

**Media Release | For immediate release – 15 May 2025**

**Oranga Tamariki lost sight of the children and whānau it was there to serve: Response to Auditor General's inquiry into Oranga Tamariki procurement and contract management**

Te Pai Ora SSPA says an inquiry released today by the Auditor General into Oranga Tamariki shows a government department under enormous stress, “that clearly lost sight of how its decisions could impact children and whānau.”

Te Pai Ora SSPA sought an urgent intervention and called for an inquiry in July last year about Oranga Tamariki's procurement and contract management process. Chief Executive, Belinda Himiona says the inquiry is “an alarming reading of the poor and sometimes unethical practices and treatment of providers and failure to follow government contracting guidelines.”

“The tragedy is, it appears there were no checks and balances in place to make sure decisions didn't put children and whānau at risk,” says Ms Himiona.

She says it was clear that decisions made about what services would be funded, reduced or defunded were made with no knowledge of the providers, their services, or the needs of children and whānau.

Te Pai Ora SSPA says Oranga Tamariki has been systematically paying providers late and withholding payments as a bargaining tool to reduce contract conditions. “This must stop.”

Te Pai Ora SSPA represents around 250 community social service providers. Around half of these have experienced funding reductions since June last year when hundreds of community social service providers were given little notice by Oranga Tamariki that their funding would be reduced or discontinued. Providers had little time to find alternative supports for children and whānau who were receiving their services.

Te Pai Ora SSPA says the process had real-life consequences with children and whānau being left without vital services they rely on.

“We heard stories of children whose move to a stable and loving home was put on hold. We knew of teen mums with nowhere else to go after teen parent units lost their funding. We knew of women and children experiencing family and sexual violence left with no lifeline because there were no other supports available,” says Ms Himiona.

Te Pai Ora SSPA says it expects checks and balances to be put in place by all government agencies to prevent similar contract breaches and harm to children and whānau from occurring again.

“Government agencies are meant to follow best practices, but for some reason Oranga Tamariki lost sight of what these were.”

Te Pai Ora SSPA acknowledges the detailed and important work of the Auditor General and his office and is calling on Oranga Tamariki to enact ALL of the recommendations in the report. “We expect to see a fair, good faith commissioning process that protects vital lifelines for children and whānau with decisions that are informed by good evidence,” says Ms Himiona.

Te Pai Ora says there are some key actions needed to repair trust and restabilise vital services for children and whānau.

**No more carrying Government's debts.** "We expect Oranga Tamariki to promptly pay all providers the amount it still legitimately owes them," says Ms Himiona.

**No more flip-flopping decision-making.** "We want a consistent and transparent contracting round that ensures decisions are informed by good evidence of the impact on children and whānau," says Ms Himiona. "We need to see a sound commissioning plan and process that gives everyone certainty, stability and clarity.

**No risk to children or whānau.** "We want an approach to social services investment that has a clear rationale and that has children and whānau at its centre," says Ms Himiona.

**Work with the sector, not against it.** "We care that the work we do every day turns around the lives of children and whānau. We want Oranga Tamariki to succeed in this and we're working closely with them and the sector to reset the working partnership," says Ms Himiona.

**ENDS**

Belinda Himiona is available for interviews upon request: [ceo@sspa.org.nz](mailto:ceo@sspa.org.nz) | 021 0230 1029

#### **Editor's Notes:**

**ABOUT SOCIAL SERVICE PROVIDERS TE PAI ORA O AOTEAROA | [www.sspa.org.nz](http://www.sspa.org.nz)**

Te Pai Ora SSPA is a membership-based organisation, representing more than 250 non-profit, community-based social service organisations from around Aotearoa New Zealand. Our member organisations are diverse, including small rural organisations, Iwi and kaupapa Māori service providers, Pacific providers, and large national children's organisations. Our member organisations provide life-changing and often life-saving services and support in their communities.

Te Pai Ora SSPA's full members are funded by government to deliver social services in our communities every day, with a predominant focus on children, rangatahi, families and whānau. Our affiliate members are organisations that deliver social services for these people, and organisations and individuals working in areas aligned to the interests of children, young people, whānau or communities.

Te Pai Ora SSPA's vision is that Aotearoa New Zealand's community-based social services are sustainable, making a positive impact every day in our communities and hāpori, supporting children, young people and whānau to thrive now and into the future. Te Pai Ora SSPA works to strengthen Aotearoa New Zealand's social sector through advocacy and engagement, learning and development, relationships and sector leadership.