



**Briefing Note:** Meeting with Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria (Australia) on Inquiry into Children affected by Parental incarceration

<b>To:</b>	Hon Kelvin Davis, Associate Minister of Education – (Māori Education)		
<b>Cc:</b>	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
<b>Date:</b>	23 May 2022	<b>Priority:</b>	Medium
<b>Security Level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>METIS No:</b>	1286523
<b>Key Contact:</b>	Rose Jamieson	<b>DDI:</b>	9(2)(a) [REDACTED]
<b>Messaging seen by Communications team:</b>	No	<b>Round Robin:</b>	No

## Purpose of Report

The purpose of this paper is to provide you with background information and speaking points to support your meeting with Fiona Patten, Chair of the Legislative Council, Legal and Social Services Committee, Parliament of Victoria (Australia) and Committee members on Monday, 30 May, 9.00-9.30am.

## Summary

Fiona Patten and Committee members would like to discuss New Zealand Government's work to support children impacted by parental incarceration and how whole-of-Government approaches to protecting vulnerable children have been implemented in Aotearoa New Zealand.

To support your meeting with the Committee we have provided information on *Taonga mō ngā Tamariki*, the Storytime Foundation's intergenerational whānau reading and literacy programme led by the Department of Corrections and supported by the Ministry.

We have also included information on the Ministry's Equity Index work to show how funding is used to identify and better target additional resources to schools to better support vulnerable learners and their families.

## Proactive Release recommendation

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**Agree** that this briefing is proactively released as part of the next publication.



Rose Jamieson  
**National Director**  
**Parent Information and Community Intelligence**  
23/05/2022

☒ **Agree** ☐ **Disagree**



Hon Kelvin Davis  
**Associate Minister of Education**  
28/05/2022

Proactively Released

## Purpose of Meeting

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1. On 11 April you received a letter from Fiona Patten, Chair of the Legislative Council – Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria, Australia requesting a meeting to discuss Aotearoa New Zealand's work to support children impacted by parental incarceration. You have agreed to meet with the Chair of the Committee on Monday 30 May 2022, 9.00-9.30am.
2. The Committee has been tasked with the responsibility to investigate the adequacy of policies and services to assist the children of imprisoned parents in Victoria, Australia. Their inquiry will focus on the following key areas:
  - the social, emotional and health impacts on affected children
  - what policies exist and what services are available, including consideration of those in other jurisdictions
  - how effective these services are, including:
    - consideration of evaluation of work already done in this area; and
    - identifying areas of improvement.
3. The Committee is also interested in how whole-of-Government approaches to protecting vulnerable children have been implemented in Aotearoa New Zealand.
4. The Social Policy Evaluation Unit (SUPERU) identified that having a parent incarcerated has significant and long-lasting impacts on children and tamariki, including:
  - feeling of abandonment
  - difficulty maintain a meaningful relationship with their incarcerated parent
  - instability and disruption to living arrangements
  - financial hardship
  - emotional distress (including grief, anxiety and depression and an increased risk of mental health problems) and are
  - five times more likely to be imprisoned than children of non-incarcerated parents.<sup>1</sup>

## Initiatives that support children impacted by parental incarceration

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5. While the Ministry continues to provide an increasing wide range of supports for child wellbeing and engagement, schools tailor and target these supports for students based on their needs and whānau circumstances.
6. To support your discussions with the Committee, we have identified two areas of the Ministry's work that relate specifically to the Committee's request - the *Taonga mō ngā Tamariki* initiative and the Equity Index.

### **Taonga mō ngā Tamariki**

7. *Taonga mō ngā Tamariki* is the Storytime Foundation's intergenerational whānau reading and literacy intervention. Storytime Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation that focuses on enhancing early attachment, building cohesive families and improving social outcomes. It delivers books and information free into New Zealand's most deprived homes through Well Child providers. Storytime has an expert advisory board that monitors the programme delivery.

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<sup>1</sup> SUPERU (2015). *What Works: Improving outcomes for children with a parent in prison*. Social Policy Evaluation and Research Unit, Wellington.

