



Government of the Cook Islands



TE PITO MANAVA O TE ANAU

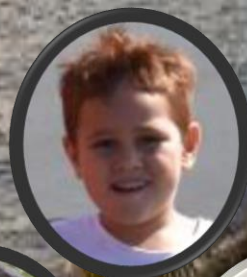


COOK ISLANDS

NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR
CHILDREN

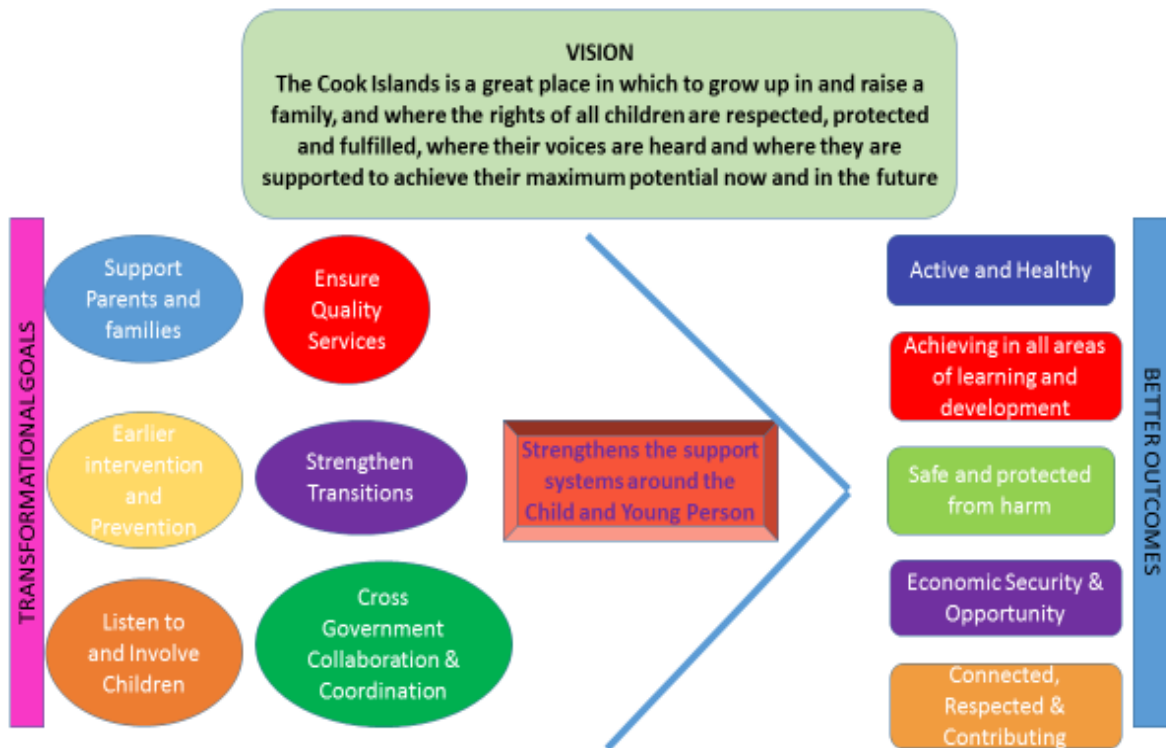


2017 – 2021

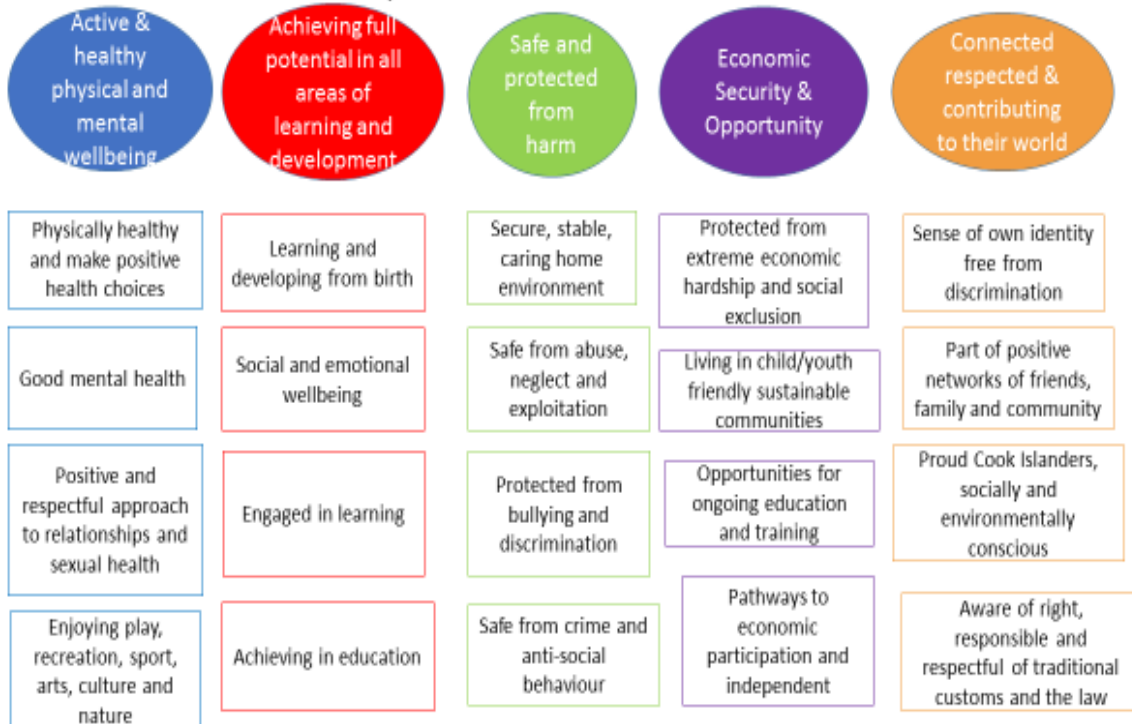


A SUMMARY OF COMMITMENTS

TE PITO MANAVA O TE ANAU AT A GLANCE



The Outcomes Framework, with national outcomes and aims for each



INTRODUCTION

Te Pito Manava o te Anau: National Policy Framework for Children sets out the Cook Islands Government's agenda and priorities in relation to children aged under 18 years – up to the year 2021. It signifies a whole of Government effort to ensure brighter futures for children, acknowledging the shared responsibility of achieving results and the importance of doing so within available resources. Although focused on a whole of Government effort, it recognises that implementation requires a concerted effort by the Government to engage with communities; Non-Government, Civil Society, Faith Based Organisations; and Development Partners. This policy framework is grounded in the Cook Islands culture and also the country's commitments under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Te Pito Manava o te Anau: National Policy Framework for Children adopts an outcomes approach, based on five national outcomes for children. These outcomes are that our children:

1. Are active and healthy, physically and mentally.
2. Are achieving their full potential in all areas of learning and development.
3. Are safe and protected from harm.
4. Have economic safety measures and opportunity.
5. Are connected, respected and contributing positively to their world.

This outcomes approach will underpin all subsequent interrelated strategies.

To realise the five national outcomes for children, a number of cross cutting themes that require strengthening have been identified and prioritised. These themes are termed 'transformational goals' as they are key to ensuring policies and services are made more effective in achieving outcomes. These goals will be a core focus for collective attention and improvement within the timeframe of *Te Pito Manava o te Anau: National Policy Framework for Children*. The six transformational goals are:

1. Support parents and families
2. Earlier intervention and prevention
3. Listen to and involve children
4. Ensure quality services
5. Strengthen transitions
6. Cross Government and interagency collaboration and coordination

This Policy Framework is aligned to the goals of the National Sustainable Development Plan (NSDP) in particular:

Goal 1	Improve welfare, reduce inequity and economic hardship
Goal 2	Expand economic opportunities, improve economic resilience and productive employment to ensure decent work for all
Goal 7	Improve health and promote healthy lifestyles
Goal 8	Inclusive, equitable and quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities
Goal 9	Accelerate gender equality empower all women and girls, and advance the rights of youth, the elderly and the disabled
Goal 14	Preserve our heritage and history, protect our traditional knowledge, and develop our language, creative and cultural endeavours
Goal 15	Ensure a sustainable population, engaged in development for Cook Islanders by Cook Islanders
Goal 16	Promote a peaceful and just society and practice good governance with transparency and accountability

Te Pito Manava o te Anau Policy Framework is also aligned to other key strategic documents, such as the Education Master Plan, National Health Strategy, National Strategy and Action Plan for NCD, National Gender Policy, Disability Inclusive Development Policy and Action Plan. It should be noted that this Policy Framework is also closely aligned and overlaps with the National Youth Policy 2015-2020. It also reflects key legislation such as the Education Act, Ministry of Health Act, Welfare Act and its Amendments, Prevention of Juvenile Crime Act and its Amendments, Crimes Act and its Amendments, Disability Act, and the Family Protection and Support Act 2017.

