Nationwide advocacy campaign Phase One Status Report

as at April 2026

www.dearchildren.co.nz

Introduction

On 8 December 2025, the Children's Commissioner, Dr Claire Achmad, alongside the team at Mana Mokopuna - Children's Commissioner and 250 attendees, launched *Dear Children,* a new nationwide, multi-phase advocacy campaign.

Dear Children affirms the right of every child and young person in Aotearoa New Zealand to grow up safe, free from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and harm, and it calls on every adult in New Zealand to step up and fiercely protect that right, in communities throughout our country.

The advocacy campaign was intentionally launched ahead of the summer holiday period, with Dr Achmad pointing to past tragedies - including children killed by homicide during the previous Summer holiday period - to illustrate the real risks when support and vigilance are lacking.

While the Children's Commissioner is the initial face and voice behind this campaign, as it flows into communities around the country over time, the kaupapa of *Dear Children* is intended to belong to everyone, owned at the flaxroots in communities, and its success relies on all our collective voices, leadership, and actions. *Dear Children* is initially squarely focused on raising awareness of the issue of child safety and prevention of violence against children, to lay the foundation for a bigger ripple of change over time, in the prevention of violence, abuse, neglect and harm of children.

This report outlines the reach and resonance of Phase One of the campaign. It demonstrates strong public and stakeholder engagement to raise awareness of children's safety, widespread media coverage, a clear appetite for continued leadership and for adults to step up to better protect mokopuna from harm throughout New Zealand.

Purpose and kaupapa of the campaign

From its inception, the *Dear Children* campaign had one aim – to raise awareness of the problem of child maltreatment in New Zealand and start national and local conversation about this kaupapa. The intent is on bringing focus, urgency, and collective responsibility to the unacceptable and ultimately preventable high levels of harm experienced by children and young people in New Zealand.

"The reality is that children — often very young children — are dying in our country by homicide. We can't let it happen anymore." **- Dr Claire Achmad, Children's Commissioner**

Children's right to be safe: How we are falling short as a nation

- The scale of harm to mokopuna is significant.
- Multiple forms of child maltreatment happening every day, in all communities.
- Some mokopuna carry a heavier burden of harm.
- Mokopuna who die by homicide are often killed by the people who were meant to be caring for them.
- Thousands of mokopuna are carrying the harmful impact of the violence, abuse and neglect that they are victim-survivors of, and mokopuna who have experienced harm want this to be prevented for other mokopuna.

On average, a child is killed in Aotearoa New Zealand every

4-5 weeks

Police Admin data, 2025

7.3x

higher than the UK

3.5x

higher than Australia

2.6x

higher than Canada

Derived from the Global Burden of Disease 2023 dataset

1,493

common assaults against children

7,014

serious assaults against children

1,833

aggravated sexual assaults against children

Police Victimisation Data 2024; as cited in Table 6a, Salvation Army, 2025

The campaign is supported by a dedicated website, www.dearchildren.co.nz, and across its phases, the *Dear Children* campaign sets out to:

- spark national and local conversations about child safety and violence against children
- build awareness of the scale and seriousness of harm experienced by mokopuna in Aotearoa New Zealand, including how we compare internationally (showing how far we lag behind)
- affirm children and young people's inherent right to be safe, heard, and protected, and
- mobilise adults – individually and collectively – to take action in homes, communities, workplaces, and systems.

Dear Children

MANA MOKOPUNA
Children's Commissioner

Dear

Children

Campaign logic: Phase One

- Build awareness of the reality of child maltreatment in New Zealand amongst adults.
- Equip more adults with knowledge on how to play their part to support children's safety.
- Create a ripple of change for children's right to be safe.

MANA MOKOPUNA
Children's Commissioner

The call to action

Central to Phase One of the campaign is an open letter written by the Children's Commissioner, Dr Claire Achmad, addressed directly to mokopuna. The letter acknowledges the reality of harm for many children in New Zealand, affirms their right to grow up safe, and makes a clear commitment: that adults must, and will, collectively do better. Through the letter, the Children's Commissioner is calling on adults to join her in **making a shared commitment to children's safety**, and preventing child maltreatment in New Zealand.

