

The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

SUBMISSION FROM
 THE OFFICE OF THE CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

DECEMBER 2018

The Children's Commissioner is supportive of the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

WE WELCOME THIS FOCUS ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

It's great that the Government is developing a Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (the Strategy).

We have provided lots of input at different stages and have been pleased to see it reflected as the Strategy has developed. In addition to the input we have had to date and the engagement we have done with children and young people, this submission summarises our views on the development of the Strategy so far.

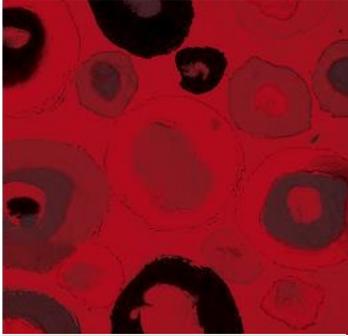
Listen to children and young people: Our team has been engaged by DPMC to run a large-scale engagement with children and young people directly to understand what wellbeing means to them. This work has recently been completed and analysis is under way. It will be with you soon and it should be instrumental in the next stages of developing the Strategy. We urge you to pay particular attention to these voices and views as you finalise the Strategy.

Be child-centred: Our overall point in this submission is the importance of taking a child-centred approach. This means understanding children in the context of their homes, families, whānau, schools, communities and the country, and considering their rights, best interests and wellbeing within those contexts. We know that children are significantly impacted by the wellbeing of their families. This recognises that providing children with access to resources and support that enables them to develop and thrive is the primary role of parents, family, whānau and caregivers. From our perspective, helping the family do well enables them to support their children to thrive.

Embed child rights: The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is a great opportunity to embed the rights that all children are entitled to under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Children's Convention) into New Zealand legislation, policy, and practice. We offer some suggestions on how to leverage this opportunity and use the tools and processes already available to embed child rights to support the implementation of the Strategy.

Be aspirational and show leadership: While we make a number of suggestions in this submission to enhance the draft Strategy, this does not detract from our overall enthusiasm for the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy. This Strategy is critical to developing an aspirational vision for all children. This will provide a much-needed map of the areas where additional focus and support is needed, and how government and community actions can align for greater effect.

Shift our culture towards children: The Strategy has the potential to shift how children and young people are accepted, prioritised and supported. It can drive important and much-needed change to improve lives and remove barriers that prevent some children and young people from thriving as they should. And importantly, the Strategy can reflect the special and important place of children and young people in our society.



The OCC represents **1.1 million** people in Aotearoa New Zealand under the age of 18, who make up 23 per cent of the total population.

We advocate for their interests, ensure their rights are upheld, and help them have a say on issues that affect them.

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This submissions starts with a summary of recommendations, followed by:

- Section 1: Framing the Strategy through its vision and underpinning principles
- Section 2: Informing the domains and outcomes through an understanding of child and youth wellbeing
- Section 3: Being clear about who does what and providing an 'operational' layer
- Section 4: Integrating a rights-based approach into all aspects of the Strategy

