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Waitakere Anti-Violence Essential Services

WAVES Trust

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Committee Secretariat:  
Maori Affairs Select Committee

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## **Submission on the Determinants of Wellbeing for Maori Children**

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### **We would like to speak to the Committee about our submission if the opportunity arises**

### **Introduction**

WAVES Trust is an interagency family violence network organisation. The membership is primarily government and non-government service providers who work in the area of family violence. There are also members who are not specifically family violence agencies but their work complements or supports efforts to reduce violence in Waitakere City.

We are committed to strengthening the work of those who educate and support victims of family violence and those who hold offenders accountable and support them to make positive changes to their behaviour. WAVES acts to support and resource all member agencies to practice to the highest standards of integrity and professional ethics.

WAVES Trust provides:

- Links to other organisations through the interagency network
- A networking forum to encourage and support statutory and community services to provide integrated and collaborative services to reduce family violence
- Community advocacy and representation on initiatives that target family violence
- Information about best practice in family violence intervention and support for the implementation of best practice

- Primary prevention, capacity building and education opportunities for those working to reduce family violence
- Contract management of interagency projects and contracts
- Access to current, relevant research
- Monitoring of community initiatives such as the Waitakere Family Violence Court
- An overview of information deficits and initiation of local research

WAVES Trust is a charitable trust. Governance is vested in the Board. There are four employee positions – a full-time Manager, two part-time Coordinators, and an Administrator, as well as one Project Leader on a fixed term contract.

### Consultation

The questions asked by the Committee for this Inquiry are very broad. Therefore, WAVES has chosen to address the concept of wellbeing for Maori children through the lens provided by the family violence sector's engagement with Maori clients. We do not discuss the historical context for Maori children but note that there is a growing body of historical literature that is available for consultation should the Select Committee wish to do so.<sup>1</sup>

We have developed this submission using information and discussion emanating from consultation meetings with our network and with the wider social services sector in preparation for our submission on the *Green Paper on Vulnerable Children*. WAVES hosted two stakeholders meetings in October 2011 and February 2012, and attended two other meetings hosted by MSD and the Social Service Providers Association. Participants at these meetings included:

- Members of the Waitakere Family Violence Network
- Waitakere Taskforce on Family Violence
- Office of the Children's Commissioner
- Auckland Council
- Hapai Te Hauora Tapui Ltd
- Core Education
- CCS Disability Action
- Waitakere community members
- Auckland region Family Violence Networks including SAFVPN

Our submission is also informed by discussions at the recent Regional Hui on Family Violence sponsored by Auckland Council.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Kuni Jenkins and Helen Hart, *Traditional Maori Parenting: an Historical Review of Literature of Traditional Maori Child Rearing Practices in Pre-European Times*, Auckland, 2011, <http://www.whakawhetu.co.nz/assets/files/TraditionalMaoriParenting.pdf>; Melissa Matutina Williams, 'Back-home' and home in the city : Māori migrations from Panguru to Auckland, 1930-1970', PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2010; Aroha Harris, 'Dancing with the state : Māori creative energy and policies of integration, 1945-1967', PhD Thesis, University of Auckland, 2007; Hazel Petrie, *Chiefs of Industry: Māori Tribal Enterprise in Early Colonial New Zealand*, Auckland, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Information on presentations at the Hui can be found on the NZ Family Violence Clearinghouse website see <http://nzfvc.org.nz/?q=node/542>

## Summary

In our submission we highlight the **extreme need for reform of aspects of social and economic policy and social service delivery to support the wellbeing of Maori children.**

We believe that Maori children's needs must be addressed in the wider context of the needs of children generally, not treated as separate or isolated as this leads to 'band-aid' solutions that often fail to promote holistic understandings of wellbeing and are not enduring. We recommend that the Select Committee recognise and support three interrelated reforms:

1. Urgent attention to the social and economic support needs of Maori parents and a commitment to reducing child poverty in New Zealand.
2. The development of a Children's Act to provide a legislative national framework for action to support children's wellbeing that references national and international conventions such as Te Tiriti o Waitangi/The Treaty of Waitangi and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
3. Within this framework the special place of Maori children as tangata whenua must be acknowledged with accompanying support for the development of a framework of Maori cultural interpretations of wellbeing.

## Background

The WAVES network consists of agencies that directly or indirectly provide services to victims and perpetrators of family violence, and their children. Family violence and the related issue of child maltreatment are significant issues impacting the wellbeing of Maori children in Waitakere and in New Zealand. This section discusses the local and national indicators of poor wellbeing among Maori children through the lens provided by family violence and child welfare services.