Phase One of the *Dear Children* campaign sees the Children's Commissioner directly calling on every adult in New Zealand to co-sign the *Dear Children* letter with her, visibly demonstrating collective commitment to children's safety. It also calls on them to play their part to keep mokopuna safe by:

- **Speaking up** when something doesn't feel right
- **Being present** noticing children, listening to them, believing them, and checking in
- **Taking action** to make homes, schools, organisations, and communities safer, and
- **Championing change** by strengthening child protection policies and practices in workplaces, schools, and community groups.

In addition to co-signing the letter, leaders, supporting organisations and stakeholders are also invited by the Children's Commissioner to help create a ripple effect of awareness leading to action, by sharing the campaign through organisational and community networks, supported by the supporters' kit available on the campaign website.

Dear Children

MANA MOKOPUNA
Children's Commissioner

Partnering to develop the campaign

Dear Children was supported and developed through strong relationships, which enabled us to deliver a high-quality, ethical and cost-effective campaign. It builds on decades of previous work around ending violence against children undertaken by previous Children's Commissioners, rangatira throughout iwi and hapū, community leaders and organisations, rangatahi leaders, and professionals who work alongside children and whānau.

The campaign was created collaboratively by Mana Mokopuna and Curative, a creative agency specialising in social change.

Curative undertook research and consultation to ensure tikanga Māori, child protection principles, and ethical considerations were embedded throughout the campaign's visual and narrative elements.

The campaign microsite was developed by For Purpose, a social enterprise supporting community-led change. It provides information to help build awareness about the extent of the issue of child maltreatment in Aotearoa New Zealand, informed by research undertaken by Mana Mokopuna. It also features guidance to help people recognise the signs of abuse and harm experienced by children, and practical actions that individuals and organisations can take to help keep mokopuna safe.

Media planning and placement to support *Dear Children* to reach adults throughout Aotearoa New Zealand were delivered in ship with Together, with nationwide billboard placements secured through LUMO and Go Media. Both media providers offered significantly discounted placements in support of the kaupapa, for which Mana Mokopuna – Children's Commissioner is exceptionally grateful.

Campaign investment

Thanks to substantial in-kind support and discounted media placements, the overall cost of the campaign was very modest for a nationwide advocacy campaign, at approximately **$120,000** total spend.

Given the national scale, reach, and level of engagement achieved, this represents a highly cost-effective investment in public awareness building. This investment covered:

- campaign development and production
- microsite design and build
- paid media placement, including billboards and social media amplification.

This led to significant campaign reach, detailed later in this status update.

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Children's Commissioner

Campaign launch

Phase One of the *Dear Children* campaign was officially launched on 8 December 2025, at an event in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington.

The launch created a powerful shared moment of acknowledgement and commitment, reinforcing the campaign's central message: protecting children's safety and preventing child abuse is everyone's responsibility.

Approximately 250 people attended the apolitical launch, including iwi leaders, kaupapa Māori leaders, senior leaders and officials from government agencies, community leaders, representatives from NGOs, peak bodies, and child-focused organisations, academics, thought leaders and experts, and young people and youth advocates.

As part of the launch, attendees were invited to co-sign the digital letter, along with physically signing a *Dear Children* wall, as a physical representation of the kaupapa. A strong media presence attended the launch, filming the event, and the Children's Commissioner held a media standup at the launch and also conducted live to air interviews, following formalities.

Reach performance

As the campaign purpose is to start national and local conversations, this first phase of **awareness- building** is best measured in terms of *campaign reach*.

The coverage and support outlined in the following pages demonstrates that the campaign has created a focal point for public, political and sector discussion, raising visibility of the magnitude of preventable child maltreatment in our country. It has also reinforced the right of all children to be safe and that protecting child safety is a responsibility that we all hold – as neighbours, whānau, professionals, communities, and as a nation, collectively.

The following sections demonstrate reach-performance across media coverage and amplification, and feedback and offers of support that have been received to-date for the *Dear Children* campaign.

The estimated campaign reach as at March 2026 includes:

- Nearly **five million billboard impressions.**
- Over **one million social media views** (Facebook and Instagram).
- Around **700,000 viewers and listeners** of unpaid media coverage.

