. • Since 2018, Oranga Tamarik has established a range of strategic partnerships including shared care partner arrangements with iwi. The annual section 7AA reports released between 2020 to 2024 showed where progress has been made for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and where further work is required. • Oranga Tamariki continues to embed and enable social work that values and draws upon Māori models of practice through a shift in its Practice Approach and new tools and resources that support responding the individual needs and circumstances of each child, including their cultural needs.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Practice Approach enables social workers to better understand and meet the needs of tamariki and whānau and work in new ways with iwi, Māori and community-led approaches. It is framed by te Tiriti o Waitangi, supported by a mana-enhancing paradigm for practice and draws from the Te Ao Māori principles of oranga (well-being). These principles are relational, inclusive and restorative, and therefore have benefits for all children and families. • The Oranga Tamariki Pacific Strategy 2021 – 2024 sets out our strategic direction for Pacific children. One of its strategic objectives is to enable competency in the cultural-practice tool Va’aifetū to address the needs of Pacific children and their families. • Te Hāpai O is the wider approach and function within Oranga Tamariki that is building Māori cultural capability over time. Over 900 staff members have completed Tū Māia since its inception in 2022. Tū Māia is a 20-week, 200 hour learning programme designed to uplift our cultural competencies to ensure a culturally authentic, inclusive and fair workplace. This is a commitment to cultural capability that is one of the most significant in the New Zealand public sector. • Oranga Tamariki continues to invest proportionally more in iwi and Māori services. Between the 2019 and 2024 financial years, the percentage of all service contract funding with iwi and Māori organisations increased from 21% to 33%. This represents a spend increase from \$62.9 million to \$190.2 million, and a 10% increase on the spending between 2023 and 2024. <p><i>Whānau connections</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where it is not possible for a child or young person to stay at home, Oranga Tamariki takes a whānau-first approach as is set out in the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. Oranga Tamariki seeks a safe, stable and loving home within a child’s wider whānau, hapū, iwi of family group and the needs of the child related to connections with whanau, hapu and iwi are considered. • Despite increasing challenges with finding placements more generally, there has been stable progress over the past five years towards ensuring tamariki and rangatahi Māori are placed in the care of their whānau, hapū, and iwi where possible. This reflects the success of Whānau Care and Enabling Communities partnerships. • Indicative 2025 results show that 86% of children in care have a plan that sets out actions to address their needs. In 84% of cases, the plans contain actions to connect children with their family or whānau. For tamariki Māori, 44% of cases had evidence of being supported to connect with their marae, hapū or iwi, or that strong connections already existed. <p>Additional information on supporting cultural appropriateness in care</p> <p>Over the past year, Oranga Tamariki has embedded several tools to support social workers in this relational, community-led way of working. These include the:</p>
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² Supervision is a professional and regulatory requirement. It is an internationally accepted practice standard in the social work profession. Oranga Tamariki must support registered Social Workers to meet their regulatory, professional, and organisational supervision requirements.

				<p>shifts, such as greater placement stability and improved engagement with children, findings of harm continue to occur.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any harm to those in care is unacceptable. Oranga Tamariki has an operational focus and regular reporting on core safety and well-being responsibilities under the initiative <i>Resolute about Safety</i>. Responsibilities include the timely allocation of cases and completion of safety assessments, locating and returning missing children quickly, visiting children at least once every eight weeks as a minimum, and working to ensure children in care are living with approved caregivers. • The Quality Improvement team also plays a critical role in monitoring the safety of children and young people in care. The team monitors the quality of care settings, identifies systemic risks and works alongside our internal teams to mitigate harm. Their work contributes to improving care standards, training, and policies to better protect children and young people. • Over the past few years, Oranga Tamariki has improved children and young people’s awareness of how to make a complaint, strengthened recording and responding to allegations of harm and improving awareness of the need for a formal Report of Concern to be entered and assessed in all situations of harm to children. • Oranga Tamariki has also established a Child Protection Investigation Unit (CPIU) to improve the safety of children through rigorous and transparent investigations into cases where care provided to a child by the state has caused harm. The CPIU work will inform changes to practice, policy and processes – at an individual, site, regional or national level. • Oranga Tamariki also has a programme of work underway to reduce harm in secure residences, through refining how young people are assessed and placed, safety-focused training for residence staff, the development of a new model of care, and the implementation of consistent standard operating procedures across all residences. • As noted above, there are also extensive independent monitoring mechanisms that help ensure that where abuse may occur, it is identified quickly. <p><i>Minimum standards of care</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oranga Tamariki has an obligation to meet the needs of all children and young people in care are set out in the Oranga Tamariki (National Care Standards and Related Matters) Regulations 2018. The Independent Children’s Monitor reports on our compliance with the National Care Standards. Its fourth annual report found insufficient progress towards meeting the National Standards in 2023/2024. • Oranga Tamariki has acknowledged that these standards are not consistently being met, often due to complex and interrelated factors. • Oranga Tamariki and the Ministries of Health and Education are working together under the Oranga Tamariki System Action Plan (Action Plan) to understand the barriers to children and young people in care face in accessing health and education services. This includes a redesign of the Gateway Assessment³ to deliver more integrated culturally-appropriate ongoing support and make children in care visible in the health system.
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³Gateway provides a comprehensive assessment of the health, disability, and education needs of children and young people entering care, and for some children and young people at the risk of entering care.

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During 2024, Oranga Tamariki trialled the role of Allied Support Workers to undertake tasks that do not require a social work qualification. This enabled social workers to focus on social work practice. Following its positive evaluation, the position has been made permanent and there are 33 Allied Support Workers employed nationwide. • Oranga Tamariki continues to self-monitor our progress towards the Standards using core indicators such as, whether: those in care had recent assessments and plans; their views and the views of their families and whānau were considered in the plans; and they were receiving regular and quality social worker visits. • Our self-monitoring shows that progress towards core indicators was broadly stable in 2023/2024, following a significant lift in performance across several indicators in 2022/2023. In 2023/2024, an estimated 37% of children and young people in care had all core indicators met. <p>Update on the repeal of section 7AA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, which placed additional duties on the chief executive to show a practical commitment to the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi, was repealed in April 2025. The intent was to clarify that the safety and wellbeing of children was paramount in decision-making. • The duty for Oranga Tamariki to report annually on the measures taken to carry out the duties in section 7AA was repealed. However, the Independent Monitor of the Oranga Tamariki system will continue to report on the outcomes achieved for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau, in accordance with the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022. • The practical commitment to the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi is unchanged in section 4(1)(f). That mana tamaiti and the child or young person’s wellbeing should be protected by recognising their whakapapa and the whanaungatanga responsibilities of their family, whānau, hapū, iwi and family group is unchanged in section 5(1)(iv). • The duty to develop strategic partnerships with iwi and Māori organisations formerly in section 7AA was retained and shifted to section 7(2)(h) of the Act, which relates to the general duties of the chief executive. These partnerships continue to be a high priority for the government. • Section 78 notices⁴ remain stable following a period of significant decline. In many cases reviewed, whānau were engaged in a formal process to discuss concerns and create safety for pēpi and other support services are consulted prior to the application of the notice. In 2024, there were 611 section 78 orders, 424 of which were for tamariki and rangatahi Māori.
3	Young offenders/Bootcamps	Corrections Police MSD OT		<p>Updates and data on Young Serious offenders legislation and Military Style Academies (MSAs)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government has a target (Target 3) to reduce the number of children and young people with serious and persistent offending behaviour by 15% by 2030. Early indications are that the number of children and young people in this cohort is reducing, including as a result of the Fast Track and other operational initiatives to address the underlying

⁴ Section 78 allows for the Court to place a child in the interim care of Oranga Tamariki when there are immediate concerns for their safety and wellbeing.

