



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Petitions Committee

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Petihana

54th Parliament

January 2025

**Petition of Aaron Hendry on behalf of
Manaaki Rangatahi: Develop a strategy and
commit funding to end youth homelessness**

Presented to the House of Representatives
by Greg O'Connor, Chairperson

Contents

Recommendation.....	3
Request for a strategy and funding to end youth homelessness	3
Comments from the petitioner	3
Youth homelessness in New Zealand.....	3
The need for a youth homelessness strategy	4
Comments from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	5
Existing strategies and initiatives	5
Data collection on youth homelessness.....	6
Comments from Oranga Tamariki	6
Our response to the petition	6
Appendix.....	8

Petition of Aaron Hendry on behalf of Manaaki Rangatahi

Recommendation

The Petitions Committee has considered the petition of Aaron Hendry on behalf of Manaaki Rangatahi—Develop a strategy and commit funding to end youth homelessness—and recommends that the House take note of its report.

Request for a strategy and funding to end youth homelessness

The petition was presented to the House on 18 July 2023. It requests:

That the House of Representatives urge the Government to urgently develop a strategy and allocate funding to end youth homelessness; and note that 7,733 have signed a similar online petition.

The Petitions Committee of the 53rd Parliament began considering the petition. We resumed consideration in the 54th Parliament and received submissions from Manaaki Rangatahi, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development | Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga, and Oranga Tamariki | Ministry for Vulnerable Children.

The organisations we received submissions from used slightly differing definitions of “youth” or “young people”, but generally these terms refer to people aged between 16 and 25 or 26.

Comments from the petitioner

Manaaki Rangatahi is a collective of organisations that work across New Zealand to support vulnerable young people. It formed in 2018 in response to youth homelessness in Auckland and has grown to represent more than 10 organisations across the country.

The petitioner asks the Government to adopt a comprehensive strategy to end youth homelessness, supported by appropriate funding. It says the strategy should include these key aspects:

- legislation to prohibit government agencies from releasing youth into homelessness
- investment in upscaling and upskilling services to address youth housing and youth homelessness
- better data collection on youth homelessness.

The petitioner also asked us to seek input from several government agencies on this matter, acknowledging that the issue cuts across many portfolios.

Youth homelessness in New Zealand

The petitioner said that almost half the people who experience homelessness in New Zealand are under the age of 25, and that there are 2,880 young people on the public housing register. An Oranga Tamariki report found that one in five young people transitioning from care or youth justice placements experienced some form of homelessness or housing

instability. Government documents from 2021 show that 18 percent of those in receipt of an Emergency Housing Special Needs Grant were under the age of 25.

Manaaki Rangatahi drew our attention to the use of hotels and motels as emergency accommodation for young people. In 2023, over 3,800 individuals under 25 years old were tenanted in emergency housing. The petitioner commented that motels should not be a long-term solution; it is better to billet young people with whānau. Emergency housing should be a brief and non-reoccurring experience as it does not give an individual sufficient care or support to change their situation.

The petitioner gave us an example of a success story. A 20-year-old Māori male was supported by an urban papakāinga initiative in South Auckland for 16 months and went from sleeping in a train station to obtaining a driving licence, participating in a Pasifika Leadership programme, and securing permanent housing.¹ This story demonstrates the potential of targeted interventions. Manaaki Rangatahi expressed its concern that Budget 2024 reduced funding for one such targeted intervention: funding for the Rangatahi Youth Transitional Housing Initiative will be cut by \$5 million a year from 2024/25 to 2027/28.²

The need for a youth homelessness strategy

The petitioner acknowledged the important work already being done by government and charitable initiatives, but it called for a more targeted approach. It refuted the Government's position that youth are sufficiently covered in existing workstreams. Manaaki Rangatahi argued that the current government strategy does not sufficiently provide for the needs of young people and the unique challenges they face, particularly in transitioning to independence. The petitioner submitted that young people may be discriminated against in the housing market and may have difficulties understanding and accessing their entitlements. The petitioner drew our attention to Stage One of the Waitangi Tribunal's Kaupapa Inquiry into housing policy and services. In it, the Crown acknowledged "that more needs to be done to increase housing supports and services for rangatahi/young people experiencing homelessness".³

The petitioner suggested several upcoming opportunities for the Government to introduce a youth homelessness strategy. The first is the legally mandated 2024 review of the Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development, which the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development referenced in its written submission. The second opportunity was the State Report due in March 2025 on New Zealand's compliance with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

Manaaki Rangatahi noted that part of the strategy should be to improve data collection to better understand and tackle factors affecting youth homelessness. It mentioned how vulnerable groups can be hidden from official statistics, again referencing a Crown

¹ Papakāinga refers to a Māori housing development, normally on ancestral land.

² The [Budget 2024 - Summary of Initiatives](#) is available on the Treasury website, see p 57.

[Official Information Act Response 20240404 - Rangatahi Youth Transitional Housing Initiative in 2024 Budget - Received 5 Jun 2024 - Published Aug 2024](#), available on the Treasury website.

³ Waitangi Tribunal, 2024, [Kāinga Kore: The Stage One Report of the Housing Policy and Services Kaupapa Inquiry on Māori Homelessness](#), 2024, p 175.

acknowledgement during the Waitangi Tribunal's Kaupapa Inquiry that there is a lack of data specific to rangatahi Māori housing needs.