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- Rec 1:** Reframe the proposed vision to remove reference to New Zealand in competition with the rest of the world, drawing instead on how children and young people themselves visualise the good life.
- Rec 2:** Reword the principles to ensure they meet the definition of fundamental propositions that can guide behaviour, are consistently worded, are clear, are able to be operationalised and embed Māori concepts.
- Rec 3:** Add to or amend the proposed wellbeing domains to ensure the inextricability of child wellbeing and that of their whānau/family is reflected at the top level of the Strategy.
- Rec 4:** Undertake a detailed analysis of the gaps and barriers to achieving the proposed wellbeing domains and desired outcomes by age, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, disability, and other relevant factors, to provide a baseline for measuring achievement and ensure no groups of children and young people are left out or unintentionally disadvantaged by the Strategy.
- Rec 5:** Group the desired outcomes under each domain to ensure the Strategy accurately reflects children and young people in the context of their families and communities and ensures mutually reinforcing action takes place at all levels to support their wellbeing.
- Rec 6:** Ensure there are corresponding focus areas to advance all desired outcomes.
- Rec 7:** Ensure that all focus areas are child-centred and do not place an inappropriate burden on children and young people themselves to address the systemic challenges they experience.
- Rec 8:** Include the roles and responsibilities of all people, agencies, and organisations involved in supporting children and young people to thrive.
- Rec 9:** Create a 'how to' layer in the outcomes framework between the principles and the desired outcomes. The 'enabling settings' included in this layer should aim to operationalise the principles and include the tools, systems and processes required to deliver and monitor the Strategy.
- Rec 10:** Ensure all items on the cross-government Children's Convention Work Programme are linked to and reflected in the Strategy.
- Rec 11:** Comprehensively map the Strategy against the Children's Convention and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2016 Concluding Observations to seek as much alignment as possible.
- Rec 12:** Consider the Strategy's outcomes and focus areas against the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other key international human rights obligations and standards
- Rec 13:** Remove the note defining "children" from the front page of the proposed outcomes framework, and if necessary note this definition elsewhere.

Section 1: Framing the Strategy through its vision and underpinning principles

- 1 We are excited that the Strategy signals a positive, aspirational trajectory for children's outcomes, rather than simply looking to reduce deficiencies. A wellbeing focus widens the lens to allow consideration of the many positive conditions required for children to achieve their potential, have their rights fulfilled and be fully included in society.

"We need adults who don't just see us now, but what we can be in the future" (*Rangatahi, Engaging with tamariki and rangatahi at Ngā Manu Kōrero, OCC*)

ENSURE THE VISION IS BOTH ASPIRATIONAL AND CHILD-CENTRED

- 2 The proposed vision for the Strategy is "New Zealand is the best place in the world for children and young people." It's great that this vision is aspirational and aims high. We agree that Aotearoa New Zealand should be a great place to be a child or young person.
- 3 However, it is unnecessary to frame the vision as a competition with other countries. When children and young people picture a good life, they do not do so in reference to how children live in other parts of the world. Besides, it is an empty statement – there is no way to – and no intention to – literally measure whether New Zealand is the best place in the world for children.
- 4 A child-centred vision for the Strategy would be equally aspirational, but would reflect how children and young people themselves think and talk about wellbeing. We therefore recommend reframing the vision based on children and young people's own visions for the good life (drawing from the forthcoming report on our office's engagement with children and young people about the Strategy).

Recommendation 1: Reframe the proposed vision to remove reference to New Zealand in competition with the rest of the world, drawing instead on how children and young people themselves visualise the good life.

"Feeling well emotionally and physically. Feeling happy about the place you are in and optimistic towards your future"
(*13 year old student, when asked what the word 'wellbeing' means to them. OCC*)

UNDERPIN THE STRATEGY WITH STRONG AND CLEAR PRINCIPLES

- 5 A principle is a fundamental truth or proposition that serves as the foundation for a system of belief or behaviour.
- 6 We support the meaning and intent behind the seven statements that are listed as underpinning principles in the Strategy. However we think they could be reworded to better reflect this definition of what a principle is. A redraft could tighten meaning and intention, ensure consistency of expression between the principles, embed Māori concepts, and aid interpretation and operationalisation.
- 7 We suggest reframing the existing statements. We provide suggestions here:
 - > Children and young people are taonga. They have inherent mana, dignity, and value.
 - > Above all else, children need aroha, love, care, and trusting relationships with those who look after them.
 - > Children are deeply embedded within their family and whānau. Their wellbeing depends on that of their family and whānau. One cannot be achieved without the other.
 - > Children and young people are experts on their own lives. Their voices and views on decisions that affect them must be heard and taken into account.
 - > Everyone in Aotearoa New Zealand, including the Government, has collective responsibility to nurture the children and young people in our communities and show support and manaakitanga to them and the adults who care for them.
 - > Upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi and giving effect to the ongoing partnership between the Crown and Māori is fundamental to achieving wellbeing for all tamariki and rangatahi.
 - > Children's rights, as outlined in the Children's Convention must be upheld in order to achieve wellbeing for all children.

