

**CHILDREN'S
RIGHTS
ALLIANCE** AOTEAROA
NEW ZEALAND

Annual Report
2019/20

23 September 2020

Karakia

*Kia tau ngā manaakitanga a te mea ngaro ki runga ki tēnā, ki tēnā o tātou
Kia mahea te hua mākihikihi kia toi te kupu, toi te mana, toi te aroha, toi te reo
Māori kia tūturu
Ka whakamaua kia tīna, tīna
Haumi e hui e, tāiki e.*

*Let the strength and life force of our ancestors be with each and every one of us
Freeing our path from obstruction so that our words, spiritual power, love and
language are upheld
Permanently fixed, established and understood
Forward together.*

The Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand is a civil society coalition committed to protecting and promoting children's rights in Aotearoa New Zealand. Our work builds on the work of many who have come before us.

Our vision is an Aotearoa where the rights of all children are made real.

Children’s Rights Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand Annual Report 2019-2020

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Chairperson's report

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa

I would like to begin my report by saying a huge thank you to all those who are part of the Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand - our individual and organisational members and those who contribute to our reports are the essence of who we are and how we achieve what we do. I am both grateful for the commitment and passion that each and every one of you bring to this work and hopeful that together we will create the change we seek for the children of Aotearoa.

I particularly wish to thank the other members of the steering committee and our wonderful new Executive Director Andrea Jamison. As some of you will know, Andrea has been involved in the Children's Rights Alliance (formerly Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa) for a number of years, but at the end of May she took on a new role as our first Executive Director. We are incredibly fortunate to have someone with her knowledge and expertise at the helm as we continue preparing for the 6th United Nations reporting round on New Zealand's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Alison Cleland who left the steering committee this year. Alison has made an incredible contribution to children's rights in Aotearoa over a number of years through her work with the Children's Rights Alliance / ACYA and her academic work at Auckland University and AUT. She continues her contribution to children's rights in Aotearoa through her ongoing role at AUT and although we miss Alison's presence on the steering committee, we look forward to continuing to work with her in other ways.

I'd now like to touch on some of the work we have done over the last year. A large proportion of the work of the Children's Rights Alliance is focused on preparing, presenting and following up on civil society reports to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. In the 2019-2020 year this included hosting a series of workshops in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, as well as on-line, to engage with civil society on the reporting process and to gather information on the key children's issues to contribute to the submission of our report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on 1 March 2020. The purpose of this report was to assist the UN Committee to identify the issues that the New Zealand Government will be asked to report on when it submits its next report in June 2021.



Workshops hosted by Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa on civil society reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

We also provided advice and support to other groups wishing to submit thematic reports to the UN Committee on their own areas of expertise and we were delighted to see a series of powerful reports from our members and other children’s sector colleagues. The reports submitted in March were followed by our supplementary report on the impact of COVID-19 on children and their rights in Aotearoa in June 2020. The reporting process, and the steps to come over the next year, are also outlined in further detail later in this report.

In August 2019 three members of the Children’s Rights Alliance Steering Committee spoke at the Children’s Rights Symposium held at Victoria University of Wellington Law School, on a range of children’s rights topics. Alongside this Symposium, the Children’s Rights Alliance hosted a side-event entitled “Making Children’s Rights Real in Aotearoa New Zealand”. The seminar was an opportunity for participants to learn from, and meet with, the visiting children’s rights experts, and to build relationships with others who have an interest in and commitment to children’s rights. The international experts who spoke at the event were Professor Laura Lundy (Queen’s University Belfast), Professor Ursula Kilkelly (University College Cork), Bruce Adamson (Scotland Children’s Commissioner), and Justice Vui Clarence Nelson (Acting Chief Justice, Samoa, and member, UN Committee on the Rights of the Child).¹



L-R: Mereana Ruri (Alliance Steering Committee - ASC), Jacqui Southey (ASC), Bruce Adamson, Dr Claire Achmad (ASC), Heidi Coetzee (ASC), Justice Vui Clarence Nelson, Andrea Jamison (ASC), Professor Nicola Taylor (Steering Committee), Professor Laura Lundy and Professor Ursula Kilkelly.