The framework has been informed by comprehensive consultations in the Cook Islands community, including, most importantly, children aged 5 – 18 years old. A child is defined in this framework as below the age of 18 aligning with the definitions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Family Protection and Support Act. These consultations with children were conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. Gaining insights into children’s perspectives was through participatory activities at the primary school level and a voluntary online survey for secondary school students. A total of 559 primary school students and 176 secondary school students have significantly informed this Policy Framework.

Input was also gained from key government stakeholders, non-government actors, Island Government’s, traditional leaders and communities both in Rarotonga and selected pa enua. This input was provided through face to face meetings, focus group discussions and an online community survey.

Te Pito Manava o te Anau Framework hopes for a concerted effort to move policy development and service delivery beyond the present scenario – where children are viewed

primarily through the lens of narrow organisational responsibilities – to a whole of Government response, that will work collaboratively with other non-government actors and the community as a whole. This represents a shift in thinking which aspires for a more seamless approach between a range of child, youth and adult services, uniting policy focus on children.

OUR VISION

The Cook Islands is a great place in which to grow up in and raise a family, and where the rights of all children are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard and where they are supported to achieve their maximum potential now and in the future.

Ko te tupuanga o te tamariki e te kopu tangata I roto nei I te Kuki Airani e mea tumanava te reira, na roto i te inangaro tikai, te utuutu, e te akonoanga i te au tikaanga o te au tamariki; mate akarongo ki to ratou au reo e te turuturu ia ratou kia rauka ta ratou e umuumu ra, mei teiane, e roa uatu o ratou puke ra.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Te Pito Manava o te Anau is guided by the following principles. These principles will, consecutively, steer the implementation and monitoring of this Policy Framework.

Kua arataki ia Te Pito Manava o te Anau e teia au tumu manako mamaata. Na teia au tumu manako oki e tauturu I te akamaka I te au ta'anganga anga e te tiro tiro anga I teia Kaveinga.

Akangateitei – Respect

Respect is defined as having regard for the feelings, wishes or rights of others. It is the foundation of solid relationships. It is acknowledged that the feelings, wishes and rights of children should be respected, and in return, children will respect their parents, families, authorities and society as a whole.

Ko te akangateitei koia oki ko te akara I te au anoano, au manakonako anga me kare au tikaanga o tetai uatu au tangata. Ko te tango matutu teia o te au piri anga tangata. Kua akapapu ia oki e, ko te au anoano, au manakonako anga e pera Tikaanga o te au Tamariki e mea tau kia akangateitei ia e koia katoa oki te tamariki kia akangateitei atu I to ratou au metua, kopu tangata, au akaaere e te au tuanga katoatoa o te basileia.

Te Tikaanga o te Tamariki – Children's Rights

The rights of children, as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, are recognised. It is acknowledged that children's developmental and age-appropriate needs evolve over time, and that children are sometimes vulnerable and largely depend on adults for their care and needs.

Ko te Tikaanga o te Tamariki, tei akataka ia e te Taokotai Basileia o Teiane ao (United Nations) I roto I te Kororomotu no te Tikaanga o te Tamariki, kua akamana ia te reira. Kua akataka ia oki e ko te au mea ka anoano ia no te akameitaki I te tupuanga tau e te oraanga meitaki o te tamariki ka rauka te reira no tetai tuatau roa, e te vai nei tetai au atianga ka tu kaui to ratou oraanga e ka irinaki maata ratou kite au tangata mamaata kia akono e kia utuutu I to ratou oraanga.

Ututuanga e te kopu tangata – Family focused

The family is recognised as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and wellbeing of children. It is acknowledged that parents have the primary responsibility for children's upbringing and that Government has a duty to help parents in fulfilling this responsibility.

