

E nga Mana, E nga Reo, Raurangatira mā

Tēnā koutou

Tēnā Koutou

Tēnā Koutou katoa

We come together today, at a time of great change, but also great opportunity.

As many of you are well aware, we've progressed essential changes. And, with the help of our partners, we're building momentum. Now, we need to *accelerate swiftly* as there much to do.

We know more now. We have more information, deeper experiences, and we understand better how to really *accelerate* progress, to shape the services of the future, for our children and young people.

Real *progression* will be seen when new legislation comes into force in July next year.

These are big changes. In many ways, it's when Oranga Tamariki begins, and we need to prioritise these new ways of working, alongside the work we do every day.

The scale of this challenge should not be underestimated.

Additional investment will be needed if the new services are to have an impact for our tamariki and their whānau.

These additional services will be rolled out across New Zealand, if not site-by-site, then certainly region-by-region, and they'll have to compliment, and leverage, the existing network of services and support.

We have made a good start with the funding and mandate we have received, since we were established in April last year.

Since I presented to you last year a lot happened:

We co-designed with you, children and their families New Zealand's first ever Care Standards.

We've established a Care Taskforce find more safe and stable placements for children and young people requiring emergency care.

We established community based alternatives to reduce the number of youth in police cells in Hamilton, Rotorua, Waikite Valley, Palmerston North and Dunedin.

We've developed a new Practice Framework to ensure high quality practice in all frontline services

New kaupapa Māori homes have opened, supporting children and young people to transition back to whānau.

We developed our Pacific Strategy, to deliver on our responsiveness across Oranga Tamariki.

We have shifted to longer term funding, increasing the proportion of our funding in multi-year contracts from 30% to more than 70%.

We started a 24/7 caregiver support and advice live.

We set up new sites in Waikato, Tauranga and Whangarei.

And, increased bed-night rates to recognise the cost of delivering care services.

Importantly, we introduced the first 'across-the-board' increase for many years, a welcome start to recognising the on-going pressures faced by our partners.

We know young people do best when they are in stable family-like environments and when they feel part of a community.

We are investing more in children by creating loving homes, and our partners have been key to this.

Developing care options alongside our partners, that best support young people to thrive, is our top priority.

However, I know last year you asked me to come back and talk about the current state, and the future. Thank you for the invitation, it is much appreciated.

So, today, I want to acknowledge, that top of mind for many of you, is pay equity for social workers.

Pay Equity:

As you know, last month, Oranga Tamariki signed a pay-equity deal with the PSA.

This recognised, that the role of a social worker in Oranga Tamariki, had been subject to historical, and on-going, gender-based *under-valuation*.

This was a long fought success for our social workers, but brought up issues for others, including people in this room today.

We know that the pay equity settlement has raised concerns for the NGO sector.

We know you are worried that the pay equity deal will make it harder to attract and retain social workers.

We also know, that the NGO sector delivers *vital* social services, to children and families, across the country, every single day.

So, today I want to show how we are committed, to making sure that children and families continue to get the services they need, from *all* parts of the sector.

Minister Martin has asked Oranga Tamariki to work with the NGO sector on the challenges and opportunities.

That work has already started, and I have had many conversations with the community sector on the subject of pay equity.

The last thing we want for our children and young people is division. Working together is the only way forward.

We're listening:

Earlier this year, we held a national forum bringing together senior leaders from our partner organisations. This forum followed a series of 14 regional hui.

Altogether we talked with over 750 people, from more than 570 organisations.

Earlier this month, we also held a National hui, with iwi and Māori organisations. 150 senior leaders from Māoridom came and talked to us, beginning the processes of creating strategic partnerships.

Through the Regional Hui, National Forum and National Hui you told us about the main areas that we must prioritise on.

We heard that you want *respectful partnerships* between Oranga Tamariki, social service providers and wider government agencies.

You said we *all* needed have greater cultural understanding and responsiveness.

It was clear, that there must be more *collaboration* between parties, focused on getting collective results.

And, that there has to be *flexible* regional approaches, to the planning and delivery of services.

When you talked about respectful partnerships in the Hui, you said that respecting each other's strengths and responsibilities was key.

This is very important to us. We're committed to being open to new and flexible ways of commissioning. To enable collective, innovative and locally tailored responses to be developed.

So, where does the opportunity lie?

The opportunity to work together lies at multiple levels, and I'd stress that it need not be all about a contract for service.

We want our relationships with you, as individual organisations, to feel more like partnerships.

I know that term "partnership" can take on multiple meanings – for me, in this context, it's being clear about the opportunities ahead for children, *and* working through how we bring our collective strengths, and our experience, together.

Oranga Tamariki is a team, and I am enabling decision-making, at a *local* level.

I encourage you all to share your ideas, and ways we can work together with our Regional Managers and Partnering for Outcomes staff members.

We want to build a common understanding of where the need lies in *your* communities and what services need to be made available.

Then, moving forward, we will need to collectively understand how well those services are working, and how we can continue to build capacity, and capability, to achieve better outcomes for tamariki.

We also see opportunities to work in partnership at a national level.

As we establish this network of services across the country, it will be really important that we share with each other, what we learn. What is working and what isn't? Ongoing engagement across the country, will help strengthen us as a whole.

This will all take time. And, as I've already said we will take a staged approach to how we implement the new model.

This Government's commitment to well-being, and *child* well-being in particular, provides us with an opportunity to do more, and do better.

Let's look ahead to the future, and apply *fresh thinking* to how we work together.

So, what's our commitment to this?

