

Under the Inquiries Act 2013
In the matter of the Royal Commission into Historical Abuse in State Care and in
the Care of Faith-based Institutions

Oranga Tamariki: Brief of Evidence of Nicolette Dickson for Institutional Response Hearing

8 August 2022

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Brief of evidence of Nicolette Dickson

I, **Nicolette Dickson** of Auckland, Social Worker, state:

Introduction

- 1 My full name is Nicolette Dickson. I am a first generation Pakeha New Zealander with whakapapa links to the Netherlands. I grew up in Papakura, currently reside in Manurewa and have a strong personal and professional commitment to the South Auckland community.
- 2 I am currently Tumu Tuarua Te Kounga o te Mahi me ngā Wheako Deputy Chief Executive – Quality Practice & Experiences, at Oranga Tamariki. I will address the purpose of this group and my responsibilities later in my evidence.
- 3 I am a member of the new Oranga Tamariki Leadership Team, Te Riu, which was established in April 2022. Collectively Te Riu are responsible for supporting Chappie Te Kani, as Tumu Whakarae mō ngā Tamariki / Secretary for Children in realising the purpose and objectives of Oranga Tamariki. Members of Te Riu include the Chief Social Worker, Tumu Tikanga and Deputy Chief Executives responsible for Māori Partnerships and Community, System Leadership, Service Delivery, People, Culture and Enabling Services and Quality Practice and Experiences.
- 4 I hold a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Auckland, 1996 and a Diploma in Social Work from Auckland College of Education, 1998. I am a fully registered social worker.
- 5 I began my career in 1998 as a social worker employed by the Northland District Health Board, working firstly in the area of adult community mental health, also undertaking the duties of a Duly Authorised Officer under the Mental Health Act, followed by a role as the maternity social worker for Whangarei Hospital.
- 6 In 2003, I joined Child Youth and Family as a social worker in the Whangarei office. Since that time, I have worked in a range of local, regional and national roles for Child, Youth and Family (CYF) and Oranga Tamariki including as a supervisor, site manager, youth justice manager, operational manager and regional manager before commencing my former role as the General Manager Practice within the Professional Practice Group (PPG) in March 2019. In 2021, I was a co-Director of a programme of work which led to the introduction of the current Oranga Tamariki Practice Framework.

Quality Practice and Experiences group

- 7 The purpose of the Quality Practice and Experiences group is to drive practice design, quality and improvement, drawing on the insights of tamariki, whānau and kaimahi. As Deputy Chief Executive Quality Practice and Experiences, I work closely alongside the Chief Social Worker and am responsible for a range of functions which translate the Oranga Tamariki vision for quality practice into action.
- 8 The Quality Practice and Experiences group includes the following functions:

- (a) Practice – the development of practice guidance, frameworks and tools, the provision of practice advice and a range of practice review and analysis activities. The group includes a dedicated Māori Practice team – Te Tira Hāpai Māori, Pacific Practice team and Disability Practice advice. They also provide direct support to sites and regions with a focus on lifting practice quality. They also maintain our external repository of practice information – the Practice Centre.
- (b) Operational Policy – this includes describing what social workers must do in their practice in order to give effect to legislation and regulations. This group also plays a role in supporting the development of a range of Memorandums of Understanding and Interagency Agreements.
- (c) Practice Programme – this is a time limited area of work which is responsible for building on the introduction of the new Practice framework by developing and introducing supporting practice models and tools. The programme includes a particular focus on the area of Professional Supervision
- (d) Quality systems – monitoring the quality of practice delivered by Oranga Tamariki practitioners in their work with tamariki and whānau. This includes the development of quality practice tools, undertaking case file analysis, regular residence reviews and generating insights and reports on a range of quality practice indicators within Oranga Tamariki.
- (e) Professional Development – the development and delivery of professional development programmes within Oranga Tamariki and the provision of learning advice and support into regions. A primary focus of this group is the delivery of programmes such as the induction programme, Puawai for new social workers.
- (f) Public, Ministerial and Executive Services – this group is responsible for timely and high-quality responses to Ministerial, Ombudsman and Official Information Requests, responding to customer information requests and the provision of our feedback and complaints service.
- (g) Review Management and Royal Commission – this group maintains critical relationships with those external groups to whom we are accountable including but not limited to the Independent Children’s Monitor, the Office of the Children’s Commissioner, the Ministerial Advisory Board and the Crown Response Unit. They also monitor and report on actions undertaken by Oranga Tamariki in response to reviews, enquiries and investigation (including in response to any recommendations arising from this Commission’s investigation).
- (h) Safety of Children in Care Team – this group reviews every allegation of abuse and harm against tamariki in care and the actions taken by Oranga Tamariki in response. They provide direct feedback and coaching to site staff to ensure that there has been a comprehensive investigation of the allegation and that appropriate support has been provided to ensure the needs of tamariki in these circumstances have been met. They also produce regular reports on the safety of children in care which are published.

9 As a result of my current and previous roles, I have a broad range of knowledge and experience of the practices within Oranga Tamariki from a site, regional and national perspective. I have detailed knowledge on the operation of the current practice system including the Practice Framework, the policy and strategy that sits behind it and how it is being developed and implemented.

Scope of evidence

10 I understand that the Commission is interested in the following issues:

- (a) Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the guarantee of tino rangatiratanga over kāinga (te Tiriti);
- (b) Priority groups: tāngata whenua, Pacific peoples, disabled people (Priority Groups);
- (c) System and organisational monitoring, oversight and safeguarding (Monitoring, Oversight, Safeguarding);
- (d) The relationship between the state and faith in the care system (State and Faith);
- (e) Entry into care;
- (f) Staff and caregivers;
- (g) Provision of care;
- (h) Complaints, Referrals and Criminal Justice;
- (i) Funding and resources; and
- (j) Lessons learned.

11 I have read, and am familiar with, the brief of evidence filed by our Chief Executive, Chappie Te Kani. I am appearing in the Commission with Mr Te Kani to give evidence as needed to supplement his evidence.

12 In particular, I am able to answer questions in relation to the following aspects of Mr Te Kani's brief of evidence:

- (a) Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the guarantee of tino rangatiratanga over kāinga (te Tiriti);
- (a) Priority groups;
- (b) System and organisational monitoring, oversight and safeguarding (Monitoring, Oversight, Safeguarding);
- (c) Entry into care;
- (d) Provision of care;
- (e) Complaints, Referrals and Criminal Justice; and

(f) Lessons learned.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'ND', with a checkmark-like flourish at the end.

Signed
Nicolette Dickson

Dated: 8 August 2022