8. *Taonga mō ngā Tamariki* provides books and resources for children, and supports parents and caregivers with the knowledge and skills to support their child's reading. It increases children's enjoyment of reading; strengthens the attachment between parents and their children; increases wellbeing; and contributes to reductions in recidivism.
9. The programme is currently being delivered to parents and caregivers in the care or management of Ara Poutama Aotearoa (Corrections). Te Tāhū o te Ture (Ministry of Justice) is funding this interagency collaboration with the Ministry of Education until mid-2022. The programme has been adapted for prison settings based on the successful Early Reading Together® and Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi.
10. *Taonga mō ngā Tamariki* provides carefully selected books and resources for children and facilitates workshops for parents and caregivers to equip them with the knowledge and skills needed for constructively supporting their children's enjoyment of reading.
11. The programme has been delivered to parents and caregivers in the care and management of Corrections in 17 Corrections facilities and prisons and 28 community sites throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. A total of 624 participants voluntarily attended a total of 118 programmes between 2017 and 31 March 2021, with 517 participants (82.9%) completing the full programme.

#### *Evaluation Findings*

12. The evaluation of *Taonga mō ngā Tamariki* aimed to assess how the programme is increasing wellbeing and improving outcomes for both whānau and children. It looked at the difference, if any, the programme is making, and the conditions under which the programme works well, and what is not working. The evaluation of the Storytime Foundation *Taonga mō ngā Tamariki* programme is published on the Education Counts website <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/topics/bes/evaluation-of-taonga-mo-nga-tamariki>.
13. The evaluators analysed a range of data from various sources including questionnaires from 412 prisoners, surveys of 29 probation officers, reports from the kaiako of the 118 programmes, and interviews with 4 kaiako, 12 Corrections staff, 92 programme participants, and 29 children. Key findings are:
  - a. 90% of participants reported that the programme had changed their thinking about the difference that reading and playing games could make to their children.
  - b. Parents' awareness of the benefits of reading to children increased from 26% to 94% after the programme.
  - c. Despite learning to read having been traumatic for many of the participants, they learned how to be patient and keep reading fun: *'It has given us tools to make reading experiences more enjoyable. I used to dread it.'* These changes strengthened whānau attachment.
  - d. Combining the programme with child-centred visits was essential to realise impact: *'My kids cry when they leave the child-centred visits. They used to cry when they came. It was boring for them.'*

- e. The evaluation found considerable alignment between the programme and Corrections' Hōkai Rangi strategy which recognises the importance of whānau to those in the care of and under the management of Corrections, in particular:
    - Whānau are connected, or are able to connect, to those in the care of Corrections and have stable and healthy relationships.
    - That a new approach is needed - moving away from focus on the individual to focus on the collective: individuals, their whānau, support systems, and community.
  - f. An unexpected outcome of the programme is that it appears to be deeply humanising, enhancing relationships between staff and those in their care.
14. We have attached two A3 documents, *Annex 1: Taonga mō ngā Tamariki: Evaluation* and *Annex 2: Taonga mō ngā Tamariki – In our Words* that illustrate the key evaluation findings of the programme which you may want to share with the Committee members.

### **Equity Index**

15. The Ministry is currently in the process of planning to phase out the decile system and implement the Equity Index (EQI). Aotearoa New Zealand has been using the decile system since 1995 for targeting equity funding for schools. Access to improved data, a better understanding of barriers to equity from outside of the classroom that impact young people, and up-to-date information, have all been used to develop the Equity Index.
16. The EQI is a statistical model that allows the Ministry to better understand the socioeconomic circumstances of children and young people attending our schools. It estimates the effect that socio-economic circumstances may have on students' educational achievement. The Ministry will use the Equity Index to better allocate and target equity funding and identify schools that may benefit from additional resources to support vulnerable learners and their families.
17. The Equity Index will help us to better target funding and resources:
  - a. It considers 37 variables across a range of socio-economic factors that we know relate to educational success. Information about the socio-economic status of parents including their justice history are among the variables included. All information is confidential and stays inside the Stats NZs Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI)
  - b. Information will be updated annually through IDI so we have a more accurate view of current socio-economic factors
  - c. It considers the circumstances of individual tamariki and rangatahi in a school, rather than of the neighbourhoods they live in.

### **Ministry Regional support**

18. The Ministry's regional offices do not have any specific initiatives directly related to support children of incarcerated parents.
19. However, we provide general support for young people through:
  - a. Learning Support, Educational Psychologists and Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLb) – we respond to requests for specialist support from schools, kura and early learning centres. Some of the children receiving support will have incarcerated parents.

