**We want to hear your views on**

**New Zealand’s Fifth periodic report to the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child**

**[](http://www.msd.govt.nz/)**

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| **Introduction** |

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) is a treaty that guarantees basic civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights to the world’s children.

New Zealand must send regular reports to the United Nations to let them know how well we are doing under UNCROC. In particular we have to comment on how the Government:

* organises itself to put UNCROC into action
* upholds the general principles of UNCROC
* further enhances civil rights and freedoms for children
* supports families to take care of their children
* keeps children healthy
* supports children to achieve in education
* provides special protection measures for vulnerable children.

We also need to update the United Nations on progress under the Optional Protocols to UNCROC, and whether the Government is planning to sign and ratify any other international human rights treaties.

The Government has done a lot to make life better for children and young people in New Zealand over the past four years. The Government has focused on getting better results for:

* children and families who need extra support to make their home safe
* children who need help to stay in school
* young people who need support to get into training or find a job
* young people who get into trouble with the law
* parents who need support to help their children get the best start in life.

Our next report is due on 5 May 2015. We have drafted the report and now we want to hear your opinion on the Government’s progress under UNCROC.

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| **II. General measures of implementation (Articles 4, 42 and 44(6))** |

This section explains how the Government organises itself to put UNCROC into practice.

The Social Sector Forum Deputy Chief Executives (SSF DCEs) is the group which directs UNCROC action. The SSF DCEs are made up of the Deputy Chief Executives of the social sector ministries. This group meets with the UNCROC Monitoring Group twice a year to discuss UNCROC related issues.

The Government has 10 Better Public Service (BPS) targets. Five of these targets aim to make life better for children and young people in New Zealand. There is also a Children’s Action Plan which is the Government’s plan for protecting vulnerable children. Different areas of government, such as health, education and justice, also have their own strategies and plans for children. Together these actions show the Government’s national direction for children.

New Zealand has three reservations to UNCROC. A reservation is a statement made by the State Party when they sign or ratify the treaty to exclude that part of the treaty coming into effect. New Zealand’s reservations are in the areas of access to services for children unlawfully in New Zealand (article 2), a minimum age for employment (article 32(2)), and age-mixing in places of detention (article 37(c)). The United Nations would like New Zealand to withdraw these reservations. The Government thinks it has sufficient protections in place for children in these areas and continues to work towards meeting the requirements of UNCROC.

The Government is also responsible for supporting and working with Tokelau to ensure the children of Tokelau enjoy the rights and protections of UNCROC. New Zealand supports other countries to make life better for children by providing overseas development assistance.

You can refer to pages 5 to 14 of the full Report to find out more about what the Government is doing.

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| **III. Definition of the child (Article 1)** |

This section explains how the Government’s legal definition of a child in different contexts aligns with UNCROC.

New Zealand’s legal definitions of a child and young person vary depending on the context.

The case for raising the age that young people leave the custody of the Chief Executive of MSD to 18 is being explored as part of the UNCROC Work Programme.

You can refer to page 14 of the full Report to find out more about what the Government is doing.

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| **IV. General principles (Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12)** |

This section explains how the Government is achieving the general aims of UNCROC, such as making sure children have a say in their own lives, and making sure all children are treated the same.

Tamariki Māori often experience poorer outcomes than non-Māori children. The Government continues to provide services to Tamariki Māori and their whānau to address this. Whānau Ora aims to ensure that children have what they need to learn and stay healthy. The BPS targets that aim for greater participation in Early Childhood Education and increasing infant immunisation show encouraging results for Māori and Pasifika children in these areas.

An item in the Government’s UNCROC Work Programme is to look at what the Government can do to help children and young people have a say on issues that affect them.

You can refer to pages 15 to 19 of the full Report to find out more about what the Government is doing.

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| **V. Civil rights and freedoms (Articles 7, 8, 13 – 17, 19 and 37(a))** |

This section explains how the Government makes sure that children have the right to live with their family in freedom and safety, to believe in a God or Gods if they want to, have a name and identity, to voice their opinions without being afraid, and to have their privacy protected.

The New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 affirms civil and political rights for all New Zealanders, including children.

It is important to the Government that we protect the privacy of children and young people and ensure that they can access information on the internet safely. A new Privacy Act and the Harmful Digital Communications Bill will incorporate recent recommendations from the Law Commission to prevent or reduce the harm that cyber bullying can cause.

Keeping children safe from violence is a priority for the Government. This is shown by the Children’s Action Plan and the BPS target that aims to reduce assaults on children.

You can refer to pages 21 to 24 of the full Report to find out more about what the Government is doing.

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| **VI. Family environment and alternative care (Articles 5, 18(1-2), 9-11,  19-21, 25, 27(4) and 39)** |

This section explains how the Government makes sure that children are well cared for by their parents, how the Government helps parents that need support, and what happens if parents are unable to care for their children well enough.

The Government offers a range of services to parents and legal guardians who need support to bring up their child. Some services, such as Well Child/Tamariki Ora, are for everyone. Other services, such as Intensive Caseworkers for Teen Parents, are for a small group who face unique challenges.

The Care of Children Act 2004 continues to promote the well-being and best interests of a child when deciding who will look after them. There have also been some recent changes to the Family Court that encourage parents to work out childcare issues outside the Court room and through Family Dispute Resolution.

A review of New Zealand’s adoption law is on hold due to other law reform priorities. In the meantime, the Government has done a lot to improve the alternatives to adoption to make sure children have a permanent, safe and loving home while still having a connection with their birth parents. Home for Life achieves permanent care for a child in the care of the Government.

You can refer to pages 30 to 39 of the full Report to find out more about what the Government is doing.

