

In Confidence

Office of the Minister for Youth

Chair, Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

YOUTH PLAN 2020-2022: TURNING VOICE INTO ACTION – REBUILDING AND RECOVERING

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks agreement to the *Youth Plan 2020-2022: Turning Voice into Action – Rebuilding and Recovering* (the Youth Plan). The Youth Plan is appended to this Cabinet paper.

Relation to government priorities

- 2 The Youth Plan is a deliverable under the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (the Strategy). While the Strategy has a broad focus on the wellbeing of all children and young people (aged 0-24 years), its Current Programme of Action includes a commitment to develop a Youth Plan as part of Outcome 6: *Children and young people are involved and empowered*. There are approximately 800,000 rangatahi¹ in Aotearoa New Zealand and the Youth Plan focuses on addressing their needs as part of COVID-19 recovery.

Executive Summary

- 3 Rangatahi, along with the rest of Aotearoa New Zealand, have been faced with an unprecedented global pandemic. Immediately, many rangatahi mobilised to support friends, family and whānau, volunteered to support others in the community and contributed through roles as essential workers.
- 4 But this time has also been challenging for rangatahi. Evidence shows that COVID-19 will have a disproportionate and lasting impact on rangatahi and the full extent of these impacts are only just starting to emerge. As we collectively rebuild and recover, it is important that rangatahi are supported and empowered to be part of the conversation about shaping a productive, sustainable and inclusive Aotearoa New Zealand.
- 5 The Youth Plan sets out actions that government will take, in partnership with others, to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19 for rangatahi. It aims to ensure rangatahi have a say in decisions about recovery, to support the wellbeing of rangatahi and their family and whānau, to enable leadership and to drive transformative change.
- 6 The Youth Plan is for rangatahi aged 12-24 years. However, some rangatahi faced marginalisation prior to COVID-19. Without intervention, the recovery period is likely to amplify existing issues. These impacts increase for rangatahi who are also navigating significant life transitions during COVID-19 recovery, such as starting a first job. Therefore, the Youth Plan prioritises

¹ 'Rangatahi' is used throughout this Cabinet paper interchangeably with 'young people'.

rangatahi Māori, Pacific young people, rainbow young people² and disabled young people, aged 17-24 years.

- 7 The Youth Plan will span two years to build a platform for sustainable and lasting change. A measurement framework is being developed, which will be used to review the Youth Plan in two years' time. There will be an opportunity to revise the focus areas and actions following the review.

The Youth Plan is an action under the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

- 8 Cabinet agreed to adopt the Strategy in 2019 [CAB-19-MIN-0085 refers]. The Youth Plan shares the Strategy's vision, principles and outcomes. It links to the Current Programme of Action but is a more direct response to COVID-19 and focuses on recovery from the impacts of the pandemic.
- 9 The Youth Plan has been informed by engagement with over 1,200 rangatahi, as well as youth sector representatives and government agencies in October 2019. Officials from the Ministry of Youth Development (MYD) – Te Manatū Whakahiato Taiohi engaged face-to-face with over 600 rangatahi, focusing on rangatahi from seven groups; rangatahi Māori, Pacific young people, rainbow young people, disabled young people, young women, young people living in the regions and young people from a refugee or migrant background. Officials also heard from over 600 rangatahi through an online survey. Feedback from engagement has continued to inform the Youth Plan, including the focus areas, alongside more recent evidence on the impacts of COVID-19 for rangatahi. This includes a rapid evidence and policy brief and analysis of the Youth Pulse Check survey, which over 2,600 rangatahi responded to.
- 10 The Youth Plan aligns with other recovery and/or youth-focused work across government, including the Youth Employment Action Plan (established as part of the Employment Strategy), the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan (under development)³, the Psychosocial and Mental Wellbeing Recovery Plan, the Homelessness Action Plan, the Disability Action Plan and the National Strategy to eliminate family violence and sexual violence. The Youth Plan also aligns with work outside of government, such as Mana Taiohi.⁴
- 11 Many of the impacts that rangatahi are facing in the current environment are economic. The Youth Plan recognises this and aims to respond to these impacts, while recognising that the Youth Employment Action Plan is government's main mechanism for improving employment outcomes for rangatahi. MYD officials are working closely with officials at the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment to align work and collaborate.

² The Youth Plan uses 'rainbow young people' as an umbrella term to include all rangatahi who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, gender diverse, gender fluid, transgender, takatāpui, intersex, fa'afafine, leiti, queer, or whose sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics differ from majority, binary norms.