- b. The Ministry's regional offices have *Education Advisors – Student Support* who work closely with the New Zealand Police, Youth Justice, Oranga Tamariki, schools and kura to support at risk whānau and children with attendance, standdowns, suspensions, exclusions, transitions, and school placements. Some of the children receiving support have parents who are incarcerated, on parole or on home detention.

### **Further Information to Support the Committee Inquiry**

20. Rose Jamieson, National Director, Te Pae Aronui is the key contact person if the Committee requires further information regarding the initiatives outlined in this paper.

### **Annexes**

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- Annex 1: Taonga mō ngā Tamariki: Evaluation
- Annex 2: Taonga mō ngā Tamariki – In our Words
- Annex 3: Regional Support notes
- Annex 4: Speaking Points
- Annex 5: Profile of Fiona Patten (Chair, Legislative Committee, Parliament of Victoria)

# TAONGA MŌ NGĀ TAMARIKI: EVALUATION

The purpose of this evaluation is to look at the impact of the Storytime Foundation programme, Taonga mō ngā Tamariki, delivered to whānau in the care or under the management of Corrections.

## THE PROGRAMME IS WHĀNAU-BASED

Taonga mō ngā Tamariki is a whānau-based programme in which parents are supported to read to and play games with their children. It combines books, games and resources with workshops based on the Reading Together® programmes. It is designed to provide access to books, foster positive whānau-child interactions and grow children's enjoyment of reading.



## EVIDENCE: PRISONER-CHILD CONTACT CAN REDUCE RECIDIVISM AND INTERGENERATIONAL OFFENDING

Research repeatedly shows reading programmes involving prisoner-child contact can foster supportive family relationships, motivate prisoners towards a productive future, and contribute to a reduction in recidivism and intergenerational offending (see full report).

Reading for pleasure is the single most important indicator of a child's future success. It has an even more powerful influence on life outcomes than socio-economic status (OECD, 2002) Yet engagement in reading is increasingly unequally distributed (Medina & McGregor, 2019). There are inequities in access to books, libraries, expertise, support and reading role-models.

Taonga mō ngā Tamariki is based on compelling research that shows:

- If you provide a choice of appealing books in 'home and heart' languages,
- Let parents and caregivers know about the benefits of reading,
- Show them ways to make reading with their children fun, and
- Combine the programme with child-centred visiting

Then...

- Parents and caregivers will use their new skills, knowledge and confidence to play with and read to their children,
- Both parents and children will find it fun and enjoyable,
- It will support attachment, educational and wellbeing outcomes,
- It will help to disrupt the cycle of offending, reduce recidivism and have an impact on intergenerational offending.

## KEY FINDINGS

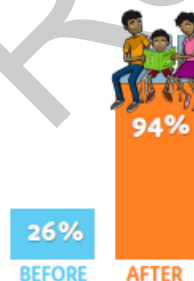
### MOST PARENTS CHANGED THEIR THINKING ABOUT READING



412 whānau took part in the programme. Of these, **nine out of 10** (90%) said the programme had changed their thinking about the difference that reading and playing games could make to their tamariki.

### PARENTS ARE AWARE OF THE BENEFITS OF READING

Awareness of the benefits of reading to children increased from **26%** to **94%** after the programme.



### PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN ARE HAVING FUN READING TOGETHER

Interviews with 92 participants and whānau said the programme had "opened their eyes" to ways they could support their children's education and wellbeing both from prison and at home. It is disrupting intergenerational patterns of practices that do not support reading for pleasure. Despite reading having been traumatic for many of the participants, they have now learned to be patient and keep reading fun. They report enjoying reading to and playing with their children.

### TO MAXIMISE ITS IMPACT IT IS ESSENTIAL IT IS COUPLED WITH CHILD-CENTRED VISITING

The benefits of Taonga mō ngā Tamariki will not be activated unless incarcerated parents can spend time reading books and playing games with their tamariki. It is essential that the programme is combined with child-centred visits. Currently, this is not happening consistently.

## CONCLUSION

Corrections staff and programme participants interviewed said Taonga mō ngā Tamariki is one of the most successful programmes the Department of Corrections offers. It is making a difference.

It provides children with access to books in home and heart languages, lets parents know the benefits of reading, and shows them how to make it fun. Both parents and their children say they are enjoying spending time together. Staff interviewed say seeing prisoners reading and playing with their children is deeply humanising and both staff and prisoners believe it has improved relations between them.

