

Media statement – Children’s Commissioner

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For immediate release

Children’s Commissioner – ‘vulnerable children deserve this radical change’

Children’s Commissioner Dr Russell Wills welcomes today’s announcement on the proposed radical changes to the child protection and care system.

“It’s not an exaggeration to say that this piece of work is visionary and has potential to change the lives of many vulnerable children. If all the recommendations are accepted and implemented and resourced well – we would have a system that is world-leading and something to be very proud of.

“I am most pleased to see genuine desire to put children at the centre of everything the new agency will be tasked to do – and to make sure that children have a voice.

“We know from our monitoring of Child, Youth and Family that the organisation does not consistently put children at the centre. That has to change and I’m pleased to see this clearly identified in the report.

“Part of putting children at the centre is understanding their full range of needs including their culture and identity. This is not done well at present. The Minister has rightly acknowledged that reducing the over-representation of Maori children is a vital part of the proposed reforms. This will require real commitment and resources to build cultural capability across the whole system.

“The proposal to expand the focus to early intervention and prevention is promising and one I fully support. Supporting our children to thrive needs to start at a much earlier stage if we want to see a significant shift in the outcomes for our vulnerable children.

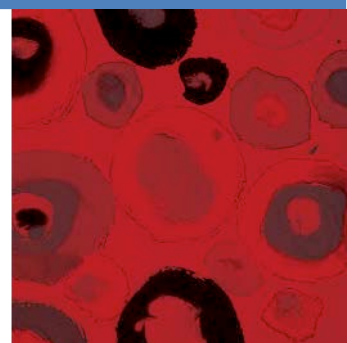
“Lifting the age of state care responsibility to 18 years, and in some cases to 25 years is common sense and I’m pleased to see this is likely to progress. But I would like to see the recommendation to lift the age to 18 years for youth justice also accepted – as this is an anomaly that is doing great harm to young people caught up in the adult system.

“These changes are radical, they are challenging and they will require some major investment and commitment. That commitment needs to extend to other agencies with a role to play in the lives of children and to the Cabinet table. I trust the Minister will receive full support from her Cabinet colleagues on such promising recommendations.

“I would also like to see all New Zealanders embracing the need for change for our most vulnerable. We are all part of this and all need to feel responsibility for the lives of these children. They deserve our full support and aroha.”

Ends.

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