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| **VII. Basic health and welfare (Articles 6, 18(3), 23, 24, 26, and 27(1 - 3))** |

This section explains how the Government makes sure that children can get health care if they are sick, and enough food, clean water and shelter to make sure that they stay healthy.

Community and primary health services are available for all New Zealand children, and there are special services for children with more complicated needs. The Government is improving immunisation rates and working to decrease the incidence of rheumatic fever through its work under BPS target 3. From 1 July 2015, the Government will spend $90 million over three years to extend the current zero fees for doctors’ visits at any time of the day or night, and prescription co-payments, to children aged under 13.

Another priority for the Government is to address suicide amongst young people. The Government is doing this through the Prime Minister’s Youth Mental Health Project for 2012 - 2016 and the New Zealand Suicide Action Plan 2013 - 2016.

The Government provides financial support to vulnerable children and young people. The Government’s approach to child poverty has been to help families and young people to help themselves out of poverty through work and education. However there is always a safety net for those who need it. Budget 2014 provided almost $500 million in new spending on children and families to support this approach. The Government has also reformed the welfare system and created the Youth Service to help young people build the skills they need to find a job.

You can refer to pages 40 to 49 of the full Report to find out more about what the Government is doing.

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| **VIII. Education, leisure and cultural activities (Articles 28, 29 and 31)** |

This section explains how the Government makes sure that children learn what they need to know to grow up as productive members of our society. The Government makes this happen through schools, but also through funding activities like sport and music.

The Government has made good progress in early childhood and inclusive education. The participation rate in Early Childhood Education at March 2014 was 95.5 percent (up from 94.7 percent in 2011), with strong growth in Māori and Pasifika numbers. Special education services are provided annually to an estimated 80,000 to 100,000 children as part of ensuring an inclusive learning environment for all children. The Positive Behaviour for Learning Programme helps all children achieve by improving the behaviour of disruptive children. The Government continues to fund a range of programmes to encourage children to participate in arts, sport and cultural activities.

You can refer to pages 50 to 57 of the full Report to find out more about what the Government is doing.

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| **IX. Special protections measures (Articles 22, 30, 38, 39, 40, 37(b-d) and 32-36)** |

This section explains what the Government does to protect and help children who need more help than others, such as children in emergency situations (like refugees), children who are in contact with youth justice services, children who have been taken advantage of, and children who belong to minority groups.

Some groups of children and young people are particularly vulnerable and need more protection. The Government’s major progress in this area is helping young people who get into trouble with the law. The Youth Crime Action Plan aims to increase the options for responding to young people who break the law. The Turning of the Tide and aspects of Policing Excellence support contact with iwi and Māori groups who live in cities to develop crime prevention action plans that reduce offending, particularly by young people.

You can refer to pages 59 to 65 of the full Report to find out more about what the Government is doing.

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| **X. Disability (Article 23)** |

This section explains what the Government does to help children with disabilities and their families.

The 131,000 children with disabilities in New Zealand can access services for all children. Where they need more support because of their disability, specialist services are available. These include initiatives under the New Zealand Sign Language project, the nation-wide rollout of Wraparound Intensive Individualised Support, and the Autism Spectrum Disorder Work Programme.

You can refer to page 66 of the full Report to find out more about what the Government is doing.

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| **XI. Ratification of international human rights instruments** |

This section explains what other international human rights treaties the Government has ratified.

New Zealand ratified the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC) on 20 September 2011 and submitted its Initial Report under OPSC on 22 July 2014.

You can refer to page 67 of the full Report to find out more about what the Government is doing.

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| **XII. Optional protocols to UNCROC** |

The Optional Protocols to UNCROC provide more detail and expand obligations beyond those under the main treaty. New Zealand is a State Party to the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Pornography and Child Prostitution.

New Zealand submitted its initial report under the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Pornography and Child Prostitution on 22 July 2014. An update on the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict is provided in the Report. New Zealand will consider the implications of signing and ratifying the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure as part of its commitment to UNCROC.

You can refer to pages 68 to 70 of the full Report to find out more about what the Government is doing.

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| **General comments** |

1. Overall, do you agree or disagree with the Government’s assessment of progress presented in the Report?

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Comments?

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1. What are the three things covered by the Report that you think are most important for the Government to make more progress on?

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1. We have been consulting about the Report through this questionnaire, and at public meetings in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch. What can we do next time to better gather your views?

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| **About you** |

We are asking you these questions to help find out what matters most to different groups of people and what is most important for people living in different parts of New Zealand.

You do not have to answer these if you don’t want to. We cannot tell who you are if you answer these.

1. Which age group do you belong to?

* 0-13
* 14-18
* 19-24
* 25-35
* 36-45
* 46-65
* Over 65

2. What is your gender?

* Female
* Male
* Other

3. Which ethnic group(s) do you belong to? Select the ones that apply to you.

* New Zealand European
* Māori
* Samoan
* Cook Island Maori
* Tongan
* Niuean
* Chinese
* Indian
* Other (please specify)

4. Which of these are you? You can choose more than one.

* child / young person / tamariki / rangatahi
* student
* parent / guardian or caregiver
* a person of refugee background
* professional who works with or in the children’s sector
* member of an advocacy organisation (please specify which one)
* other (please specify)

5. If you work with children, which of these are you? You can choose more than one.

* teacher
* social worker
* sports or other coach
* medical professional i.e. nurse or doctor? (please specify)
* other (please specify)

6. What part of New Zealand do you normally live in?

* Northland
* Auckland
* Waikato
* Hawke’s Bay and East Coast
* Taranaki
* Manawatu-Whanganui
* Wellington
* Nelson-Tasman
* West Coast
* Malborough
* Canterbury
* Otago
* Southland
* Other (please specify)

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.