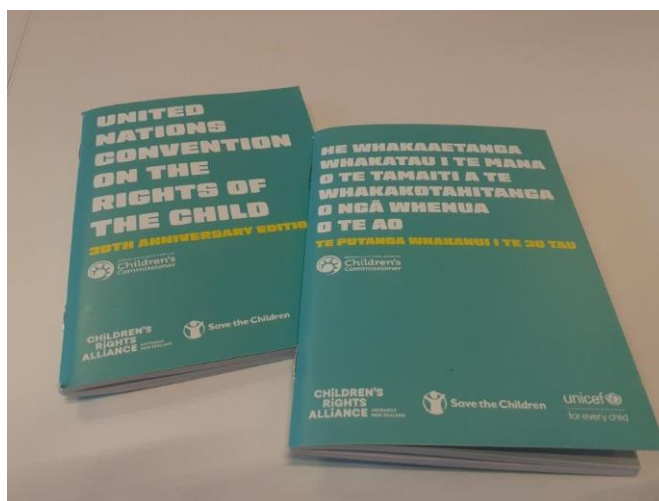
¹ The summary of proceedings from the symposium will be available on our website shortly. In the meantime you can see them here: https://www.savethechildren.org.nz/assets/Childrens-Rights-Symposium_Reflections_Online-Version.pdf

International Children’s Day 2019 on 20 November 2019 marked 30 years of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. To celebrate this momentous occasion the Alliance, Barnardos and Save the Children organised a children’s picnic, hosted by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, on the lawn of Parliament. Approximately 90 children under the age of five attended, and the Prime Minister announced a pledge of recommitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which the Alliance and other organisations had advocated for.



International Children’s Day 2019 children’s picnic at Parliament

To further mark the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Children’s Rights Alliance, the Office of the Children’s Commissioner, Save the Children and UNICEF supported the publication of a pocket version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in both English and Te Reo Māori, so that the Convention can be widely promoted, understood and used in New Zealand.



30th Anniversary pocket version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Over the last year the Alliance has also engaged in strategic planning to ensure we are well placed to meet our objectives. This led to us changing our name from Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA) to the Children’s Rights Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand in order to make our role and purpose clearer. Through this process we also identified the need to do further work on our organisational structure and relationships

with our members and key partners to ensure we are in a strong position to continue our advocacy work so that all pepe, tamariki, and rangatahi have their rights protected and promoted. This will include focusing on how children and young people are involved in our work and how we operationalise our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi before reviewing our Rules to ensure that they reflect the way we wish to work going forward. The Alliance plans to complete this work in the second half of 2020 before moving our focus back to the UN reporting process in 2021.

We look forward to continuing to work collaboratively with our members and wider civil society to ensure that children in Aotearoa experience the full realisation of their rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. All children, all rights, all circumstances.

Ngā mihi maioha

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jennifer Braithwaite', written in a cursive style.

Jennifer Braithwaite

Chairperson

Treasurer's report

The report is for the period ending 30 June 2020. A copy of the Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand financial report is available to members at the AGM and will also be available on the Alliance's website.

Income

The Alliance remains most appreciative of the generous 5-year grant from the JR McKenzie Trust and our budget for the period 2017-2022 has been structured accordingly. The sum of **\$40,700** was drawn down during this financial year as per the Year 4 schedule for this grant.

A modest amount of **\$80** was received in the form of donations from members.

An amount of **\$405** of other income was generated from subscriptions paid by CRAANZ members. This was down by \$200 on the previous financial year (a second year of decline).

Total income for the year ending 30 June 2019 therefore amounted to **\$41,185**.

The **volunteer input** to the governance and work programme, which is noted in the Performance Report, remains a huge and highly important resource to the organisation. We are grateful for the continued support.

Expenditure

Total **expenditure** for the year ending 30 June 2020 amounted to \$22,116 (2019: \$8,369)

Projects

- UNCROC LOIPR report and supplementary report on the impact of COVID-19, hosted workshops and seminars, \$15,877 (2019: \$0)
- Publication of a pocket edition of the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child with the Children's Convention Monitoring Group, \$941 (2019: \$0)

Meetings

Cost of meetings were 27% lower than 2019

- 2020: \$2,210 (2019: \$2,576) for steering committee meetings (flights, taxis/shuttles, catering etc)
- \$995 (2019: \$1,793) for the annual general meeting held in Auckland

Operating expenses

- \$1,913 (2019: \$2,893) for Accounting services and package (\$1,822), bank fees (\$40) and minor administrative fees (\$51);
- \$180.00 for the ACYA website (similar to 2019)

Current Financial Position

This year the Children's Rights Alliance is reporting a **surplus** of **\$19,068** and **retained earnings** of **\$122,615**.

