

# CALL FOR CHANGE AT ORANGA TAMARIKI



Thousands of people marched around the Country on Tuesday 30 July 2019 to protest Oranga Tamariki taking children from their families. Amongst them, Hare Arapere of Ngāti Pīkiahū-Wāewae, claimant and member of Te Hono ki Raukawa pictured with Dame Tariana Turia who originally called for the march.

The Hands Off Our Tamariki Network handed an open letter to Green Party co-leader Marama Davidson at Parliament demanding the State stop removing Māori children from whānau.

Speakers at the protest told the crowd Māori should be the ones caring for their children, and the state must leave their mokopuna alone.

Oranga Tamariki came under renewed scrutiny this year after the attempted removal of a newborn from its mother at Hawke's Bay Hospital. Jean Te Huia was one of the midwives at

the centre of that case. She said Oranga Tamariki's policies were racist against Māori, and continued to hurt iwi, hapū and whānau through the generations.

"When we look at the statistics of children in state care today, they are third, fourth and fifth generation. They are children of state care, their parents were and their grandparents were."

Acting Prime Minister Kelvin Davis briefly addressed the crowd and was met by shouting.

He said that while there are too many Māori tamariki in state care, he accepted sometimes children needed to be taken away from unsafe home environments.

Minister for Children Tracey Martin said legislation that came in a month ago overhauling Oranga Tamariki would make transformative changes.

"Everything [protesters] are asking for with regard to the fact that ... the best place for children is in loving families, all those things we don't disagree with," Ms Martin said.

She said that was why the government had this year invested \$1.1 billion into a new operating model for Oranga Tamariki to make it what it was always supposed to be.

Academic Rawiri Waretini-Karena, at the protest at Parliament, said the practice of taking Māori babies had been going on far too long.

He said the state was participating in the annihilation of Māoridom.

"If you think about the UN definition of genocide, part of that process is the taking of babies and giving them to caregivers not of that culture.

"Why is Oranga Tamariki, or even this New Zealand government, [complicit] in genocidal practices."

He said enough was enough. "Māori for Māori - we need to look after our own.