

## The Oranga Tamariki Evidence Centre



**Vasantha Krishnan**  
General Manager

### Kia ora koutou katoa.

Welcome to our first quarter newsletter for 2022.

It is with sadness that we all heard the news of Tā Wira Gardiner's passing. Tā Wira held senior positions in the public service for many decades, including recently as Oranga Tamariki Chief Executive. A special memorial for Tā Wira was held online that enabled many kaimahi to join. Our thoughts are with Sir Wira's whānau.

In reflecting on the past couple of years as we launch well into 2022, it's difficult to ignore the many challenges the country has been through and overcome. In March 2021, I recall writing about a recent earthquake and tsunami evacuations in the midst of the pandemic, and in March 2020 there was emergent concern about the global pandemic and its yet to be felt implications for NZ. Well, here we are in March 2022, navigating our way through the Omicron scourge. Who would have thought that 3 years on we are still trying to tame the pandemic beast! We are however, managing it well as a country, with a highly vaccinated population and broad adherence to safety protocols.

Oranga Tamariki has not been spared in terms of the impacts of Omicron on our workforce, our caregivers, the children and young people in care and their whānau. Staff are working hard

around the country to fill gaps where there are pressures and to ensure staff who have to isolate are able to do so. While this continues, I encourage everyone to take the best measures they can to keep yourselves, and your loved ones, safe while we wait for the peak to flatten. This is an opportunity to be thankful and grateful for all our staff and the flexible way they have worked to support each other and those whose interest we work.

I am also thinking of how we have connections across the globe. Members of the Evidence Centre have close family affected by the conflict in Ukraine, as will others in our work whānau. Again, please be kind to each other in stressful times.

Despite the challenges we've continued to build the evidence base for those in whose interest we work. We've published a range of studies on various aspects of well-being, and re-vamped the seminar series to allow access by a wider audience and to meet the COVID requirements - continue reading for more about the publications and seminars.

This will be another challenging year for New Zealand but in these challenges, opportunities emerge to foster a more vibrant future for all.

**Ngā mihi,**  
**Vasantha.**

### Focus for coming work

Oranga Tamariki is required by the Children's Act to gather evidence and determine how best to improve outcomes for children in the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan (OTAP) core populations of interest. The Evidence Centre will be leading research into the specific needs of children across housing, education and health, as well as supporting the programme's analytical needs.

### Our Recent Publications

*The Evidence Centre works to build the evidence base that helps us better understand wellbeing and what works to improve outcomes for New Zealand's children, young people and their whānau.*



### Raising the Age of Care: A technical analysis report

This analysis explores the impacts Raising the Age of Care (RAC) had on the outcomes for rangatahi who were eligible to remain in, or return to, placement for an additional year until the age of 18.

[Read the report here.](#)

### Orphan's Benefit and the Unsupported Child's Benefit – follow up survey

The report presents the findings from a survey of around 1300 caregivers receiving the Orphan's Benefit (OB) or the Unsupported Child's Benefit (UCB) with the aim of understanding children and their caregivers and the extra help that they might need.

[Read the report here.](#)

### Youth19 Rangatahi Smart Survey

Three more reports have been produced from the Adolescent Health Research Group's Rangatahi Smart Survey bringing the total to five – Mental and Physical Health and Healthcare Access; Community and Contexts; Youth Voices; Housing and Home Life; Identity and Cultural Connectedness. The reports compare outcomes between young people who reported involvement with Oranga Tamariki and those who did not.

[Read the reports here.](#)

### Our Research Seminars



The new virtual format for our research seminars continues to attract a widely dispersed audience, not only from around NZ but also internationally.

Our February seminar featured Associate Professor Terry Fleming and her colleagues from Victoria University who presented the findings from the Youth19 Rangatahi Smart Survey. The presentation shed light on both positive and negative outcomes for these young people and put a focus on where we all need to do better to improve the lives of young people in New Zealand.

[The presentation can be seen on our web page here:](#)

### Meet Duncan McCann: Principal Advisor – Analytics & Insights



**Duncan and daughter, Evelyn,**  
enjoying the beach

Duncan has worked in the A&I team since Oranga Tamariki formed almost five years ago and recently took on the role of Principal Analyst.

Originally from the sunny beaches of the Bay of Plenty, Duncan studied his undergraduate and Masters degrees in Wellington, before doing a four year stint in Scotland where he cultivated a love for haggis and a great many whiskeys. Duncan has lived in Wellington altogether for 14 years so well and truly considers this best little city in the world home, along with his wife Melanie and almost two year old daughter Evelyn.

Duncan is a self-professed "massive nerd" with an eclectic love for all things science fiction, fantasy, board and console gaming, and of course, karaoke.

Prior to joining Oranga Tamariki, Duncan completed his PhD at the University of Edinburgh in Condensed Matter Physics investigating superconductors and magnetic materials under extreme pressures. He studied and worked as an experimental physics researcher of novel materials in both academia and industry for several years. While not a particularly common background in the social sector, he has found his skill set and scientific experience has brought a unique perspective to analytical work.

In his time at Oranga Tamariki, Duncan has worked on analytical trends, modelling, and insights across a range of areas in both care and protection and youth justice services to inform policy and strategy. In particular, Duncan has been involved with the Children's Wellbeing Model in the Integrated Data Infrastructure for a number of years, drawing on complex cross agency data to provide a more holistic view of wellbeing of not only children and young people involved with Oranga Tamariki but the wider New Zealand population. Apart from working with an amazing group of colleagues Duncan enjoys solving the complex problems often posed to the Analytics and Insights team and using his broad range of knowledge and skills to help support the team.

*"Coming from a Physics background I never imagined working in the social sector but have found it hugely rewarding using my skill set to help inform decisions as Oranga Tamariki has gone through its transformational establishment. There are always interesting analytical problems to solve that will ultimately hopefully contribute to helping some of New Zealand's most vulnerable children."*