				<p>causes of offending behaviour. The majority of this cohort is Māori and benefitting from this progress.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Oranga Tamariki (Responding to Serious Youth Offending) Amendment Bill (RSYO Bill) will introduce further stronger, faster and more targeted responses to a small group of young people aged 14 to 17 years old where previous interventions have been unsuccessful and there is a high risk that offending behaviour will continue. This is a small subset of the Target 3 group – the latest modelling shows that by the fourth year of the law coming into force, 126 young people will be eligible for the proposed Young Serious Offender (YSO) declaration. • The YSO declaration will unlock additional powers for the Youth Court and New Zealand Police and introduce the option of a military-style academy (MSA) order that will require a young person to be placed in a secure Youth Justice residence for between 3 to 12 months. To be eligible for an MSA order, a young person will need to be declared a YSO and be aged between 15 and 17 years old at the time of offending. • The military-style academy programme will consist of military-style activities as well as daily activities to support their health, learning and well-being with a focus on rehabilitation and reducing offending behaviour. Activities may be delivered offsite by a qualifying provider, which will open new rehabilitative opportunities including noho marae. • The Bill is currently before the House and is expected to be enacted in August 2025. Regulations will be introduced to support the implementation of the Bill. <p>Additional information on the new use of force provisions</p> <p>The Bill authorises Oranga Tamariki staff and approved workers of qualifying providers delivering part of a military-style academy programme with the ability to use force.</p> <p>Force is only able to be used if it is reasonably necessary to prevent the young person from being harmed, harming themselves or another person, or to prevent them from absconding. The level of force used must not be any more than is reasonably necessary in the circumstances.</p> <p>The Bill provides further safeguards relating to the use of force, including that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • de-escalation techniques must have been used first, or must not be reasonably practicable in the circumstances, to ensure that any use of force is a last resort. • any young person must be examined by a health practitioner following a use of force incident. • the use of mechanical restraints is prohibited. • Oranga Tamariki must provide the Ombudsman with all information relating to critical or serious incidents. • approved workers must record any use of force incident and provide this to the chief executive of Oranga Tamariki as required by regulations. • the jurisdiction of the Ombudsman will be extended to qualifying providers, which includes all mandatory reporting and monitoring provisions under the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022.
4	Child Poverty and wellbeing	MSD		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please provide any updates on measures being taken to reduce child poverty – MSD.

		OT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing child poverty significantly improves the lives of children, young people and their families. The Child Poverty Reduction Act 2018 (CPRA) established ongoing political accountability for child poverty reduction. Governments are required to set and report against 3-year and 10-year targets for reducing child poverty, and report annually on progress across multiple measures and indicators. • Between 2021 and 2024 none of the three child poverty reduction targets were met. In the past two years all three primary measures of child poverty have been trending upwards. This reflects the increase in cost-of-living pressures, rising housing costs, challenging economic and labour market conditions, and incomes that have remained relatively flat in real terms. • Actions the Government is taking to address the cost of living and long-term poverty have included lifting the incomes of working households experiencing hardship by providing tax relief, reducing inflation, and making childcare more affordable by introducing the FamilyBoost childcare tax rebate. Also, a focus on addressing the long-term drivers of child poverty including reducing long-term benefit dependency and lifting education and skills. The Government also provides the Healthy School Lunches programme, discussed in paragraphs 307-308. • Reducing child material hardship is one of the three priorities identified in the refreshed Child and Youth Strategy, reflecting the lifelong impact that material hardship in childhood can have. The Strategy priority areas are expected to underpin cross-government work and investment. The material hardship priority will focus on addressing additional household costs, such as costs associated with disability, and addressing the drivers of long-term disadvantage and hardship, including in relation to health, housing, education and employment. <p>(ICESCR Fifth Periodic Report, p 231 – 234)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a concerted effort to improve data, particularly on incomes and child poverty. The Child Poverty Reduction Act was passed in 2018 to help achieve a significant and sustained reduction in child poverty in New Zealand. The Act requires the government to set three-year and ten-year targets on four primary measures, and that the Government Statistician will report annually on 10 measures of child poverty. See Table 9-10 in Annex 4. • Stats NZ received funding through Budget 2018 and 2020 to improve and convert surveys to report on all ten measures of child poverty, as well as income, poverty, and housing cost statistics for the general population. • In Budget 2021, the Government invested in a range of initiatives to reduce child poverty by supporting families to provide essentials. This included funding to increase weekly main benefit rates by between \$32 to \$55 per adult. These increases are expected to lift between 19,000 and 33,000 children out of poverty on the after-housing costs measure, and between 12,000 and 28,000 children out of poverty on the before-housing cost measure, with a greater impact for Māori children than for the population as a whole. See Table 15-19 in Annex 4. <p>(CERD/C/NZL/23-24 at 224-229)</p> <p>See also tables 9-10 and 15 – 19 of Annex 4 to CERD/C/NZL/23-24 (Statistical information)</p>	
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		<p><i>Child and youth wellbeing strategy</i></p> <p>The Government launched the <i>Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy</i> in August 2019. It sets out six high-level and interconnected wellbeing outcomes, with progress measured through 36 indicators. The implementation of the Strategy is intended to give practical effect to te Tiriti requires reporting on outcomes for tamariki Māori (Māori children).</p> <p>The Government released its first Annual Report on the Strategy in June 2021, which establishes baseline data for some indicators, and included some disaggregated reporting for Māori and Pacific children and young people.</p> <p>In 2018/2019, Māori (23.3%) and Pacific peoples (28.6%) had higher rates of children living in households that experience material hardship than Pākehā (9.8%) or the national average (13.4%). The Strategy will only be successfully implemented when outcomes for Māori and Pacific peoples improve significantly across the multiple areas of wellbeing. Currently, these children and young people fare worse than others across almost every outcome identified by the Strategy.</p> <p>(CERD/C/NZL/23-24 at 342 -344)</p>	
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BI-1605 UN Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination Report.**Q9: Children and young people in out of home placements, by primary ethnic group**

Ethnic Group	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Maori	2734	2487	2358	2298
Maori and Pacific	548	492	433	401
Pacific peoples	285	258	228	234
New Zealand European and Other	1224	1163	1096	1083
Not Specified	4	10	9	22
Total Children and young people	4795	4410	4124	4038

Q10: Children and young people in the custody of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki, by primary ethnic group

Ethnic Group	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Maori	3361	2959	3080	2722
Maori and Pacific	663	558	603	545
Pacific peoples	349	305	325	276
New Zealand European and Other	1484	1320	1399	1177
Not Specified	4	8	6	2
Total Children and young people	5861	5150	5413	4722