Recommendation 2: Reword the principles to ensure they meet the definition of fundamental propositions that can guide behaviour, are consistently worded, are clear, are able to be operationalised and embed Māori concepts.

- 8 For the Strategy to be effective and widely accepted, it will need to explicitly address the aspirations and needs of mokopuna Māori. It will be critical ensure that Te Ao Māori concepts and framing are visible in the Strategy.

"My family made me happy by giving me everything I want and supported but also my friends helped me along the way." (Primary student, Māori/ NZ European/Pacific Peoples, Education Matters to me engagement, OCC)

"Get to know us, listen to us, talk to us!" (Care experienced child, Views and voices of younger children in care, OCC)

Section 2: Informing the domains, outcomes, and focus areas by understanding child and youth wellbeing

ELEMENTS OF CHILD AND YOUTH WELLBEING

- 9 Wellbeing is a complex concept. We know it when we see it (or its absence) but it is hard to define. Over several years, we have reviewed academic and government documents and listened to children and young people to develop a holistic understanding of child and youth wellbeing:

Wellbeing is a positive state and not simply the absence of negatives. Children experience wellbeing when their family and whānau are connected and united; relationships within and beyond the family and whānau are thriving; family and whānau members support each other; there are opportunities for individual and collective growth; and all members of their family and whānau have their needs met. A community has achieved child wellbeing when all children and their whānau have their rights fulfilled and the conditions are in place to enable all children to participate in society and plan, develop and achieve meaningful lives.

- 10 The graphic below shows the different areas that we need to pay attention to when we are working towards wellbeing. The areas are the same whether we are thinking about an individual child's wellbeing, or child wellbeing in a community or society. Notice that children's participation is essential in all areas.

Child Wellbeing Wheel



CHILD WELLBEING IS INEXTRICABILITY LINKED WITH WHĀNAU/FAMILY WELLBEING

- 11 If we had to boil down everything we have learned about child wellbeing in the past several years into one sentence it is this: **children do well when their whānau/family does well.**
- 12 The proposed outcomes framework for the Strategy suggests five top-line wellbeing domains for the Strategy. These are expressed as the indicators for how we will know when the vision for all children and young people is achieved. These are:
 - > Children and young people are loved, nurtured and safe
 - > Children and young people have what they need
 - > Children and young people belong, contribute and are valued
 - > Children and young people are happy and healthy
 - > Children and young people are learning and developing
- 13 When we map our understanding of child and youth wellbeing against these domains and the desired outcomes that sit beneath them we see that they are a good fit. The key elements of identity and belonging; stable, nurturing family; safe communities and recreation opportunities; adequate income to meet needs; learning opportunities and support; services and supports to be healthy; and safe, healthy homes and environment are all reflected.
- 14 If there is one thing missing from the five top-line wellbeing domains it is the emphasis on whānau/family wellbeing as critical to achieving child wellbeing.
- 15 We can see that effort has been made to weave reference to whānau/family wellbeing into the other levels of the Strategy. One of the proposed principles articulates this link, for example, as well as several of the desired outcomes that sit below the domains.
- 16 However, given the importance of this concept, especially to children and young people themselves (as will be outlined in detail in our forthcoming report on our engagement with children and young people to inform the Strategy) we think it should be reflected at the top-line level. This will help to guide the implementation of the Strategy for maximum success.
- 17 We therefore recommend the addition of an extra wellbeing domain, or re-organisation of the existing domains and desired outcomes, to reflect the emphasis that needs to be placed on whānau/family wellbeing in order to achieve child wellbeing. If adding a separate new domain, we suggest "Children and young people are part of thriving whānau/families" and redistributing the desired outcomes as appropriate. If amending the existing domains we suggest "Children and young people are loved, nurtured and safe in thriving whānau/families."