³ The first Oranga Tamariki Action Plan will focus on COVID-19 recovery, particularly for young people in care and custody, or transitioning out of care to independence.

⁴ Mana Taiohi is a set of principles that informs the way people who work with young people undertake their mahi in Aotearoa New Zealand. The process for developing Mana Taiohi was led by Ara Taiohi. Mana Taiohi replaces the Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa.

The Youth Plan has been reframed to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and to enable rangatahi to be part of decisions about recovery

12 Rangatahi are disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 crisis.⁵ Evidence shows that young people are more at risk of adverse psychological, social, health, economic and educational effects post-disasters.⁶ Without intervention, COVID-19 is likely to exacerbate existing disadvantage, meaning some groups of rangatahi will experience more severe impacts than others. While some impacts are known, others are only just beginning to emerge. Some rangatahi are likely to recover relatively quickly, while others may experience impacts for some time, or even see these worsen over time. Impacts include:

- *Employment and financial security* - rangatahi tend to experience higher rates of unemployment and underutilisation when compared to the wider population and these rates increase under economic crises.⁷ Rangatahi Māori, Pacific young people and disabled young people are more likely to not be in education, employment or training.⁸ Unemployment at an early age, and taking jobs which pay lower than an individual is qualified for, can negatively affect lifetime earning potential.⁹ In addition, economic health is strongly linked with mental health.¹⁰
- *Social impacts* – rangatahi struggled with a range of factors during Alert Levels 4 and 3, including social isolation, loneliness, disrupted education and training, a lack of access to devices, data or internet and not being in safe bubbles or not feeling accepted by others in their bubble. Increased screen time for some rangatahi also meant increased exposure to online harms.¹¹
- *Mental wellbeing* – evidence from other countries about how young people have coped during periods of quarantine shows that a range of mental health and addiction impacts are likely. The mental health impacts include post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depressive symptoms, grief, confusion and anger.¹² Those with pre-existing conditions are more likely to experience the negative mental health and addiction

⁵ International Labour Organisation Monitor: *COVID-19 and the world of work*. Fourth edition. Updated estimates and analysis. 27 May 2020.

⁶ Webb, S, Kingstone S, Richardson E, Flett J. *Rapid Evidence and Policy Brief: COVID-19 Youth Recovery Response 2020-2022*. 2020. Wellington: Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency (yet to be published).

⁷ International Labour Organisation Monitor: *COVID-19 and the world of work*. Fourth edition. Updated estimates and analysis. 27 May 2020.

⁸ Our Youth Employment Action Plan: Setting our young people on a strong pathway to fulfilling working lives. August 2019.

⁹ Webb, S, Kingstone S, Richardson E, Flett J. *Rapid Evidence and Policy Brief: COVID-19 Youth Recovery Response 2020-2022*. 2020. Wellington: Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency.

¹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹¹ Youthline COVID-19 Research Report of Results and analysis of Youth Pulse Check Survey results.

¹² Webb, S, Kingstone S, Richardson E, Flett J. *Rapid Evidence and Policy Brief: COVID-19 Youth Recovery Response 2020-2022*. 2020. Wellington: Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency.

impacts associated with lockdown. Mental health and addiction impacts may be exacerbated by other socio-economic impacts.

The Youth Plan will have a particular focus on four priority groups

- 13 The Youth Plan is for rangatahi aged 12-24 years. However, COVID-19 is likely to have disproportionate impacts on some groups of rangatahi, particularly those already facing disadvantage. For this reason, the Youth Plan focuses on the perspectives, experiences and outcomes of four priority groups. These are:
- rangatahi Māori aged 17-24 years
 - Pacific young people aged 17-24 years
 - rainbow young people aged 17-24 years
 - disabled young people aged 17-24 years.
- 14 Prior to COVID-19, rangatahi in these priority groups experienced disadvantage and marginalisation based on their ethnicity, sexuality, gender identity and disability. As a result, they were likely to experience worse health and wellbeing outcomes than other young people.¹³ Rangatahi who identify with more than one of these groups are also at greater risk of marginalisation. The impacts of COVID-19 are likely to amplify some of the issues that currently affect these groups, including colonisation, racism and discrimination, poverty, homelessness, identity not being accepted, higher rates of mental distress and increased likelihood of not being in education, employment or training. Rangatahi in these groups may also struggle to access appropriate support services, for example, services that are culturally appropriate, accessible, accepting and gender-affirming.
- 15 The majority of rangatahi aged 12-16 years are attending school and have access to supports, services and connection through this environment. Those who are not attending school are able to access youth-specific services. Rangatahi aged 17-24 years are more likely to feel the immediate impacts of COVID-19. They are navigating major life transitions, such as starting further education or training, seeking employment or starting a first job, receiving independent income for the first time, and moving away from home for the first time. Some rangatahi are facing pressure to take up employment or provide care for family or whānau members as a result of how COVID-19 has impacted their families and whānau. In the current environment, there may be a lack of youth-specific services for this age group. The economic downturn associated with COVID-19 is likely to impact this group in particular.

