

Safe, healthy, affordable housing

[what matters most is] "Getting everything we need – safe dry house, good food, good places to be."

Mokopuna¹

No child or young person should be growing up homeless in Aotearoa New Zealand. All mokopuna have the right to a safe, stable, and nurturing home.

A secure home is foundational to wellbeing. It makes a crucial difference to all aspects of the lives of mokopuna (children and young people). Safe and healthy housing is linked to reduced stress and better physical health. Mokopuna in secure housing are more likely to attend school consistently and maintain connections with their wider community. For whānau (families), affordable housing allows resources to be used for food, education, and wellbeing.

Housing is a fundamental human right, affirmed under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as many other international laws that Aotearoa New Zealand is duty-bound to uphold. The United Nations states the fundamental elements of the right to housing are security of tenure, availability of services (materials, facilities and infrastructure), affordability, habitability, accessibility, location, and cultural adequacy.²

A wide range of people experience housing insecurity. Increasingly this includes working whānau with mokopuna. Women – especially young women, Māori, Pacific, whaikaha (disabled) and rainbow people are most likely to experience housing deprivation.^{3 4 5} People deprived of secure housing are also more likely to face violence and exploitation, and struggle to access employment.⁶

Mokopuna make up the highest proportion of people living in crowded or uninhabitable environments.⁷ The last Census found that almost half of all people experiencing housing deprivation are under 25 years old. This includes 13,000 mokopuna under 15 years old.⁸ These numbers are rising, exacerbated by increased numbers of mokopuna and whānau living in poverty, narrowing criteria for support, fewer emergency housing grants and young mokopuna increasingly sleeping in cars and living rough.⁹

Mokopuna transitioning out of Oranga Tamariki care and justice settings are particularly vulnerable to housing insecurity. Affordable, safe, stable housing is the most significant barrier to these mokopuna and their wellbeing in transitioning from State care to independence and adulthood. Mokopuna moving from these settings are likely to have ongoing support needs.

Youth homelessness is inconsistent with children's rights. It undermines the wellbeing and mana of mokopuna. It disproportionately affects mokopuna Māori, reflecting systemic breaches of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and entrenching intergenerational inequity.

Our calls to action

We call on the Government and housing providers to:

- **Increase the supply of affordable and social housing.** Significantly expand investment in social and community-led housing initiatives targeted for those in severe housing need, including for children and young people who are homeless. Implement policies that incentivise affordable housing construction.
- **Improve youth housing services and system responsiveness.** Expand youth-specific transitional housing with integrated on-site support. Improve service coordination by ensuring young people and their support networks can easily access information and referral pathways to housing solutions that meet their needs.
- **Review and revise existing housing policies and strategies to ensure they respond to the specific needs of mokopuna** especially those most affected, including young women, young parents, Māori, and Pacific, whaikaha and rainbow.
- **Increase resourcing to enable earlier support and assistance focused on mokopuna leaving Oranga Tamariki care,** including longer lead-in and preparation time and earlier referrals for transition-related support. Increase the frequency of engagement with mokopuna from services. Recognise their needs will change throughout transition periods.
- **Ensure housing affordability through stronger income support and incentivising or subsidising approaches.** Increase assistance in supported accommodation supplements and other age and income-related subsidies targeted to households with mokopuna.
- **Support Māori-led and culturally grounded housing approaches.** Invest in Māori-led initiatives and papakāinga housing (collective homes on Māori-owned land) to support intergenerational living, uphold cultural identity, and deliver solutions grounded in whānau, hapū, iwi and hapori (community) partnerships.
- **Support mokopuna participation in housing policy development and implementation.** Actively involve mokopuna in the development of housing policies and implementation, to ensure housing solutions uphold their rights, experiences, and aspirations, particularly those from groups who experience higher levels of homelessness.

What mokopuna say

Mokopuna have told us that having a safe and warm home is fundamental to their wellbeing. Their observations highlight their awareness of the critical importance of having a home to live in.

"Getting everything we need – safe dry house, good food, good places to be".
Mokopuna¹⁰

"Living with parents at the moment, maybe forever. It's hard to get a house that's affordable or accessible for me".
Mokopuna¹¹

"Cold and mouldy, too poor for heating."
Mokopuna¹²

"...If I am not in a warm, dry home I am susceptible to colds. I am not able to clear my throat because of cerebral palsy"
Mokopuna¹³

"Not having a house makes people crazy."
Mokopuna¹⁴

For mokopuna involved in Oranga Tamariki, transitioning out of a system and into independence can be challenging. Mokopuna want to know that someone is backing them.