Q11: Admissions to Youth Justice residences, by primary ethnic group

Ethnic Group	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Maori	566	713	604	535
Maori and Pacific	146	149	120	120
Pacific peoples	45	86	58	45
New Zealand European and Other	80	132	132	118
Not Specified	0	3	1	1
Total Children and young people	837	1083	915	819

Q12: Admissions to care and protection residences, by primary ethnic group

Ethnic Group	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25
Maori	16	21	25	28
Maori and Pacific	8	10	9	0
Pacific peoples	2	0	0	0
New Zealand European and Other	11	8	9	13
Not Specified	0	0	0	0

Total Children and young people	37	39	43	41
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Q13: Key step in care and protection pathway for distinct children and young people (Māori and non-Māori)

Key step in care and protection pathway for distinct children and young people (Māori and non-Māori)	Financial year 2021	Financial year 2022	Financial year 2023	Financial year 2024	Financial year 2025
Distinct reports of concern	Maori - 29168	Maori - 25451	Maori - 26656	Maori - 26840	Maori - 28434
	Non-Maori - 27767	Non-Maori - 23898	Non-Maori - 26132	Non-Maori - 26798	Non-Maori - 30734
Distinct referrals for Assessment	Maori - 19356	Maori - 16271	Maori - 17286	Maori - 17409	Maori - 17192
	Non-Maori - 15726	Non-Maori - 13027	Non-Maori - 14705	Non-Maori - 14375	Non-Maori - 15151
Distinct Family Group Conferences	Maori - 4240	Maori - 3440	Maori - 3127	Maori - 3080	Maori - 2956
	Non-Maori - 2154	Non-Maori - 1691	Non-Maori - 1623	Non-Maori - 1541	Non-Maori - 1522
Direct entries into care	Maori - 649	Maori - 615	Maori - 627	Maori - 829	Maori - 752
	Non-Maori - 397	Non-Maori - 326	Non-Maori - 396	Non-Maori - 395	Non-Maori - 413
Distinct tamariki in care (at 30 June)	Maori - 4566	Maori - 4024	Maori - 3683	Maori - 3517	Maori - 3322
	Non-Maori - 2037	Non-Maori - 1837	Non-Maori - 1730	Non-Maori - 1633	Non-Maori - 1593
Distinct exits from care	Maori - 1230	Maori - 976	Maori - 946	Maori - 939	Maori - 847
	Non-Maori - 529	Non-Maori - 506	Non-Maori - 470	Non-Maori - 468	Non-Maori - 398

Appendix Two: Oranga Tamariki input for the Ministry of Justice on 20 October 2025

004 MĀORI AND PACIFIC CHILDREN IN CARE

Article 6, LOT par 22

Key messages

- Oranga Tamariki administers the Act that promotes the well-being of children and their families and communities through:
 - working to prevent harm, including harm from offending
 - responding to reports of concern for at-risk children and assessing their safety and care needs
 - assisting families to care for children
 - ensuring children who need to be removed from an unsafe home have a safe, stable, and loving home as quickly as possible.
 - responding to child and youth offending, and
 - assisting young people to transition out of care to independence.
- In the financial year 2024/25 there were 5481 children and young people in the custody of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki. Of these children and young people:
 - 3165 were Māori
 - 578 were Māori and Pacific
 - 324 were Pacific
 - 1393 were New Zealand European and Other
 - 21 did not have a primary ethnicity specified.
- As part of Budget 2025, \$25 million in contingency funding has been allocated to the Social Investment Fund to invest in initiatives that prevent children, young people and adults from entering care. Work to understand where best to invest this fund is under way. Agreed initiatives will be included in updates to the Crown response.
- Section 78 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 allows for the Court to place a child or young person in the interim care of Oranga Tamariki when there are immediate concerns for their safety and wellbeing. There has been a significant decrease in entries into care, from 1469 section 78 orders in

financial year 2018 to 611 in financial year 2024. Of the children and young people with section 78 orders in financial year 2024, 424 identified as Māori. The percentage of tamariki and rangatahi Māori with section 78 orders has remained stable over this period, at 70 per cent in financial year 2018 and 69 per cent in financial year 2024.

- In 2024/25, Oranga Tamariki undertook a review of practice on a sample of cases for tamariki who entered care under a section 78 order. The review found that, for tamariki Māori, there was evidence of search for whānau prior to the application for custody in all cases, and the large majority of whānau (81%) were engaged in a formal process to discuss concerns and build safety before the order was made. Additionally, nearly all - 92% of tamariki Māori - had their iwi affiliations recorded (noting that in some cases this information will not be known). Most tamariki remained in the care of whānau following the custody order, with this being higher for tamariki Māori at 70%.

Additional information for delegation if required

OT improvements to services

- In the 2024/25 fiscal year, Oranga Tamariki focused on improving services for children and young people by supporting more social worker visits, better practice, and more community-led solutions.
- In 2024, Oranga Tamariki started implementing a new structure and operating model. This includes boosting funding to technology to support social workers and establishing the Child Protection Investigation Unit to strengthen internal oversight and accountability for harm in care.
- Examples of key improvements made this year include:
 - Changes to the oversight of incidents involving harm, with greater visibility of the relevant information. These include new ways to circulate learnings, increased use of debriefs, national Residence Manager hui, and daily operational standups.
 - Frontline leadership training is being rolled out across youth justice secure residences to ensure teams have the support and specialist knowledge needed for these spaces.
 - Refreshed delivery of the induction programme (Te Waharoa) for staff has been introduced in youth justice secure residences. This increases opportunities to combine theoretical with experiential learning and has a strong focus on proactive behaviour management.

- Improvements in residences that support the safety and wellbeing of staff and young people are being trialled and have seen promising early results. These include a pilot of a new ways of recruiting and rosters for staff and a pilot of a programming approach, that includes school holidays.
 - A programme of work to professionalise the residential care workforce has commenced, building on progress to date and aiming to further enhance safety through the development of a confident and capable workforce.
 - Youth Justice residences have a grievance process in place, under the Oranga Tamariki (Residential Care) Regulations 1996. Young people have the right to lodge a grievance and access advocacy support through this process. Grievances are monitored, reviewed and/or investigated by an external Grievance Panel, appointed by the Minister for Children.
- Oranga Tamariki also works closely with other agencies to improve services for children in care. In May 2024, agencies completed the review of the Gateway Assessment. The Gateway Assessment was established as an interagency tool to understand whether children and young people in care or at the edge of care have unmet health and education needs and to encourage the development of an interagency support plan to address these needs.
 - Subsequently, in June 2024 the Ministers for Children, Health and Education endorsed the key findings of the review along with a proposed approach to re-design the service to improve interagency support for children in care. Since then, agencies have collaborated to complete the detailed service design phase, which was anchored by the review findings and recommendations that have been endorsed by Ministers. These are:
 - Strengthening the role of primary health
 - Strengthened role of partners and community providers wherever possible
 - Delivering on the education commitment
 - Ensuring consistent follow-up, and accountability
 - Child and family/whanau-centred decision making.
 - Agencies developed a prototype that was tested with frontline kaimahi from relevant agencies, partners and providers. The proposed changes will shift the service from a one-off, specialist-oriented approach to one that is focused on addressing health needs through earlier access to primary care with regular review and ongoing support, that is delivered by community partners and providers.
 - As part of the detailed service design, agencies also developed detailed costing for the future state of Gateway and a service blueprint to inform

implementation planning. The detailed costing includes options to pilot the new service model in a few regions.