"Children need stable lives at home with their families, as well as a home where there are no financial issues" (16-year-old female, Māori/Pacific/NZ European, OCC survey)

Recommendation 3: Add to or amend the proposed wellbeing domains to ensure the inextricability of child wellbeing and that of their whānau/family is reflected at the top level of the Strategy.

REFLECTING THE CHILD IN THEIR UNIQUE CONTEXT

18 While the wellbeing domains (with the proposed addition/amendment of whānau/family wellbeing) capture well the elements necessary to achieve child and youth wellbeing, it is important to note that what these look, feel and sound like will be very different for different children and young people, depending on factors like their age and stage of development, geographical location, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity and/or (dis)ability. All children and young people might need broadly the same things, but how to ensure they get them will vary hugely based on these factors.

19 We note that sixteen focus areas have been suggested for the first Strategy, based largely on work that is already underway or anticipated. While it is important and useful to situate existing and planned work and ensure it contributes to the Strategy, the Strategy should also generate new areas of work based on an analysis of where children and young people in various communities and with different characteristics are at right now in relation to the wellbeing domains and desired outcomes.

20 We therefore recommend undertaking a detailed analysis of the gaps and barriers to the achievement of the proposed wellbeing domains and desired outcomes for different groups of children and young people according to their age, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, disability, and any other factors identified that might be relevant. This analysis would provide a valuable baseline for measuring the achievement of the Strategy, as well as ensuring that no groups of children and young people are left out.

21 For example, if we consider the desired outcome that 'children and young people and their parents, caregivers, family and whānau are able to spend quality time together' we see that the needs and solutions will vary for a) children in sole-parent households with implications for work and income policies; b) children of low-income working families

with implications for minimum wage settings; c) disabled children in residential care; and d) young children and babies having time with primary caregivers versus teenagers.

"Whakapapa is important because you need your whānau. They will be there for you."