According to the 2006 census, people identifying as Maori make up 13% of the Waitakere population and 14.6% of the national population.<sup>3</sup> But Maori are consistently at least one third of the clients requiring help around family violence and child protection, for example Maori were:

- 35% of Waitakere offenders arrested for family violence offences and 31% of victims of offending in 2009.
- 37% of Western Refuge clients (including refuge residents and outreach clients) for the year ended 31 August 2011.
- 33% of children notified to CYF and 35% of children identified by CYF as needing further action during the year ended 30 June 2011.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.waitakere.govt.nz/abtcit/ps/2006census.asp#2006censusrlts>

Nationally, the indicators for family violence and child welfare are also concerning, Maori are:

- 44% of care and protection notifications to CYF and 46% of children for whom CYF took further action for the year ended 30 June 2011.
- 29% of protection order respondents in 2007.<sup>4</sup>
- 48% of women who used refuge services provided by National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges for the year ended 30 June 2008 and 53% of the children using independent refuge services.<sup>5</sup>

These statistics paint a picture of Maori as burdened with high levels of violence and abuse that are grossly disproportionate to their representation within the population.

Research also suggests that over recent years Maori have not enjoyed the same benefits as other demographic groups in terms of improvements in financial wellbeing. Real equivalised median household incomes for Maori have declined from 81% of Pakeha household income in 2001 to 71% in 2007.<sup>6</sup> In part this reflects the fact 'that Maori have a 14% lower wage rate than' their Pakeha peers with similar education levels and family structure.<sup>7</sup> Lower income for Maori households is also impacted by greater sensitivity to economic conditions reflected in high rates of job insecurity and unemployment, and uptake of social welfare benefits: 25% of working-aged Maori receive some form of government benefit.<sup>8</sup>

Maori adults' high rates of living in poverty will also impact their children. Government efforts to reduce child poverty have not substantially improved living conditions for Maori children. The number of Maori children living in hardship declined by 20% between 2004 and 2008, but 1 in 3 Maori children (32%) still lived in hardship during 2008 compared to only 7 in every 50 Pakeha children (14%).<sup>9</sup> Poverty has a profound impact on health and wellbeing, as evidenced by the fact that Maori children have 'nearly 28 times increased risk' of developing rheumatic fever than a Pakeha child.<sup>10</sup> Recent research shows that the popular narrative of upward social mobility in response to childhood poverty or 'pulling oneself up by one's bootstraps' is the exception rather than the norm. For the vast majority, childhood experience of poverty and family disadvantage is likely to be

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<sup>4</sup> New Zealand Family Violence Clearinghouse, 'Family Violence Fact Sheet', December 2009, p.3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.11.

<sup>6</sup> Cynthia Kiro, Martin von Randow, and Andrew Sporle, *Trends in Wellbeing for Maori Households/Families, 1981–2006*, Auckland, 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Manuka Henare, Adrienne Puckey, and Amber Nicholson, with M. Claire Dale and Rhema Vaithianathan, *He Ara Hou: The Pathway Forward, Getting it right for New Zealand's Maori and Pasifika Children*, Auckland, 2011, p.43.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp.42–3.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.30.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.40.

reproduced in adulthood with poor outcomes ranging from the experience of welfare dependence and poverty to health-related issues such as smoking.<sup>11</sup>

The situation in relation to child maltreatment for Maori children is equally dire. Between 2000 and 2004 hospitalisations of Maori children as a result of intentional injury were consistently twice the rate for non-Maori children.<sup>12</sup> Between 1999 and 2003 Maori children died as a result of maltreatment at more than twice the rate per 100,000 children (1.5) of non-Maori children (0.7).<sup>13</sup>

The children represented in family violence and child maltreatment statistics will live with the long term consequences of these issues. The effect of family violence on children, which lasts well into adulthood, is of special interest to our network. Children who live with violence at home are three to nine times more likely than others to be victimised during childhood either within the home or outside, and between 30% and 70% of these children are also likely to experience some form of maltreatment at home.<sup>14</sup> Other consequences may include attachment problems in infants; behavioural and mental health problems such as anxiety and depression, difficulties in their relationships with peer groups, and low educational attainment in preschoolers and school-aged children.<sup>15</sup> These children are also more likely than their peers to engage in crimes against property, to abuse alcohol or other substances, to experience or perpetrate violence within intimate relationships, and to live their adult lives affected by chronic mental or physical health problems including depression, obesity, cardiovascular or lung disease, diabetes, and other inflammation-related conditions.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See for example Dannette Marie, David Fergusson, and Joseph Boden, 'Ethnicity and Pathways to Welfare Dependence in a New Zealand Birth Cohort', *Policy Quarterly*, 7, 2, 2011, 14–22; David Fergusson, L. John Horwood, and Sheree Gibb, 'Childhood Family Income and Later Outcomes: Results of a 30 year Longitudinal Study', *Children*, No. 79, Summer 2011, 24–8; Dannette Marie, David Fergusson, and John Boden, 'Does socioeconomic inequality explain ethnic differences in nicotine dependence? Evidence from a New Zealand Birth Cohort', *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 44, 2010, 378–83.