- Agencies have developed a set of criteria to test if the new model will be successful in different regional settings.

Specific Issue: *Reducing the number of Māori and Pacific children in care*

Information on measures adopted to address the disproportionate number of Māori and Pacific children placed in alternative care (LOT par 22).

- A new social work practice approach has been developed and progressively rolled out over the past five years that acknowledges that most children and young people in care are Māori. The practice approach is a paradigm shift that frames practice from a Te Ao Māori perspective while making room for other worldviews and forms of knowledge. The Practice Approach enables social workers to better understand and meet the needs of tamariki and whānau, children and families and work more effectively with iwi, Māori and community-led approaches. The approach is framed by the Treaty of Waitangi, supported by a mana-enhancing paradigm for practice and draws from the Te Ao Māori principles of oranga (well-being). These principles are relational, inclusive and restorative, and therefore have benefits for all children and families.
- In this respect, the practice approach is helping to reduce the number of children and young people needing care. The circumstances and needs of tamariki and whānau Māori are better understood through this paradigm and, by virtue of its inclusivity, so are the circumstances and needs of Pacific (and all other) children and families to address the underlying drivers leading to family harm. Tools, resources, and models have been developed to uphold these values and maintain the shift. This includes two applied practice models, Te Toka Tumoana and Va'aifetū, intentionally modified from earlier iterations to further strengthen practice with tamariki and whānau Māori, and Pacific children and families. An emphasis on Te Toka Tumoana and Va'aifetū as the two key practice models for all areas of Oranga Tamariki practice contributes to working in more meaningful and culturally appropriate ways including with Māori and Pacific children in care, their whānau/families and their caregivers.

- Where it is not possible for a child or young person to stay at home, Oranga Tamariki takes a whānau-first approach as is set out in the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. Oranga Tamariki seeks a safe, stable and loving home within a child's wider whānau, hapū, iwi, family, island and village and the needs of the child related to connections with whanau, hapu and iwi, family, island and village are considered.
- Despite increasing challenges with finding placements more generally, there has been stable progress over the past five years towards ensuring tamariki and rangatahi Māori are placed in the care of their whānau, hapū, and iwi where possible. This reflects the success of Whānau Care and Enabling Communities partnerships.
- Oranga Tamariki also continues to invest proportionally more in iwi and Māori services. Between the 2019 and 2024 financial years, the percentage of all service contract funding with iwi and Māori organisations increased from 21% to 33%. This represents a spend increase from \$62.9 million to \$190.2 million, and a 10% increase on the spending between 2023 and 2024.
- Oranga Tamariki is working with Pacific communities to put in place the support, solutions and services for our amaiti, ānau and kainga to thrive and prosper. During 2023/24, we worked with Pacific communities and providers in a variety of ways:
 - We engaged the Pacific Panel of professional and community leaders for advice and expertise to inform and support our work to deliver the Oranga Tamariki Pacific Strategy goals and outcomes.
 - We established an Enabling Communities Pacific Steering Committee to develop the approach for enabling Pacific Communities. Work will continue in the next year to advance this mahi.
 - We celebrated nine New Zealand Pacific Language Weeks with local ethnic-specific Pacific community groups – providing opportunities for talanoa and to strengthen relationships with communities.
 - We engage with Pan Pacific and Pacific ethnic-specific Pacific Advisory Panels comprising Pacific community leaders and professionals who provide advice and support to Oranga Tamariki for complex Pacific tamariki cases. This is a community-led approach utilising Pacific cultural expertise, community connections.

- Over the past year, Oranga Tamariki has developed and introduced new tools, resources and models to support social workers in this way of working. These include the:
 - Tangata Whenua and Bicultural Supervision Model, to support the delivery of comprehensive supervision. This is the first model that Oranga Tamariki has had to support supervision and is being taught through the Leading in Practice programme.
 - Oranga-framed practice prompts to help social workers explore the safety of children using a holistic framework including physical, emotional, mental, whānau, spiritual and environmental well-being.
Tiaki Oranga, a tool used to comprehensively provide a 'snapshot' of safety, harm and risk for children at a point in time while further assessment and planning occurs. Tiaki oranga is applied to determine immediate safety when responding to reported concerns, and subsequently to show a picture of safety over time and support safety planning.
- An evaluation of the tools found that social workers demonstrated greater confidence in their decision-making when the tools were used as intended. The tools also improved the experiences of whānau and families, who felt social workers were working with them, as well as the quality of recorded assessments.

Additional information for the delegation if required

- The Minister for Children is advised by a Ministerial Advisory Board made up of leaders and representatives of Māori to ensure that independent advice on cultural appropriateness is provided to the Minister about Māori in the care and protection or youth justice systems. Oranga Tamariki also has a Pacific Panel made up of external Pacific leaders providing advice on cultural appropriateness to Oranga Tamariki decision-makers.
- Since 2018, Oranga Tamariki has established a range of strategic partnerships including shared care partner arrangements with iwi. The annual section 7AA reports released between 2020 to 2024 showed where progress has been made for tamariki and rangatahi Māori, and where further work is required.
- The Oranga Tamariki Pacific Strategy 2021 – 2024 sets out our strategic direction for Pacific children. It encompasses five strategic objectives, one of which is quality social work practice for Pacific children and families

underpinned by strengthened cultural competency of Oranga Tamariki social workers. The Oranga Tamariki applied practice model, *Va'aifetū*, responds to this strategic objective.

- Te Hāpai O is the wider approach and function within Oranga Tamariki that is building Māori cultural capability over time. Over 900 staff members have completed Tū Māia since its inception in 2022. Tū Māia is a 20-week, 200-hour learning programme designed to uplift our cultural competencies to ensure a culturally authentic, inclusive and fair workplace. This is a commitment to cultural capability that is one of the most significant in the New Zealand public sector.
- Social workers and other frontline practitioners are supported through professional learning and development opportunities.

Specific Issue: *Abuse in Care*

- We are committed to eliminating abuse in care and acknowledge that more needs to be done.
- In 2018, Oranga Tamariki implemented a dedicated process for understanding, responding to, and reporting on harm to children in care. Regular reporting is one aspect of the commitment to transparency about the experiences of children in care, and to continuous improvements in their stability and safety.
- The latest Oranga Tamariki reporting reflects the ongoing complexity of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi in care. While there have been positive shifts, such as greater placement stability and improved engagement with children, findings of harm continue to occur.
- Any harm to those in care is unacceptable. Oranga Tamariki has an operational focus and regular reporting on core safety and well-being responsibilities under the initiative Resolute about Safety. Responsibilities include the timely allocation of cases and completion of safety assessments, locating and returning missing children quickly, visiting children at least once every eight weeks as a minimum, and working to ensure children in care are living with approved caregivers.
- The Quality Practice Improvement team also plays a critical role in monitoring the safety of children and young people in care. The team monitors the quality of care settings, identifies systemic risks and works alongside our internal teams to mitigate harm. Their work contributes to

improving care standards, training, and policies to better protect children and young people.