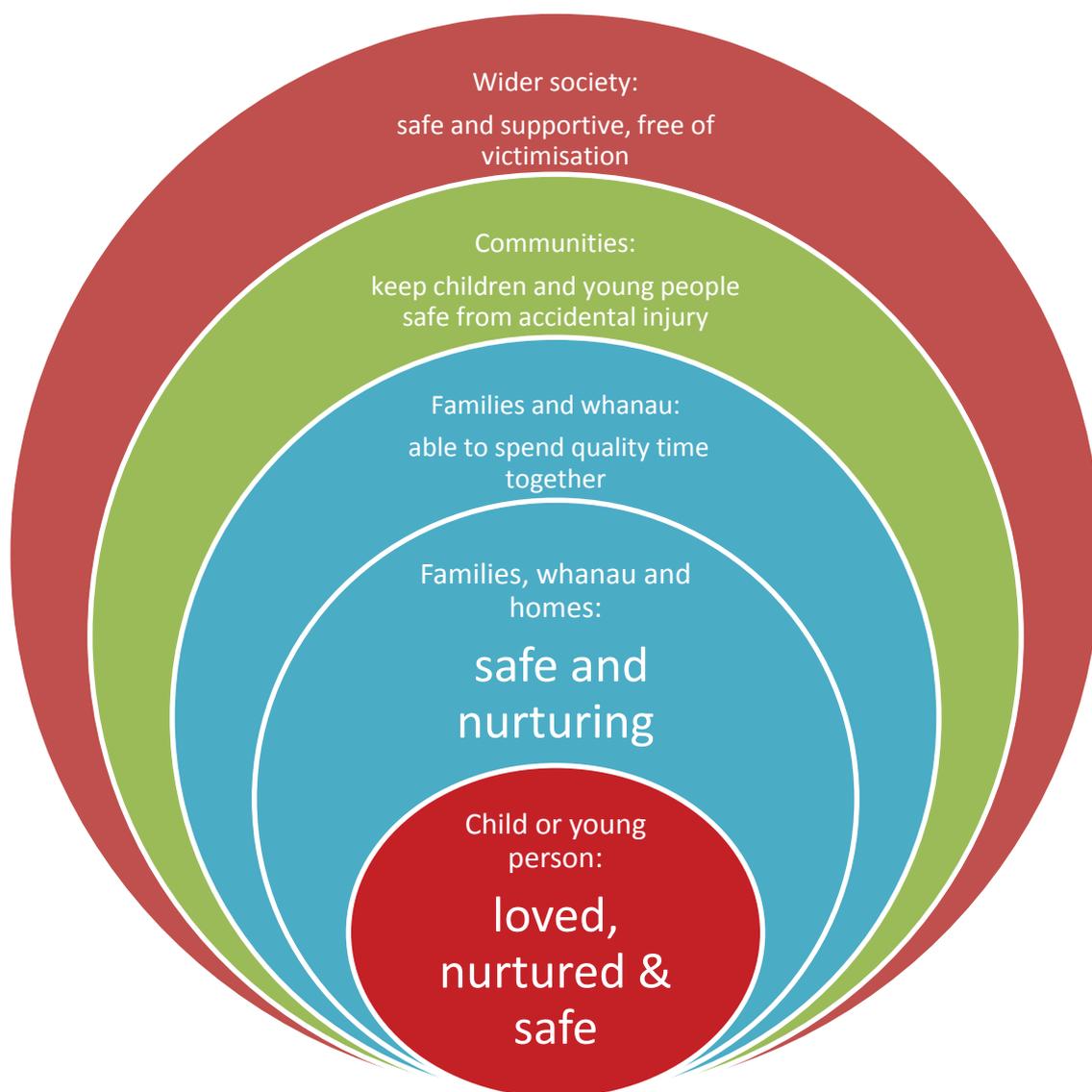
(Rangatahi, Engaging with tamariki and rangatahi at Ngā Manu Kōrero, OCC)

"Listen to the community and children. Make fair decisions that are good for communities and children. Find solutions that are good for everyone"

(Young person, Our Views Matter. OCC)

Recommendation 4: Undertake a detailed analysis of the gaps and barriers to the achievement of the proposed wellbeing domains and desired outcomes by age, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, disability, and other relevant factors, to provide a baseline for measuring achievement and ensure no groups of children and young people are left out or unintentionally disadvantaged by the Strategy.

- 22 Each child and young person exists within the context of their whānau/family, various communities (cultural, geographical, identity-based and others), schools/workplaces, and wider New Zealand society. Actions are required at each level to achieve child and youth wellbeing. We think the Strategy could do a better job of reflecting this by grouping the desired outcomes to reflect the actions needed from different parts of the child or young person’s life to achieve the desired outcome.
- 23 For example, the desired outcomes under the proposed domain “children and young people are loved, nurtured, and safe” could be ‘nested’ accordingly to show better where responsibility lies for each outcome:



Recommendation 5: Group the desired outcomes under each domain to ensure the Strategy accurately reflects children and young people in the context of their families and communities and ensures mutually reinforcing action takes place at all levels to support their wellbeing.

ENSURE THE FOCUS AREAS ARE CHILD-CENTRED AS WELL AS THE DOMAINS AND OUTCOMES

- 24 The language and framing of the domains and desired outcomes is child-centred and empowering. We commend this inclusive framing, which recognises children and young people's status as rights holders.
- 25 However, the more detailed potential focus areas do not always correspond with the desired outcomes and are not always child-centred.
- 26 For example, the second outcome under the first domain (loved, nurtured and safe), is about the need for children and young people to experience quality family time. However, this area of need is not reflected in the corresponding focus areas. If outcomes do not correspond directly with focus areas, some issues of importance may be missed.
- 27 As a further example, the fourth outcome under the second domain (have what they need) reflects the importance of sustainable communities and environments for children and young people ("Children and young people live in sustainable communities and environments.") Again, there is no directly corresponding focus area for this outcome.