The retained earnings comprise cash funds of **\$122,615** held in the ASB account. The high level of retained earnings reflects the fact that the primary role of the Alliance relates to the UNCROC reporting process and will involve significantly greater activity and related

expenditure in the years ending 30 June 2021 and 2022 when both the NZ Government and civil society will report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. These cash reserves put the Alliance in a very strong financial position to make a difference for children during this process by helping people to understand what children's rights are, working to make sure children have a say and reporting on Aotearoa's progress on children's rights.

This year we will strengthen the organisation and build our membership to ensure the Children's Rights Alliance is well placed to produce high quality reports on children's rights.

I move that **Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand's Financial report and Tier 4 Performance Report** for the year ended 30 June 2020 be formally adopted.

Heidi Coetzee

Heidi Coetzee
Treasurer

About us

The Children's Rights Alliance is a membership-based organisation; a coalition of NGOs, families and whānau, and individuals committed to making children's rights real in their daily lives here in Aotearoa.

Together, we make a difference for children by:

- Helping people to understand what children's rights are, why they are important and how to use them to improve children's wellbeing.
- Working to make sure children have a say in their lives.
- Reporting on Aotearoa's progress on children's rights - what is going well for children and what needs to change.

Underpinning all our work is respect for all people, te Tiriti o Waitangi and children's rights. Our values, which shape both what we do and how we do it, are

- Aroha – love, compassion and empathy.
- Te ira Tangata –nurturing the physical and spiritual qualities of children.
- Tika – what is right, just, fair.
- Pono – truth and integrity.
- Whanaungatanga – connection and working together.
- Manaakitanga – caring for each other.

The Alliance holds the role of Country Focal Point – a role that mandates us to co-ordinate the civil society groups and individuals attending the UN sessions and to liaise with the UN. Since 1995, the Alliance has provided the civil society report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child so that the Committee is informed about the children's rights situation in New Zealand from a civil society perspective. Many of the Alliance's observations and recommendations have been incorporated in the final Concluding Observations (including recommendations) from the Committee to the New Zealand government.

Membership of the Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa

Everyone is welcome to join the Children's Rights Alliance; any child, young person, adult, whānau or non-government organisation who supports children's rights, Te Tiriti O Waitangi, and the Alliance's aims and values. The stronger our Alliance, the stronger our reports and the more able we are to make a difference for children in Aotearoa. Over the next 12 months we will be reaching out to people, seeking information and ideas about how children's rights can be made real in Aotearoa and what we need to include in our 2021 report to the UN Committee.

To find out more about being involved in the reporting process and joining the Children's Rights Alliance please contact info@childrensrightsalliance.org.nz or visit our website <https://www.childrensrightsalliance.org.nz>

Introduction to the team

The Children's Rights Alliance is run by a volunteer Steering Committee which is elected at our AGM and meets fortnightly during the year. The Steering Committee is comprised of at least 7 (currently 9) people with a mix of expertise on a range of children's issues: justice, law, education, disability and social services. Members of the Steering Committee are well connected in the children's sector and can draw on a diverse range of experiences and networks throughout Aotearoa New Zealand.

From time to time, the Steering Committee co-opts new members to access a particular sector or to fill a knowledge gap. There is also capacity to establish sub-committees, working groups and branches to further the Alliance's aims and objectives. The Steering Committee, through its Chairperson and other selected members, regularly meets with coalition partners and others in the children's sector, the Children's Commissioner and government officials to raise awareness of children's rights issues and seek to have them addressed. In late May 2020, the Children's Rights Alliance appointed Andrea Jamison as our Executive Director. We are also supported by a number of contractors including Karen Davis of Common Cents Accounting who we have been fortunate to have working for us for a number of years.

Jennifer Braithwaite, Chairperson

Jennifer has served on the Steering Committee of the Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand since 2018 and as the Chairperson since 2019. Jennifer is a lawyer and passionate advocate for children and access to justice with a background in diverse areas of law including children's rights, child protection, Te Tiriti o Waitangi claims, Māori legal issues, public law, refugee status applications, education issues, family law, criminal justice, and employment. She has also held a number of governance roles including at Auckland Sexual Abuse HELP, Community Law Centres o Aotearoa, YouthLaw Aotearoa, and Child Poverty Action Group. Jennifer has a Masters in Law specialising in human rights and recently completed her thesis research in relation to youth participation in NGOs in Aotearoa New Zealand which is the final component of her Masters in Social and Community Leadership. She currently works as a consultant for iwi and hapū in relation to Te Tiriti o Waitangi claims and Māori legal issues as well as for community organisations on access to justice issues.