As at **24 March 2026:**

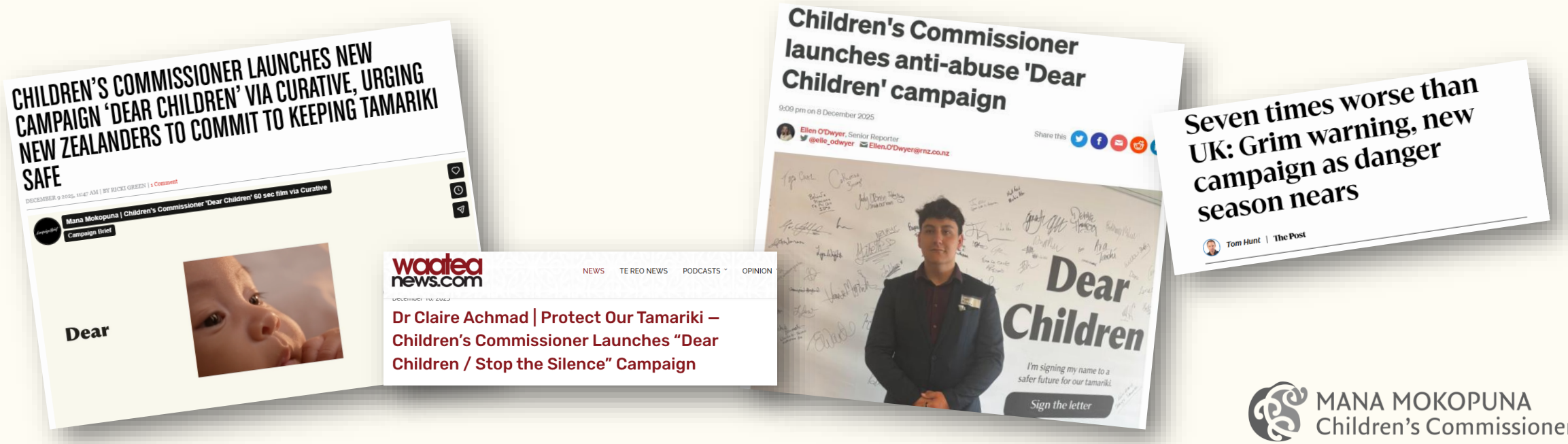
- **Around 19,266** new users had visited the *Dear Children* microsite.
- **4,113** people had signed the letter, with more signing every day.
- This represents a **21.35% conversion rate**, indicating strong engagement and alignment with the campaign message.

Media coverage and amplification

Media coverage (unpaid)

The launch of *Dear Children* generated extensive national media coverage across television, radio, print, and online platforms, including English-language, Māori, and Pacific media.

At least 26 pieces of unpaid media coverage were recorded off the back of the launch of *Dear Children*. This coverage significantly amplified the campaign's message and extended its reach across the motu, with an estimated audience reach of around 700,000 viewers and listeners, based on Isentia monitoring. This is a conservative estimate, with some media outlets not captured by Isentia monitoring.



MANA MOKOPUNA
Children's Commissioner

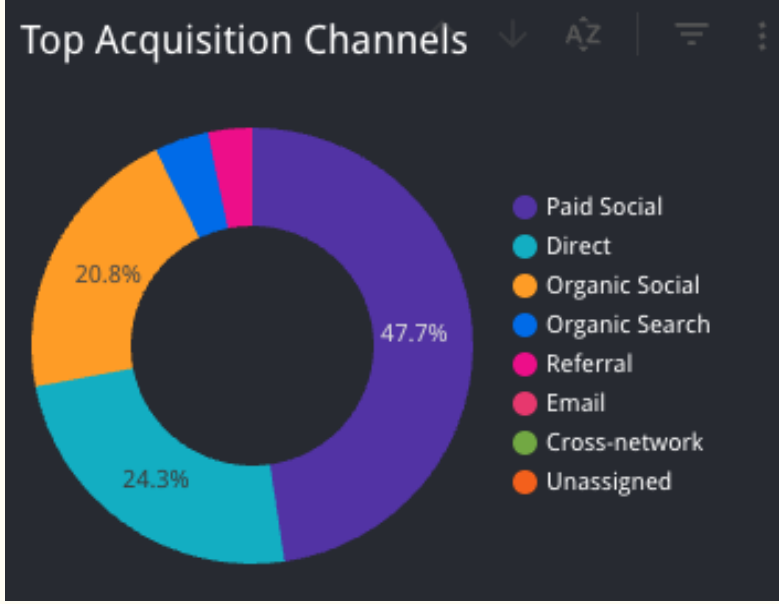
Media coverage and amplification highlights included:

- ***The Post Weekend*:** Feature story previewing the campaign including interview with the Children's Commissioner and featuring current data, including international comparisons.
- ***TVNZ Breakfast*:** TV interview with Children's Commissioner highlighting the reason for the campaign and what she hopes it will achieve, amplifying the direct call to action to all adults in New Zealand.
- ***Three News*:** News story featuring clips and commentary from the campaign launch, and highlighting extent of harm against children in New Zealand, when compared to other countries.
- ***RNZ:*** Feature story highlighting the launch including interview with the Children's Commissioner, and highlighting support from others, including various attendees at the launch. Also included reaction quotes stating support from Ministers of the Crown. Story was followed by multiple news items and news bulletins.
- ***Waatea News:*** Radio Interview with the Children's Commissioner, and digital article calling on Māori to honour the values of mana tamariki, mana whānau, and tikanga: to protect the vulnerable, to care for our mokopuna, and to ensure their right to a safe future. Also a te reo interview with the Pou Whakahaere of Mana Mokopuna in te reo Māori.
- ***NewstalkZB:*** Drive show interview with Children's Commissioner, along with multiple news items highlighting the launch of the campaign.
- ***Otago Daily Times:*** Feature story including comments from the Children's Commissioner and highlighting support from the Minister for Children and for the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence, as well as voices of survivors of abuse from the Gloriavale Leavers Trust.
- ***531pi / Pacific Media Network:*** Interview with the Children's Commissioner about the campaign.

Billboards and social media

Paid media placements to amplify the campaign's reach ran from 8–28 December 2025 and included:

- billboard placements across Auckland, Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, and Christchurch, which generated an estimated **4.9 million impressions**, and
- ads and social media boosts received **62,642 views,** and accounted for approximately **50% of microsite visits**.



This chart highlights how the campaign microsite was accessed

In addition to the paid social media boosts, between 8 December – 14 January:

- the *Dear Children* Facebook page generated **545,989 views** and **1,700 interactions**
- the *Dear Children* Instagram account generated **461,695 views**, including **56,395 organic views**, and
- the top-performing posts on Mana Mokopuna's own social media channels were campaign-related, generating seven of the most popular posts.

Campaign content was also shared organically across at least 151 other Facebook accounts, 74 LinkedIn pages, and multiple workplace intranets, including of major government departments, and on the social media accounts of iwi.

Examples of organic sharing include…

- Wellington Tenths Trust
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Te Puni Kōkiri
- Safeguarding Children

safeguardingchildrennz • Follow

safeguardingchildrennz Edited • 8w
Today our CEO, Willow Duffy, was proud to stand with Dr Claire Achmad, Children's Commissioner, at the launch of Protecting Our Mokopuna and the national advocacy campaign Dear Children in Wellington.

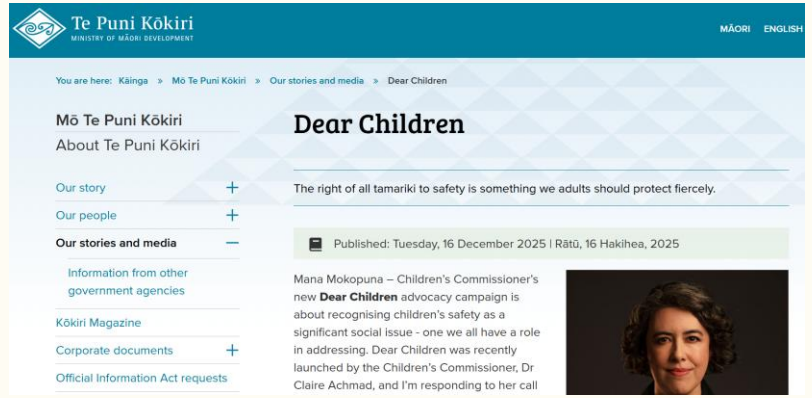
Dr Achmad's message was clear and urgent: we cannot allow harm to our children to continue. In Aotearoa, a child is killed by homicide every 4–5 weeks. Too many are growing up with abuse, fear and the impacts of family violence.