Recommendation 6: Ensure there are corresponding focus areas to advance all desired outcomes.

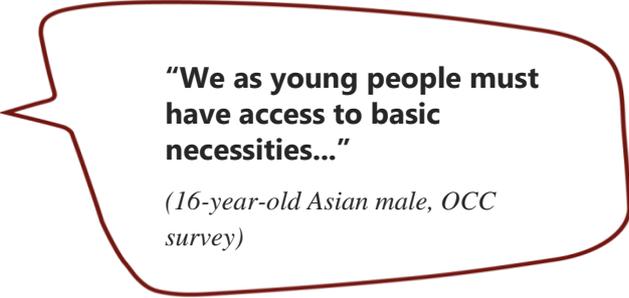
- 28 On the theme of environmental protection, the only reference to this important outcome in the focus areas comes in bullet one under focus area 9: "Children and young people are supported to be positive, valued contributors to civic life and the protection of the environment (kaitiakitanga)."
- 29 Children can of course be involved and learn values of kaitiakitanga as an important recognition of their status as contributing citizens. However, having this as the sole reference to environmental protection in the focus areas frames environmental protection as the responsibility of children and young people themselves rather than recognising that adults (especially government and business interests) have a responsibility to address environmental degradation.
- 30 This is inappropriate and demonstrates the importance of distinguishing between rights holders (children and young people) and duty bearers (Government) in framing the focus areas.
- 31 Likewise, bullet point three under focus area 13 ("Children and young people are supported to be accountable and address underlying causes of the behaviour if they break the law,") places a burden of responsibility on children and young people to regulate their own behaviour. While positive decision-making skills are important, a child-centred framing would first consider the drivers of harmful behaviours like alcohol and drug use, risky sexual behaviour, or criminal offending, and craft actions that Government and communities can lead or support to address these.

Recommendation 7: Ensure that all focus areas are child-centred and do not place an inappropriate burden on children and young people themselves to address the systemic challenges they experience.

Section 3: Being clear about who does what and providing an ‘operational’ layer

SUPPORTING BETTER CHILD WELLBEING IS A COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

- 32 While the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is a Government document, its only hope for success will be if it is collectively owned, understood, and embraced by the wider community. As noted in the principles, we have a collective responsibility to nurture children and young people and support the adults who care for them.
- 33 By grouping the desired outcomes to reflect children and young people in the context of their families and communities, it becomes clear how critical whānau/family and community engagement is to achieve the goals of the Strategy. Child and youth wellbeing will not be achieved by direct Government action or intervention in the lives of children and young people or their whānau/family; rather, the Strategy needs to outline how Government will assist whānau/families, iwi, hapu, communities, schools, local councils, workplaces and business to collectively support child and youth wellbeing.
- 34 Therefore the roles of different stakeholders in the achievement of the Strategy need to be made more explicit. This includes the various roles of:
- > Central government, including schools and healthcare providers
 - > Local government
 - > NGOs and community-based organisations
 - > Businesses/private sector
 - > Charities and philanthropic organisations
 - > Hapu and iwi
 - > Families and whānau



“We as young people must have access to basic necessities...”

(16-year-old Asian male, OCC survey)

Recommendation 8: Include the roles and responsibilities of all involved in supporting children and young people to thrive.

