

7/08/2024

Media Release: PSNZ Opposes Repeal of Key Oranga Tamariki Act Provision

The Paediatric Society of New Zealand (PSNZ) has submitted its concerns to Parliament regarding the proposed repeal of section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989. This submission, authored by Dr Owen Sinclair (Te Rarawa, President), Wane Wharerau (Ngāpuhi, Māori Director), and Dr Russell Wills (Chair of the Child Protection Clinical Network), highlights significant risks posed by the repeal.

The proposed bill seeks to remove section 7AA, which is crucial for recognising the Crown's Treaty of Waitangi duties within the child protection system. This section ensures Oranga Tamariki sets measurable outcomes for tamariki Māori, has regard to mana tamaiti, and the whakapapa responsibilities of their whānau, hapū, and iwi, develops strategic partnerships with iwi, responds to invitations, and reports to the public on outcomes for Māori.

PSNZ strongly opposes the repeal, arguing it will not reduce child abuse or reverse uplifts of tamariki. They believe it will compromise the health and wellness of tamariki Māori and breach Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

"Repealing section 7AA would be a step backward for our tamariki. We must prioritise their cultural and holistic wellbeing, which is so vital for health," said Dr Owen Sinclair, President of PSNZ.

The submission highlights that poor child protection practices are a result of systemic issues, not the statute. Repealing section 7AA could negatively affect the placement process and undermine the duty to honour Māori cultural connections and what this means for tamariki.

Wane Wharerau, Māori Director of PSNZ, stated, "Our duty to tamariki Māori is set as a specific remit by the society. This repeal would disregard the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the relationships between the Crown, the Government, and Māori."

Section 7AA has contributed to positive changes, such as reducing disparities and forming strategic partnerships with Māori organisations. Repeal risks undoing these gains.

"Tamariki receive better assessments and care and are safer when Oranga Tamariki have enduring, respectful relationships with iwi," emphasised Dr Russell Wills, Chair of the Child Protection Clinical Network. "We have seen improved practice and outcomes resulting from these relationships. We must not put them at risk."

"Tamariki in Aotearoa flourish in health and wellness"

It was with shared horror that the members of PSNZ read the recent [Abuse in State Care Report \(Whanaketia\)](#). The report details widespread abuse and neglect that occurred over generations, with Māori suffering the most.

“We are determined that this report marks a turning point for our most vulnerable populations, emphasising a new approach that focuses on the needs of tamariki and their whānau, rather than the system,” said Dr Owen Sinclair

PSNZ emphasises the role of health in child protection, citing the unmet health needs of children in care. They advocate for a stronger partnership between Oranga Tamariki and Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora to prioritise care for vulnerable children.

[Read the full submission here.](#)

Contact:

For more information, don't hesitate to get in touch with Ruth Dryfhout, Communications Manager, PSNZ on 021 590 893 or email communications@paediatrics.org.nz

“Tamariki in Aotearoa flourish in health and wellness”