Jacqui Southey, Secretary

Jacqui Southey is the child rights advocate and research Director at Save the Children New Zealand. She is fully committed to a positive and nurturing world for children, today and every day into the future. Her focus is systemic and cultural change that will see children's rights understood, respected and upheld for all children in our everyday lives.

Jacqui has a background in children's rights – with a particular interest in children's participation and empowering children's agency, child rights education, speaking up with and for children on issues important to children now and in the future, and teaching. She recently completed her Master of Education focusing on child engagement, children's social and emotional development, and authored a significant research report on the positive discipline practices of parents of children under five years of age.

Prior to beginning her role at Save the Children, Jacqui lead the child rights education and participation programme at UNICEF New Zealand for seven years and was a primary school teacher for ten years before her role at UNICEF. Jacqui lives in the Wairarapa, is mother to three adult children, and three beautiful grandchildren



Heidi Coetzee, Treasurer

Heidi Coetzee joined the Children's Rights Alliance (formerly ACYA) steering committee in 2019 as treasurer. She is the Chief Executive of Save the Children New Zealand, the organisation credited with being the birthplace of children's rights. Save the Children's mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives. Heidi also holds the deputy chair position for the Council of International Development.



Dr Claire Achmad

Dr Claire Achmad has served on the Steering Committee of the Children's Rights Alliance Aotearoa New Zealand since 2018. She is an international children's rights law and policy expert and child rights advocate. Currently, Claire is General Manager Advocacy, Barnardos New Zealand. Claire is committed to using her skills and experience to advance and protect the rights of children and tamariki in Aotearoa and globally. She has previously held roles in Aotearoa and internationally across government, intergovernmental organisations, and non-government organisations. Claire holds a PhD in international children's rights law from the Child Law Department, Leiden University, and has published internationally on a range of child rights issues. She is also an alumna of the Universities of Auckland and Copenhagen, and represents the Alliance on the Children's Convention Monitoring Group, convened by the Children's Commissioner. Claire lives in Te Whanganui-a-Tara Wellington, and grew up amongst kauri and kereru in the Waitākere Ranges of Tamaki Makaurau.



Mereana Ruri

Mereana has been a steering committee member of the Children's Rights Alliance (formerly ACYA) since 2015. She has 22 years policy experience in the government, regulatory and NGO sectors with a focus on roles that have contributed to the advancement of the rights and wellbeing of tamariki in Aotearoa. Mereana is a former co-Chair who presented our last report to the UN Committee in Geneva in 2016. In the same year, she also led the NGO delegation to Geneva to observe and contribute to the Government's presentation of its fifth periodic report. Mereana is of Ngāi Tūhoe and Tainui descent and currently lives in Wellington.



Dr Deb Inder

Deb is a practicing Mediator, Barrister and Lawyer for the Child. Her areas of expertise in family law are; Family Violence, Extended Family Issues, Parenting/Care and Contact Issues, Relocation and Relationship Property disputes. Deb holds a PhD in Law from Otago University, her thesis topic being 'Children's Participation in the Context of Private Law Disputes in the New Zealand Family Justice System'.

Deb is a passionate child advocate and continues to work to improve the participation experiences of children who are the subject of inter parental disputes.



Dr John Waldon - Tūhoe (Ngāti Koura, Te Urewera), Ngāti Kahungunu, Ngāti Pōrou.

Dr John Waldon has long-term interest in the rights and well-being of children. Born and educated in Whakatāne, John has whānau connections with Papakainga and Te Tōtara marae at Ruātoki, as well as Te Tira Hou in Auckland.

John holds a Bachelor of Science degree (Waikato), a Master of Public Health (Otago) and a Doctor of Philosophy (Massey). He has worked with the Hepatitis Research Unit at Whakatāne, where his whānau mandate was to carry out this research to protect children from hepatitis B, and with Te Pūmanawa Hauora at Massey University. John is currently a Restorative Justice Facilitator, contract researcher and has an appointment as a conjoint lecturer at the University of Sydney. He is also a Board member of the Midcentral District Health Board. John has presented papers on Māori health and wellbeing internationally, is a life member of the Cancer Society and has served on the boards of the Public Health Association, the NZ Drug Foundation and currently Chair and President of the Manawatū Centre of the Cancer Society.

