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Social Service Providers Te Pai Ora o Aotearoa reacts to Budget 2024

Social Service Providers Te Pai Ora o Aotearoa (Te Pai Ora SSPA), the national member-based organisation for community-based social service providers does not see a clear direction for community-based social service providers around Aotearoa New Zealand in Budget 2024.

“Social service providers will continue to provide for children, rangatahi and families but it’s unfortunate that they remain uncertain about the future of their own organisations,” says Belinda Himiona, Chief Executive, Te Pai Ora SSPA.

“The reduction in funding for contracting through Oranga Tamariki in effect sets a savings target but we have not seen a reduction in the need for these services. We need to know the extent of funding decreases to understand the impact this will have on frontline services for families, communities and providers,” says Belinda.

This Budget provides significant investment in reactive areas including Youth Justice, Corrections and Police. However, there is limited new investment in core social service delivery and early intervention, which is what makes the real difference for children, families and whānau.

Te Pai Ora SSPA was concerned to see a reduction in funding for emergency housing, with the expectation this housing will not be needed. However, we are yet to see the correct frameworks and supports to provide solutions to our housing crisis.

“It is heartening to see a strong investment to improve the lives of disabled people and their families,” says Belinda, “and children in the care and protection system will benefit from the increase in funding for disability services, as they are more than twice as likely to have a disability than the general population.”

Te Pai Ora SSPA was also thankful to see the investment in Ka Ora, Ka Ako, the healthy school lunches programme and its extension starting from Year 0. “We all know children cannot learn if they are hungry. It is initiatives like this that show how we can care and nurture tamariki in their everyday lives,” says Belinda.

“We note the expanded funding for the Abuse in Care Crown Response Unit, which we hope will assist in implementing recommendations that come out of the Commission’s final report as well as an increase in funding to resolve more historic claims of abuse. For survivors and providers of care who have contributed to this Inquiry over the last five years, it will be reassuring to see this uplift in funding to ensure the Crown Response Unit can respond to recommendations and improve our care system into the future,” says Belinda.

“Critical to the success of community-based social services is a well-paid and valued workforce. It is disappointing that even after the social worker pay equity settlement and extension process, we again see our workforce undervalued and not given a pay increase equivalent to the Oranga Tamariki staffing increase signaled in this Budget,” says Belinda.

Looking to the future, Belinda explains “the new Social Investment Fund provides an opportunity to deliver more through trusted communities, but we need to understand how this potential will be realised with such a small level of investment.”

In Budget 2024 Te Pai Ora SSPA sees the family boost package, tax relief and investment in early childhood education as supporting families and whānau, but overall, Belinda commented, “we are not convinced that the changes are sufficient to tackle the complex social challenges and cost of living issues facing families today.”

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Belinda Himiona is available for interviews upon request: ceo@sspa.org.nz | 021 0230 1029

Editor's Notes:

ABOUT SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS TE PAI ORA O AOTEAROA | www.sspa.org.nz

Te Pai Ora SSPA is a membership-based organisation, representing more than 230 non-profit, community-based social service organisations from around Aotearoa New Zealand. Our member organisations are diverse, including small rural organisations, Iwi and kaupapa Māori service providers, Pacific providers, and large national children's organisations. Our member organisations provide life-changing and often life-saving services and support in their communities.

Te Pai Ora SSPA's full members are funded by government to deliver social services in our communities every day, with a predominant focus on children, rangatahi, families and whānau. Our affiliate members are organisations that deliver social services for these people, and organisations and individuals working in areas aligned to the interests of children, young people, whānau or communities.

Te Pai Ora SSPA's vision is that Aotearoa New Zealand's community-based social services are sustainable, making a positive impact every day in our communities and hapori, supporting children, young people and whānau to thrive now and into the future. Te Pai Ora SSPA works to strengthen Aotearoa New Zealand's social sector through advocacy and engagement, learning and development, relationships and sector leadership.