ADD A 'HOW TO' OPERATIONAL LAYER

- 35 We recommend adding another layer to the proposed outcomes framework between the underpinning principles and the desired outcomes, to describe *how* the Strategy will be operationalised. This layer could include the enabling settings required to support and deliver the Strategy and could embed processes to ensure the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the Children's Convention are given effect.
- 36 This 'enabling settings' layer could include things like:^{*}
- > **Child Impact Analysis.** Conducting a child impact analysis at every stage of the Strategy (design, implementation, delivery and monitoring) to ensure children's rights are being upheld, impact on children is well understood, children have had their voices heard, and there are no unintended consequences. Every child impact analysis should at a minimum ask: How will this impact on children? Will there be differential impacts? What do children and young people think? MSD has a [Child Impact Analysis Tool](#) that we support to be used for this purpose.
 - > **Children and young people's participation.** Embedding mechanisms at every stage to enable children to participate and have their voices heard. Ensuring ongoing engagement with children through the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages of each focus area. Ensuring processes are in place to incorporate children's views into practices and policies.
 - > **Investment, budget setting and monitoring.** Transparently and regularly measuring and tracking resource allocation and spending on children's wellbeing as part of the Strategy. Assessing the impact of investments for children in line with the principles and provisions of the Children's Convention.
 - > **Resourcing communities.** Ensuring communities are adequately resourced and have the capability and capacity to support children's wellbeing.
 - > **Training and supports.** Ensuring the people and organisations who are key to the success of the Strategy receive children's rights and wellbeing training to support and enable the implementation of the Strategy.
 - > **Data.** Ensuring the collection, storage and sharing of information about children related to the delivery of the Strategy is consistent with privacy and information rights and the views and best interests of children.
 - > **Monitoring and Evaluation.** Designing and implementing a monitoring and evaluation framework so that progress towards the desired outcomes and vision of the Strategy is tracked and monitored over time. Monitoring should be iterative and aim to capture and integrate lessons learned along the way. Monitoring should be inclusive of all stakeholders, particularly children and young people, and their families and whānau, based on their own lived experience.

Recommendation 9: Create a 'how to' layer in the outcomes framework between the principles and the desired outcomes. The 'enabling settings' included in this layer should aim to operationalise the principles and include the tools, systems and processes required to deliver and monitor the Strategy.

^{*} Many of these 'enabling settings' are included in the Children's Convention Monitoring Group's April 2018 report '[Building Blocks](#)'

Section 4: Integrating a rights-based approach into all aspects of the Strategy

ALIGN THE STRATEGY WITH THE EXISTING CHILD-RIGHTS WORK PROGRAMME

37 The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy is the national plan for children that the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child and members of the children's rights sector in New Zealand have long advocated for. This Strategy presents a golden opportunity to embed the Convention into the fabric of New Zealand's laws, policies and practices.

38 We urge the Government to ensure the guiding principles and the rights that all children are entitled to under the Convention are holistically considered and reflected throughout the outcomes framework. These include the General Principles of: non-discrimination; the best interests of the child; the child's right to life, survival and development; and the child's right to participate in matters affecting them.

"We need to diminish the feeling of not being heard" (14-year-old female, Māori/NZ European, OCC survey)

39 The Strategy should be carefully linked with the [cross-government Children's Convention Work Programme](#) which is governed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child Deputy Chief Executives Group - New Zealand's permanent coordinating mechanism for the Convention. This work programme agreed in July 2018, sets out seven initiatives to be undertaken before 2021. The seven items are listed below with suggestions in red for where they align with the Strategy:

- > Expand community-based options across all relevant settings to reduce the use of detention for children and young people. Aligns with focus area one, bullet four: **children and young people in care (including because of offending) have a safe environment and relationships of care**.
- > Implement an anti-bullying strategy and work programme, including the Bullying-Free NZ School Framework, the Bullying-Free NZ School Toolkit and the Bullying-Free NZ website, with a strong focus on student voice and agency. Aligns with focus area three, bullet two: **bullying in schools and recreational environments is addressed**.
- > Develop training for public servants on children's rights and the Children's Convention (aligns with enabling settings – see section 3 of this submission).
- > Finalise the Child Impact Assessment Tool and implement across government agencies (aligns with **enabling settings** – see section 3 of this submission).
- > Establish a data leadership working group to coordinate and improve data collection and dissemination in relation to children and young people (aligns with **enabling settings** – see section 3 of this submission).
- > Implement and make publicly available the Privacy, Human Rights and Ethical Framework for data use, including predictive modeling (aligns with **enabling settings** – see section 3 of this submission).

