

Chief Ombudsman welcomes new Oranga Tamariki role

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The Chief Ombudsman Peter Boshier is welcoming the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of children and young people within the state care and youth justice system.

Mr Boshier is responding to the government’s announcement of proposals aimed at strengthening the independent oversight of the Oranga Tamariki system and children’s issues.

The package includes a proposal to give the Ombudsman an enhanced role in overseeing complaints and investigations relating to Oranga Tamariki and children and young people in state custody.

Mr Boshier says he sees this role as an extension of his existing work overseeing the administrative actions of all state agencies.

“Under this proposal, I can work quickly to respond to complaints, as well as identifying and resolving emerging issues. I can launch an investigation at any stage. Oranga Tamariki will need to tell me about any serious issue or if it receives any significant complaints.”

Mr Boshier says he can also look at wider trends -a cluster of complaints in an institution or about a particular event may suggest broader issues with systems and processes.

“A number of agencies and non-government organisations provide services to vulnerable children and families. There may be several agencies working with one whānau. I can work across these organisations and identify any gaps in care.”

Mr Boshier says this work can only start if it is first approved by the Officers of Parliament Committee chaired by the Speaker of the House, Trevor Mallard.

“If the Committee endorses the proposal and approves resources, I intend to develop implementation plans over the next year, in close consultation with Tangata Whenua and youth.

I have the experience to take on this work and my organisation has a track record of resolving complaints and completing complex investigations.

I personally spent close to twenty-five years as a Family Court judge. The last eight of those as the Principal Family Court Judge. I have spent years working with whānau, social workers and a raft of agencies responsible for children's welfare.

I'm here for people who do not normally have a voice, those who don't know who else to turn to. I see this as an opportunity to make a real difference to children's lives."

Further queries: Mark Torley, Communications Manager: 027 275 5733,
mark.torley@ombudsman.parliament.nz

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