

New Zealand's 2nd Universal Periodic Review

Mere Pohatu's Intervention Remarks

27 January 2014

[10 minutes]

[1,045 words]

[Whanau Ora, child poverty, Constitutional Advisory Panel]

Mr President and distinguished representatives, thank you for your comprehensive and detailed questions and comments so far. I would like to discuss the Whānau Ora programme. Whanau Ora in this context is a Māori term which broadly translates as Whanau meaning Family and Ora meaning Well-being. I will use both terms and you will appreciate the term also means a strong sense of kinship and relationships. New Zealanders understand and appreciate the importance of whanau and family. The discussion about Whanau Ora is in reference to questions and comments by states, and an advance question from the United Kingdom seeking information on addressing poor outcomes for Māori in health, education, housing and employment.

Whanāu Ora is an inclusive approach to providing services and opportunities to all New Zealand families in need. It requires multiple government agencies to work together, often facilitated by non-government agencies who together with the whanau and family have developed aspirational plans for change. In many ways the Whanau Ora approach will strengthen the whānau and family as a whole.

Since its inception in 2010, the Government's investment in Whānau Ora has focused on achieving outcomes for whānau and families through service and organisational transformation as well as whānau integration, innovation and engagement.

More than 150 health and social service providers from throughout the country have come together as Whānau Ora collectives and were selected to develop whānau-centred services. Collectives work directly and intensively with whānau and families to identify their needs and aspirations. They develop plans to meet those needs and then broker their access to services that meet their goals. Common themes in whānau plans include better lives for children; employment; housing and home ownership; education and skills development; and health and cultural wellness. Whānau Ora works in a range of ways, influenced by the approach the whānau chooses to take. Some families may choose to work on this with a hapū (sub-tribe), iwi (tribe) or non-government organisations.

Participating families have reported high levels of satisfaction with services and support they have received from provider collectives, leading to positive changes for whānau members.

Early results show positive signs of change for whānau and families are occurring through Whānau Ora. Although the lives of whānau and families are complex and multi-dimensional, it appears the

approach supports whānau to progress towards aspirations holistically. Results include families and whānau indicating more confidence in parenting/care-giving, an improved housing situation, and an improved income.

One example of early success is Kaiti School in Gisborne. Located in a low socio-economic community with a high Maori and growing Pacific Island populations, just 6 months into operation, the school has reported dramatic and positive changes for families – illness is down and attendance is up. In addition, government agencies, in particular the local Health Board are working to a whole of whanau or family approach to health related support on-site at the school. All of which has been co-produced with the whanau and the Whanau Ora facilitator employed by the school.

Though initial results are very positive, we are continually assessing our whānau-centred services to ensure they are refined and improved where possible.

The New Zealand Government is also broadening the scope of Whānau Ora to focus on creating opportunities for whānau and family capability building.

I would now like to address the topic of child poverty in New Zealand that was raised by distinguished representatives of the member states X₁ and X₂, and addressed by Germany, the Czech Republic and the Netherlands in their advance questions.

Child poverty does exist in New Zealand and the Government is taking steps to address this. Based on the latest available comparisons, New Zealand's child poverty rates are in the middle of international league tables published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the European Union. It is important to explain that poverty in New Zealand is generally understood as "exclusion from a minimum acceptable way of life in one's own society because of a lack of adequate resources" and that children in New Zealand have access to free education, health care, and where necessary, welfare for their parents.

In addressing child poverty in New Zealand, the Government's primary approach is to promote social mobility and to move families out of poverty. This is achieved through a focus on moving parents into paid employment driven by economic growth, and improved educational performance, while ensuring that New Zealand's social security safety net continues to support people who cannot support themselves.

New Zealand is taking an innovative approach to trial a change in the way social services are delivered. Social Sector Trials, which is supporting decision-making at the local level, building on existing networks and strengthening coordination at every level of government and within the community.

The Minister of Maori Affairs will report later this year to Cabinet on the recommendations of the Maori Affairs Select Committee Inquiry into the determinants of well-being for Maori Children.

The Government is firmly focused on children's engagement and success in education. There is a deliberative policy drive to increase participation in early childhood education particularly for children considered vulnerable. Government is also looking at those parts of our education system where children tend to disengage. The overall emphasis is on increasing achievement and success.

New Zealand does not have an official poverty line, but regularly reports on a range of measures of income poverty and material wellbeing.

The Government remains concerned many children live in poor households.

Our 2013 Budget contained a number of additional initiatives with a poverty and child poverty focus. These examples are working

together with a number of important sectors including local communities, health and education agencies, and private partnerships. One example is the Government's \$9.5 million investment over five years to help extend the KickStart school breakfast programme. This was extended to five days a week in higher needs schools in 2013, with all schools eligible from 2014. The Government will also provide \$500,000 a year over three years to help charity KidsCan provide health products, raincoats and shoes for children in need. Additionally, the Government has invested \$45 million into the Rheumatic Fever Prevention Programme to support vulnerable children, including through working with Australia to collaboratively identify a potential vaccine.

I would now like to move onto the topic of New Zealand's constitutional arrangements. Raised by X.

New Zealand has no single written constitution. Our constitution is instead based on the Constitution Act and other legislation such as the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act. Additionally, the Treaty of Waitangi, court decisions, constitutional practice and the wider context of New Zealand's international obligations form our constitution. New Zealand's constitutional arrangements continue to

evolve through engagement with Māori and through negotiation and acceptance of new international commitments.

We established an independent Constitutional Advisory Panel in 2010 to consider the state constitutional issues in New Zealand. The Panel independently designed and managed the engagement process. They implemented a multi-faceted approach designed to support and encourage conversations with a diverse range of New Zealanders. This process involved seeking advice from community groups on how to engage with communities, and face-to-face engagement with the public. Of interest were the high numbers of young people who participated in the process. This thorough and dynamic process gave all New Zealanders the opportunity to make their voices heard.

The Panel made their recommendations public in late 2013. The Panel noted that although there is no broad support for a supreme constitution, there is support for entrenching some elements. Recommendations of the Panel included a review of New Zealand's Bill of Rights Act and support for the continued development of the role and status of the Treaty of Waitangi.

The report's key recommendation is that the Government actively support a continuing conversation on this topic.

The New Zealand Government is currently considering the recommendations in the report, and whether any further work is desirable. Any changes to our constitutional arrangements will need to be carefully examined and have broad public support.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the direct and challenging questions provided by representatives of the member states so far. A member of the delegation will attempt to address other points that have been raised but I have not had the opportunity to discuss. Thank you Mr President.