The Commissioner reminded us that child safety is not the job of one agency or one sector. It is a responsibility we all hold - as neighbours, whānau, professionals, communities, and as a nation. Listening to children, acting

14 1

December 8, 2025

Add a comment...



Wellington Tenths Trust's post

Wellington Tenths Trust
9 December 2025 ·

DEAR CHILDREN NATIONWIDE ADVOCACY CAMPAIGN
https://www.dearchildren.co.nz/
Dear Children brings focus, urgency, and shared responsibility to keeping children safe. At the heart of this kaupapa is a simple truth: every child has the right to grow up safe. I want all New Zealanders to be aware of the magnitude of the child harm in our country, and to be a champion for children. You are invited to help create a ripple effect of change. Let's show New Zealand's children they're dear to us. Help to continue growing this movement for children's safety and the prevention of child maltreatment by:
1. Signing the Dear Children letter at dearchildren.co.nz. In real-time, we are keeping track of the number of people who sign the letter with me, to send our country's children a clear and powerful message.
2. Sharing the campaign across your networks, organisations, and communities to help amplify the campaign. A supporters' kit is available at dearchildren.co.nz. If you have social media, one quick way you can get the word out about Dear Children is to post on your social media channels that you've signed the letter, why this kaupapa is important, and encourage others to sign the letter too.
3. Championing child safety within your community and spheres of influence – this might be through leadership, advocacy, policy, practice, or by building relationships with others.
4. Helping to strengthen the systems around whānau that ensure mokopuna can grow up safe, well and thriving.

Dear Children

MANA MOKOPUNA
Children's Commissioner

Feedback and offers of support

There were four key themes from across the correspondence we received in response to the campaign:

1. Tautoko for the Dear Children campaign

The most prominent theme across the correspondence has been strong support and tautoko for the *Dear Children* campaign, from both adults and mokopuna. Many expressed thanks, congratulations, and endorsement of the kaupapa, including signing the letter, sharing positive feedback following the launch and media coverage, and acknowledging the independent leadership shown by the Children's Commissioner and Mana Mokopuna team. Several correspondents identify as survivors of child maltreatment or as whānau who feel seen and affirmed by the campaign. There has been feedback from people who have already taken action as a result of seeing the campaign.

Examples of feedback from adults include:

- *"I truly commend you on the letter you've written and I have signed it. Thank you for all that you are doing for our children."*
- *"The campaign is an important step in changing the culture of violence against children."*
- *"Because of your campaign, our whānau has had difficult conversations that have needed to happen for a long time… I'm so thankful you helped this to happen with my sons."*
- *"It is our duty to protect every child in Aotearoa. Children are the collective responsibility of society."*
- *"Signed.. keen to know what I can do to make a strong impact on this issue."*
- *"Every action to address injustice starts with a thought, a kōrero, a hui, a petition or a letter …ka tukua tēnei kaupapa ki te ao, ka rere.'*

Examples of feedback from mokopuna include:

- *"This is a very proud campaign, something that mokopuna, rangatahi, and adults alike should sign and take pride in."*
- *"I saw your campaign and it made me feel so grateful that someone is shining the light on this… Thank you for actually being brave enough to talk about the dark realities, as young people we need to hear that someone cares and is willing to go there, it gives us hope."*

2. Requests to connect and collaborate

A significant volume of correspondence has included invitations to meet, requests to connect, and offers of collaboration.

This includes proposed meetings with the Children's Commissioner, offers of support, invitations to visit schools, opportunities to engage with caucus committees and senior officials, and questions about how individuals or organisations can actively support the campaign.

These requests often sit alongside expressions of support but carry a clear intent to engage further and to be part of an ongoing movement around owning *Dear Children* collectively, to grow greater awareness and to be the ripple of change in action.