"I would like a check-up with a transition worker. I never had a consistent transition worker."
Mokopuna¹⁵

"...implement a regular check-up (every 3-6 months) to see how the now young adults are tracking along after leaving your guys 'care'".
Mokopuna¹⁶

"U guys suck I just got dropped at 18 had nowhere to live had to turn to WINZ to help me."
Mokopuna¹⁷

Mokopuna have reminded us time and again that we must place their best interests at the heart of housing funding and policy.

"Everyone tells you have human rights, that you have a right to safe and warm housing, that you have a right to education, but I couldn't go to school, why? Because I couldn't make it there. I was in emergency housing."
Mokopuna¹⁸

Endnotes

¹ Mana Mokopuna (2024). <https://www.manamokopuna.org.nz/publications/reports/you-need-to-get-in-early-as-soon-as-you-see-people-struggling-understanding-the-life-course-journey/>

² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – UN Habitat (2009). [The right to adequate housing: Fact Sheet No. 21/Rev.1.](#)

³ Rangatahi females are overrepresented within the population of housing deprived New Zealanders. Pacific peoples are overrepresented, followed by Māori. Disabled people are also overrepresented, and the rainbow community is also significantly affected. [2023 Census severe housing deprivation \(homelessness\) estimates | Stats NZ](#)

⁴ Jackson, S. C., & Chubb, L. A. (2025). 'I can sleep at night': examining the intersection of housing stability, addiction, and recovery among mothers who use drugs. *Kōtuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences Online*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1177083X.2025.2510601>

⁵ Stats NZ, (2024). 2023 Census severe housing deprivation (homelessness) estimates, sourced from: [Cabinet paper to Hon. Louise Upston \(March 2025\). New Zealand Disability Strategy Refresh: Approval for Approach and Consultation.](#)

⁶ Jiang, T., Fraser, B., Buchanan, M., Aspinall, C., Guha Thakurta, A., Fasoro, A., Atatoa-Carr, P., McMinn, C., Pehi, T., Ombler, J., Hawkes, K., Nelson, J., & Pierse, N. (2025). A Survival Analysis of Mortality in a Housing First Population in Aotearoa New Zealand. People, Place & Policy Online, <https://ppp-online.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/housing-first-population-new-zealand.pdf>

⁷ [2023 Census severe housing deprivation \(homelessness\) estimates | Stats NZ](#) (221.3 per 10,000 children under 15 years).

⁸ Ibid. 319.0 per 10,000 children aged under 15 years, and 287.3 per 10,000 and young people aged between 15 - 29 years, are living in crowded and/or uninhabitable environments. Sourced Stats NZ – Tatauranga Aotearoa (2024). *2023 Census severe housing deprivation (homelessness) estimates.* <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/2023-census-severe-housing-deprivation-homelessness-estimates/>

⁹ Salvation Army (2025). *Salvation Army State of the Nation 2025.* https://www.salvationarmy.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/TSA_SOTN25_DownloadVersion.pdf; Office of the Minister of Housing, Infrastructure and RMA Reform (2024). *Cabinet paper: Fixing the housing crisis.*

<https://www.hud.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Documents/Cabinet-papers/Cabinet-Paper-Fixing-the-Housing-Crisis.pdf>; Cindy Kawana, Housing lead and whanau violence advisor for E Tipu E Rea, Auckland kaupapa Māori mātua taiohi support organisation. [E Tipu E Rea: Supporting Teen Parenting and Young Parents with Comprehensive Services](#), in Todd Foundation Annual Review (2024)

https://www.toddfoundation.org.nz/site_files/30680/upload_files/2024%20Annual%20Review%20-%20The%20Todd%20Foundation.pdf?dl=1. Radio New Zealand (June 2025). 'Nowhere to go' for more than 100,000 Kiwis: The worsening reality of homelessness. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/thedetail/564850/nowhere-to-go-for-more-than-100-000-kiwis-the-worsening-reality-of-homelessness>.

¹⁰ Mana Mokopuna (2024). ["You need to get in early, as soon as you see people struggling." Understanding the life-course journey.](#)

¹¹ Mana Mokopuna (then Office of the Children's Commissioner) (2021). *Mokopuna voices summary 2021.* https://www.manamokopuna.org.nz/documents/568/New_Zealand_Childrens_Commissioner_Mokopuna_Voices_Summary_2021.pdf

¹² ibid

¹³ ibid

¹⁴ ["You need to get in early, as soon as you see people struggling." Understanding the life-course journey.](#) Mana Mokopuna 2024

¹⁵ Oranga Tamariki (2023). *Report of survey findings: Hearing from young people - Just Sayin' 2023* <https://www.orangatamariki.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/About-us/Research/Latest-research/Transition-Support-Service-four-year-evaluation/Just-Sayin-23-report.pdf>

¹⁶ ibid

¹⁷ ibid

¹⁸ ibid