<sup>12</sup> Erana Cooper and Julie Wharewera-Mika, 'Maori Child Maltreatment: A Literature Review Report', 2009, p.8.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Sherry Hamby, David Finkelhor, Heather Turner, and Richard Ormrod, 'The Overlap of Witnessing Partner Violence with Child Maltreatment and Other Victimizations in a Nationally Representative Survey of Youth', *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34, 2010, pp.734–41; Stephanie Holt, Helen Buckley, and Sadhbh Whelan, 'The Impact of Exposure to Domestic Violence on Children and Young People: A Review of Literature', *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 32, 2008, pp.797–810.

<sup>15</sup> Holt; Abigail Gewirtz and Jeffrey Edleson, 'Young Children's Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence: Towards a Developmental Risk and Resilience Framework for Research and Intervention', *Journal of Family Violence*, 22, 2007, pp.151–63.

<sup>16</sup> Holt; David Fergusson and L. John Horwood, 'Exposure to Interparental Violence in Childhood and Psychosocial Adjustment in Young Adulthood', *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 22, 5, 1998, pp.339–57; Andrea Danese, Carmine Pariante, Avshalom Caspi, Alan Taylor, and Richie Poulton, 'Childhood Maltreatment Predicts Adult Inflammation in a Life-Course Study', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 104, 4, 2007, pp.1319–24; David Russell, Kristen Springer, Emily Greenfield, 'Witnessing Domestic Abuse in Childhood as an Independent Risk Factor for Depressive Symptoms in Young Adulthood', *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 34, 2010, pp.448–53.

*... the over-representation of Maori in welfare statistics is best understood as an outcome of greater exposure to a multitude of adverse influences beginning in childhood.*

D. Marie, D. Fergusson, and J. Boden, 'Ethnicity and Pathways to Welfare Dependence in a New Zealand Birth Cohort', *Policy Quarterly*, 7, 1, 2011, 14–22.

Strategies to promote wellbeing among Maori children are imperative for the long term health of our society. The proportion of New Zealand children identifying as Maori is increasing due to relatively high fertility rates. By 2016 Statistics New Zealand project that Maori children under the age of 15 will be more than one quarter of our child population (27%) and growth will continue into the 2020s and beyond.<sup>17</sup> Continuing to ignore the social, cultural, and economic needs of Maori carries enormous risks for the wellbeing of the country as a whole.

## Wellbeing

*Well-being is a state of successful performance throughout a life course integrating physical, cognitive and socio-emotional functions that result in productive activities deemed significant by one's cultural community, fulfilling social relationships, and the ability to transcend moderate psycho-social and environmental problems.*

John Rowlands, 'Need, Well-being and Outcomes: The Development of Policy-Thinking for Children's Services 1989–2004', *Child and Family Social Work*, 16, 2011, p.226

As the above quote indicates, the promotion of wellbeing for Maori children cannot be achieved in a cultural vacuum. Recent academic literature explores Maori ambitions for and interpretation of the meaning of 'wellbeing'. WAVES draws the Committee's attention to calls for government to support the development and adoption of culturally appropriate indicators of quality of life as measurements of Maori wellbeing and use these to develop policies to enhance Maori wellbeing.<sup>18</sup> This is part of the project initiated by the founding documents that recorded the relationship between Maori and the Crown: Te Tiriti o Waitangi and The Treaty of Waitangi. These documents emphasise the State's obligation to the principles of partnership, participation, and protection for all Maori. We support the view that **for Maori children the principles of Te Tiriti/The Treaty require the State to**

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/population/estimates\\_and\\_projections/NationalEthnicPopulationProjections\\_HOTP2006-26.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/estimates_and_projections/NationalEthnicPopulationProjections_HOTP2006-26.aspx)

<sup>18</sup> Henare, p. 17.