Examples of engagement opportunities and invitations received and so far acted on by the Children's Commissioner and Mana Mokopuna include:

- presenting the campaign to around 30 mayors involved in the Mayors Taskforce For Jobs
- presenting the campaign to New Zealand Rugby's Safe Kids Advisors from each provincial rugby union, with reach to around 400 clubs and 88,000 children throughout the country
- collaboration with the Integrity in Sport Commission
- presenting the campaign to the Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention sector-wide working-group
- presenting the campaign to members of the Judiciary, including all Youth Court Judges at their Triennial Conference, and
- approaches from the education sector, health sector, rainbow community and legal profession to team up around the campaign.

We are continuing to receive and respond to requests to connect and collaborate on *Dear Children*.

3. Sharing lived experience

Another major theme is the sharing of lived experience with us in response to *Dear Children*. This includes people who have got in touch with support for the campaign and shared personal accounts of child maltreatment, the impact of Family Court decisions, suicide concerns, and systemic harm. Some correspondence includes feedback directly from mokopuna, alongside reflections from parents and caregivers.

- *"I'd like to write to you and commend you for your new campaign. I grew up in a household where violence and mental abuse was perpetual and cruel…."*
- *"I thought I'd personally speak on this as someone who has experience of this…This campaign will help Aotearoa be a country who can pride ourselves in the safety of our mokopuna and our rangatahi and an Aotearoa that can nourish our young people and not harm and hurt them."*

4. Ideas shared with us to further strengthen the campaign

Feedback about the campaign has also included the sharing of ideas about how the campaign can be further strengthened in relation to accessibility, equity and visibility. These messages are generally constructive and focused on strengthening the kaupapa, including concerns about the visibility of trans and rainbow mokopuna and suicide, the absence of NZSL resources for deaf mokopuna, and encouraging provision of the campaign materials in a wider range of languages.

Dear Children

MANA MOKOPUNA
Children's Commissioner

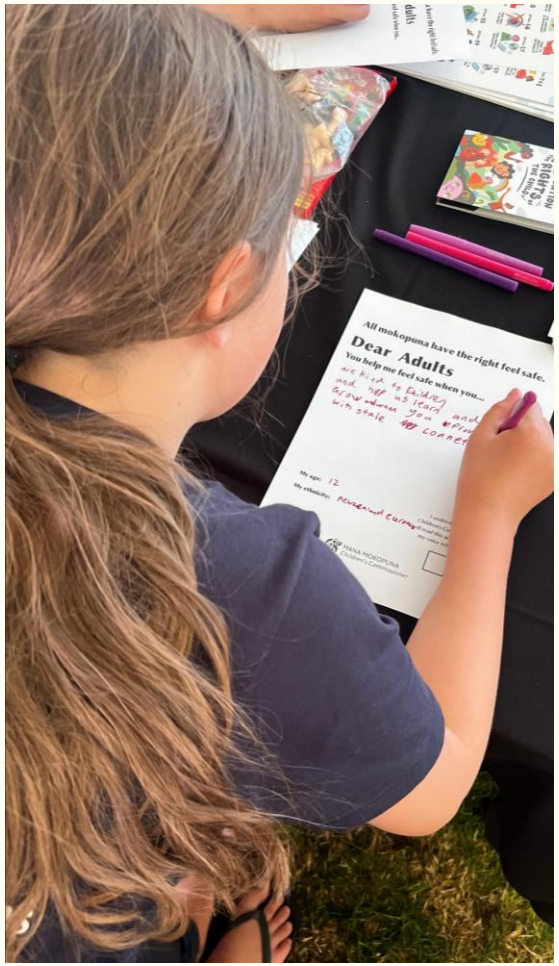
Looking ahead

The first phase of *Dear Children* was deliberately focused on building **visibility and awareness**. Its purpose was to bring the scale and scope of harm experienced by children and young people in Aotearoa New Zealand into the light, to challenge silence and complacency, and to affirm - publicly and unequivocally, and directly from the independent advocate for all mokopuna - that this level of harm is unacceptable and preventable.

Dear Children is not a moment in time, it is **an enduring invitation and responsibility**. The promise made to children through this campaign - to see them, to believe them, and to protect them - must now be carried forward through continuing to grow awareness that will in turn lead to collective and deliberate action.

