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## Children's views can improve the way we live, but are we listening?

A report released today, from the Children's Convention Monitoring Group\*, is a sharp reminder that what children and young people say makes a difference, and that it's time we paid more attention to their views, says Children's Commissioner Andrew Becroft.

The report, 'Are We Listening? – Children's Participation Rights in Government Policy', focusses on children and young people's right to participate in all matters affecting them, and the positive difference this can make to policies that affect children's lives every day.

"It's a month since students around the country took to the streets for the second time to demand action on climate change. So it's a good time to reflect on the constructive value young people add when we factor their concerns and suggestions into decision-making," Commissioner Becroft says.

"While we've seen a growing interest in engaging with children and young people, we have also seen voices from some politicians and in the media trivialising the impact young people can make. But the clarity of these young voices, and the force of their argument, meant the strike was effective in moving the discussion from rhetoric around climate change to consideration of policy that may actually make a difference."

The report notes that, while there has been a positive shift in the valuing of children and young people's views, there's still a long way to go in terms of really listening and acting upon what they have to say.

The report unpacks what children's participation actually means and why it's important. It spells out the positive benefits of involving children and young people in the policy process. It identifies examples of the progress that's been made since 2016 as well as providing ten ideas for action that can lead us forward.

"Children and young people have a right to participate and a right to be heard," Commissioner Becroft says.

"We need to be listening to what they have to say to us. It can improve the way we live, both now and in the future."

ENDS

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\*The Office of the Children's Commissioner convenes the Children's Convention Monitoring Group which includes the following four permanent members:

- Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa
- The Human Rights Commission

- Save the Children New Zealand and
- The United Nations Children's fund New Zealand

**Andrea Jamison, Chair of Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA) is available for comment**

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#### **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 Oranga Tamariki 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.