The most recent *Safety of Children in Care* report (for the 2025 tax year) notes a drop in the proportion of harm experienced by Pacific children in care—from 11% in 2024 to 6% in 2025. The rates for other ethnic groups showed little change in the proportion of harm compared to the previous year. The proportion of Māori children in care who experienced harm remained the same at 10%.

- Over the past few years, Oranga Tamariki has improved children and young people’s awareness of how to make a complaint, strengthened recording and responding to allegations of harm and improving awareness of the need for a formal Report of Concern to be entered and assessed in all situations of harm to children.
- Oranga Tamariki has also established a Child Protection Investigation Unit (CPIU) to improve the safety of children through rigorous and transparent investigations into cases where care provided to a child by the state has caused harm. The CPIU work will inform changes to practice, policy and processes – at an individual, site, regional or national level.
- As part of Budget 2025, Oranga Tamariki received \$16 million over four years for Recognising and Responding to Abuse of Children and Young People in Care. The funding supports training and development, monitoring and assurance, clearer escalation pathways, and improved response times and accountability processes. These measures aim to reduce abuse and harm in community and remand homes, and in individual caregiver placements. Work is underway to scope, develop, and implement this initiative.
- Oranga Tamariki also has a programme of work underway to reduce harm in secure residences, through refining how young people are assessed and placed, safety-focused training for residence staff, the development of a new model of care, and the implementation of consistent standard operating procedures across all residences.
- As noted earlier, there are also extensive independent monitoring mechanisms that help ensure that where abuse may occur, it is identified quickly.

Specific Issue: *Minimum standards of care*

- Oranga Tamariki has an obligation to meet the needs of all children and young people in care are set out in the Oranga Tamariki (National Care

Standards and Related Matters) Regulations 2018. To help us meet our obligations to the tamariki in our care, Oranga Tamariki has developed a self-monitoring system designed to generate timely and actionable insights that support meaningful and effective improvements in our performance.

- In 2023/24, we established a set of 21 lead indicators as a framework for assessing our performance against the Care Standards. These indicators are deliberately focused on the foundational elements of practice that, when delivered well, position us strongly to meet both our regulatory obligations and the needs and expectations of tamariki in care. Last year, Oranga Tamariki assessed itself as partially compliant across all Care Standards, and this overall assessment remains unchanged for 2024/25. In 2023/24, most of the 21 lead indicators remained stable, with performance improvements from 2022/23 largely sustained.
- Key practice strengths this year include continued identification and response to tamariki's safety and education needs in their plans, along with opportunities for play and developmentally appropriate experiences. There was also an improvement in caregiver support, with the percentage of Oranga Tamariki caregivers having a current support plan rising from 67% to 75%. For most tamariki Māori, there was strong evidence of practice supporting whānau connections. While support for connections with marae, hapū, and iwi remains an area for improvement, progress is evident. The proportion of tamariki Māori with documented connections to their marae, hapū, or iwi increased from 42% in 2023/24 to 49% in 2024/25.
- The Independent Children's Monitor also reports on our compliance with the National Care Standards. Its fourth annual report found insufficient progress towards meeting the National Standards in 2023/2024. Oranga Tamariki has acknowledged that these standards are not consistently being met, often due to complex and interrelated factors.
- The Government is committed to addressing these gaps. For example, Oranga Tamariki and the Ministries of Health and Education are working together under the Oranga Tamariki System Action Plan (Action Plan) to understand the barriers to children and young people in care face in accessing health and education services. The Action Plan includes a focus on delivering a more integrated culturally-appropriate ongoing support and make children in care visible in the health system.
- Furthermore, in 2024/25, Oranga Tamariki has focused on key areas aligned with the Care Standards, including improving caregiver experiences,

introducing a new assessment approach, and embedding the Practice Framework to support relational, inclusive, and restorative practice with tamariki and whānau.

- In March 2025, Tamariki and Whānau Services developed the TaWS plan in response to the *Aroturuki Tamariki Experiences of Care in Aotearoa: 2023/24* report. The plan outlines priority areas aimed at improving the experiences of tamariki in care and supporting compliance with the Care Standards, focusing on practice areas identified by Aroturuki Tamariki as needing improvement.

Specific Issue: *Update on the repeal of section 7AA*

- Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, which placed additional duties on the chief executive to show a practical commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, was repealed in April 2025. The intent was to clarify that the safety and wellbeing of children was paramount in decision-making.
- The duty for Oranga Tamariki to report annually on the measures taken to carry out the duties in section 7AA was repealed. However, the Independent Monitor of the Oranga Tamariki system will continue to report on the outcomes achieved for tamariki and rangatahi Māori and their whānau, in accordance with the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022.
- The practical commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi is unchanged in section 4(1)(f). That mana tamaiti and the child or young person's well-being should be protected by recognising their whakapapa and the whanaungatanga responsibilities of their family, whānau, hapū, iwi and family group is unchanged in section 5(1)(iv).
- The duty to develop strategic partnerships with iwi and Māori organisations formerly in section 7AA was retained and shifted to section 7(2)(h) of the Act, which relates to the general duties of the chief executive. These partnerships continue to be a high priority for the government.

Appendix Three: Oranga Tamariki input for the Ministry of Justice on 19 November 2025

001 YOUTH JUSTICE

Key messages

Youth justice trends

- Despite challenges in recent years, there has been a decrease in youth offending over the last decade, with fewer children and young people entering the criminal justice system. For example, since 2013/14:
 - the rate of police proceedings decreased by 45% for children and 44% for young people
 - the rate of Youth Court appearances decreased by 41% for young people
 - and the one-year reoffending rate for those proven in court decreased from 46% to 37%.
- There are fewer young people in prison and there are also fewer young adults in prison.
- Māori children and young people continue to be overrepresented in the youth justice system. For example, in 2023/24, the number of police proceedings was 1053 for Māori young people compared with 442 per 10,000 for the total population.
- Over the last decade, fewer Pacific young people have interacted with the youth justice system, but disparities still exist for Pacific children. In 2023/24, the rates and proportions for Pacific young people were lower than or similar to the total population. However, 14% of Pacific children proceeded against had an FGC or court action compared with 10 percent for the total population.
- Children and young people involved in the youth justice system often have complex needs, which can be among the underlying causes of their

offending. In particular, most children (93%) and young people (88%) referred for a youth justice Family Group Conference had a previous care and protection report of concern to Oranga Tamariki.

Including 17-year-olds in the youth jurisdiction

- Since 1 July, 2019, 17-year-olds who commit offences are now processed through the youth justice system instead of the adult system. There are exceptions for serious offenses, such as murder, manslaughter, or those listed in Schedule 1A of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, which are still handled in adult court (the District Court or High Court) after an initial appearance in the Youth Court. This change recognises that 17-year-olds' brains are less developed, and the youth justice system is better equipped to focus on rehabilitation.