Phase two of *Dear Children* will be about **creating a ripple effect of change in action** - moving from recognition to action, from concern to commitment, and from individual responses to collective and system-level shifts. Having introduced people to *Dear Children*, phase two will build on the impact of phase one, including through information/resource additions and refinement, leveraging relationships for impact, and through growing the campaign ownership at flaxroots, throughout New Zealand.

Mokopuna participation in *Dear Children*



- In early 2026 we developed and piloted a mokopuna engagement aspect to the *Dear Children* campaign, called *Dear Adults*.
- The purpose is to continue to bring the participation and voices of children and young people to the forefront of the campaign, bringing to life our section 23 Children's Commissioner Act 2022 function.
- The engagement approach with mokopuna of all ages involves an invitations for them to share by way of letter, *"Dear Adults, you help me feel safe when you…"*
- This has proven powerful (see some examples on the next slides), with mokopuna of all ages around the motu keen to engage in sharing their voice on this topic, and the Children's Commissioner weaving their perspectives into ongoing advocacy underpinning the campaign.
- The *Dear Adults* mokopuna engagement part of *Dear Children* campaign will further evolve and embed in phase two.

Dear Adults

You help me feel safe when you...

Listen to me
Stand up for me
look after me and protect me

My age: 16

My ethnicity: Māori + NZ European

I understand the Children's Commissioner will read this and may share my voice with others

Dear Adults

You help me feel safe when you...

are nice too me, i hate going out and getting judged from people alot older than me.

My age: 16

My ethnicity: Māori

I understand the Children's Commissioner will read this and may share my voice with others

Dear Adults

You help me feel safe when you...

Say words kindly
Don't yell all the time
Letting your kid be free
Listing to them when
they talk

My age: 10

My ethnicity: Māori, Samoa, Spanis

I understand the Children's Commissioner will read this and may share my voice with others

☐

Dear Adults

You help me feel safe when you...

Supports me with kapa haka
my mum helps me with homework
feeds me (mum)
dad helps me with netball and
all sports.