Workforce Working Group:

Today I'm announcing the establishment of a Workforce Working Group made up of NGO representatives.

This group will have a mandate to advise Oranga Tamariki, on the challenges and opportunities, which will undoubtedly come as we implement the Oranga Tamariki operating model, for the sector's workforce.

They will guide us on the development of a *sector-wide* workforce strategy.

I'll go into more detail about this, in a minute.

We see the impact of the proposed pay equity settlement as being something that needs to be addressed, in the context of building a new set of services, and new ways of working.

Those new things all have significant implications for the workforce. So, it makes sense to connect-up how we respond to them.

Your feedback at the regional and national Hui was that we should tackle challenges together, so let's *continue* to do just that.

I say "continue" because I hope you've seen a genuine effort on our part to involve you in our design work for the new services, and in finding solutions for some big issues, like emergency placements.

So, I see our next pieces of collaboration happening in three connected ways:

First, I'm establishing the Workforce Working Group which will have up to 15 sector representatives across Iwi and Māori organisations, Pacific organisations and the wider sector.

The objectives of this group are to identify the full set of challenges facing us all, in expanding how we help tamariki and their whānau, including the impact of the proposed pay-equity settlement.

And, to also identify *how* we can meet those challenges.

The Working Group's main focus is a *practical* plan which addresses pain-points and makes the most of opportunities.

Secondly, we'll design those next steps together.

I see this, as small teams of subject-matter experts, generating a detailed picture of what possible solutions *could* look like.

I say "could look like", because we know that our new ways of working, have to fit *local* needs and circumstances, and who knows better about those, than you. The experts.

Which brings us to the third part of our journey - regional engagement, or more correctly re-engagement.

Hopefully many of you attended the regional Hui in May and June, where we were talking about the new operating model, talking about the scale of investment needed, and describing some of our initial thinking, about what it might look like.

We plan to hold further Hui in the new year - probably around March - where we present the picture of what's required in each region, for the changes to be effective.

And, then we'll work with you to build it - both in terms of new or expanded services, and the workforce required to provide it.

The work overseen by the Working Group, and led by subject matter experts, should help make those collaborative discussions easier.

We will be able to focus our discussion on how the local network of; Iwi and Māori organisations; of Pacifica organisations; of NGOs and of Oranga Tamariki staff; can respond to the challenges and opportunities, using the ideas generated by these people who have *regional* context and expertise.

I'm keen to get the Workforce Working Group started as soon as possible, given the work it needs to get through, by early next year.

I'm proposing it be co-chaired by Oranga Tamariki and by a sector partner, and because we need to work quickly, the group will have finished giving advice and recommendations by around September next year.

The focus is clear. Tell us what's needed to maintain and *improve* our collective workforce, so, together we provide the best support for our tamariki and whanau.

What we've got to do:

We talk a lot here, about how, while we've been *establishing* Oranga Tamariki, our work *really* begins in July.

Alongside the work we need to do today, we are shaping the services of the future.

In the middle of next year change begins in earnest.

We have a large, immediate challenge ahead – to implement the legislative changes to the Oranga Tamariki Act which come into force from 1 July 2019.

The current government has endorsed Oranga Tamariki and its direction, and Minister Martin has told me to continue building momentum, to bring about *real change* for our tamariki.

Oranga Tamariki - with the help of our children, caregivers, partners and many of you, have been working with Government, so that we *can* deliver on the new legislative expectations.

I know many of you know this already, but it's worth reinforcing the scale of the change.

We'll be working in an expanded youth justice system, which includes 17 year olds.

We'll be leading a significant lift in the quality of care, underpinned by new Care Standards, and improved support for caregivers.

We're building a brand new transitions service for 18-25 year olds, including the right to return to living with a caregiver until age 21.

And, we'll be creating intensive intervention services for those who might be at risk of serious harm without effective intervention, and as many of you know, this requires improved practice, transparency and oversight of family group conferences.

Sitting across all of these changes is Section 7aa of the Act, which charges us to co-create higher aspirations for tamariki Māori.

Some have described it as Te puawaitanga mo ngā tamariki Māori.

(Pron: tea-pua-wai tanga mo ngaa tamariki-maori)

The enactment of section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act will require the Ministry to set measurable outcomes, to reduce disparities between Māori and non-Māori.

We *must* ensure policies, practices and services have regard to the principles of mana tamaiti, whakapapa and whanaungatanga.

We are *required* to establish strategic partnerships with iwi and Māori organisations

And, importantly we need to show what we're doing, by reporting annually on steps taken to fulfil these duties, and their impact on improving outcomes.

This new legislative environment provides a positive platform for change that requires the set-up of a comprehensive range of new support services. It also sets high standards for practice and for care.

Our challenge is to *always* put tamariki at the centre of everything we do. We will focus on partnerships with key stakeholders in the community, to get the best possible outcomes for children. Everybody here today can play a key role in realising this goal.

We have to be ambitious for tamariki who need our attention.

We must ensure they grow up in a loving and stable environment, preferably at home or in the care of whānau, their hapu, or iwi.

We have to commit to these young people, and to support them in the long-term where that's needed. And, we need to form strong partnerships, and respect the mana of those we work with.

This Government wants to enable us, to do just that.

Now, the ball is in our court to demonstrate how we can work effectively, and differently, *together* to implement the new model.

Let's find new ways to work together, to make the most of this opportunity for the benefit of our tamariki.

Thank you for the work you do every day to support New Zealand's children and young people.

No reira

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

ENDS