The programme focuses on what matters most to whānau - their children. When coupled with a programme of child-centred visiting, it activates the Hōkai Rangi strategy by enabling parents and caregivers to spend 'normal family time' with their tamariki, deepening whānau connections in a positive and healthy way. Together, the programmes support attachment, and the conditions to improve educational and wellbeing outcomes, reduce recidivism and disrupt cycles of intergenerational offending.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

- Taonga mō ngā Tamariki and child-centred visits are contracted and provided together.
- Parents/ caregivers who have contact with tamariki, and are at the beginning of their sentence, or have 6 to 12 months remaining on their sentence are prioritised, along with remand prisoners likely to receive bail.
- The practice of disciplining prisoners by cancelling contact with their children is stopped.
- Bedtime stories by audio-visual means are trialled and evaluated
- Kaiako safety is prioritised with Corrections staff monitoring the sessions.
- Storytime provides a box of books and learning games in the visiting area for *all* children not just those whose parents are involved in the programme.
- A longitudinal evaluation in Aotearoa is undertaken to better understand the longer-term impacts.

Woodley, A. (2021). Storytime Foundation evaluation: Taonga mō ngā Tamariki. Point & Associates (Aotearoa).



## TAONGA MŌ NGĀ TAMARIKI – IN OUR WORDS

In this report the voices of participants tell the story of their experiences of Taonga mō ngā Tamariki, a Storytime Foundation whānau reading and literacy intervention based on the Reading Together® programmes, delivered to parents and caregivers in the care of Corrections and their whānau between 2017 and March 2021.

### TAONGA MŌ NGĀ TAMARIKI IS CHANGING AWARENESS, ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOUR

FOR MANY THE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF READING, STORYTELLING, SINGING AND PLAYING TOGETHER WITH THEIR CHILDREN IS NEW



"All of this is completely new to me."  
Mt Eden Corrections Facility

"It opened my eyes a lot about the benefits of reading."  
Christchurch Men's Prison



ATTITUDES TOWARDS READING ARE CHANGING, EVEN FOR THOSE WITH LOW LITERACY AND CONFIDENCE WHO WERE TAUGHT POORLY THEMSELVES



"My contribution matters too."  
Manawatu Prison

"It has given us tools to make reading experiences more enjoyable. I used to dread it."  
Arohata Prison



"I have never read a book to my children (aged 4 and 5 years). I can't wait 'til my visit on Saturday."  
Christchurch Women's Prison



"My kids hate reading as much as I do – but they have loved these books and so have I."  
Northern Region Corrections Facility



### PARTICIPANTS ARE LEARNING NEW SKILLS, CHANGING THE WAY THEY READ TO THEIR TAMARIKI AND HAVING FUN



"I liked the reading tips, especially watching the videos to see how they read with their kids."  
Manawatu Prison

"Told all my family, uncle and mates that I've written a book for my son. They were dumbfounded as they know what I'm like with reading and writing. I've come out of my comfort zone."  
Christchurch Men's Prison



### PARENTS ARE CHANGING THE WAY THEY READ TO THEIR CHILDREN



"I have learned that it is not all about what the words say, I used to growl them if they got it wrong. I won't now."  
Whangarei Community Corrections

"I learned how the pictures relate to the words in a book for kids when they are learning to read."  
Huntly Community Corrections



"I have learned I can read with my children, just using the pictures – which for me is good, as I don't read with my children ever."  
Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility

### THE PARTICIPANTS ARE KEEPING IT CONVERSATIONAL NOT INSTRUCTIONAL ...

"Not instructing, but conversating."  
Springhill Corrections Facility



"A lightbulb went off when I learned the difference between an instructional parent and a conversational parent."  
Thames Community Corrections



### ...AND FUN



"Awesome", "sweet", "loved it", "fun", "tu meke" (too much), "wonderful", "cool", "great", "solid" "surprised",  
Tamariki



"Making reading fun. Don't put pressure on them to get it right 100% of the time, as long as they enjoy it!"  
Arohata Prison



"We are not the teachers. We can put the magic and fun into the learning for our kids."  
Auckland Region Women's Corrections Facility



### WE HEARD FROM OVER 500 PEOPLE ...



### IT IS SUPPORTING WHANAU TO STAY CONNECTED, ACTIVATING THE CORRECTIONS' HŌKAI RANGI STRATEGY

THE PROGRAMME, WHEN COMBINED WITH CHILD-CENTRED VISITS, IS SUPPORTING WHĀNAU TO STAY CONNECTED



"Prison is a horrible place for prisoners and especially our children. We lose contact. Anything that can help rebuild that connection is positive and appreciated."  
Hawke's Bay Regional Prison

"It has made a huge difference to (the son's) relationship with his dad. I hey had been close and were losing that connection."  
Partner, Northern Regional Corrections Facility



THE PARTICIPANTS SAY THEIR TAMARIKI KNOW THEY ARE THINKING OF THEM, CARE ABOUT THEM AND MISS THEM.