John has held the Tamariki Māori portfolio on the Steering Committee for many years and attended the 2003 session of the United Nations Committee for the Rights of the Child and the 2010 pre-session on behalf of ACYA.



Nicola Taylor

Associate Professor Nicola Taylor is Director of the Children's Issues Centre in the Faculty of Law at the University of Otago. She also holds the Alexander McMillan Chair in Childhood Studies. She has qualifications in both law and social work, a PhD, and has been admitted as a Barrister and Solicitor of the High Court of New Zealand. Nicola is a leading socio-legal researcher and has undertaken many studies with children, parents and professionals on family law, cross-border and children's rights issues. She was the founding Treasurer of ACYA and has been involved with ACYA and the Children's Rights Alliance for many years.



Andrea Jamison, Executive Director

Andrea has a longstanding commitment to children and their rights. She has worked at the Office of the Children's Commissioner and at the Ministry of Youth Affairs, where she had a lead role in developing Government's 2nd children's rights report. In 1999, Andrea received a Nuffield Bursary to study the use of children's rights in local authority planning, policies and service delivery in the United Kingdom. She helped to draft ACYA's 5th periodic report in 2015, joining the ACYA steering committee in 2016. Andrea attended, as an observer, the UN's examination of Government's 5th periodic children's rights report in Geneva. She was chair of ACYA, and then the Children's Rights Alliance, from 2017-2019, and has represented the Alliance on the Children's Convention Monitoring Group since 2016. Between 2016 and 2019 Andrea worked at IHC developing a particular interest in the intersectionality of disability and children's rights. She lives in Wellington, has two teenage children and spent her own childhood in Waitohi/Picton.



Children’s Convention Reporting Process

Although no legislative changes were necessary to enable the Government to take this step [ratification of the Children’s Convention], future policy development affecting children – including proposals for new legislation – will need to be considered in the light of the Convention. The Convention will help ensure that the interests of the children are fully considered in the future.²

How does the reporting process work?

By ratifying the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993, Aotearoa New Zealand agreed to *take all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights in the Convention* (Article 4). Reporting on children’s rights is about reflecting on our progress as a country and identifying what more needs to be done for Aotearoa to meet its commitment to children.

As the Country Focal Point, the role of the Children’s Rights Alliance is to co-ordinate civil society (non-government) reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, so the Committee can assess what life is like for children in Aotearoa and how well children’s rights are being upheld. The Government also reports, separately, to the UN Committee and appears before them to discuss how it is meeting its obligations under the Children’s Convention.

The reporting process for Aotearoa changed in 2019 to the UN Committee’s “simplified reporting process”, which works like this:

- The Children’s Rights Alliance and others, such as the Children’s Commissioner, report to the Committee on the key children’s rights issues in Aotearoa.
- Using the information provided, the Committee develops a list of up to 30 issues for the Government to report on. This is called the List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR).
- The Government provides a written report to the Committee, responding to the LOIPR.
- The Children’s Rights Alliance reports to the Committee to provide supplementary information, to comment on the Government’s report, to suggest issues for the Committee to discuss with the Government, and to propose recommendations the Committee could consider making to the Government.
- The Children’s Rights Alliance meets with the UN Committee to answer questions and help the Committee prepare for its examination of Aotearoa’s progress on children’s rights.
- The Government appears before the Committee to discuss progress on children’s rights in Aotearoa.
- The Committee issues Concluding Observations to the Government, recommending what should be done to realise children’s rights in Aotearoa.

Find out more about the [simplified reporting process](#).

² Then Minister of External Relations and Trade, Rt Hon Don McKinnon. Media release from the Minister of External Relations and Trade, 13 March 1993.

When are our next reports due?

