



20 September 2024

Dr Claire Achmad
Chief Children's Commissioner
Mana Mokopuna | Children and Young People's Commission
Sent via email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe Dr Achmad

Draft OPCAT Report – Te Puna Wai ō Tuhinapo Youth Justice Residence

In May 2024, your monitoring team visited the Te Puna Wai ō Tuhinapo Youth Justice Residence (Te Puna Wai) to monitor the safety and wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi. This monitoring visit was completed as part of your role as a National Preventive Mechanism under the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT).

On 23 August 2024, you provided your draft OPCAT report for Te Puna Wai to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) for review and comment. Our response to the factual accuracy was shared with your office on 6 September 2024.

The report makes 11 recommendations, all of which are either accepted or under consideration as part of the residence future state design. As noted in the report, the monitoring visit took place shortly after the commencement of the Residences and Homes pilot. The pilot is focused on improving kaimahi training and leadership development, trialling a new roster system, and working with kaimahi and rangatahi to identify what the best experience in a youth justice residence could look like. The monitoring team have therefore acknowledged that the residence was operating within a test environment and that some teething issues were still being worked through. An evaluation of the pilot will be undertaken which will inform any changes that may be more widely rolled out across our Residences and Homes. It is good to note that, within those early days, kaimahi at Te Puna Wai were largely positive about trying a different way of working and seeing what could be achieved.

I acknowledge the concerns raised in the report regarding the conditions of the Secure Care unit. As observed, the walls in the secure bedrooms have been heavily damaged by tagging, including some etching into the walls. I can advise that these have since been addressed, with the walls being repaired and painted to bring the rooms back to their original state. This includes polishing work on some of the stainless where tagging has also occurred.

It was pleasing to note your findings that the Te Puna Wai leadership team is working to improve the culture of the residence. The pilot has seen an investment in training the Team Leader Operations group, and strengthening the consistency of practice within this group has been a focus which will provide clearer guidance and direction for kaimahi and also be positive for rangatahi.

Another positive observation in the report is that Te Puna Wai leadership have worked to ensure rangatahi have increased access to meaningful programmes in the residence and activities in the community. The recruitment of an Employment Co-ordinator, a Programme Co-ordinator, and the Agriculture Programme tutor have been positive additions. The report particularly acknowledges the importance of these roles in enabling rangatahi to learn new skills and be supported within a safe environment, providing rangatahi with developmental opportunities that can help build resilience and build their skill sets. Rangatahi are also being connected to community-based courses so they can gain some work experience before they leave residence, which helps with their transition back to the community.

I trust you find this information useful. If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact me on [REDACTED]

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a trailing line, positioned below the Māori phrase.

Julie Miller
General Manager
External Monitoring and Reviews