



26 August 2025

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 – Kaitiaki Remand Home**

In May 2025, your monitoring team completed a follow-up visit to the Kaitiaki Remand Home (the whare) to monitor the safety and wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi. This followed your monitoring visit to the whare in October 2023 and 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 11 July 2025, you provided your draft OPCAT report for the whare to Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) and to our partner agency Reconnect Family Services – Te Ope Pirita Ltd (Reconnect) for joint review and comment. Our joint response to the factual accuracy was shared with your office on 8 August 2025.

Your positive findings regarding the care provided by Reconnect was pleasing to read, particularly that it was obvious to the monitoring team that rangatahi and kaimahi enjoy spending time together, and that rangatahi knew what kaimahi they felt they could trust and talk to. We consider this is largely helped by the stable group of kaimahi that predominately work in the whare, enabling consistent support for rangatahi and a positive and safe environment in the whare.

You reported that recent training provided by Reconnect has proved positive. It is great to see kaimahi highlight that our training has helped to support consistent practice, and increased their capability to work with, and understand, the behavioural need of rangatahi. As Mana Mokopuna also noted in the report, the Oranga Tamariki Tāmaki Makaurau Placements team had planned up-coming training for all remand homes in the region to further upskill kaimahi and support consistent practice across all the remand homes. This training has since been completed.

We note your concerns around kaimahi working long shifts in the whare. Reconnect will review their shift processes and will monitor staffing arrangements. The monitoring team also commented that kaimahi want more staff on shift. Reconnect senior leadership have carefully considered current staffing arrangements and have assessed these as adequate for the number for rangatahi in whare at any time. Should an urgent situation arise, Reconnect can use additional casual kaimahi, and will continue to do so if required. In addition to this, the Reconnect after-hours response team is largely based in the Kaitiaki homes, providing additional in-person support when needed.

We note your report finding that kawa and tikanga needs to be woven through day-to-day operations. The Reconnect Cultural Leader | Mana Whakahaere is working closely with the whare to make improvements, which recently included the implementation of our four cultural competencies, which are also part of kaimahi performance appraisals. Increased training has also supported kaimahi to better understand cultural practice, including integrating the use of basic Te Reo Māori, and the creation of a safe space for rangatahi to express their culture. Additionally, our longer-term programmes already include Oranga assessments, providing rangatahi with an opportunity to further explore and share their culture. This will also be offered in our Kaitiaki homes, particularly for those who stay longer.

We note that rangatahi shared with the monitoring team that they get bored in the afternoon. Reconnect ensures there are a variety of scheduled activities, which includes a focus on providing opportunities for rangatahi to have 'down-time'. We will continue to ensure kaimahi document daily schedules and comment on any last-minute changes - which can often happen due to a range of dynamic operational factors.

Mana Mokopuna noted that the paint work of the whare needed a refresh due to tagging and raised concerns regarding black mould in the bathroom and on the backs of some curtains. After the visit, a shower dome was installed to contain condensation in the shower and help prevent mould. The mould present was a surface-kind and has been removed and it is expected the curtain issue will be addressed shortly. The paintwork and general damage have been assessed, and following a lighting upgrade in the whare, painting of the whare will occur.

Mana Mokopuna was told by kaimahi and rangatahi that they would like to see a bigger budget for kai at the whare. Mana Mokopuna observed that kaimahi making dinner during their visit had to improvise due to the whare running out of rice. It was also reported that kaimahi then needed to ration potatoes when adding these to the meal so there was something of substance for the next night. Reconnect notes that there was sufficient kai to make meals that day in the fridge and freezer of the whare. The following day was also grocery shopping day for the whare, so there was no need for kaimahi to save food for the following night. Reconnect therefore considers that the budget is sufficient but is working with Oranga Tamariki to change the supermarket to purchase orders from a nearby supermarket. Reconnect has also allocated petty cash to be available in situations where there is a delay (due to unforeseen circumstances) in any purchases, or the house runs out of basic items.

We understand that kaimahi expressed to Mana Mokopuna their concern regarding the mixing of care and protection and youth justice rangatahi. This occurs as a last

resort and after alternative options are explored first. The age and presentation of those in the whare are considered, but the reality, as noted in the report, is that there is shortage of placements. Oranga Tamariki is committed to addressing this shortage.

It is pleasing to read that rangatahi described their time with the Tuilaepa Youth Mentoring Service (TYMS) kaiako as the highlight of their day in the whare. We note that Mana Mokopuna observed rangatahi experiencing education, including a mixture of activities, fun games and tasks, with one example involving rangatahi having to work together and support each other with maths to get to their target.

It is also good to see that Mana Mokopuna found rangatahi at the whare were supported to regularly speak with their whānau and social workers, and that rangatahi said they had no problems with their social workers. Rangatahi are also able to call their whānau, and are happy with that contact, but expressed a desire to see their whānau face to face at the whare. Oranga Tamariki and Reconnect are currently reviewing the whare in-person contact policy when mokopuna are placed into remand homes.

Reconnect and Oranga Tamariki are proud of the work we do together to ensure that rangatahi experience high quality service provision. However, we do acknowledge the areas in your report that require further work, including ensuring more timely repairs and property maintenance, and kaimahi shift processes. Reconnect and Oranga Tamariki will continue to work to resolve these matters.

I trust you find this information useful. If you have any questions or would like further information, please feel free to contact me, or the Reconnect Chief Executive Officer Kelly Manning on [REDACTED]

Nāku noa, nā



Julie Miller  
**General Manager  
External Monitoring and Reviews  
Oranga Tamariki**



Kelly Manning  
**Kaiwhakahaere Matua, Chief  
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Reconnect Family Services Te Ope  
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