Thank you for the opportunity to feedback to the Productivity Commission on the draft report of the More Effective Social Services Inquiry. I provide this written submission on behalf of Te Tai Tokerau Whanau Ora Collective in complement to the discussions that occurred on Friday 19 June in Whangarei.

Background
Te Tai Tokerau Whanau Ora Collective is made up of the five leading Maori providers in Northland, delivering a broad array of community and primary healthcare, early childhood education, and social services from Ruakaka in the south to Te Hapua in the Far North. Our provider partners have bases in Whangarei, Kawakawa, Kaitaia and Te Kao, employing upwards of 500 staff and contractors across our network, and currently delivering on 100+ government contracts worth $26m pa. Our Board is made up of Executives of the five partners – the Ngati Hine Health Trust, Whakawhiti Ora Pai, Te Runanga O Te Rarawa, Te Hiku Hauora, Ki a Ora Ngatiwai; and includes a current member of the Waitemata and Auckland District Health Boards, a former Chair of the Northland District Health Board, and a current Iwi CEs Consortium member.

We have long and direct experience to a forerunner of the Whanau Ora commissioning model, known as Maori Co-Purchasing Organisations (MAPO) which operated in the northern region from 1995 to 2010. What we contribute to the inquiry is a critique based on first-hand experience of the successes and challenges of independent Maori-led organisations working in partnership with government funders to maximise health and economic benefits to communities, whanau and families.

This submission is focused on the two sections of the report most relevant to Maori – chapter 13 The Maori Dimension and the Whanau Ora case study appendix. However, we consider that for real change to occur, the recommendations from these sections and the full report should apply across all levels and sectors of social services, not just to “Maori” programmes. Note that we appreciated the Cut to the Chase flyer and found it a useful executive summary of the full report.

Chapter 13: The Maori Dimension
Overall we thought this chapter provided insightful commentary on many key issues critical to Maori development and empowerment; including:
- recognition of the shift from deficit thinking to empowerment models
- an understanding of Maori aspirations and the importance of Tikanga Maori
- an overview of a diverse range of Maori organisations that operate in social services
• a respectful exploration of the Treaty dimension and its ongoing relevance across the social services sphere
• introducing the case for devolution of social services commissioning to Maori and how better data analytics would aid this
• a useful discussion on funding options to better support commissioning by iwi and Maori

We concur with the report’s contention that the Treaty settlement process is too inflexible and narrow to “realise the potential for devolving commissioning to Maori effectively” (p272), and believe that attempts to conflagrate the two issues are counter-productive, hindering both processes from advancing. Using a social justice lens, there is a social contract that Governments enter into with its citizens which obliges them to care for and protect us, and in return we empower them to govern us and make laws on our behalf which we are obliged to observe. In respect of Maori, these are Treaty obligations; not only moral ones. The Crown’s responsibilities to Maori include ensuring fair and equitable access to social services, enabling Maori participation in decision-making and protecting Maori interests. The transfer of resources to Iwi under the Treaty settlement process should not be equated with a transfer of Crown responsibility for meeting the health, social and economic needs of Maori citizens.

As Maori providers operating primarily in the health sector for the past 20 years, we have been impacted by major policy shifts away from the core Treaty-derived principals that underpinned Maori health gain and development in the 1990s and early 2000s. These principles are:

• meaningful partnerships predicated on good faith, trust, respect for diverse realities and cultures, shared goals to achieve mutual benefits
• Maori participation at every level of decision-making, design, development, delivery of services and as whanau consumers
• active protection of Maori interests

It was heartening to see these principals come through in the draft report and to appreciate that they still resonate and have relevance to the many contributors to this report. We believe that the continued expression of these principles and the good practices resulting from their implementation can only support and enhance the new commissioning environment. No matter what options are presented for Maori empowerment, they have to be designed and developed by Maori in order for them to work for Maori. More importantly, Maori participation has to extend across all levels of social services decision-making, and not just be confined to “Maori” programmes like Whanau Ora – because when Maori are well, the whole community are well.

Appendix C: Whanau Ora Case Study

The case study provides a succinct yet reasonably detailed exploration of the “Whanau Ora Story” so far, overviewing the whanau ora structural features – Te Puni Kokiri, national and regional leadership groups, provider collectives, navigators and commissioning agencies - in some depth, as well the Pasifika Dimension, the Treaty context and the differing approaches of the three commissioning agencies.

The report poses some critical questions under the section “Drawing it together – Where does Whanau Ora sit now?”(p12). As a collective, we recognised that we needed to undergo significant organisational transformation and in our service delivery practice in order for us to empower whanau to effect their own
transformations for the better. Te Puni Kokiri provider capacity and capability funding allowed us to do this, and to invest in the development of a specialised whanau ora workforce (navigators) unlike anything else in the New Zealand public sector.

Provider collectives and the specialist workforce we employ, with our wealth of whanau ora intelligence and experience, have been left in limbo by the gap in active and comprehensive stewardship created by the structural changes in Whanau Ora. Te Tai Tokerau Whanau Ora Collective is effectively “de-collectivising” on 30 June 2015, and while our commitment to working collaboratively remains undiminished the reality is that without the resources which enabled that collectivisation the job is that much harder. We are realigning our contractual and service relationships to meet the new expectations in the commissioning environment.

We note the two models depicting Whanau Ora in phase one (centralised “control” via TPK), and phase 2 (decentralised “control” via commissioning agencies) capture the complexities of the institutional design. While we understand this was not in the Productivity Commission’s brief, the structural changes identified in the report begs the question “are any whanau better off because of these structures?” The Auditor General’s report on *Whanau Ora: the first four years* pointed out a number of bureaucratic inefficiencies, including a top heavy structure, which we trust will be remedied overtime with the introduction of the commissioning agencies.

In our experience, these institutional design challenges can be mitigated by agencies operating processes and practices that:

- are fair and transparent, affording equity of opportunity for all
- encourage and enable participation of Maori at all levels, and particularly in resource allocation decision-making
- appropriately and openly manages actual and perceived conflicts of interest between the various levels of the structure

Such processes and practices give confidence to all stakeholders – Crown, Maori and whanau that decisions are being made in the best interests of whanau. The case study concludes with the Commission restating its view from 2012 that “Whanau Ora is a good vehicle for whanau to use to pursue their development aspirations” (p19). We concur with your assessment and look forward to the opportunities that the future arrangements through the commissioning agencies may offer.

Nga mihi mahana

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