The reporting process is a five-year cycle. It is not clear yet what impact the COVID-19 pandemic will have on the way the UN Committee holds its future sessions or on the reporting timetable. For now, the reporting timetable we are working to is:

- 1 March 2020: the Alliance submitted its [LOIPR report](#) to the UN Committee.
- June 2020: the Alliance submitted a [supplementary report](#) to the UN Committee on the impact of COVID-19 on children in Aotearoa.
- June 2021: the Government's report is due with the UN Committee.
- 1 September 2021: the Alliance's main report is due with the UN Committee.
- October 2021: the UN Committee will hold its pre-session, where it meets with the representatives of the Alliance and other civil society organisations and individuals to prepare for examining Aotearoa's progress on children's rights.
- January 2022: the UN Committee will meet with a Government delegation to examine Aotearoa's progress on children's rights. Representatives of the Alliance attend as observers.

What do our reports need to cover?

The UN Committee needs "on the ground" information to understand and assess how well children's rights are being met in Aotearoa. The information we provide tells the story, or paint the picture, of how life is for children in Aotearoa.

However, there is not one story of childhood and adolescence in Aotearoa, but many. All children, all rights and all circumstances need to be considered.³ The Alliance uses a group of thematic "cluster" heading to help us organise the information we provide to the UN Committee. These cluster headings are set by the UN Committee, based on groups of articles, and cover topics like: laws, policies and budgeting for children; children's civil rights and freedoms; violence against children; family environment and alternative care; disability, health and welfare; education, leisure and cultural activities; and special protection measures, which includes child justice and children who work.

Thematic reports can also be provided on issues for a particular group of children (for example, children with disability or children in State care) or about a cross cutting issue, such as climate change.

³ **All children** – for example, babies, older children, adolescents, tamariki Maori, pasifika children, LGBTI+, disabled children, those who have come to Aotearoa as refugees and migrants; **All rights** – civil rights and freedoms as well as economic, social and cultural rights. Also rights under te Tiriti o Waitangi and other instruments such as UNDRIP and UNCRPD; **All circumstances** – For example, children in State care, living in the regions, living in urban areas, living in low income families, those living with addiction issues, those caring for others.

Key issues

All children's rights issues are important. However, the Children's Rights Alliance has identified the following five issues as the current priorities for Aotearoa:

- Respect for the rights of tamariki Māori (both as tāngata whenua and under the Children's Convention).
- Ending discrimination against certain groups of children, so the rights of all children are upheld equally.
- Protecting children from violence and abuse, including through violence prevention.
- Support for families, including an adequate standard of living, so all children can know and, as far as possible, be cared for by their families. This includes:
 - warm, safe housing
 - nutritious food
- Ensuring good health for all children, including good mental health, and timely access to quality health services for all children when they are needed.

How can Children's Rights Alliance members, and others with an interest in children's rights in Aotearoa, be involved?

Comprehensive reports

One way you can be involved is to contribute to the Children's Rights Alliance's reports. Our next report, due on 1 September 2021, can be up to 20,000 words long and:

- Provides supplementary information
- Comments on the Government's report
- Suggests questions for Government and possible recommendations

Thematic reports

Alternately, you may want to write a thematic report. These are also due by 1 September 2021 and have a 6,000 word limit. The Children's Rights Alliance would welcome the opportunity to work in partnership with those wanting to develop and submit thematic reports on cross-cutting issues for children in Aotearoa.

Children's reports

Submissions from children themselves can use multiple formats and, if written, have no word limit.

Children's Convention Monitoring Group

The Children's Rights Alliance has continued during the 2019-20 year to be a member of the Children's Convention Monitoring Group (CMG).

Convened by the Office of the Children's Commissioner, the CMG is a collective made up of the Independent Crown entities monitoring children's and human rights in Aotearoa, alongside the international children's organisations represented in New Zealand, and the Alliance as the group representing civil society. The Alliance has been a member of the CMG since its establishment in 2011, alongside the Te Kāhui Tika Tangata the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, Save the Children New Zealand and UNICEF New Zealand.

The CMG has the mandate to monitor the New Zealand Government's implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, its Optional Protocols and the Government's response to recommendations from the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child. The CMG functions under a [Terms of Reference](#), adopted in 2017, and meets regularly throughout the year to monitor and review New Zealand's progress towards on implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in New Zealand.

The Group also meets twice a year with the Children's Convention Deputy Chief Executives Group (the DCEs Group). The DCEs Group is the coordinating mechanism for the Government with regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Meetings between the CMG and the DCEs Group provide a standing forum for discussing how the Government is advancing the rights of children in line with the Convention. The Monitoring Group and the DCEs Group signed a [Terms of Engagement](#) in March 2018.