¹³ Deane, K., Dutton, H. & Kerekere, E. (2019). *Ngā Tikanga Whanaketanga – He Arotake Tuhiinga. A Review of Aotearoa New Zealand Youth Development Research*. Auckland, NZ: University of Auckland.

Mitigating the impacts of COVID-19 requires collective action

- 16 Rangatahi, communities, the youth sector and government agencies need to transform how they work with and for rangatahi. COVID-19 has driven collaboration, community-led solutions and innovation. It is critical that we continue to build on what we learnt during COVID-19 to mitigate any ongoing and emerging impacts for rangatahi. Government agencies need to continue sharing information and advancing collective actions. This should be transparent to the public and involve rangatahi where possible.
- 17 It is also important that rangatahi are increasingly involved in decisions made about them and their future. The Youth Plan provides a dedicated platform to support and enable this.

The Youth Plan has four focus areas

- 18 The four focus areas are:
- *voice* – rangatahi voices and perspectives are listened to, valued, and embedded in decision-making at all levels, particularly in decisions about COVID-19 recovery
 - *wellbeing* – the wellbeing of rangatahi, their family and whānau, and their communities is supported and strengthened
 - *leadership* – rangatahi are enabled to lead their own lives, have their identities seen, valued and respected, and have increasing influence in their communities and over government policy
 - *transformative change* – government agencies work collaboratively with each other, the youth sector, communities and rangatahi to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 for rangatahi.
- 19 These focus areas were developed based on analysis of key themes from engagements with rangatahi during 2018 and 2019.¹⁴ These key themes were mapped against youth-related work already underway across government and this work was used to inform the focus areas. These were then tested with rangatahi, youth sector representatives and government agencies in October 2019. Engagement resulted in some changes to the focus areas, including changing ‘mental wellbeing’ to ‘wellbeing’ and adding in ‘transformative change’.
- 20 Actions have been developed by the Youth Plan Cross-Agency Working Group¹⁵ in response to the known and emerging impacts of COVID-19 on

¹⁴ These include *What Makes a Good Life?*, *Ngā Kōrero Hauora O Ngā Taiohi*, *Aotearoa Youth Declaration 2019* and *Pacific Aotearoa Lalanga Fou*.

¹⁵ This group includes Accident Compensation Corporation, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Te Hiringa Hauora/ Health Promotion Agency, Office for Disability Issues, Office of the Children’s Commissioner, Oranga Tamariki–Ministry for Children, Sport New Zealand, Te Puni Kōkiri, Department of Conservation, Department of Corrections, Suicide Prevention Office, New Zealand Police, Office of Film and Literature Classification and the Ministries for/of Business, Innovation and

rangatahi. Actions address gaps in services, increase youth voice, wellbeing and resiliency, and aim to mitigate the impacts of COVID-19. Actions aim to connect rangatahi to people, place or activity as this is shown to support resiliency in rangatahi post-disaster.¹⁶ Some actions are already underway, and some were announced as part of Budget 2020.

- 21 Youth Plan actions sit under one of the four focus areas but may contribute to more than one focus area, or multiple outcomes in the Strategy. The actions do not reflect all the work underway across government within the focus areas in order to avoid duplication. Similar initiatives for other groups of rangatahi are not excluded. There are actions which address the needs of rangatahi aged 12-24 years, and others which specifically target the priority groups. Emphasis is placed on working with rangatahi, communities, iwi and the youth sector on the implementation of actions.
- 22 An overview of the actions is below, with further detail provided in the appended Youth Plan.