**ensure that Maori children have equal or better outcomes than their non-Maori peers.**<sup>19</sup>

Sadly, as a nation New Zealand has failed to live up to those promises to the detriment of many Maori children resulting in their experience of poor social, health, and economic outcomes alongside considerable alienation from culture for many.

WAVES Trust, and the family violence network that we represent, support the view that legislation/social policy and social service delivery should be strengths-based and culturally-based rather than punitive and mono-cultural. We believe that all cultural communities must have a say in the formation of legislation/social policy and other services in order for these to be effective at enhancing wellbeing. These principles are extended onto children by New Zealand's ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). Maori children occupy a special place in New Zealand by virtue of their being tangata whenua, meaning that their wellbeing is an indicator of the wellbeing of the nation as a whole. **That Maori children are overrepresented as one of the most underprivileged and adversely impacted sectors of our population reflects the convergence of our nation's poor achievement in promoting children's wellbeing with our equally poor support of Maori interests.**

### **A Way Forward**

The family violence sector predominantly (although not exclusively) works with adults. One aspect of that work is to support parents to better support their children. This section discusses the urgent need for government to support Maori children's wellbeing through a combination of policies, some aimed at adults in their capacity as parents and other directed to children.

A number of factors are well-known to support the wellbeing of adults, which in turn helps adults be supportive of their children's wellbeing. From the perspective of the WAVES network, families affected by violence at home often present with multiple needs that both contribute to and exacerbate clients' and their children's ongoing experience of violence. Reflecting on the wealth of experience in working with families among our members, we believe there is urgent need for some immediate 'band-aid' solutions to address areas where Maori needs are not currently being met that will begin to contribute incremental improvements in the wellbeing of children, including but not limited to:

- reducing child poverty by improving family incomes
- presenting positive and empowering images of Maori to the community
- addressing the adequacy of benefit rates and low income support
- improving access to culturally-based parenting and early childhood education
- improving availability and uptake of primary healthcare services
- improving access to secondary and tertiary education, particularly for teen parents

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<sup>19</sup> Tiaria Fletcher, Manager, Lifewise Family Services to the Green Paper Forum, hosted by WAVES Trust, Lifewise, Auckland Council, and Community Waitakere, Laidlaw College, Henderson, 12 October 2011.

- improving the quality of rental-housing, state-housing, and iwi-housing stocks and improving rental and first-home affordability for low income families

But a wider and longer term vision is needed to ensure on-going attention to the wellbeing of Maori children. Other groups of children suffer equally poor outcomes as Maori, for example Pasifika children and benefit-dependent children. Our current legislative/policy responses to children prioritise crisis-hopping, where groups identified as performing poorly receive solutions aimed at reducing the gaps, but that fail to promote the wider social, economic, and cultural determinants of wellbeing.<sup>20</sup> It is our view that New Zealand must embed a focus on child wellbeing within all levels of government and society to make redundant the practice of selective crisis-hopping and replace it with an inclusive approach to children. Developing a long term framework for all children that enshrines in legislation the State's obligations under Te Tiriti/The Treaty to prioritising Maori children's needs would produce a firm platform for on-going government commitment to addressing Maori children's wellbeing. Such a platform would prevent the needs of Maori children being overlooked if other groups emerge as more disadvantaged in the future.

Therefore WAVES supports the enactment of a Children's Act that provides a framework for action to promote the wellbeing of children in New Zealand. This framework must include the principles of partnership, participation, and protection contained in the Treaty/Te Tiriti as well as the articles of UNCROC. We suggest that this Act also needs to ensure that all government and non-government agencies measure and evaluate the impacts of their activities against this framework with special focus on Maori children and require that they take steps to mitigate adverse effects of their activities on children.

There are existing precedents that could support the development of such a framework, including Britain's *Every Child Matters*.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, our own government has initiated a process to explore developing an action plan for children with its *Green Paper on Vulnerable Children*, to which the WAVES network has made a submission expressing similar views as those contained within this submission. We urge the Maori Affairs Select Committee members to consider supporting the perspectives raised in this submission and challenge the present government to begin to prioritise children in all aspects of its work alongside recognising the State's special obligations to Maori children.

**We look forward to seeing responses to this Inquiry that produce substantial and meaningful improvements in the wellbeing of Maori children. National and international literature is unequivocal in stating that childhood experience of material and cultural relative poverty substantially contributes to poor outcomes in adulthood. The situation for Maori children will not change without substantial support from Government.**

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<sup>20</sup> Henare.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.education.gov.uk/consultations/downloadableDocs/EveryChildMatters.pdf>