



MANAAKITIA Ā TĀTOU TAMARIKI

**Children's
Commissioner**

Media release 18 August 2019

30 years of child rights: Children's Commissioner calls on government to consult with children and young people

Ahead of a Child Rights Symposium in Wellington this week, the Children's Commissioner is calling on the government to re-prioritise its commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Children's Convention) by embedding clear obligations to consult with children and young people on legislation that affects them.

Commissioner Andrew Becroft says the 30-year anniversary of the Children's Convention is an ideal time to do this.

"30 years ago, the United Nations officially adopted what was then a ground-breaking convention to promote, respect, protect and fulfil the rights of all children," he says.

"New Zealand ratified the Children's Convention four years later, in 1993. Our Government of the day made a promise in doing so to embed those rights in our laws, policies and practices and to report publicly on how it was ensuring all children in New Zealand are safe, healthy and thriving.

"But nearly three decades on, we still have not prioritised children's rights as they should be," says the Children's Commissioner.

"One of the steps towards ensuring children have their rights to things like education, safety and health fulfilled, is improving how we enable and empower children to participate in our democracy.

"I would like to see children participate in the development of policy that affects them, and to have that right to participate protected by law.

"One recent positive example where this has happened is the Child Poverty Reduction Act (2018). This legislation includes an explicit obligation to consult with children and young people on the creation and ongoing monitoring of a Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

"This government has made a good start but to really live up to its 'transformational' tagline, it needs to keep up the momentum.

"It's also important that the Children's Convention be understood in the context of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and the government takes appropriate measures to ensure tamariki Māori have their individual and collective rights as indigenous children fulfilled.

"This means recognising the importance of hearing the voices of children within the context of their whanau, hapu, iwi and wider family groups.

"There is an opportunity now to affect the lives of millions of children to come. Where ever possible, I encourage the government to protect the rights of all New Zealand's children to participate by making it clear in all legislation, as has already been done with the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy," says Commissioner Becroft.

For more information about children's participation rights in government policy see the Children's Commission's recent report, [*Are we listening?*](#) or visit occ.org.nz.

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