

Children's Commissioner's top priorities in 2017

Information sheet - March 2017



MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI

Children's
Commissioner

The Office of the Children's Commissioner is focused on ensuring Aotearoa New Zealand is a place where all children can thrive. As Children's Commissioner, I am independent from the Government. I have a broad role under the law to advocate for the interests, rights and wellbeing of children and monitor the services provided under the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act.

I have set five top priorities for this year.

1. Achieving better outcomes for tamariki Māori

We will place a special emphasis on the interests of tamariki Māori in all we do, and encourage others to do the same by advocating for culturally responsive policies and services across government and NGOs to enhance the mana of tamariki.

2. Helping build and monitor Oranga Tamariki

With the new Ministry, Oranga Tamariki, we have an opportunity to build a world-leading care and protection and youth justice system. It must meet the needs of children and young people, and give them the best possible platform for a good life. My Office will continue to provide child-centred advice on the service design of Oranga Tamariki and closely monitor its service delivery.

3. Encouraging government agencies and NGOs to be more child-centred

We will encourage organisations to be more child-centred by promoting ways to gather children's views and consider their interests. This approach upholds children's rights, ensures better outcomes, and means better decisions are made. Being more child-centred means children have the right to participate in decisions that affect them. We will also investigate whether to advocate lowering the voting age to 16 to better allow young people a voice.

4. Improving children's engagement in education

We want to ensure the benefits of active engagement and participation in the education system are experienced equally by all children. We will focus mainly on alternative education, those with neurodevelopmental disorders, and on an appeal system from suspensions or exclusions.

5. Improving Youth Justice

We will advocate for improving the conditions for children and young people in the Youth Justice system. In the short term, we will focus particularly on stopping the inappropriate use of police cells for young people after their first court appearance and on promoting community-based alternatives. We will retain our strong monitoring focus on the nine Youth Justice and Care and Protection residences.

Finally, I will keep highlighting the major issues facing New Zealand's children and suggesting solutions. Some of our children face unacceptable levels of abuse, neglect, and violence, and the rates of relative child poverty and material disadvantage are profoundly concerning. As a country, we can do better.



Children's Commissioner Judge Andrew Becroft represents the 1.1 million people in Aotearoa New Zealand under the age of 18, who make up 24 percent of the total population.

He advocates for their interests, ensures their rights are upheld, and helps them have a say on issues that affect them.

More information about the work of the Commissioner and his office at www.occ.org.nz