Government target to reduce serious repeat offending

- The Government is committed to addressing child and youth offending behaviour, with a target of reducing serious and persistent offending behaviour by 15% by 2030.
- To do this, we are holding young people who offend to account, while also supporting them to address the issues contributing to their offending. We also have a focus on prevention and addressing the drivers of youth crime.
- The delivery plan focuses on strengthening the response to offending with new legislative tools, boosting operational performance and preventing offending and re-offending through locally led, regionally enabled approaches. I will outline the key initiatives.

Young serious offender declaration

- New legislation will introduce the ability for the Youth Court to make a Young Serious Offender declaration for young people aged 14-17 years old, who have committed two or more serious offences¹, and where previous interventions have been unsuccessful and there is a high risk of re-offending. Making the declaration would allow the Youth Court and the New Zealand

¹ With a maximum penalty of 10+ years imprisonment

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Police to use stronger and faster responses to offending by that young person.

Military-style academies

- For young people aged 15-17 years old, one of those responses is a military-style academy order. The Youth Court could order a young person to take part in a military-style academy programme at a secure youth justice residence for between 3 and 12 months. This must be followed by a 6-to-18-month supervision order focused on re-integration in the community.
- A 12-month pilot ran from July 2024 to July 2025.
- As the Amendment Bill is still progressing through Parliament, it is not possible to provide details of future Military Style Academies. Lessons from the pilot will, however, be used to inform operational elements when the legislation is in place. Oranga Tamariki (Responding to Serious Youth Offending) Amendment Bill has been reported back from Parliamentary select committee stage and remains on track for a planned commencement date in late 2025. Separately, Police are working through an implementation and training plan for preparation of the legislation changes.

Boosting operational performance

- Operational initiatives in the delivery plan include:
 - establishing intensive case management teams in priority regions to provide intensive case management and coordinate cross-agency supports
 - expanding the use of the Fast Track, which is a rapid response pathway for children (age 10-13) and young people (age 14-17) with offending behaviour, and involves developing a plan to respond to the offending behaviour and putting wraparound support in place for the child, and their family within 48 hours
 - improving the Gateway support service for children in care and on the edge of care to better meet health, education, and disability needs for at-risk children as a form of prevention.
- Quarterly reports on the achievement of the Government's target show a steady reduction in the number of children and young people with serious and persistent offending behaviour. The number of serious and persistent

child and youth offenders as at 31 August 2025 is 16 percent lower than in June 2023.

Ram raid offending – if required

- The Government has decided not to proceed with legislation relating to ram raid offending and instead focus on a more targeted response. The legislation would have created a new ram raid offence and allowed 12- and 13-year-olds to be proceeded against in the Youth Court for the offence.

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How will the government ensure youth justice reforms are evidence-based and do not exacerbate Māori overrepresentation?

The Government regularly monitors the impact of its reforms against its targets. Quarterly reports show a continued reduction in reoffending and serious youth offending. Reducing offending rates will result in a reduction in the number of young people in custody including Māori.

The Government acknowledges that a focus on the effectiveness of these interventions for Māori children and young people will be important as Māori are disproportionately overrepresented in this group.

Was the Military-Style Academy pilot successful?

An independent review of the pilot has shown that elements of the pilot were very successful, with lessons learned to be included in future iterations of an MSA.. Young people, when they returned to the community, had a plan,. supported by a social worker, and t a mentor.

When compared to a cohort of young people with similar demographics and offending histories, offending behaviours improved. For 67% of the boys, their further offending was of a lower level of seriousness with reduced frequency and violence.. This is a significant improvement compared to a similar cohort, where only 22% of young offenders do not go on to commit a serious crime within six months.

Notably, there were improvements in the young people's wellbeing domains, which provides a foundation for future positive changes in offending outcomes.

002 HIGH RATES OF INCARCERATION AMONG MĀORI AND PACIFIC PEOPLES

Article 6, LOT par 21

Oranga Tamariki

- In 2023/24, of young people in Oranga Tamariki Youth Justice custody, 85% were in a youth justice residence. Māori young people remained significantly over-represented in youth justice custody, accounting for on average 81 percent of all young people in custody each day. For context, Māori are around 18 percent of the population of New Zealand.
- Oranga Tamariki works in the prevention and early intervention spaces for youth justice. Oranga Tamariki collaborates with Māori tribes and Māori social services in locations across the country to provide support that draws on Māori knowledge and cultures. This ensures interventions are culturally appropriate. For example, the Oranga Rangatahi programme aims to prevent 'at-risk' Māori young people from entering the formal youth justice system by closely working with communities and establishing partnerships and co-locations with Māori-focused approaches or tribal providers.
- Oranga Tamariki works in the prevention and early intervention spaces for youth justice. Oranga Tamariki collaborates with Māori tribes and Māori social services in locations across the country to provide support that draws on Māori knowledge and cultures. This ensures interventions are culturally appropriate. For example, the Oranga Rangatahi programme aims to prevent 'at-risk' Māori young people from entering the formal youth justice system by closely working with communities and establishing partnerships and co-locations with Māori-focused approaches or tribal providers.
- A majority of young people in the youth justice system also have a care and protection status. Oranga Tamariki has nine strategic partnerships with Māori groups, which aim to help Māori children and young people to thrive in the care and protection of their families, community and tribes.
- Oranga Tamariki also operates Enabling Communities prototypes, in collaboration with Māori tribes and Māori social services, supporting selected partners in redesigning and reimagining care and protection for their children, young people and families, and empowering them to develop solutions focused on supporting their community. Through this,

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Oranga Tamariki has been enabling collective learning on the safe decentralisation and delegation of New Zealand's care and protection system.

The services provided by these prototypes vary, but a key goal is to prevent children and young people coming into the care and protection or youth justice system where a community-based intervention can be more effective. Ultimately, this approach should reduce the number of Māori children and young people who offend and face custodial sentences.

004 MĀORI AND PACIFIC CHILDREN IN CARE

Information on the measures adopted to address the disproportionate number of Māori and Pacific children placed in alternative care. (Article 6, LOT par 22)

Key messages

- The Government acknowledges that Māori and Pacific children remain overrepresented in alternative care. We are committed to continue to take steps to reduce this overrepresentation while ensuring the safety and best interests of children.
- As part of Budget 2025, \$25 million in contingency funding has been allocated to the Social Investment Fund to invest in initiatives that prevent children, young people and adults from entering care. Work to understand where best to invest this fund is under way.
- Where it is not possible for a child or young person to stay at home, Oranga Tamariki, the Ministry for Children, takes a family first approach as set out in the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. It seeks a safe, stable and loving home within a child's wider tribe, sub-tribe or family group and the needs of the child related to these connections are considered.
- Despite increasing challenges with finding placements more generally, there has been stable progress over the past five years towards ensuring Māori children and young people are placed in the care of their tribe, subtribe or wider family where possible.
- Oranga Tamariki also continues to invest proportionally more in Māori tribes and services. Between the 2019 and 2024 financial years, the percentage of all service contract funding with Māori tribes or organisations increased from 21% to 33%. This represents a spend increase from \$62.9 million to \$190.2 million, and a 10% increase on the spending between 2023 and 2024.
- Oranga Tamariki is working with Pacific communities to put in place the support, solutions and services needed. During 2023/24, we:

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- worked with the Oranga Tamariki Pacific Panels of professional and community leaders to deliver the Oranga Tamariki Pacific Strategy goals and outcomes and to provide advice and support in complex cases.
- Established an Enabling Communities Pacific Steering Committee to develop the approach for enabling Pacific Communities to deliver services needed.
- Celebrated nine New Zealand Pacific Language Weeks with local ethnic-specific Pacific community groups – providing opportunities to strengthen mutual understanding and relationships.