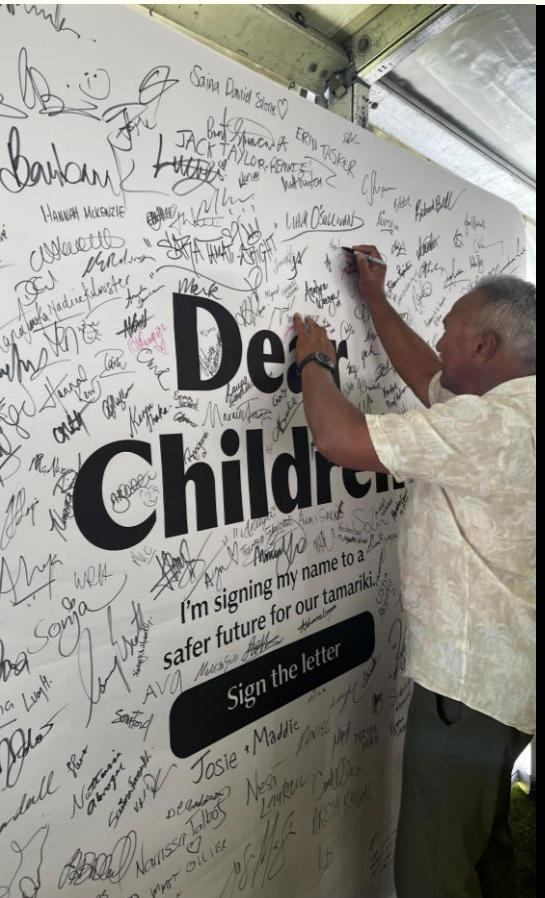
My age: 11

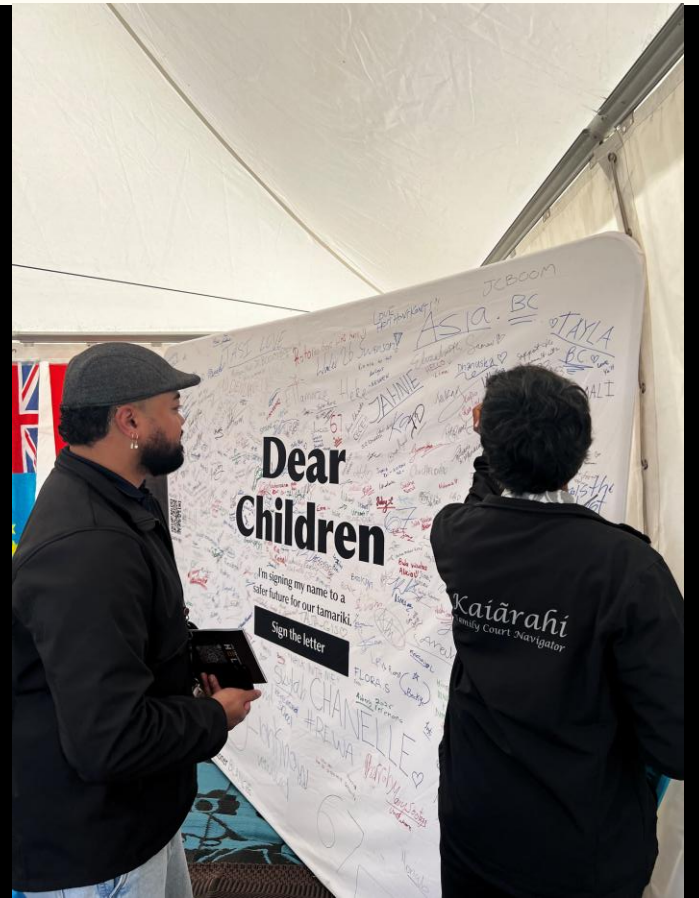
My ethnicity: Tuhoe

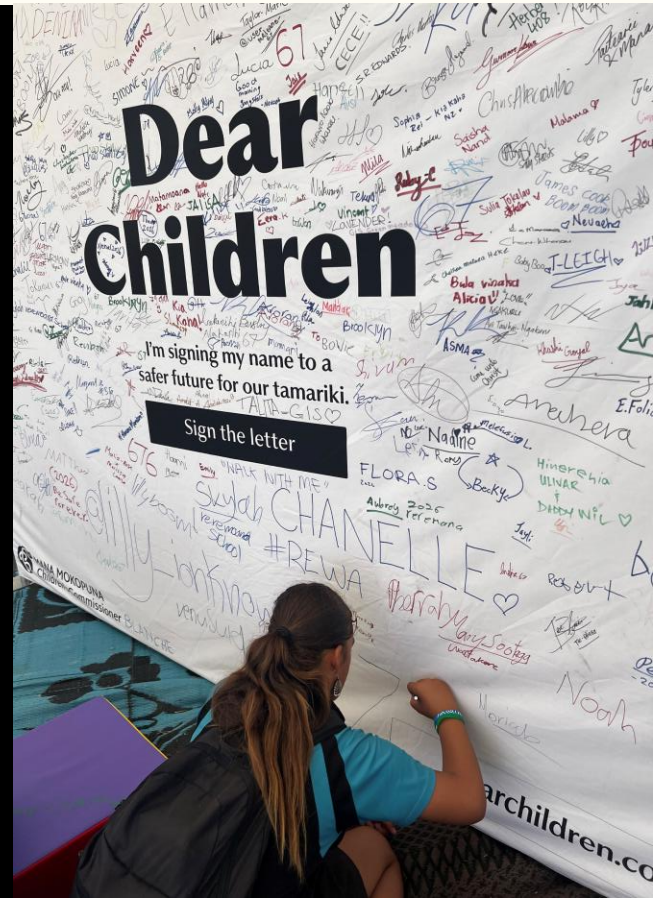
I understand the Children's Commissioner will read this and may share my voice with others

☑

Mana Mokopuna – Children's Commissioner will continue to nurture the *Dear Children* nationwide advocacy campaign over the coming months, working alongside communities, supporters and decision-makers – taking up the offers for engagement and collaborations to keep strengthening awareness, leading to a ripple of action and change, putting children's safety at the centre.







The *Dear Children* campaign belongs to us all, because…

… all forms of harm are preventable.

It’s about the power of prevention and education. Be part of it by:

- Signing the letter
- Sharing the campaign with others
- Drawing on the information and resources, to support the ripple of awareness and change.

Sign the letter

dearchildren.co.nz