Kua riro te kopu tangata I roto I te matakeinanga e pera te basileia ei utuutu I te tupuanga tau e te oraanga meitaki o te tamariki. Kua akapapu katoa ia oki e ko te au metua te numero tai I te utuutu anga I te tamariki e kua riro te Kavamani I te tauturu ia ratou I te akatupu anga I te reira.

Akaaitete I te ngakianga – Equality

The diversity of children’s experiences, abilities, personalities and circumstances is acknowledged and reducing inequalities is promoted as a means of improving outcomes and gaining greater social inclusion.

Ko te au turanga tuketuke o te tamariki, mei to ratou anoano, kite, tu tangata e pini ake to ratou oraanga, kua kitea katoa iatu te reira e ko te akamaruarua anga I te akaiti mai I te au ravenga taukore kia ratou, kua riro la ei ravenga akameitaki e pera takave mai ia ratou ki roto I te katoaanga o te iti tangata.

Tatari matatio kia tiratiratu – Evidence informed, accountable and outcomes focused

Policies and services must be evidence based and outcomes focused, with accountability mechanisms and clear lines of responsibility for delivery to ensure effective implementation. It is acknowledged that policies and services for children and their families are based on identified needs, informed by knowledge, practice and focused on achieving results within agreed timeframes and in a targeted cost-effective manner.

Ko te au kaveinga angaanga e pera te ta’angaanga atu I te reira, kia tatari matatio ia ma te tiratiratu, e kia akataka katoa ia te au tuanga no te rave mou I te reira. Kua akapapu ia oki e ko te au kaveinga angaanga e te akatupu anga I te reira, no te tamariki e to ratou au kopu tangata kua akamou ia ki runga I te au tuanga i anoano ia te tauturu, te rave anga I te reira kia rauka tei akakoro ia I te tuatau I akataka ia ma te tauturu tau no te reira.

PART 1

TRANSFORMATIONAL GOALS

1 SUPPORT PARENTS AND FAMILIES

The Government commits to:

(Note: Government ministry/agency responsible for action in brackets, with the lead agency indicated in **bold**)

1. Develop a high-level policy statement on Parenting and Family Support to guide the provision of parenting support systems/mechanisms. This should target parental and familial factors impacting on parenting and family functioning and identify responses needed for at risk children, families and communities. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Police)
2. Work together with non-government and faith-based organisations and communities to ensure planning and coordination of parenting and family supports at the island/community levels through Children’s Services Champions. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Island Governments)
3. Continue to financially support parents and families with the costs of raising children through the provision of the Child Benefit and other social protection programmes, continually examining ways of better improving financial support to parents and families. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management)

2 EARLIER INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

The Government commits to:

(Note: Government ministry/agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**)

- Continue to implement the National Immunization Policy. (**Ministry of Health**)
- Continue to provide free health services to all children. (**Ministry of Health**)
- Continue to increase investment in quality early years care and education for all children. (**Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs**)
- Support quality youth work targeting adolescences, both as a protective factor contributing to the young person’s overall development and in reaching out to young people at risk of dropping out of the formal education system, committing crime or

anti-social behaviour. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Police)

- Training and up-skilling of people across formal and non-formal situations to be able to identify potential child welfare and mental health issues, and to provide preventative and early intervention support. (**Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health**, Office of the Public Service Commissioner)
- Profile key risk factors for poor outcomes for children and develop instruments to assist in identifying and working with families to mitigating these risks. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health)
- Develop and implement Area Specific Childhood Programs to improve outcomes in areas of disadvantage, given that there are differences between and within our islands and communities. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health)
- Explore opportunities to rebalance resources with a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention. (**Ministry of Finance and Economic Management**, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health)
- Provide the opportunity for more dialogue and awareness on the early intervention and prevention initiatives (including processes to follow) to the general public on Rarotonga, as well, as the outer islands.