Focus area	Actions
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enable youth voice in COVID-19 recovery (led by MYD) • Implement the Youth Voice Project (led by MYD) • Develop and share best practice guidance for engaging with children and young people (led by Office of the Children’s Commissioner)
Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand and respond to the psychosocial impacts of COVID-19 on rangatahi (led by Ministry of Social Development (MSD) – Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora) • Create a safe digital environment for children and young people (led by Department of Internal Affairs) • Develop a social marketing campaign for rangatahi promoting healthy and safe relationships (led by MSD) • Collaborate with rangatahi to design and implement a wellbeing campaign (led by Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency) • Increase mental health, addiction and wellbeing supports for young people (led by Ministry of Health)

Employment, Education, Health, Pacific Peoples, Primary Industries, Social Development, Women and Housing and Urban Development.

¹⁶ Webb, S, Kingstone S, Richardson E, Flett J. *Rapid Evidence and Policy Brief: COVID-19 Youth Recovery Response 2020-2022*. 2020. Wellington: Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency.

Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabled community-led solutions (led by Ministry for Pacific Peoples) • Convene a regional rangatahi Māori leaders forum (led by Te Puni Kōkiri and MYD) • Expand the existing Employment Service to disabled young people in their final two years of school (led by MSD) • Expand He Poutama Taitamariki (led by MSD)
Transformative change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide strategic leadership and evidence-informed advice on rangatahi (led by MYD) • Collaborate with rangatahi to facilitate change across government (led by Office for Disability Issues) • Design and implement the ‘Hear Me See Me’ campaign (led by Oranga Tamariki–Ministry for Children) • Increase public sector capability and responsiveness to rainbow communities (led by MYD)

A measurement framework is being developed

- 23 Officials are developing a measurement framework for the Youth Plan, which will align with the Strategy where possible. Some variations may be required to reflect the Youth Plan’s focus on those aged 12-24 years (compared to the Strategy’s focus on those aged 0-24 years). Rangatahi will have input into this process.
- 24 The framework will be developed over the next six months. This will enable a review of the Youth Plan in two years’ time. The review will outline how the Youth Plan has affected the priority groups, as well as the youth population more broadly, how it has mitigated the impacts of COVID-19 and how it has helped to achieve the Strategy outcomes. There will be an opportunity to revise the focus areas and actions following the review.

Progress on the Youth Plan will be monitored and reported to the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

- 25 I will present six-monthly progress reports to the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee to identify and address any emerging issues and highlight successes. This will encourage agencies leading actions to regularly monitor progress. The measurement framework will be presented to Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee as part of the first six-monthly progress report.
- 26 There will also be reporting to Cabinet and Parliament as part of reporting on the Strategy, which is a legislative requirement [CAB-19-MIN-0085 refers].

The Youth Plan is subject to these reporting requirements. The first annual report is due in March 2021 and will include an update on the Youth Plan.

Financial Implications

27 The actions in the Youth Plan will be funded from departmental baselines or through Budget 2020.

Legislative Implications

28 There are no legislative implications arising from this paper.

Impact Analysis

29 A regulatory impact analysis is not required for this paper.

Climate Implications of Policy Assessment

30 There are no climate implications arising from this paper.

Population Implications

Population group	How the proposal may affect this group
Rangatahi Māori	<p>The Youth Plan prioritises the needs and voice of rangatahi Māori, as rangatahi Māori experience additional barriers to wellbeing compared to tauwiwi. Without increased intervention, COVID-19 is likely to amplify these impacts.</p> <p>The Youth Plan recognises that involving whānau, hapū and iwi, and considering connection to whakapapa, is essential for achieving good outcomes.</p>
Pacific young people	<p>Pacific young people are a priority group for the Youth Plan as they experience higher rates of economic deprivation and are more likely to experience violence and report negative mental wellbeing. COVID-19 risks exacerbating these impacts.</p> <p>Where possible, Youth Plan actions will include talanoa with Pacific young people as part of the design and implementation of actions.</p>
Rainbow young people	<p>Rainbow young people are a priority group for the Youth Plan. Research has shown that rainbow young people often experience discrimination due to their identities, which is particularly pronounced for transgender and non-binary young people. This discrimination can create barriers in accessing healthcare, education and employment opportunities, and can be detrimental to their wellbeing. There is a risk that these impacts will be amplified by COVID-19. The specific focus on this community of young people,</p>