- Over the past year, Oranga Tamariki has developed and introduced new tools, resources and models to support social workers.. An evaluation of the tools found that the tools also improved the experiences of families.
- The tools include:
 - The Māori and Bicultural Supervision Model, which supports the delivery of comprehensive supervision. This is the first model that Oranga Tamariki has had to support supervision and is being taught through the Leading in Practice programme.
 - Wellbeing -framed practice prompts to help social workers explore the safety of children using a holistic framework including physical, emotional, mental, family, spiritual and environmental well-being which is more consistent with Māori and Pacific models of wellbeing.
 - Tiaki Oranga, which is a tool used to provide a “snapshot” of safety, harm and risk for children at a point in, can subsequently show a picture of safety over time and support safety planning

Working with Māori and Pacific peoples

- The Minister for Children is advised by a Ministerial Advisory Board made up of leaders and representatives of Māori to ensure that independent advice on cultural appropriateness is provided to the Minister about Māori in the care and protection or youth justice systems.
- Oranga Tamariki also has a Pacific Panel made up of Pacific leaders providing advice on cultural appropriateness to Oranga Tamariki decision-makers.

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- Since 2018, Oranga Tamariki has established a range of strategic partnerships including shared care partner arrangements with Māori tribes. The annual section 7AA reports released between 2020 to 2024 showed where progress has been made for Māori children and young people, and where further work is required.
- The Oranga Tamariki Pacific Strategy 2021 – 2024 sets out our strategic direction for Pacific children. It encompasses five strategic objectives, one of which is quality social work practice for Pacific children and families underpinned by strengthened cultural competency of Oranga Tamariki social workers. The Oranga Tamariki applied practice model, Va'aifetū, responds to this strategic objective.
- Oranga Tamariki's commitment to Māori cultural capability is also one of the most significant in the New Zealand public sector. Over 900 staff members have completed its cultural capability programme called Te Hāpai O since its inception in 2022. It is a 20-week, 200-hour learning programme designed to uplift cultural competencies to ensure a culturally authentic, inclusive and fair workplace.

Specific Issue: Update on the repeal of section 7AA

- Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, which placed additional duties on the chief executive to show a practical commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, was repealed in April 2025. The intention was to clarify that the safety and wellbeing of all children was paramount in decision-making.
- While the duty for Oranga Tamariki to report annually on the measures taken to carry out the duties in section 7AA was repealed, the Independent Monitor of the Oranga Tamariki system will continue to report on the outcomes achieved for Māori children and young people and their whānau, in accordance with the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022.
- The practical commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi is unchanged. Furthermore, the requirement that the child or young person's well-being should be protected by recognising their lineage and the supportive responsibilities of their immediate and extended family, tribe and sub-tribe remains the same.

- The duty to develop strategic partnerships with Māori tribes and organisations remains and continues to be a high priority for the government. (now it is shifted to section 7(2)(h) of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 which relates to the general duties of the chief executive).

Specific Issue: *Abuse in Care*

- The Government is committed to eliminating abuse in care and acknowledges that more needs to be done.
- In 2018, Oranga Tamariki implemented a dedicated process for understanding, responding to, and reporting on harm to children in care. Regular reporting is one aspect of the commitment to transparency about the experiences of children in care, and to continuous improvements in their stability and safety.

[Note: more information on the response to abuse in care in relation to the Royal Commission inquiry is provided below at 005]

- The latest Oranga Tamariki reporting reflects the ongoing complexity of ensuring the safety and wellbeing of Māori children and young people in care. While there have been positive shifts, such as greater placement stability and improved engagement with children, findings of harm continue to occur.
- Any harm to those in care is unacceptable. Oranga Tamariki has an operational focus and regular reporting on core safety and well-being responsibilities under the initiative *Resolute about Safety*. Responsibilities include the timely allocation of cases and completion of safety assessments, locating and returning missing children quickly, visiting children at least once every eight weeks as a minimum, and working to ensure children in care are living with approved caregivers.
- The Quality Practice Improvement team also plays a critical role in monitoring the safety of children and young people in care. The team monitors the quality-of-care settings, identifies systemic risks and works alongside Oranga Tamariki's internal teams to mitigate harm. Their work contributes to improving care standards, training, and policies to better protect children and young people.

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- The most recent *Safety of Children in Care* report (for the 2025 tax year) notes a drop in the proportion of harm experienced by Pacific children in care—from 11% in 2024 to 6% in 2025. The rates for other ethnic groups showed little change in the proportion of harm compared to the previous year. The proportion of Māori children in care who experienced harm remained the same at 10%.
- Over the past few years, Oranga Tamariki has improved children and young people’s awareness of how to make a complaint, strengthened recording and responding to allegations of harm and improved awareness of the need for a formal Report of Concern to be entered and assessed in all situations of harm to children.
- Oranga Tamariki has also established a Child Protection Investigation Unit (CPIU) to improve the safety of children through rigorous and transparent investigations into cases where care provided to a child by the state has caused harm. The CPIU work will inform changes to practice, policy and processes – at an individual, site, regional or national level.
- As part of Budget 2025, Oranga Tamariki received \$16 million over four years for Recognising and Responding to Abuse of Children and Young People in Care. The funding supports training and development, monitoring and assurance, clearer escalation pathways, and improved response times and accountability processes. These measures aim to reduce abuse and harm in community and remand homes, and in individual caregiver placements.
- Oranga Tamariki also has a programme of work underway to reduce harm in secure residences, through refining how young people are assessed and placed, safety-focused training for residence staff, the development of a new model of care, and the implementation of consistent standard operating procedures across all residences.
- There are also extensive independent monitoring mechanisms that help ensure that where abuse may occur, it is identified quickly.

Additional information for delegation if required

Data

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- Section 78 of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 allows for the Court to place a child or young person in the interim care of Oranga Tamariki when there are immediate concerns for their safety and wellbeing.
- There has been a significant decrease in entries into care, from 1469 section 78 orders in financial year 2018 to 611 in financial year 2024. Of the children and young people with section 78 orders in financial year 2024, 424 identified as Māori. The percentage of Māori children and young people with section 78 orders has remained stable over this period, at 70 percent in financial year 2018 and 69 percent in financial year 2024. In the financial year 2024/25 there were 5481 children and young people in the custody of the Chief Executive of Oranga Tamariki. Of these children and young people:
 - 3165 were Māori
 - 578 were Māori and Pacific
 - 324 were Pacific
 - 1393 were New Zealand European and Other, and
 - 21 did not have a primary ethnicity specified.

