



Reference: 24-OIAD-016

9(2)(a)

[Redacted]

13 November 2024

9(2)(a)

Response to your Official Information Act Request

Thank you for your email of 23 October 2024 requesting the following under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act):

Can I please request, under the OIA, any reports, evaluations, feedback, or written information of that nature on Aroturuki Tamariki's visit to the Military-style academy pilot.

The scope of your request is interpreted to be for any written information that provides a report, evaluation or feedback on Aroturuki Tamariki | Independent Children's Monitor's visit to the military-style academy pilot, at Te Au rere a te Tonga youth justice residence in Palmerston North on 10 October 2024.

There is one document in scope of your request. This document is released to you below. Some information that is out-of-scope of your request has been redacted.

The document contains a draft reactive media statement prepared to respond to enquiries regarding the Aroturuki Tamariki visit to Te Au rere a te Tonga youth justice residence.

The role of Aroturuki Tamariki is to carry out objective, impartial, and evidence-based monitoring of the oranga tamariki system. To do that, we gather information from the agencies that provide services and support to tamariki, rangatahi and their whānau, and we visit every region in New Zealand once every three years to listen to the voices of those tamariki, rangatahi, whānau and caregivers receiving the services and support. We then report our findings through a range of publications which you can find on our website, here: <https://aroturuki.govt.nz/reports>.

As part of our planned monitoring schedule, we visited the Manawatū and Taranaki regions in 2023, including Te Au rere a te Tonga youth justice residence. This visit took place prior to the residence being selected for the military-style academy pilot programme.

We are one of three agencies that work together under the Oversight of Oranga Tamariki System Act 2022. The other two are: the Children and Young People's Commission, Mana Mokopuna, which advocates for the rights and wellbeing of children and young people in New Zealand, and the Ombudsman, which provides assistance with complaints. To minimise disruption, the three oversight agencies decided to visit the military-style academy pilot together on 10 October 2024.

This visit was informal. Over the afternoon we met the young people and the staff supporting them and heard about their experience to date and how the programme is being run. Rangatahi on the programme had all volunteered to take part, and we did not see any activity that met the concerns around what military style might mean in practice. What we heard was that rangatahi have individual plans in place, daily routines, therapeutic programmes, regular exercise, excursions outside of the residence, involvement of Ngāti Rangitane, vocational and educational training, and connection to employment post sentence. There is also work with whānau to support the return home of rangatahi. My initial impression was that the focus, increased resource, training and support for rangatahi that we observed is something all rangatahi in residences could benefit from. We will be interested in the findings of the evaluation that is underway.

This visit did not produce the documentation that we would usually collate for analysis for our formal monitoring reporting. The draft proposed reactive statement attached briefly summarised our observations from the visit, however it has not yet been used to respond to media queries.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Office of the Ombudsman relating to this request, in accordance with section 28(3) of the Act. The relevant details can be found on their website at: www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

Please note that due to the public interest in our work, Aroturuki Tamariki publishes responses to requests for official information on our [OIA responses page](#). If you have any queries about this, please feel free to contact us on info@aroturuki.govt.nz.

Ngā mihi nui



Arran Jones
Chief Executive

Military style academy pilot at Te Au rere a te Tonga

Our proposed reactive statement about our visit is:

Attributed to Arran Jones, Chief Executive, Aroturuki Tamariki – Independent Children’s Monitor

Aroturuki Tamariki - Independent Children’s Monitor visits every region around New Zealand once every three years. We started monitoring the wider oranga tamariki system, including youth justice, and secure residences last year. Our visit to Manawatu and Taranaki occurred in late 2023, and we included Te Au rere a te Tonga at this time, prior to it being selected for the pilot programme.

I’m very mindful of the need for the young people at Te Au rere a te Tonga to be in a settled environment and the disruption that multiple visits could cause.

With this in mind, the three oversight agencies decided to visit together. Along with our Chief Monitor, the Chief Children’s Commissioner and representative of the Office of the Ombudsman, I went to Te Au rere a te Tonga on 10 October.

This visit was informal. I met the young people and the staff supporting them, heard about their experience to date and how the programme is being run.

The young people were enjoying the routine and access to physical activity. Staff were actively supporting the young people. Social workers and psychologists were working with the young people, supporting the programme and working on their transition back into the community. Some of the young people had jobs lined up, some had earned NCEA credits. What we saw is good practice that should be the norm in all residences.

I’m looking forward to hearing how the next nine months of community support go, and reading the evaluation of the pilot.

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