Comments from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) expressed its gratitude to Manaaki Rangatahi for its work and for its regular engagements with the ministry.

Existing strategies and initiatives

HUD argued that a specific youth homelessness strategy is not needed, highlighting some of the Government's existing strategic goals and plans:

- The Aotearoa Homelessness Action Plan 2020–2023 includes an action to review and develop responses to at-risk groups, one of which is young people.
- Several long-term workplans set direction for addressing housing issues, such as the Government Policy Statement on Housing and Urban Development, and MAIHI Ka Ora | the National Māori Housing Strategy.
- The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy requires the Government to set 3-year and 10-year targets to reduce child poverty.

Like the petitioner, HUD also referenced the Crown's acknowledgement during Stage One of the Waitangi Tribunal's Kaupapa Inquiry that increased housing support is needed for rangatahi experiencing homelessness. It cited several youth-targeted services currently operating or scaling up:

- The Ministry of Social Development | Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora provides a Youth Service for individuals aged 16 to 18 who are not in education, employment, or training (NEET), which could include supporting them with secure accommodation.
- Oranga Tamariki provides a Transition Support Service (discussed in more detail later in this report).
- The Transitional Housing pilot, begun in June 2021, gave young people up to 12 months of support with immediate housing while they transitioned into permanent housing. It was expanded in 2022 and 2023 with additional funding.
- New supported accommodation was introduced in 2023, as a pilot with 13 places, for youth with higher and more complex needs. By June 2024, 20 more places were due to be available.

HUD advised against investing resources into developing a specific youth homelessness strategy at this stage. Instead, it said, time was needed to establish and assess the effectiveness of existing initiatives. In reference to the Transitional Housing pilot specifically, we were told that substantial time was needed to identify suitable providers and then work with them to increase their capacity and bespoke services. HUD also noted that work to increase the general housing supply, including social housing, will alleviate the risk of homelessness for young people.

We asked HUD whether it felt that a youth-specific strategy might be useful in the future. The ministry was non-committal, but reiterated that the current homelessness action plan includes specific actions related to at-risk groups, including youth.

Data collection on youth homelessness

HUD agreed with the petitioner that improved statistics are needed. We heard that the current data sets are primarily from the 2018 census; more up-to-date figures will be published in early 2025 from the 2023 census. Acknowledging that it is unsatisfactory to have the main data source updated only every five years, HUD said it is working on introducing new measures to understand homelessness. Inaccuracies also occur due to young people experiencing homelessness as part of a whānau group, and data does not distinguish between this group and a young individual.

Comments from Oranga Tamariki

Oranga Tamariki did not comment on whether there should be a youth homelessness strategy but told us about its work and findings on the topic.

Part of the Oranga Tamariki Action Plan involves completing in-depth assessments of housing needs for priority populations.⁴ It mentioned some of the same challenges Manaaki Rangatahi and HUD raised around young people facing discrimination in the housing market and understanding their entitlements. At least 1 in 10 young people who have transitioned from care or a youth justice placement live in unstable housing. Challenges can be compounded for some population groups, such as rangatahi Māori, Pacific young people, disabled young people, and rainbow communities. It explained that the Action Plan was developed across six government agencies, which continue to work closely together.

Oranga Tamariki supports young people transitioning out of care and youth justice settings through the Transition Support Service (TSS). Its focus is to help young people build and maintain relationships, to support decision making, and to enable them to achieve their goals. The service provides varying amounts of advice and assistance from the age of 16 to 25. As of June 2023, there were 70 TSS partners across the country employing 137.75 full-time-equivalent transition workers. For eligible youth, TSS includes access to financial support and supported accommodation where needed.

Our response to the petition

We thank Manaaki Rangatahi for bringing this issue to our attention, and all parties for their comprehensive submissions and presentations. We appreciate all their hard work to support young individuals who are experiencing homelessness, or at risk of it, and acknowledge that this work takes many different forms.

We understand the severity of youth homelessness in New Zealand but have confidence in government agencies' work to support young people and their whānau. We note that several agencies agreed that improved data on youth homelessness is needed. We encourage the Government to pursue up-to-date data to better inform targeted interventions. Finally, we

⁴ The [Oranga Tamariki Action Plan](#) can be read on its website.

hope that agencies will continue to work closely with each other to reduce homelessness among young people.

Appendix

Committee procedure

The petition was referred to the Petitions Committee of the 53rd Parliament on 18 July 2023.

On 6 December 2023, the petition was reinstated with the Petitions Committee of the 54th Parliament. We met between 14 December 2023 and 30 January 2025 to consider it. We received written and oral submissions from Manaaki Rangatahi, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development | Te Tūāpapa Kura Kāinga, and Oranga Tamariki | Ministry for Children.

Committee members

Greg O'Connor (Chairperson)

Carl Bates (to 29 January 2025)

Kahurangi Carter (to 8 May 2024, then from 29 January 2025)

Greg Fleming

Paulo Garcia (from 29 January 2025)

Francisco Hernandez (from 8 May 2024 to 29 January 2025)

Related resources

The documents we received as evidence in relation to this petition are available on [Parliament website](#).

A recording of our hearing can be accessed online on the [Parliament website](#).