OT improvements to services

- In the 2024/25 fiscal year, Oranga Tamariki focused on improving services for children and young people by supporting more social worker visits, better practice, and more community-led solutions.
- In 2024, Oranga Tamariki started implementing a new structure and operating model. This includes boosting funding to technology to support social workers and establishing the Child Protection Investigation Unit to strengthen internal oversight and accountability for harm in care.
- Examples of key improvements made this year include:
 - Changes to the oversight of incidents involving harm, with greater visibility of the relevant information. These include new ways to circulate learnings, increased use of debriefs, national Residence Manager hui, and daily operational standups.
 - Frontline leadership training is being rolled out across youth justice secure residences to ensure teams have the support and specialist knowledge needed for these spaces.
 - Refreshed delivery of the induction programme (Te Waharoa) for staff has been introduced in youth justice secure residences. This increases

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opportunities to combine theoretical with experiential learning and has a strong focus on proactive behaviour management.

- Improvements in residences that support the safety and wellbeing of staff and young people are being trialled and have seen promising early results. These include a pilot of a new ways of recruiting and rosters for staff and a pilot of a programming approach, that includes school holidays.
- A programme of work to professionalise the residential care workforce has commenced, building on progress to date and aiming to further enhance safety through the development of a confident and capable workforce.
- Youth Justice residences have a grievance process in place, under the Oranga Tamariki (Residential Care) Regulations 1996. Young people have the right to lodge a grievance and access advocacy support through this process. Grievances are monitored, reviewed and/or investigated by an external Grievance Panel, appointed by the Minister for Children.
- Oranga Tamariki also works closely with other agencies to improve services for children in care.
- In June 2024 the Ministers for Children, Health and Education endorsed a proposed approach to re-design the Gateway Assessment service to improve interagency support for children in care. Detailed service design is underway and the improved service will strengthen the role of partners and community providers and promote child and family-centred decision-making.

Oranga Tamariki Ministerial Advisory Board – additional information

- The Oranga Tamariki Ministerial Advisory Board was established in 2021 to provide the Minister for Children with independent advice and assurance on the operations and performance of Oranga Tamariki with Māori children, families and communities. The Board produced a report called Te Kahu Aroha with recommendations in July 2021.
- The Board was reestablished in 2024 to provide advice and assurance to the Minister on the performance of Oranga Tamariki in progressing actions that give effect to the recommendations made in its report.
- The Minister and the Board aspire to have a partnership that aims to meaningfully improve the lives of Māori children, young people and

families, who come in contact with Oranga Tamariki and ensure their voices influence and shape Oranga Tamariki's work. This is to be achieved by having regard to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi.

Minimum standards of care

- Oranga Tamariki has an obligation to meet the needs of all children and young people in accordance with the Oranga Tamariki (National Care Standards and Related Matters) Regulations 2018.
- Oranga Tamariki has developed a self-monitoring system designed to generate timely and actionable insights that support meaningful and effective improvements in performance.
- Oranga Tamariki has also focused on key areas aligned with the Care Standards, including improving caregiver experiences, introducing a new assessment approach, and embedding the Practice Framework to support relational, inclusive, and restorative practice with children and their families.
- Key practice strengths this year include continued identification and response to Māori children's safety and education needs in their plans, as well as providing opportunities for play and developmentally appropriate experiences.
- The Independent Children's Monitor also reports on Oranga Tamariki's compliance with the National Care Standards. Its fourth annual report found insufficient progress towards meeting the National Standards in 2023/2024.
- Oranga Tamariki has acknowledged that these standards are not consistently being met, often due to complex and interrelated factors.
- The Government is committed to addressing these gaps. For example, Oranga Tamariki and the Ministries of Health and Education are working together under the Oranga Tamariki System Action Plan (Action Plan) to understand the barriers children and young people in care face in accessing health and education services. The Action Plan includes a focus on delivering more integrated, culturally-appropriate ongoing support and making children in care visible in the health system.

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Appendix Four: Oranga Tamariki responses to additional questions from the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) committee on 27 November 2025

Responses to CERD questions

Question 1: Anything specific in Military Style Academy (MSA) that was being done to address the potential disproportionate impact on Māori

The military-style academy programme aims to provide specific rehabilitative support for young people with serious and persistent offending behaviour, including young Māori. The programme includes regular physical activities to support health and wellbeing and tailored therapeutic care that responds to the identified needs of each participant relating to offending behaviour and the risk of reoffending.

A military-style academy programme pilot ran from July 2024 to July 2025. Evaluation of the pilot has informed design principles for the military-style academy programme, including the requirement to approach design from a Māori perspective, grounded in customary values and knowledge, as well as:

- understanding past trauma, and how it impacts young people and their families
- keeping young people, workers, and the community safe from harm
- incorporating lessons and experience, voices of young people and clinical experts
- preparing, equipping and supporting staff to work with young people
- focusing on long-term change, whereby transition is planned and enabled
- recognising family connections and working with young people, families and community to support reintegration
- sharing positive, evidence-based stories of which young people can be proud.

Local Māori groups were involved in the pilot, but not until late in the process. The future programme is being designed in close consultation with Māori and aims to:

- provide multi-faceted support to address immediate behavioural issues and underlying social and economic factors. This could include mental health and addiction services, educational support, skills development, and preparation for employment.
- build family and community connections to improve physical environments and strengthen the ability of those close to young people to support them.
- integrate appropriate cultural elements to improve the participants' sense of identity and purpose.

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The evaluation of the military-style academy pilot shows some positive outcomes for young Māori with serious and persistent offending behaviour, including:

- a reduction in the seriousness and frequency of offending, with young people spending more time in the community before committing less serious offences.
- a commitment from participants to continue working towards positive outcomes even after they had reoffended.
- improvements in health outcomes, which may underpin further reductions in offending.

Question 2: CERD is concerned about deficiencies in case handling by Oranga Tamariki in particular re disabled parents. What measures is NZ taking to ensure that NZ is providing effecting support? Including parents and disabled communities.

All Oranga Tamariki practices and services are required to support all parents who are within the remit of the organisation, including those with disabilities.

This is the expectation as articulated across our practice guidance found within our **Practice Approach**, but more specifically in guidance about upholding the rights and mana of disabled people. (reference: [Strengthening our response to unborn and newborn pēpi | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#))

Te Puna Oranga, is our holistic and ecological approach to understanding harm, risk and safety, and the needs, strengths and aspirations of children, young people and family for their sustained wellbeing. This would include disabled parents. (reference: [Te Puna Oranga | Practice Centre | Oranga Tamariki](#))

More tangibly, **we are working with Society for Intellectually Handicapped Children (IHC) to develop adoption information and resources in 'Easy Read'** to better support parents and caregivers with intellectual disabilities who may be looking to go through this process.

Oranga Tamariki is also in the early stages of implementing its **Disability Strategy and Vision**, which specifically identifies disabled parents as a priority group requiring support. This implementation will be delivered through a cross organisational change programme known as the **Disability Programme**.