"[I am doing the course] to let them know I am spending my time thinking of them."  
Invercargill Prison

"[This programme] lets our children know we are thinking of them even though we are away. It keeps us connected."  
Rolleston Prison





# TAONGA MŌ NGĀ TAMARIKI – IN OUR WORDS

## PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

### PARTICIPANTS BELIEVE IT IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

"The Boz activity was great. I showed my partner, and she took the book home to show the rest of the family what it's like for a child learning to read."  
Manawatu Prison



"One of the few programmes I have undertaken that is not about my offending, but is about what matters most to me, which is my kids."  
Northern Regional Corrections Facility



"This will benefit my kids more than any other things I've done."  
Waikeria Prison

### STAFF TOO BELIEVE THE PROGRAMME IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

"We are seeing them use the skills they are learning to talk to and engage with their children. They are having fun and the kids are having fun."  
Corrections staff



"I have seen the light go on for some of them – that they actually matter and what they do matters. The programme shows them they are important to their kids, how they need to be involved and how they can still be involved. And for some they just click – they are important – their children need them to step up and be a good (parent)."  
Corrections staff

### IT IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS. BOTH STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS FIND IT HUMANISING



"The staff were so respectful of my kids. They didn't search me until the kids had gone so my kids saw a dad not a prisoner. I think in that moment maybe the staff saw a dad too."  
Northern Regional Corrections Facility



"I have seen the difference it makes to the relationship between us. This is something good they see us doing – it has made a difference to how they see us."  
Corrections Staff

"I think it has made a difference as they see us as dads."  
Northern Regional Corrections Facility



"Instead of seeing some of the heavy behaviour and posturing, we see them be dads, mucking around with their kids, having fun."  
Corrections Staff



## OVERALL

### THE PARTICIPANTS FIND THE PROGRAMME ENJOYABLE AND ENGAGING. MANY SAID THEY HAD CHANGED THE WAY THEY READ TO THEIR CHILDREN AND THEY NOW FOUND IT FUN.



"Reward cards – placemats are so personal I loved them best."  
Auckland Women's Corrections Facility

"It was fun and the Kaiako was fantastic. Who knew reading to my kids could be so much fun – and it is. I learned so much."  
Northern Regional Corrections Facility



"Some took their work back to their unit and completed the activities overnight, so they had more time to spend on the affirmation messages."  
Kaiako

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

### IT FOCUSES ON WHAT MATTERS MOST TO THE PARTICIPANTS – THEIR WHĀNAU, AND IN PARTICULAR, THEIR TAMARIKI



"Loved how everything we done was for kids – my daughter will be so excited :)"  
Christchurch Men's Prison

"It tells us and our children reading is important, this matters and you matter."  
Northern Regional Corrections Facility



### THE BOOKS AND RESOURCES ARE APPEALING AND IN HOME LANGUAGES

"We want whānau to find the books irresistible, we want to provide a selection of books they will see and want to pick up."  
Kaiako



"The books Linda brought were heart touching."  
Christchurch Women's Prison



### CHILD-CENTRED VISITS ARE CRITICALLY IMPORTANT

"There is just this big hole, this big blank in the years – doing the stuff dads do with their kids, doing all those normal things families do together. My kids won't have that."  
Kimutaka Prison



"The kids used to run around. There was little engagement between the children and their fathers. The TV was a babysitter."  
Corrections Staff

"Visiting felt like a question-and-answer session not family time. 'How is school?' 'Good'. 'What have you been up to?' 'Nothing'.  
Northern Regional Corrections Facility



"It would be really hard on our kids to go back to that kind of visiting. My kids cry when they leave the child-centred visits. They used to cry when they came. It was boring for them, and they started not wanting to come."  
Northern Regional Corrections Facility

### THE RIGHT COHORT IS ALSO IMPORTANT

"This can be deeply distressing for those who do not have access to their children, and disruptive to staff who have to manage conflict between participants."  
Kaiako



