

# Aide-mémoire



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

## Cabinet paper

**Date:** 16 September 2025      **Security level:** Cabinet Sensitive  
**For:** Hon Louise Upston, Minister for Child Poverty Reduction  
**File Reference:** REP/25/9/711

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## Update on Government Response to the Dame Karen Poutasi Review

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| <b>Cabinet Committee</b>             | Social Outcomes Committee                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Date of meeting</b>               | 17 September 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| <b>Minister</b>                      | Hon Louise Upston, Minister for Child Poverty Reduction                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Proposal</b>                      | <p>You are taking a paper to the Social Outcomes Committee on 16 September to seek Cabinet agreement to accept the recommendations of the Dame Karen Poutasi Review, and to outline the proposed all-of-government approach to implementation.</p> <p>Hannah Kerr, Director, Child Wellbeing and Poverty Reduction Group, will be available to support the discussion, if required.</p>                                                            |
| <b>Key issues and talking points</b> | <p>You may wish to provide your colleagues with a brief overview of the background to this work and the key points in the Cabinet paper.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• It has been nearly three years since Dame Karen Poutasi made 14 recommendations for changes to improve the system of safety nets for preventing harm in the children's system. This followed the death of a five-year-old child at the hands of his</li></ul> |

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carer while his mother, who was a sole parent, was incarcerated.

- Child and Youth Ministers have been overseeing the implementation of the recommendations since mid-2024.
- Multiple agencies<sup>1</sup> are involved in work to implement the recommendations. Child and Youth Ministers have been clear about our expectations that an integrated, all-of-Government approach is taken to this work, and that implementation proceeds with urgency.
- This Cabinet paper is intended to set the direction of travel for the next stage of work on the Poutasi Review.
- To date, there has not been explicit acceptance by either this Government or the previous Government of the recommendations from the Poutasi Review. This paper recommends that we now accept the recommendations. It is important that we put a stake in the ground and are clear that our overriding focus is on ensuring children's safety.
- Implementation of the recommendations has implications for agencies across the children's system, and in particular for Oranga Tamariki. The Cabinet paper signals that we need to take an implementation approach that takes immediate steps to maximise child safety while also sequencing further actions to build system capacity and mitigate potential risks.
- Further policy and design work is required on the details of the implementation approach. I intend to return to Cabinet in November to seek further decisions once this work has been undertaken.

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<sup>1</sup> Oranga Tamariki, Ministry of Health, Health New Zealand, Ministry of Education, NZ Police, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Social Development, Corrections and the Centre for Family Violence and Sexual Violence Prevention.

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s 9(2)(f)(iv)

### ***Key areas of action***

- The Cabinet paper signals four key areas of action.
  - The introduction of a mandatory reporting and training regime.
  - s 9(2)(f)(iv)
  - Reinforcing a clear expectation that agencies share information where there are safety and wellbeing concerns for a child.
  - Strengthening collective accountability for child safety.

### ***Mandatory reporting and training regime***

- International evidence demonstrates that introducing mandatory reporting can lead to an increase in substantiated Reports of Concern. However, it can also lead to an increase in total reporting volumes that, if not managed carefully, can overwhelm the system and divert resources from high-risk cases.
- To mitigate this risk, I am proposing a stepped implementation approach with an immediate focus on mandatory training for designated workforces.

s 9(2)(f)(iv)

### ***System enhancements for dependent children of sole parents***

- It is critical that when a sole parent is incarcerated, their dependent child is visible throughout the system so that their safety and wellbeing can be ensured.
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- s 9(2)(f)(iv) [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]
  - s 9(2)(f)(iv) [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]

### ***Information sharing***

- There are no legislative barriers to sharing information where there are concerns for the safety of a child. However, in practice this is not happening consistently, in part due to concerns about the possibility of breaching the Privacy Act.
- The Privacy Commissioner has agreed to lead proactive messaging to ensure everyone working with children is clear about the expectation that information is shared where there are concerns about child safety. This will also be incorporated into mandatory training.

### ***Collective accountability for child safety***

- The Children's Act contains provisions for shared agency accountability for checking child safety. However, it is not clear that all agencies are complying with these. Officials will take immediate steps to ensure compliance, s 9(2)(f)(iv) [redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]

### **Ministerial feedback**

The key feedback during Ministerial consultation was from Treasury via the Minister of Finance's office. s 9(2)(f)(iv) [redacted]

[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted]  
[redacted] [redacted] [redacted]  
[redacted]

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s 9(2)(f)(iv)



s 9(2)(f)(iv)



### **Communication**

The paper indicates that in early October you intend to make a direction-setting announcement, signalling that the Government accepts the Poutasi Review recommendations and outlining that further work will be undertaken on the detailed policy and implementation approach.

MSD officials are drafting a press release, key lines and Q&As to support this. We will work with your office on the appropriate format for and timing of an announcement.

You are meeting with a small number of key stakeholders – Dame Karen Poutasi, the Chief Executive of the Independent Children’s Monitor, the Children’s Commissioner and the Ombudsman – on 30<sup>th</sup> September to brief them on the Government’s approach in advance of your announcement.

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Responsible manager: Hannah Kerr, Director, Child Wellbeing and Poverty Reduction Group, Policy Branch