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Budget 2019:

'Significant and powerful step forward' – Children's Commissioner

"Today's Wellbeing Budget takes seriously the need for a step-change in the way we support the wellbeing of New Zealand children", says Children's Commissioner Andrew Becroft.

"What is clear is that, avowedly and explicitly, this is a budget prepared through the lens of children – something unheard of previously.

"It is becoming clearer and clearer that there are deficits, more like gaping chasms, in inter-related services for children and young people – particularly for children and young people who need extra help.

"Whether in education, health, Oranga Tamariki, or mental health services, these 'holes' date back to the mid-1980s and early 1990s.

"There has been chronic underfunding and for children in need, especially."

"The measures taken in this budget, coupled with the \$5.5 billion Families Package, mean the child poverty reduction targets the government has recently confirmed are not only aspirational and ambitious but also appropriate and achievable.

"I'm also really glad to see the \$1.1 billion investment into Oranga Tamariki. It is at last being properly resourced to carry out its role. The \$28 million for iwi and Māori partnerships is critical, as is funding for early and intensive intervention, and a transition service.

"There is also money to enable change to the way we support young people in the Youth Justice system by establishing more community-based homes so that fewer young people will need to be remanded into residences.

"Resources have been earmarked to enable the new National Care Standards to be monitored, and 350 more social workers and caregivers will make a significant difference to on the ground support for young people and families.

"I'm also heartened by the signal to link benefits to wages. This is something we've been calling for for some time. It is unquestionably both the right and necessary thing to do. The need now is for the link to be set at the right level.

"There are policies and allocations of funding in this budget that will make a real difference", Commissioner Becroft says. "Of course their effect will, in the end, be measured by positive change in the lives of the children and families who struggle. Only when we see that can we speak of transformative change."

"If the commitment to valuing children and families that this budget reflects is followed up year on year, the effect could well be transformative. And that will make it a significant and powerful step forward."

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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.