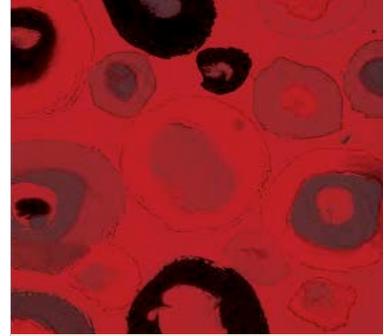




MANAAKITIA A TĀTOU TAMARIKI

**Children's  
Commissioner**



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## **It's time to change the way we look after young people in care**

A new report from the Office of the Children's Commissioner looks to the future of how we care for young people with high risk and alleged offending behaviour, and the way we support them to live successfully in the community.

*Maiea Te Tūruapō, Fulfilling the Vision*, (attached), part of the 'State of Care' series, argues for a shift in direction, a change signalled as long ago as 1989 but never adequately implemented.

The report argues for the phased closure of the present care and protection residences as part of a shift away from our current state care system to a kaupapa Māori driven approach. It looks to a partnership in the way care is provided, who is providing it, how it is experienced and what difference it makes.

"Something like two thirds of the 6,300 children and young people in state care identify as Māori," says Children's Commissioner Andrew Becroft. "The revised Oranga Tamariki Act is very clear that these tamariki Māori have the right to access care services designed specifically for them," he says.

"Iwi and Māori organisations should be fully resourced to respond to the needs of their own children and young people, to develop what is best for them, drawing on Oranga Tamariki's advice and support when required," the Commissioner says.

This will result in a move away from secure institutional residences towards kin care and community group homes, often conceived and run in partnership with iwi and Māori organisations. Increasing the number of community group homes will mean the present care and protection custodial residences can be phased out over time.

In turn, this will mean the present option of remanding young people into solitary confinement in adult prison cells can at last be struck from the statute books.

Community group homes should be places that support young people to redirect their lives. The report identifies and teases out 21 experiences young people with offending or at-risk behaviour, who are in care, will benefit from.

"These experiences should contribute to their rehabilitation," Commissioner Becroft says. "The young people we are talking about need a specialised level of care. These 21 desired experiences are vital if they are to be guided into a positive future."

The experiences identified in the report draw from interviews with children and young people in care, as well as with adults who have been part of the young people's lives.

"We have been encouraged by the initiatives already underway to transform the experience of children and young people in the care of the state," the Commissioner says. "But our monitoring work tells us there is still a long way to go to ensure these 21 experiences become part of the day-to-day lived experience of all children and young people in care."

ENDS

### **About the Office of the Children's Commissioner**

The Children's Commissioner is an Independent Crown Entity, appointed by the Governor-General, carrying out responsibilities and functions set out in the Children's Commissioner Act 2003. The Children's Commissioner has a range of statutory powers to promote the rights, health, welfare, and wellbeing of children and young people from 0 to 18 years. These functions are undertaken through advocacy, public awareness, consultation, research, and investigations and monitoring. The role includes specific functions in respect of monitoring activities completed under the Children, Young Persons and Their Families Act 1989. The Children's Commissioner also undertakes systemic advocacy functions and investigates particular issues with potential to threaten the health, safety, or wellbeing of children and young people. The Children's Commissioner has a particular responsibility to raise awareness and understanding of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Children's Commissioner's activities must comply with the relevant provisions of the Public Finance Act 1989, Crown Entities Act 2004 and any other relevant legislation.