



# Report on community hui held in response to the Royal Commission into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019

*Waiho i te toipoto, kaua i te toiroa |  
Let us keep close together, not wide apart*

This whakatauki speaks to the importance of keeping connected, of maintaining relationships and dialogue so that we can keep moving forward together.

# Ministers' foreword

Tēnā koutou

We start by acknowledging the terrible events of 15 March 2019 that resulted in the deaths of 51 New Zealanders who were gathered peacefully in prayer. We acknowledge the whānau of the 51 shuhada, the survivors and the witnesses to the attack. We also acknowledge all those who have been impacted by this horrific act.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques publicly released its report on December 8, 2020. The Commission made 44 recommendations in total, and the Government has accepted all 44 recommendations in-principle. It is now the responsibility of the Government, in partnership with communities, to determine how to take action.

We recognise that change is needed in order to bring effect to the true intent of the Royal Commission of Inquiry's findings. We are committed to strengthening social cohesion, valuing diversity, supporting inclusion and ensuring that New Zealand is fair and safe for all. To achieve these outcomes, we need to listen to the communities that we serve in order to understand what matters most to you. Our response must reflect your needs and priorities.

As part of this work, in January and February we held 33 public hui with Muslim communities and wider faith and ethnic communities throughout the motu. These hui were held to help us understand key concerns and communities' priorities, answer questions about the report and its implementation, provide feedback about initiatives underway, and discuss how communities can continue to engage and work with us in the future.

We are immensely grateful to everyone who participated in these hui and offered their time, insight and feedback. It is courageous to talk about these difficult issues. We were honoured to be able to hear your thoughts on the Government's response, and we are privileged to have the continued support of communities in carrying out this important work.

This document summarises the key themes we heard throughout the hui. As you will see, we heard a real need to respond to a wide range of issues that our diverse ethnic and faith communities are facing. Some of these are addressed explicitly by the Royal Commission in its report, and will be dealt with as the Government moves through its response. Other concerns will also be acted upon, even if they appeared less frequently in the report, or not at all. The Government is not limited by the report's recommendations. Our focus is responding to and addressing community priorities.

Throughout the hui many told us they were grateful that we had come to engage with them in their cities, regions and hometowns. We recognise it is important that we continue to do so. Community involvement in guiding and shaping the Government's response will remain a top priority.

We thank you again for your time, strength, and courage.

Ngā mihi nui,



**Hon Andrew Little**

Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission's Report into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques



**Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan**

Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Ethnic Communities, Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment

# How we engaged with communities

Minister Little and Minister Radhakrishnan, alongside officials from various government agencies, held 33 public hui with Muslim communities and wider faith and ethnic communities over January and February. These hui took place in Auckland, Hamilton, New Plymouth, Napier, Palmerston North, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch, Ashburton, Dunedin and Invercargill.

In most centres, public hui were held with Muslim communities, including specific sessions for Muslim women and Muslim youth, and separate sessions for wider faith and ethnic communities. The hui were structured in this way based on advice to the Government from the affected whānau-survivors community of the March 15 attacks about how best to engage with the communities.

The hui also helped give effect to the guiding principles for the Government's response to the Royal Commission, namely:

- Our vision is a diverse, inclusive and safe New Zealand.
- We will be accountable and forward looking.
- We will be proactive in reaching out to communities.
- Victims and whānau of the attack will be at the centre of our response.

At these hui, Minister Little and Minister Radhakrishnan addressed over 1000 people from across Aotearoa. Some of these individuals were representatives of community, cultural, ethnic, inter-faith and faith organisations, and others attended independently as interested community members. Officials from a range of government agencies as well as Members of Parliament from both sides of the House attended the hui. A list of the Members of Parliament and government agencies in attendance is included at the end of the report.

After offering opening remarks, the Ministers invited attendees to share their experiences, their concerns and priorities, views as to what the Government should focus on, and what changes community members think are required to give effect to the Royal Commission's recommendations. At the request of communities, these sessions were independently facilitated. Mele Wendt served in this capacity to help moderate discussions.

# What we heard: a summary of the key concerns and priorities shared

Through the hui, we heard that there is a real desire to make Aotearoa secure, safe, inclusive and accepting for diverse communities. There was overwhelming agreement that there is much work to do to ensure that this can happen.

## WE HEARD THAT:

### **The education sector plays a critical role in contributing to a socially cohesive New Zealand**

There are deep concerns about racism and faith-based bullying and discrimination in our schools.

Many told us they were concerned about the cultural competency of teachers and principals, which they felt hindered schools being able to respond to incidents effectively and appropriately.

Requests for greater support and training in this area for our teachers, principals and schools were common throughout the hui.

We also heard a real desire to develop greater cultural and faith-based understanding through incorporating religious and cultural education programmes into school curriculums to create an inclusive environment where children of different ethnicities and faiths felt that they could belong and were understood.

### **There are continued concerns over the Royal Commission of Inquiry's finding that no individual or specific Government agency was at fault for the terrorist attack**

In particular, communities expressed significant concern regarding the finding by the Royal Commission that before May 2018 there had been an inappropriate concentration of resources on the threat of Islamist extremist terrorism by the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service. Communities wanted to understand this finding, and understand changes that had been implemented to address this since March 15.

Some questioned how effective change could occur if the leadership of agencies remained the same.

Muslim communities expressed to us continued distrust in the New Zealand Security Intelligence Service.

