

21 December 2022

Judge Frances Eivers
Children's Commissioner
Office of the Children's Commissioner
PO Box 5610
Wellington 6145

Sent via email: [REDACTED]

Tēnā koe Judge Eivers

Draft OPCAT Report – Korowai Manaaki Youth Justice Residence

In October 2022, your monitoring team visited Korowai Manaaki Youth Justice Residence (Korowai Manaaki) to monitor the safety and wellbeing of rangatahi. The monitoring visit 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 30 November 2022, you provided your draft OPCAT report for Korowai Manaaki for our review and comment. On 14 December 2022, we provided our feedback on the factual accuracy of the draft report.

Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children (Oranga Tamariki) has accepted the 11 recommendations made in your report. Please now find enclosed our response to your report's recommendations.

We acknowledge that at the time of your October monitoring visit to Korowai Manaaki, you raised concerns about low staffing, staff completing consecutive shifts, leave being declined and the impact of this on staff morale and wellbeing. Your monitoring team identified these factors, and the inexperience of some staff, as having the potential to create significant harm for rangatahi and our kaimahi. You noted that the potential for medical care and appointments to be compromised was a particular concern. Your concerns were taken seriously and we appreciate that you have referred to the immediate actions we have underway as a result, whilst acknowledging there is more work required.

The appointment of 12 fully trained staff occurred the day after your visit concluded. On 4 November 2022 we contacted your Office to inform you that Whakatakapokai Youth Justice Service was temporarily relocating primary services to Korowai Manaaki from 8 November 2022 through to 7 February 2023. This work was accelerated after your monitoring visit and was a decision that followed significant efforts to recruit kaimahi for Korowai Manaaki, analysis of several other options, and discussions with kaimahi affected.

We also acknowledge the concerns raised in your draft report. This includes recruitment and retention issues, the need for further training and development for staff including cultural competency, strengthening the grievance process, inconsistent remand reviews, reducing the use of secure care, restraints and searches, timely access to medical appointments and increasing multi-disciplinary meetings. We welcome your recommendations to strengthen these areas and our response identifies efforts currently underway to address these.

We are pleased to note that your monitoring visit to Korowai Manaaki found no evidence that rangatahi had been subjected to torture, or cruel or degrading punishment. We are also pleased your report identified that rangatahi enjoy education and have positive relationships with teaching staff. Your report also notes the significance of having an active Youth Council with good engagement with VOYCE Whakarongo Mai so that young people can have a say in the things happening for them. It was also pleasing to see that maintaining contact with whānau appears to be a focus in the residence, whilst acknowledging more could be done to overcome barriers to this contact occurring.

As our report back demonstrates, there is considerable ongoing work underway in Korowai Manaaki and all Oranga Tamariki Residences more generally, which we look forward to continuing to share with you and your team.

I trust you find this information useful. If you have any questions or would like further information, please feel free to contact me on [REDACTED] or alternatively Julie Miller, Director Review Management, on [REDACTED]

Nāku noa, nā



Nicolette Dickson
Tumu Tuarua | Te Kōunga o te Mahi me ngā Wheako
Deputy Chief Executive | Quality Practice & Experiences