### STAFF WHO SEE THE PROGRAMME IN ACTION SUPPORT IT

"I was not supportive initially, but I have seen the difference it has made to the children."  
Corrections Staff



## NEXT STEPS

### PARTICIPANTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE PROGRAMME EXTENDED AND COUPLED WITH CHILD-CENTRED VISITS SO THEY CAN PUT WHAT THEY HAVE LEARNED IN ACTION, AND STAY CONNECTED WITH THEIR TAMARIKI



"I would like the programme to be less rushed."  
Waikeria Prison



"I would like to see more family days."  
Otago Corrections Facility

"We need more of these programmes."  
Waikeria Prison



### PARTICIPANTS WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE PROGRAMME EXTENDED BEYOND THE PRISON INTO THE COMMUNITY SO THEIR WHĀNAU CAN PARTICIPATE



"Bummer we had to come to jail to learn this."  
Mt Eden Corrections Facility

"Teaching our tamariki to read should be a must in every family."  
Arohata Prison



## Annex 3: Ministry regional support for vulnerable children

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The Ministry's regional offices do not have any specific initiatives directly related to support children of incarcerated parents.

Learning Support, Educational Psychologists and Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLb), respond to requests for specialist support from schools, kura and early learning centres. Some of the children receiving support will have incarcerated parents.

The Ministry's regional offices have Education Advisors – *Student Support* who work closely with the New Zealand Police, Youth Justice, Oranga Tamariki, schools and kura to support at risk whānau and children with attendance, standdowns, suspensions, exclusions, transitions, and school placements. Some of the children receiving support have parents who are incarcerated, on parole or on home detention.

The Ministry can be made aware of children whose parents are incarcerated if the information is voluntarily disclosed by caregivers.

### **Regional Office – Canterbury & Chatham Island**

Collaborative community consultation for released offenders

- Canterbury & Chatham Island Regional Ministry of Education Office have been working with the Department of Corrections since the beginning of 2018 around Community Consultation for offenders who are released into communities.
- This involves the Corrections Senior Advisor - *Community Engagement and Reintegration* connecting with the Regional Ministry of Education Lead Advisor – *Engagement & Wellbeing* to connect with schools and early learning services around any community consultation and communications. This work is often about (but not always to do with) released prisoners. Department of Corrections lead this work and provide assistance to schools and early learning services.
- The Department of Corrections and the New Zealand Police liaise with the Ministry of Education to support young people that have come to the notice of agencies for their radicalised behaviours. This support involves the person attending education services.

### **Regional Offices - Auckland and Waikato**

Early Learning pilot initiative at Wiri Women's Prison

- Prior to Covid-19, an early learning playgroup pilot was initiated at Wiri Women's Prison, in Auckland. The initiative involved early learning services providing support to incarcerated mothers who had their children with them, up until the age of two years old.
- Upon release, the mothers were supported to connect with a local early learning service to provide continued education and care for their tamariki.
- Due to Covid-19 restrictions, this initiative was unable to continue as on-site physical access to the women's prison was suspended.

#### **Aatea (NGO Turuki Health) cross-agency initiative**

- Aatea (NGO Turuki Health), formally known as The Children's Team, work closely with Papakura Marae and Oranga Tamariki as part of a cross-agency initiative.
- Leading practitioners from Ministry of Health, Marae and social agencies meet with Aatea to identify the needs of whānau and mokopuna.

Proactively Released

### Welcome and acknowledgements

- Opening mihi
- Key people to acknowledge:
  - Fiona Patten, Chair, Legislative Council - Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria, Australia
  - Legislative Council Committee members
- Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the important work of the Committee is doing to improve outcomes for vulnerable children.
- The New Zealand Government and the Ministry of Education recognise the importance of supporting the wellbeing and education of all children and young people, including those children with parents in prison.
- While the Ministry provides a wide and increasing range of supports for child wellbeing and engagement, schools can tailor and target these supports for students based on their needs and whānau circumstances.
- There are currently two interventions that may be of interest to the Committee which highlight examples of direct interventions and policy funding levers to support vulnerable children they include, the Taonga mō ngā Tamariki programme and the Equity Index.

