

Quotes from the ACYA delegation currently in New Zealand

Yesterday ACYA representatives Mereana Ruri, Andrea Jamison and Vanushi Walters met with representatives from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child as they prepare to put questions to the New Zealand Government delegation today, highlighting ACYA's chief concern that New Zealand isn't complying with its international obligations when it comes to children's rights.

Leader of the NGO delegation, **Mereana Ruri says**

"We welcome this opportunity to talk with the Committee about how life is for children in Aotearoa NZ and the issues they face in realising their rights".

Successive government have had 23 years to get it right and yet successive governments have failed to build a strong foundation when it comes to children's rights in New Zealand. Instead NZ governments have been implementing ad hoc measures.

The spotlight is on New Zealand this week at a time when things are going dramatically wrong for a large groups of children in New Zealand. ACYA has been saying this for decades and now we're seeing the compounded effects of the lack of action by successive governments.

We've got to ask ourselves

- Is it ok that more than 1 in 4 children in New Zealand are living in poverty?
- Is it ok that 3 out of 5 kids living in poverty live that way for significant periods of their lives?
- Is it ok that we treat some children as adults within our justice system in breach of international law?
- Is it ok that negative statistics across education, health, law, care and protection, and living standards disproportionately tell a story about children from a Maori or Pacific background ?
- Are we fine with children who have special education needs being excluded from schools because many schools just aren't funded well enough to provide adequate support?
- Is it ok that we don't ask children about what would make life better for them?"

Andrea Jamison says

"While we welcome recent announcements in the children's rights arena such as The additional protections for children and greater preventative measures being signalled in the area of family violence. There remain a number of questions about the detail of what is being proposed for example which children are the government are including and importantly who are we ignoring. What we need is a comprehensive framework for children that looks at the whole child.

ACYA is deeply concerned at New Zealand's ongoing inability to put children's rights at the centre of policy and decision-making.

We expect that amongst other issues the Government will be questioned specifically on

- Whether they intend to adhere to international obligations by including 17year old children within the youth Justice system
- Whether they will commit to reviewing our outdated 1955 adoption legislation, which has been held to be discriminatory by the Human Rights Review Tribunal.
- Whether they will commit to building a firm foundation to ensure policy and practice across Government is based on development of the whole child.
- What steps they are taking to ensure children's voices are valued as programmes of work concerning them are developed.

We look forward to hearing their responses and reviewing the concluding observations of the UN when they are released which we expect to be in October. "