Main CMG activities during 2019-20, and Children's Rights Alliance contribution and involvement

2019-20 has been a productive year for the CMG, and the Children's Rights Alliance has been involved in and contributed to all aspects of the CMG's mahi during the year, to monitor implementation of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child in Aotearoa, and to advance, promote and progress this.

Particular highlights of note during 2019-20 have been:

- Monitoring and advocacy based on the most recent CMG Report published in the 'Getting it Right' Series, entitled ['Are we listening? Children's Participation Rights in Government Policy'](#). *Are we listening?* was the second thematic report in the *Getting it Right* series, following on from *Getting it Right – Building Blocks*, which focussed on the General Measures of Implementation of the Children's Convention. *Are We Listening?* includes 10 ideas for the New Zealand Government to action to improve children's participation in the development of policy and legislation. Through the report and the follow-up mahi undertaken by the CMG since publication, the CMG aims to progress current 'child participation' efforts by government focussed on collecting the voices of children, to a place where decision-makers are increasingly listening and meaningfully drawing on those voices to shape policy and achieve better outcomes for children.
- CMG members successfully advocated for the New Zealand Government to join the global pledge of recommitment to the Children's Convention on November 20, 2019, International Children's Day. The Government made an individual pledge to

recommit to the promotion, protection and realisation of the rights of the child by highlighting the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.

- Dr Claire Achmad presented the findings of the *Are we listening?* report on behalf of the CMG at the Children's Rights Symposium marking 30 years of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 'Contemporary issues for children's rights: international and national contexts', hosted by Victoria University of Wellington, August 19-20, 2019. Collected writings and reflections on the Symposium can be read [here](#).
- The CMG has advocated strongly for the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child – Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure – to be ratified by the New Zealand Government. The Children's Rights Alliance has been involved in providing advice through the CMG to the Government on why ratification of the Third Optional Protocol is necessary to promote and protect the rights of children and tamariki in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Throughout the year, the CMG has been providing advice on how the rights of the child are adequately embedded and applied across all areas of the New Zealand Child Wellbeing Strategy.
- Throughout the year, the CMG has continued to push for Government to take steps to advance children's rights training for public servants working in policy roles, and the wider promotion and use of the Child Impact Assessment tool.
- The CMG met regularly via Zoom during the Alert Level 4 national rāhui relating to COVID-19 during 2020. During this time, the CMG monitored government policy responses to welfare, education, family violence and health with a child rights lens. The CMG wrote to the DCE's Group during the lockdown to offer support, share information and to call for the government response to prioritise the wellbeing and rights of all children.
- The CMG's annual review of its Terms of Reference resulted in amendments strengthening the Groups' commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Activity reports published by the OCC covering all CMG activity during the 2019-20 year can be found [here](#).

Looking ahead

The CMG continues to be an important forum through which the Children's Rights Alliance contributes to the monitoring and promotion of children's rights implementation and progress in Aotearoa, on behalf of civil society. Looking ahead, the Children's Rights Alliance will be contributing as a member of the CMG to the next report in the *Getting it Right* series, which will focus on monitoring the impact of COVID-19 on the rights of children and tamariki in Aotearoa. During the coming year a significant focus at the CMG will also be on preparing for New Zealand's sixth periodic reporting cycle to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Thank you to our funders, members and supporters!

The Children's Rights Alliance would like to thank all those who have supported our work over this year, and for many years. Ngā mihi nunui ki a koutou katoa.

We would particularly like to acknowledge the generous support of the JR McKenzie Trust, who have provided funding, guidance and, through meeting their other Kaikōkiri, connections and inspiration.

We would also like to acknowledge the continued support of Save the Children, Barnardos and YouthLaw who, in addition to administrative support, continue to share their people, expertise and insights with us.

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To all those who attended our workshops and contributed to our reporting – thank you!

And lastly, but by no means least, a huge thank you to our members, past and present. Our work builds on the work of many, over many years, to advance and uphold children's rights. It is a privilege to work together on this shared kaupapa.

Get in touch with the Children’s Rights Alliance Aotearoa

To find out more about being involved in the reporting process and joining the Children’s Rights Alliance please get in touch in one of the following ways:

Email us: info@childrensrightsalliance.org.nz

Visit our website: <https://www.childrensrightsalliance.org.nz>