### Taonga mō ngā Tamariki

- Taonga mō ngā Tamariki is a (not-for-profit) Storytime Foundation whānau reading and literacy programme based on Early Reading Together® and Reading Together® Te Pānui Ngātahi adapted for prison settings.
- The programme aims to support children's enjoyment of reading; strengthen attachment between parents and their children; increase wellbeing; and contributes to a reduction in recidivism.
- The programme is currently delivered to parents and caregivers in the care or management of Poutama Aotearoa (Corrections). It is an inter-agency collaboration between the Ministry of Education funded until mid-2022 through the Ministry of Justice.
- Taonga mō ngā Tamariki is delivered in 17 Corrections facilities and prisons and 28 community sites throughout Aotearoa New Zealand. A total of 624 participants voluntarily attended a total of 118 programmes between 2017 and 31 March 2021. Of these participants, 517 (82.9%) completed the programme.
- The evaluation reported compelling evidence from international studies, that encouraging prisoners to have positive contact with their families during incarceration, is linked to reduced recidivism after release.

- Key findings we found were:
  - 90% of participants reported that the programme had changed their thinking about the difference that reading and playing games could make to their children
  - Parents' awareness of the benefits of reading to children increased from 26% to 94% after the programme
  - Despite reading having been traumatic for many of the parent participants, they learned how to be patient and keep reading fun
  - Combining the programme with child-centred visits was essential to realising impact, and supported making visits more enjoyable
  - Alignment between the programme and the Corrections' Hōkai Rangai Strategy which recognises the importance of whānau to those in the care of and under management of Corrections, specifically:
    - Whānau are connected, or are able to connect, to those in the care of Corrections and have stable and healthy relationships
    - A new approach is needed, moving away from focus on the individual to focus on the collective; individuals their whānau, support systems, and community.
  - An unexpected outcome of the programme was it was deeply humanising and enhanced relationships between staff and those in care.

## Equity Index

- To ensure better targeting of school resources to support vulnerable children, the Ministry of Education is currently in the process of plans to phase out the decile system and implement the equity index
- New Zealand has used the decile system since 1995 to target equity for schools.
- The Equity Index is a statistical mode developed to allow us to better understand, the socioeconomic circumstances of children and young people attending schools. This estimates the effect that socio-economic circumstances may have on students' education achievement.
- The Equity Index will be used to better allocate equity funding to identify schools that would benefit from additional resources.

## Providing further information to support Inquiry

- Ministry officials can provide further information on the *Taonga mō ngā Tamariki* and the Equity Index to support the Committee's Inquiry.

## Closing remarks

Kei te mihi nui ki a koutou. Tēnā koutou katoa



## Annex 5: Profile of Fiona Patten, Chair, Legislative Council – Legal and Social Issues Committee, Parliament of Victoria

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Fiona Patten is a Member for Northern Metropolitan Region in the Victorian Parliament's Legislative Council. Leader of the Reason Party, Fiona was first elected in 2014 and re-elected in 2018. Since entering Parliament, Fiona has garnered respect from all sides of politics, working tirelessly to deliver legislative reforms that many thought impossible.

Fiona's achievements in Parliament include:

- Medically Supervised Injecting Centre in North Richmond
- Safe Access Zones from protesters around fertility clinics
- Voluntary Assisted Dying laws – initiated inquiry that led to this reform
- Sex work decriminalised
- A Spent Convictions Scheme for criminal records in Victoria
- Uber and ridesharing legalised
- Pandemic Legislation for Victoria
- Leaving foster and out of home care age extended from 18 to 21 years
- Loneliness ministerial portfolio commitment secured
- Anti-vilification legislation, including online vilification of women, coming in 2023
- Lord's Prayer removed from Parliament for next Parliamentary term
- Land tax changes applying to religious businesses
- A future cap on election campaign spending via review of 2022 election
- E-petitions to Parliament online
- Medicinal Cannabis Driving taskforce established
- Drug Use and Possession taskforce to trial a health response not a criminal one
- Established Parliamentary Inquiry into the legalisation of cannabis
- Electric Vehicle levy waiver and incentive payment
- Chair of Legal and Social Issues Committee, including reports into Homelessness and the Justice System.

Fiona's decision to run for political office came after 20 years of advocating for the rights of small business owners, sexual health organisations, sexual freedoms and censorship reforms.

In 2009, frustrated with the lack of social change on censorship, drug law reform, assisted dying and marriage equality, she founded the Australian Sex Party with her partner Robbie Swan. In 2017, the Australian Sex Party was dissolved to make way for the Reason Party, a movement of common sense and secular evidence-based policy.