

Hōtoke (Winter) 2022 Newsletter

**Te Mana
Whakamaru
Tamariki
Motuhake** | Independent
Children's
Monitor



Te Mana Whakamaru Tamariki Motuhaka kaimahi and guests at Papakura Marae

Ngā mihi ō Matariki, ngā mihi ō te tau hou Māori ki ā tātou katoa

Matariki marks the start of the Māori new year, and is a time for reflection on the year that has passed. Te Mana Whakamaru Tamariki Motuhake, the Independent Children's Monitor, team recently spent two days on noho marae to reflect on the year that's been, and plan for the year ahead. It was a great reminder for me of the integrity of our monitoring kaimahi who approach our mahi with both head and heart.

The end of June also marks the end of the reporting period for our Experiences of Care report for 2021/22. Our monitoring visits to the Central Plateau and Bay of Plenty in May were the last to inform this year's report.

The assistance we receive from communities to connect to whānau, tamariki, rangatahi and caregivers is vital to the work we do, so thank you if you have played a role in supporting us to connect with these key voices. I continue to be impressed at the willingness of frontline kaimahi from agencies to meet with us and openly share their experience of what is working well, and what isn't.

To be a successful monitor and provide insights and information that can drive system change, we need to have open and honest conversations with everyone involved in the State care system. This includes tamariki, whānau, caregivers, providers, iwi and government agencies.

Since 2020/21, when we started monitoring all the National Care Standards Regulations, we have listened to the voices of 260 tamariki and rangatahi, 70 whānau, 260 caregivers and over 1,500 kaimahi from government agencies, NGOs and professionals. I am immensely proud of the way we have worked with you.

This month we heard evidence given to the Royal Commission by those who were abused and neglected in foster care. We are learning from the lived experience of survivors and their whānau as we continue to develop our comprehensive monitoring approach for those in care.

You may have also seen the Select Committee report on the *Oversight of the Oranga Tamariki System and Children and Young People's Commission Bill* (the Oversight Bill), or media coverage of it.

One of the things the Oversight Bill will do is expand our scope. It enables us to report on the lives and experiences of tamariki and rangatahi in care (as we currently do), and also report on the whole range of services and agencies who work with tamariki and rangatahi notified to Oranga Tamariki, including youth justice and those services working to prevent tamariki from entering care.

When we meet with those in the community, intervention is the area the people want to discuss the most, and I look forward to having this as part of our mandate once the legislation is in place.

When we become a departmental agency, we will be operationally independent and will continue to work to our values – manaaki, kia maia, kia pono, kia tika and kia huritao (respectful, courageous, trustworthy, and reflective).

Our first full report on *Experiences of Care in Aotearoa* provided insights and information about tamariki in care that had not been previously published. Providing robust, independent information about what is working well, and what isn't, in the care system will enable others to use our reports to strongly advocate for tamariki and rangatahi.

Mānawatia a Matariki

Ngā mihi
Arran Jones
Tumu Whakarae | Executive Director

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Some of our monitoring team with kaimahi from Te Tohu o Te Ora o Ngati Awa after mihi whakatau in Whakatane

Monitoring visits and sharing back

Our kaimahi really enjoyed being back in the regions and meeting kanohi ki te kanohi (in person) again.

We have completed monitoring visits in the Central Plateau and the Bay of Plenty, meeting with nearly 60 tamariki and rangatahi, 30 whānau, 70 caregivers, and 210 professionals who work directly with tamariki and rangatahi in care.

Sharing back reports will soon be provided to those we met with. These reports are an important part of our mahi. We do these for each community we visit to let those we met with know what insights we gathered. We hope these are used to prompt action at a regional level, independent of our annual experiences of care report which summarises the findings at a nationwide level.

We'll also refer to the sharing back reports when we come back to a community to see what changes have been implemented since our last visit.

Visits are due to start next month in South Auckland and preparation for this is well advanced.

The full three yearly schedule is available [on our website](#).

Expansion of our monitoring role

The Oversight of the Oranga Tamariki System and Children and Young People's Commission Bill expands the role of the Independent Children's Monitor, Te Mana Whakamaru Tamariki Motuhake, from monitoring the National

Care Standards to monitoring the whole of the Oranga Tamariki system.

The Oranga Tamariki system, as defined by the Oversight Bill, includes work that is done to support whānau, reduce risk to tamariki and prevent them coming into care. This includes government agencies such as Oranga Tamariki, Police, Health and Education as well as all those agencies who provide contracted services through Oranga Tamariki.

The expansion of our role will mean we can monitor and share insights across a number of services or practices, for example, early-intervention, youth justice and family group conferences.

We are currently developing an expanded monitoring framework, informed by engagement with iwi and agencies. We're also testing the assessment approach that kaimahi will use in their kōrero with tamariki and rangatahi. The monitoring framework will be flexible enough to adapt if there are further changes that need to be made as a result of the recommendations from the Royal Commission's final report.

The first monitoring visits under the expanded framework will take place in early 2023, depending on when the legislation passes.

Deep dive reports

Our expanded role will also enable us to share insights via 'deep dive' reports – reports on specific areas that, through our monitoring and information from others such as the Office of the Children's Commissioner or Ombudsman, need a closer look.

These reports will be publicly released. We plan to produce the first of these this year, growing to three reports annually.

Becoming a departmental agency

The Oversight of the Oranga Tamariki System and Children and Young People's Commission Bill also strengthens the independence of the Monitor, ensuring it can act as a trusted advisor to government and the public.

It proposes the Independent Children's Monitor become a departmental agency (currently we are a business unit of the Ministry of Social Development). Examples of other departmental agencies include Te Arawhiti and the Social Wellbeing Agency.

Our Tumu Whakarae (Chief Executive) will be a Statutory Officer appointed by the Public Service Commissioner.

Government intends that as a departmental agency, the Monitor will be 'hosted'

by the Education Review Office (ERO). We will be operationally independent from ERO in how we go about our monitoring role. Hosting means we will share some back-office services (such as human resources, finance, payroll, security and IT) with ERO.

We will continue to work closely with the Ombudsman's Office, and with the new Children and Young People's Commission (currently the Office of the Children's Commissioner). All three entities are committed to ensuring there is no 'wrong door' for tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau who are receiving services or support through the Oranga Tamariki system.

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