LISTEN TO AND INVOLVE CHILDREN

The Government commits to:

(**Note:** Government ministry/agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**)

- Develop and implement a National Policy on Children’s Participation in Decision-making to strengthen efforts to ensure that children can express their views on all matters affecting them and to have those views considered, including those of ‘seldom heard’ children. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**)
- Strengthen opportunities for children to be heard in primary, secondary schools and vocational institutions, through student councils and age appropriate mechanisms. (**Ministry of Education**)
- Implement provisions of the Family Law Act relating to providing children the opportunity to be heard in judicial proceedings affecting them. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice**)
- Establish Children’s and Youth Participation Hubs to promote children’s participation in decision making where appropriate, at the national, island and community levels. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**)



ENSURE QUALITY SERVICES

The Government commits to:

(Note: Government ministry/agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**)

- Develop and implement a National Service Delivery Framework for children's welfare and protection. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health)
- Review the scope and functions of Government agencies working with children to ensure improve delivery of services and supports. (**Office of the Public Service Commissioner**)
- Develop a common assessment approach with all agencies working with children to ensure that decision making is consistent, timely and comprehensive. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Police)
- Ensure that Government funded programs and services are outcomes focused with clear demonstration that outcomes can be improved. (**Ministry of Finance and Economic Management**)
- Prioritise programs (with particular attention to community based programs and those to be implemented by non-government organisations) for children most at risk. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management)
- Support the training and capacity building for those working directly with children. (**Ministry of Education**, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs)
- Promote greater collaboration between Government, non-government and faith based organisations, community structures and communities as whole in addressing the needs of children. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Police)



SUPPORT EFFECTIVE TRANSITIONS

The Government commits to:

(Note: Government ministry/agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**)

- Bring a stronger focus on effective transitions, particularly within education, health, child welfare and justice services. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice)
- Explore and adopt strategies to strengthen transitions through the education system, including ensuring coherency of curriculum approach, school connections and promoting in-school practices such as peer to peer support. (**Ministry of Education**)
- Increase opportunities for adolescences to enter employment through strengthening work experience opportunities. (**Ministry of Education**, Ministry of Internal Affairs)

- Strengthen programs to provide support for adolescences who are most at risks to ensure better transitions. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education**, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Police)

6 CROSS-GOVERNMENT AND INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION

The Government commits to:

(Note: Government ministry/agency responsible for action in brackets, with lead agency indicated in **bold**)

- Support the development of training programs which encourages leadership and collaboration of people working with children. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Office of the Public Service Commissioner)
- Build the required project and change management capabilities to implement this Framework. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Office of the Public Service Commissioner)
- Strengthen the performance culture within the public service through continuously improving performance management systems and management of under-performance. (**Office of the Public Service Commissioner**)
- Adopt an effective interagency approach in relation to cases of child welfare and protection, establishing information and coordinating processes between agencies serving children, and adult focused addiction, domestic violence and mental health services. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Police, Office of the Public Service Commissioner)
- Formally establish the National Children’s Committee which will be linked to implementation and awareness at the local and community levels, as well as compliance with international reporting obligations. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**)
- Where viable, establish integrated services or ‘hubs’ for children. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health)
- Address information sharing issues across government and strengthen the integration of data systems. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Police, Office of the Prime Minister’s ICT division, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management’s National Statistics Office)
- Develop information protocols to assist in the sharing of information, where appropriate, in particular for children who are vulnerable or at risk. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Police)
- Develop a comprehensive set of indicators to support the Framework and ensure monitoring of the 5 outcome areas. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Office of the Prime Minister’s Policy and Planning division)
- Ensure that resource allocations are to services and programs that can justify and provide evidence of effectiveness in improving outcomes for children. (**Ministry of Finance and Economic Management**)

PART 2

NATIONAL OUTCOMES

In Part 1, the Framework addresses 6 identified cross cutting transformational goals, which will be prioritised over the next 5 years to enable better outcomes.

In Part 2, the Framework focuses on each of the 5 National Outcome Areas and captures current commitments and improving policy and services in relation to each area.

