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Kōanga (Spring) 2022 Newsletter

**Te Mana
Whakamaru
Tamariki
Motuhake** | Independent
Children's
Monitor



Ngā mihi ō te Kōanga ki a koutou. Ka mahana mai ngā rā, ā, ka puāwai mai ngā putiputi o te rākau kōwhai.

Kōanga and the September bloom of the kōwhai tree signals new beginnings and preparing for the warmer months ahead.

In August I had the privilege of appearing before the Royal Commission. The Commissioners were very interested in our current work, and what will change as a result of the new legislation (the Oversight of the Oranga Tamariki System Act and the Children and Young Person's Commission Act).

It was a good opportunity to explain that we have been around since 2019, and how we have been working with communities. Although the Act grants us greater power to monitor the whole of the Oranga Tamariki system, over the last couple of years we have been busy monitoring the compliance of Oranga Tamariki, and other agencies with custody responsibilities, with the National Care Standards Regulations.

Our monitoring is not replacing work the Office of the Children's Commissioner was doing. It is there to compliment and support their role as advocate for all tamariki in New Zealand. Along with the Office of the Ombudsman, the three of us are committed to delivering a comprehensive oversight system.

I was heartened to hear the Royal Commissioners refer to findings in our Experiences of Care in Aotearoa report in questioning Oranga Tamariki about

stability of care for tamariki, particularly the frequency of visits by social workers. Having regular, robust, independent monitoring will enable questions like this to continue to be asked by Ministers and advocates for tamariki and rangatahi.

If you've met with us, or [read our report](#), you'll know that the stories and lived experiences of tamariki and rangatahi, their whānau, caregivers and community are at the centre of our monitoring approach.

In just 18 months, to June this year, our monitoring teams met with 280 tamariki and rangatahi, 70 whānau, 260 caregivers and over 1,500 kaimahi (staff) from iwi and Māori partners, non-government organisations and government agencies.

After each visit, we share what we heard with the community. This is so communities and agencies can begin making improvements specific to their region, instead of waiting for the annual report.

We also request data from each of the agencies with custody and care responsibilities. These data requests are [published on our website](#) and include questions about areas we have previously identified as needing improvement.

Our annual report reflects what we heard in the communities we visit, alongside the data request information, so that Oranga Tamariki, and other agencies, can be held to account, and importantly, to learn what is working well for tamariki, rangatahi, their whānau and caregivers, and what isn't.

We're currently writing our second annual report on Experiences of Care in Aotearoa, to be published early next year. It will look at how Oranga Tamariki, and others, have improved since 2020/21 and whether the improvements promised in response to our report have been delivered upon.

Our reports are provided to the Minister for Children. The Minister doesn't see the report until it is final. We publish our reports for the public and from next year, all our reports will be tabled in Parliament. We also brief the Children's Commissioner and the Ombudsman on our findings, giving the Commissioner robust evidence they can use to advocate for change for tamariki and rangatahi in care.

In mid-2023, when legislation takes effect and we become a departmental agency, we will remain in our current offices. We will have our own Chief Executive, who will be a statutory officer appointed by the Public Service Commissioner. We will continue to operate independently and simply be receiving 'back office' services, such as technology, human resources, finance and payroll from the Education Review Office as the 'host' of our departmental agency.

Whether we are a crown entity (like the Children's Commission) or a departmental agency doesn't change how we work or who we are. Our people are dedicated to improving outcomes for tamariki and rangatahi, and their whānau.

If you'd like to find out more about how we work, please reach out to one of our team.

Ngā mihi
Arran Jones
Tumu Whakarae | Executive Director

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Expansion of our monitoring

The Oversight of the Oranga Tamariki System Act has now been passed by Parliament and will come into force either on or before 1 July 2023.

The Oversight Act enables the Monitor to assess the quality and impacts of service delivery, resourcing and practices on the experience of tamariki, rangatahi alongside their whānau. This means we will expand our monitoring to include early intervention services through to the services and supports provided to rangatahi who are transitioning to adulthood. We will also be monitoring youth justice practice as well as the responsibilities of Police under the Oranga Tamariki Act, 1989.

To get ready for this change, we are working to extend our existing monitoring framework. This work has included speaking to tamariki and rangatahi to test our current monitoring tools and to hear what matters most to them.

We've also developed a list of potential 'big questions' for the Monitor to answer, to measure system performance. We've discussed our initial list of questions with Māori and Iwi organisations, agencies that provide services to children and young people, whānau, tamariki and government agencies.

We're now reflecting on the feedback that we've received to inform our future monitoring framework, approach and tools.

Our first expanded monitoring visits will take place in mid-2023 and we will provide more information on our expanded framework in future updates.



Monitor kaimahi ready to welcome guests to a hui at Papakura Marae

Monitoring visits across the motu

In late August our South Auckland monitoring visits got underway. We're really pleased to have reached a wide range of the community, including a hui with parents and caregivers of tamariki with FASD (Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders), a hui with teen parents, and our first kōrero with whānau members who are in prison.

Analysis of what we heard is already underway and the team are really looking forward to sharing back our findings with the community in October.

Our lower South Island visit has just got underway. This region covers Dunedin, Balclutha, Invercargill and Gore. The rest of our monitoring team are preparing for the Greater Wellington visit in mid-October.

We really appreciate the willingness of people to share their experiences with us, and to help us connect with whānau, caregivers, tamariki and rangatahi.

If you'd like to find out when we'll be visiting your region, our monitoring schedule is [on our website](#).

Updated information about when we visit

We've recently updated our website with information about what to expect when we visit.

There is information specific to the different groups we meet with. If there is a monitoring visit coming up in your region, you will find information about what to expect:

[Information for kaimahi of agencies with custody and care responsibilities](#)

[Information for whānau and caregivers](#)

Information for tamariki and rangatahi

If you'd like to help us connect with tamariki, rangatahi, whānau or caregivers in your community, you can find out more on our [connectors page](#).

Contacts for support and complaints

Together with the Office of the Ombudsman and Office of the Children's Commissioner, we're developing information about the new oversight system and putting processes in place to ensure there is no wrong door for tamariki, rangatahi, whānau or caregivers.

This will be ready before the new legislation takes effect in mid-2023.

In the meantime, we have updated contact information for support and complaints on [our website](#), or find out more about the [Ombudsman's Children in Care team](#).

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