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	and emphasis on capturing their voice, will help to address barriers to wellbeing.
Disabled young people	Disabled young people are a priority group for the Youth Plan. They often miss out on opportunities due to a lack of accessibility, discrimination and marginalisation, and are less likely to be in education, employment or training or earn the same amount as their non-disabled peers. ¹⁷ They also face health and socioeconomic inequities. By placing a focus on disabled young people, and prioritising their voice, the Youth Plan aims to address the barriers this group faces to create equal opportunities and outcomes for this group. The Youth Plan will complement the Disability Action Plan.
Young women	Young women are likely to be disproportionately impacted by the economic effects of COVID-19. Young women and particularly young mothers are overrepresented in the rates of those not in education, employment or training. Young women are not a priority group for the Youth Plan, as evidence shows the impacts of COVID-19 on the four priority groups are likely to be significant. However, their needs will be considered when designing and implementing Youth Plan actions. Young women's needs are also considered as part of the Youth Employment Action Plan.
Young people in the regions	Young people in the regions often struggle to get the same access to services and opportunities as young people living in urban areas. Many young people in the regions did not have access to the internet during lockdown which may have impacted their education. Young people living in the regions are not a priority group for the Youth Plan, as evidence shows the impacts of COVID-19 are not likely to be as significant on this group when compared to others. However, the design and implementation of actions will consider how to best meet their needs, for example ensuring not all solutions are digital.
Young former refugees and migrants	<p>Young former refugees and migrants face racism and discrimination and this has increased following COVID-19. Many don't have the same access to information as other young New Zealanders as documents often aren't translated into their first language, which creates barriers to full participation.</p> <p>Young former refugees and migrants are not a priority group for the Youth Plan. While this group has struggled with some of the impacts of COVID-19, evidence shows that those in the four priority groups are likely to be disproportionately</p>

¹⁷ According to Stats NZ, the rate of young people not in employment, education, or training for disabled youth was over four times that of non-disabled youth in June 2017.

	impacted. Design and implementation of actions will consider the needs of young former refugees and migrants.
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Treaty of Waitangi Implications

- 31 The proposals in this paper are consistent with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi: participation, partnership and protection. The Youth Plan acknowledges rangatahi Māori as tangata whenua and recognises the Māori-Crown relationship as foundational to good policy and achieving good outcomes. It also acknowledges the significant inequities that currently exist between rangatahi Māori and rangatahi tauwiwi.

Human Rights

- 32 The proposals in this paper are consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993 and will support New Zealand to meet its obligations under various international treaties and obligations. These include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child,¹⁸ the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Consultation

- 33 The following agencies have been consulted during the development of the Youth Plan: the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, State Services Commission, Te Hiringa Hauora/Health Promotion Agency, New Zealand Defence Force, Office for Disability Issues, Office of the Children’s Commissioner, Oranga Tamariki–Ministry for Children, Sport New Zealand, Te Puni Kōkiri, and the Ministries of/for Education, Health, Justice, Pacific Peoples, Primary Industries and Social Development.
- 34 The following agencies were informed: Accident Compensation Corporation, Department of Conservation, Department of Corrections, Department of Internal Affairs, New Zealand Police, Treasury, Office for Film and Literature Classification and the Ministries for/of Culture and Heritage, Business, Innovation and Employment, Women, Environment and Housing and Urban Development.

Communications

- 35 It is my intention to release the Youth Plan via soft launch in late July 2020 and issue a media release at that time.

Proactive Release

- 36 I intend to release this paper following soft launch of the Youth Plan.

¹⁸ The Youth Plan recognises the importance of children and young people’s rights being respected and upheld, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Recommendations

The Minister for Youth recommends that the Committee:

- 1 **note** that the Youth Plan is an action under the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy.
- 2 **note** that COVID-19 will disproportionately impact rangatahi, and in particular rangatahi Māori, Pacific young people, rainbow young people and disabled young people, aged 17-24 years and that the Youth Plan aims to mitigate these impacts.
- 3 **note** that the Youth Plan has been informed by engagement with rangatahi and the youth sector, as well as COVID-19 specific evidence, and was developed in collaboration with the Youth Plan Cross-Agency Working Group.
- 4 **agree** to the Youth Plan and to the Minister for Youth publicly releasing the Youth Plan via soft launch in late July 2020.
- 5 **authorise** the Minister for Youth to make decisions about minor editorial changes, design changes, and translations to the Youth Plan without further Cabinet approval.
- 6 **invite** the Minister for Youth to provide six-monthly progress reports to the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee on the Youth Plan.
- 7 **note** that a measurement framework for the Youth Plan is under development which will be presented as part of the first six-monthly progress report to the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee.
- 8 **agree** that a review of the Youth Plan be undertaken two years after its launch.
- 9 **invite** the Minister for Youth to report back to the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee on findings following the review of the Youth Plan.

Hon Peeni Henare

Minister for Youth