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## Children's Commissioner calls for 1 year police pursuit pilot for children and young people

Children's Commissioner Judge Andrew Becroft is calling for New Zealand Police to implement a 1 year pursuit pilot that would see pursuits involving children and young people drastically reduced.

The Independent Police Complaints Authority and the New Zealand Police today released a new review of police pursuit policy which represents extensive research but doesn't offer an immediate and significant change to police pursuit policy involving children and young people.

"As a result, it fails to respond to the urgency of calls to limit police pursuits when children and young people are involved," Commissioner Becroft says.

The Children's Commissioner advocates for a reversal of the present policy. Currently, a pursuit is undertaken, even if a child or young person is known to be present, unless there is a reason not to. Commissioner Becroft believes this approach leaves too much room for poor judgment in a high-stress situation, to which teenagers are particularly prone.

"Children and young people would be better served if that policy was stood on its head," Commissioner Becroft says. "This would mean that, if there is reason to suspect there is a child or young person present, police do not pursue unless there are exceptional circumstances, such as the commission of a very serious crime or homicide."

"Good policing, modern resources and the advantages of technology mean that young drivers who fail to stop will mostly be apprehended and subsequently held to account."

Commissioner Becroft recommends piloting this revised pursuit policy specifically for children and young people for 1 year and then evaluating its success.

On a positive note, the review includes a work plan which could provide for changes to current pursuit policy to ensure it is fit for purpose.

A recent constructive meeting with senior members of the New Zealand Police and the Office of the Children's Commissioner explored the possibility that the Office could be involved in working together with the police to explore ways the policy may better serve the safety of children and young people.

"We believe that goal would be best achieved through a special policy for under-18 year olds," the Commissioner says.

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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.