

## **Key Insights from Our Monitoring Visits to Youth Justice Residences August – November 2024**

### ***Response from Oranga Tamariki***

We thank The Independent Children's Monitor - Aroturuki Tamariki (The Monitor) for sharing their report *Key insights from our monitoring visits to youth justice residences August – November 2024*. Oranga Tamariki welcomes the feedback we receive from all oversight agencies, as this is an opportunity for us to gain further insight into areas we are doing well, and opportunities for growth.

The Monitor conducted a number of monitoring visits to Oranga Tamariki youth justice residences last year. Between August and November 2024, the Monitor visited four residences and have provided insights from that time.

These visits took place against the background of a significant organisational restructure under way at Oranga Tamariki, which included the creation of a new Youth Justice Services and Residential Care business group, who now oversees youth justice residences.

During the visits, the Monitor heard examples across residences of inconsistent practice, lack of clear purpose, issues with leadership, programming, staff training and contact with site social workers. Oranga Tamariki acknowledges this feedback, which is valuable for our ongoing focus of operating safe residences with consistent high-quality care across all locations.

The Monitor's insights also captured examples of positive practice and where progress has been made at residences. These include:

- Some rangatahi getting stability and consistency at residences that they may not have had in the community, including drug and alcohol services, education and life skills
- Examples of experienced, caring and approachable leaders at some residences who are highly valued by their teams
- The exceptional support and cultural connection provided for rangatahi Māori in one residence

There are other areas where Oranga Tamariki has made significant progress in the last nine months between August 2024 and May 2025. These include:

- A new leadership structure, including a Manager Youth Justice Residences
- A new permanent Residence Manager at Whakatakapokai
- Frontline leadership training for residences being rolled out
- A refreshed induction programme for residences
- Adjustments to an ongoing pilot of a new roster for staff at Te Puna Wai
- Re-establishment of the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee

- Ending the use of contingency workers to create a more stable workforce
- A trial of a new national programme approach being launched at Korowai Manaaki
- Significant increase in the utilisation of community bail and remand homes as alternative placement options, which are less restrictive than secure residences

This work is part of a programme of continuous improvement in Oranga Tamariki youth justice residences. We take our role of caring for young people in these spaces seriously and will continue to work towards our focus of operating safe residences with consistent high-quality care across the country.