



Embargoed until 9AM Monday 2 October

**Launching Today:  
Virtual Hiko Gallery Amplifies Youth Voices on Care Reform**

Family for Every Child and VOYCE - Whakarongo Mai are elevating the voices of care-experienced young people this election, with the launch of a [new virtual gallery](#) today. The gallery, which both features the voices of, and was curated by, care-experienced rangatahi, invites visitors to join a virtual hiko to parliament, and explore the changes needed in the care system along the way.

The virtual hiko gallery invites visitors to learn more about care issues and hear the stories of those who have been directly affected by failings in the care and protection system. It amplifies the voices of care-experienced rangatahi and tamariki across the nation who are clearly, boldly, and unapologetically, calling on the government to deliver on their commitments to children's rights.

*"We don't do this because we want to. We do this so that not one more pepi, tamariki or rangatahi goes through what we went through." - care experienced young person*

The gallery captures the events from a recent hiko and petition delivery on 30th August by young care experienced leaders from across Aotearoa, and takes it online for an immersive and open experience.

The original event was part of VOYCE Whakarongo-Mai's campaign, "You Promised... Now Deliver!", calling on political leaders to take seriously the commitment successive governments have made for over three decades through the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and other international agreements to uphold the rights of children in care.

These commitments are not currently being upheld: In contrast to their peers, children and young people in care experience homelessness and mental distress, lack access to consistent and good quality health services and education opportunities, and are disconnected from their culture, community, and identity, at a far greater rate.

The gallery also highlights the need for future New Zealand governments to broaden care options and extend eligibility for funded support for all children who are unable to live in their home of origin.

There are over 30,000 tamariki and rangatahi in New Zealand that are cared for by other loving family members or by caregivers who have become their legal guardians. These children have the same needs as the children that go through the formal State Care System, however they often don't have the access to the funded support to meet their emotional, therapeutic, health or educational needs.

*"...as a young adult who has been in care my whole life I am fortunate enough to have had that stability in my life growing up with my Grandparents. However, as I have got older I have*



*realised this is a right that every young person in care should have as it allows you to grow your own safe space and connection within that space.” - care experienced young person*

Family for Every Child and VOYCE-Whakarongo Mai also recently came together with other participating organisations to contribute to [Tick 4 Kids](#) and put urgent asks to political parties on what needs to happen to improve Aotearoa’s care and protection system. The resulting care and protection scorecard details political commitments to key asks generated by the group, and is available to view [here](#).

A launch event and panel discussion featuring representatives from VOYCE-Whakarongo Mai and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren will take place online at 1230PM today.

### **Take Action for Tamariki: Reimagining New Zealand’s Care System**

Event date: 12:30 - 1:30PM, Tuesday 3 October

[RSVP here](#)

Access the gallery at [familyforeverychild.org](http://familyforeverychild.org).

More information:

**Below are the 6 Promises that form the base of the gallery, and VOYCE Whakarongo-Mai’s petition and campaign. Some quotes from youth and care-experienced voices included in the gallery are also shared below.**

- 1) You promised to take care of me and make sure I have the things I need, and yet...
  - We are experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness far too often
  - We are leaving care not set up to survive, never mind thrive

*“I often chose to forget the trauma I carry from my time in care, but after attending Summit and being confronted by shared experiences from other foster kids, I choose to remember the hurt and isolation. I choose to think of the children still in the system and I choose to stand with them always.”*

- 2) You promised to make sure I have safety and stability in my life, and yet...
  - We are not being provided with stability when we enter care
  - Caregivers aren’t consistently assessed before we’re placed with them
  - We are not being kept safe when we’re in care, particularly in residences

*“what else do I have to show for my time in care? I don’t have foster parents, I didn’t get the proper healthcare, I didn’t get stability, I didn’t feel confident in who I am...no one listened to me. All I have is the PTSD of the 6 Promises not being met.”*

- 3) You promised to help me with my education goals and dreams, and yet...
  - We experience barriers and disruption to education due to being in care
  - Alternative education and education in Oranga Tamariki residences are failing us
  - We don’t have equal access to tertiary education



*“You destabilised my childhood education, because of your unstable system...stabilise my adulthood”*

- 4) You promised to support me with healthcare when I need it, and yet...
  - Our health needs are not consistently being met while in care
  - Our mental health needs are significantly higher than other young people

*“The promise that is most important to me, is the promise to provide me with healthcare when I need it. This promise was stripped away from me when I was in the care of the state, Oranga Tamariki. I asked for mental health support and I was denied it”*

- 5) You promised to listen and include me when decisions are made about me, and yet...
  - We can't participate in decisions about our care when we don't know our rights
  - As a country we're performing poorly in upholding children's rights

*“I felt very invisible and unheard for a lot of my life, if this promise was upheld when I was in care I would have felt acknowledged and more seen by those who made decisions on my behalf.”*

- 6) You promised to help me feel confident in who I am, and learn about my whakapapa, culture and language, and yet...
  - Tamariki Māori are too often disconnected from our marae, hapū and iwi
  - Takatāpui and rainbow rangatahi are not safe and supported in our identity while in care

*“The sixth promise is the most important to me. My cultural needs were a tick box in my care report. Now I'm left lost, confused and disconnected from who I am.”*

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To arrange an interview, please contact  
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