

# Priority issues for children in New Zealand

Information sheet for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child  
September 2016

*Judge Andrew Becroft has set out his key priority areas for his term as New Zealand's Children's Commissioner:*

## **1. Upholding children's rights in the re-design of the care and protection and youth justice systems.**

These reforms are a once-in-lifetime opportunity. He is encouraged by the direction of the changes, but there are risks of unintended consequences. The new system must be truly transformational, child-centred, and address the needs of indigenous Māori children.

## **2. Including 17 year-olds in the youth justice system.**

This is simply the right thing to do. Raising the age will finally bring New Zealand into line with Article 2 of the UN Convention, as well as reducing re-offending, maintaining public safety, changing behaviour, costing New Zealand less, and reducing unconscious bias in the justice system.

## **3. Achieving better outcomes for Māori children.**

Māori children are over-represented in the care and youth justice systems, and in poor education, health, material hardship and other outcomes. Concerted effort is required to address these inequalities, starting with better engagement and partnership between Government and whānau (extended family), hapu (sub-tribal groups) and iwi (tribal groups).

*In addition, he acknowledges that high rates child poverty and material deprivation remain major drivers of poor outcomes for children, and a key barrier to full achievement of children's rights.*

*Meaningful progress on these issues will go a long way towards improving outcomes and upholding the rights of children.*



Children's Commissioner Judge Andrew Becroft represents the 1.1 million people in Aotearoa New Zealand under the age of 18, who make up 24 percent of the total population.

He advocates for their interests, ensures their rights are upheld, and helps them have a say on issues that affect them.

More information about the work of the Commissioner and his office at:

[www.occ.org.nz](http://www.occ.org.nz)

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In New Zealand, the Children's Commissioner performs a wide set of statutory functions and responsibilities, i.e.

- Monitoring Child, Youth and Family sites and residences and reporting on our findings and recommendations
- Promoting child-centred practice and policy
- Raising awareness of UNCROC and children's rights
- Listening to children and young people and making sure they have a say in things that matter to them
- Advocating for individuals via the office's Child Rights Advice Line
- Reporting to the Prime Minister on matters affecting children's rights
- Operating as a 'National Preventative Mechanism' under the provisions of the Crimes of Torture Act (1989)
- Submissions to government consultation and select committee processes on matters related to child wellbeing
- Providing advice on improving child wellbeing to government agencies by participating on relevant working groups
- Providing advice as part of the Advisory Committee on Assisted Reproductive Technology.