**Submission on the repeal of Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act**

Whānau Manaaki Kindergartens welcomes the opportunity to comment on the proposal to repeal Section 7AA of the Oranga Tamariki Act.

Whanau Manaaki operates 108 kindergartens around the country from Waiouru to Balclutha, and serves 5,500 children each day. We also operate several home-based networks in Porirua and Horowhenua, a Whānau Ora programme, and several other social programmes that benefit families in our communities.

We have more than 100 years of experience of working with families and with government agencies to support children including children in state care.

Section 77A requires Oranga Tamariki to respond to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. It requires the organisation to partner with Māori to benefit Māori children. It gives effect to the recommendations in numerous reports about the wellbeing of Māori children in state care.

This section seeks to share power resources and information with Māori with the aim of reducing the number of tamariki in state care.

This section was introduced in 2019 in response to the failures of the state to protect Māori children in state care and to prioritise their wellbeing in terms of culture, language, identity and whakapapa.

Its introduction followed multiple reviews of the failure of the care and protection system.

Whānau Manaaki supports section 7AA, and the findings of the Waitangi Tribunal urgent inquiry in March 2024 which found that repealing this section may cause harm.

The regulatory impact statement prepared by Oranga Tamariki itself states that repeal may undo progress made towards building trust and relationships with Māori communities, and could undermine the safety, stability and wellbeing of children.

We note that many other organisations that work in the field of education and child wellbeing are as opposed to the repeal of this clause as are we. We consider there is no evidence that supports this change, and we urge you to reconsider. We would ask for the opportunity to speak to our submission.

**Amanda Coulston**

Chief Executive Officer

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