- > Implement a work programme for the prevention of online child sexual exploitation and abuse, including measures targeting potential offenders, children and young people and parents and guardians of children and young people. Aligns with focus area three, bullet three: **children and young people's safety online is supported.**

Recommendation 10: Ensure all items on the cross-government Children's Convention Work Programme are linked to and reflected in the Strategy.

MAP THE STRATEGY AGAINST OUR INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS

40 Staff from our office undertook a preliminary exercise mapping the Strategy against the Children's Convention, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2016 Concluding Observations, the Government's child rights work programme and the Sustainable Development Goals. This helped us to identify a number of ways to strengthen the Strategy including:

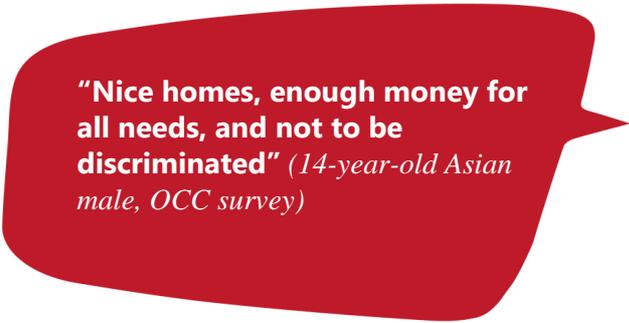
- > ensuring safety for children who work is included;
- > explicitly considering Pasifika children as a unique cohort of importance distinct from tamariki Māori;
- > ensuring there is a greater focus on minority groups such as children and young people from the LGBTQTI and refugee and migrant communities;
- > clearly recognising climate change and environmental protection and linking it with children's rights to health, play and recreation.

41 The next UN review of New Zealand's compliance with the Children's Convention will take place in 2021. This may coincide with the first significant review of this Strategy, so it will be important and useful to consider how the Strategy helps New Zealand uphold children's rights and respond to the UN Committee's previous recommendations.

Recommendation 11: Comprehensively map the Strategy against the Children's Convention and the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's 2016 Concluding Observations to seek as much alignment as possible.

42 Furthermore, New Zealand has signed up to several other international obligations that impact on children. The Strategy should also be aligned and complementary with these obligations.

Recommendation 12: Consider the Strategy's outcomes and focus areas against the Sustainable Development Goals, the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and other key international human rights obligations and standards.



"Nice homes, enough money for all needs, and not to be discriminated" (14-year-old Asian male, OCC survey)

A FINAL NOTE ON THE DEFINITION OF CHILDREN

- 43 We understand that, legally, the definition of “children” includes everyone under the age of 18; indeed this is the technical definition we also use as an office, as per the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 44 However, on a public document like the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy, a document that children and young people themselves will have input on and hopefully refer to and use, it is really important to use terms that are meaningful and respectful.
- 45 Many young people who are teenagers or young adults will not identify with the term children; this is why we use young people as well, to refer to this group in terms that are meaningful and appropriate. We avoid using the term ‘youth’ as it has a definitional meaning of 12 to 24 year olds, and is not consistent with the overall intent of this strategy.
- 46 Furthermore, as the Strategy is intended to apply to some young people (those transitioning from state care) up to the age of 25, it is simply not appropriate to refer to adults in this age group as children. For this reason we recommend removing the note on the front page of the proposed outcomes framework that defines “children” this way. If necessary for reasons of legal definition this could be noted elsewhere.

Recommendation 13: Remove the note defining “children” from the front page of the proposed outcomes framework, and if necessary note this definition elsewhere.



“Equity, fairness, and freedom are 3 things that all children should be able to experience in terms of a good life” *(Secondary school student, Samoan)*