ACTIVE AND HEALTHY, PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY

The Government commits to:

- Implement the National Policy for Non-Communicable Diseases, including fiscal measures to support healthy lifestyles with a specific focus on children. **(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management)**
- Encourage children, parents and their families to make healthier choices. **(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education)**
- Continue to strengthen Paediatric Care. **(Ministry of Health)**
- Continue support for accessible youth and sports activities that promote children's overall personal and social development, including healthy behaviours and better engage children who may be at risk of early school leaving or participating in criminal activity and anti-social actions. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education)**
- Address premature alcohol consumption, use of illicit drugs and incidence of smoking among children through a combination of legislative, regulatory and policy measures. **(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs)**
- Ensure access to children or adolescence mental health services. **(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education)**
- Ensure access for children to age appropriate information and services relating to relationships and sexual health. **(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education)**
- Enable greater access to sports, arts and culture for all children. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture Development)**
- Develop play and recreational spaces for children such as playgrounds, youth cafes, sports and leisure centres and so forth. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Cook Islands Investment Corporation)**

ACHIEVING FULL POTENTIAL IN ALL AREAS OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Government commits to:

- Maintain implementation of the Learning for Life Cook Islands Education Master Plan 2008-2023 and its four focus areas of Taku Ipukarea Kia Rangatira; Learning and Teaching; Learning and the Community; Infrastructure and Support. **(Ministry of Education)**
- Implement strategies to improve school engagement and reduce incidences of suspensions and expulsions and early school-leaving through strengthening the engagement of parents in schooling, supporting transitions, promoting different styles of learning to better engage boys, and fostering inclusive school environments where all pupils flourish **(Ministry of Education)**
- Strengthen programs which will allow students to develop key skills, such as effective communication, collaborative working, independent thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills. **(Ministry of Education)**
- Reinforce the whole-school approach to health and wellbeing to bring about a cultural focus on wellbeing as a basis for effective learning, strengthening the collaboration between the education, health, youth and social sectors to provide multidisciplinary supports when problems arise. **(Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs)**
- Support and link existing partnerships, strategies and initiatives that aim to improve the decision-making capacity of children and young people through strengthening self-esteem, resilience, responses to social and interpersonal pressure, health and media literacy (including social media literacy). **(Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Internal Affairs)**
- Provide opportunities for early school-leavers to engage with further education and training. **(Ministry of Education)**
- Ensure that education is accessible to children with special needs, particularly those with disabilities. **(Ministry of Education, Ministry of Internal Affairs)**

SAFE AND PROTECTED FROM HARM

The Government commits to:

- Strengthen the collection of disaggregated data for children to enhance our knowledge and understanding of abuse and children's experience of the Court system through the development of the National Child Care Information System and Child Care Law Reporting Project. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Police)**
- Improve the nature of Court proceedings, reducing the potential negative impact on children and introducing child-friendly court practices such as the Te Koro Akaau. **(Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Police)**
- Support efforts to limit exposure by children to age-appropriate material on the internet, including via mobile phones. **(Ministry of Internal Affairs, Office of the Prime Minister's ICT Division)**

- Assist with the effective and timely protection and support services, including counselling support for child victims of abuse and crime. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Police)
- Develop a National Framework for Anti-Bullying, taking a community wide approach to tackling bullying from childhood through to adulthood. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education)

ECONOMIC SAFETY MEASURES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The Government commits to:

- Adopt a multifaceted approach to tackling economic hardship. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Office of the Prime Minister’s Policy and Planning division, Ministry of Finance and Economic Management)
- Promote vocational education and training, encouraging entrepreneurial skills among young people, promoting internship programs and strengthening links between schools and local businesses. (**Ministry of Education**)
- Support young people building businesses and livelihood, particularly in the pa enua focusing on agriculture, fisheries, food, hospitality and tourism. (**Business Trade and Investment Board**, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Marine Resources, Ministry of Education, Cook Islands Tourism Corporation)

CONNECTED, RESPECTED AND CONTRIBUTING TO THEIR WORLD

The Government commits to:

- Support non-government and faith based organisations to provide safe, supportive and developmental opportunities for children. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**)
- Promote and recognise children’s active citizenship and engagement in democratic processes, participation in social and environmental activities and volunteering. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**, Ministry of Education, National Environment Service)
- Ensure the views of children in participation forums and consultation are taken into account. (**Ministry of Internal Affairs**)
- Strengthen the teaching of civic duty and human rights in the education curriculum. (**Ministry of Education**)



GOVERNMENT OF THE COOK ISLANDS
Ministry of Internal Affairs

Phone: (682) 29 370; Fax: (682) 23 608; PO Box 98, Avarua, Rarotonga, Cook Islands
Email: intaff@cookisland.gov.ck; website: <http://www.intaff.gov.ck>