### **Safety within New Zealand for those from Muslim and other ethnic communities remains a concern**

Communities expressed a persistent feeling of insecurity and being unable to live ordinary lives. Many members of the Muslim communities discussed still feeling unsafe visiting the masjid, and regularly experiencing racism and hate incidents.

These safety concerns particularly affect Muslim women who wear a hijab. They reported feeling especially vulnerable due to being so visibly identifiable with their faith.

Many discussed how they feared another terrorist attack, and sought confirmation from the Government that work was being done to prevent such an event occurring again.

While some stated their appreciation for the immediate gun reforms following March 15, many stated that they did not feel that the reforms had gone far enough.

### **The Government needs to be accountable and responsive to communities**

Many expressed frustration that previous engagements with the Government had resulted in little benefit for communities, and that they could not see what had been done with feedback they had provided.

Communities told us of a need for clear and measurable plans and actions, so that they can hold the Government to account.

There was significant interest in the establishment of the Implementation Oversight Advisory Group, including who its membership would be and how it would be resourced. Many spoke of the need to ensure that this Group is made up of a wide range of people, including: youth; women; people based in different regions; and a mix of established voices (from well-known community organisations), as well as voices that are less often heard.

### **The media can perpetuate negative stereotypes towards ethnic and faith communities, and this should be addressed**

Communities expressed disappointment and distress in the media's portrayal of ethnic and faith communities, particularly Muslims, in New Zealand, as it has a negative effect on shaping public discourse. Many wanted the government to intervene, or for there to be mechanisms to enable the media to be held to account for any inaccuracies.

Many spoke of a desire to see more diversity on their screens, noting that imagery is critical for social acceptance.

### **Hate speech, hate crime and hate incidents are experienced by many within the community, and legislative reform is an important tool for change**

Many spoke of the importance of the reform of hate speech legislation, as they felt that it is critical for increasing a sense of safety.

Communities spoke of the need for the reforms to be flexible enough to deal both with intra- and inter- community hate speech, and for there to be clear accountability measures for the Police to deal with hate crime.

There was an acknowledgement from communities that it would be important to balance hate speech legislation with freedom of speech.

Many told us that they feel that the Police do not take action when complaints of hate crime or hate speech are raised with them, highlighting the need for better communication from Police about what is done with the complaints and information they receive.

### **Many face barriers in accessing services and discrimination in securing employment**

Some told us that a lack of recognition of lived experiences, or requirements for New Zealand-based experience, make it difficult for those from migrant communities to secure employment in New Zealand.

Many also spoke of barriers they faced within workplaces, including finding appropriate spaces to pray, or of securing time off work to celebrate culturally significant events.

Some expressed concern over Muslim women who wear a hijab facing particular difficulty in securing employment and encountering bias and discrimination in the workplace.

Community members with ethnic names also reported facing challenges in getting shortlisted during employment application processes.

Many told us stories of difficulty accessing or using government services when their first language is not English, and the distress that this caused.

### **Any response needs to be inclusive of all-of-society, and these conversations need to be wider than just within Muslim and other ethnic communities**

Overwhelmingly, we were told that any social cohesion work programme needs to involve all New Zealanders to bring about effective change, and that these were not simply issues for Muslim communities.

The importance of grounding this work in Te Tiriti was noted frequently, including ensuring that tangata whenua were actively involved as partners in the Government's work programme.

Drawing on the knowledge of this work within the private sector, and ensuring that the private sector was working in partnership with Government, was also noted as important.

### **There needs to be continued culturally sensitive health and wellbeing support for communities**

In particular, we were told of a continued need for ongoing wraparound support for directly and indirectly affected whānau and victims of the March 15 attacks. It was emphasised that this support from Government must be ongoing.

Many told us that there is an increased need for health and wellbeing support more broadly to support the Muslim community to deal with the impact of March 15 attacks, particularly for Muslim young people. We were told that this support must be culturally sensitive and culturally appropriate.

Similarly, many spoke of the cumulative impact of hate incidents, discrimination and bias, and how this has an ongoing negative effect on communities, which has resulted in an increased need for culturally appropriate mental health support services.

### **The Government needs to work in partnership with community organisations to effect true change**

We heard a desire for Government to resource communities (through funding, information and time) so that they are able to effectively engage with Government and feel empowered to do so.

Many told us that the Government needed to engage in collaborative approaches and co-design policies and programmes with communities where appropriate.

We heard many requests for government to use, fund and support existing grassroots initiatives and community programmes (where possible) to recognise the substantial work that is already underway in this space in many communities.

Many within Muslim communities told us of the need to respect differences within communities, as those who practice Islam are diverse, and different groups have different needs.

### **The public service needs to be committed to diversity and inclusion, and ensure that ethnic and faith voices are heard in policy development**

We heard that the new Ministry for Ethnic Communities will be a real tool for communities and the public service. However, many told us that work needs to be done to ensure that this is more than simply a name change, including ensuring that the Ministry is appropriately resourced.

Many spoke of the need for the new Ministry to have deep connections to the regions and have the standing in the public service to effect policy change across key government agencies and work programmes.

Diversity within the public service, particularly within senior leadership, continues to be a concern for communities. We were told of a need to ensure cultural competency training is undertaken by existing leaders.

Communities wished to understand how ethnic and faith voices and opinions could, and do, influence policy making.

We were told that the graduate programme was a good start, but that this needed to be more than a token change, and graduates must go into a space where they are able to excel and feel included. Many saw ensuring leadership reflected the diversity within ethnic communities as a chance to ensure that this could occur.

We heard that the new Ministry needs to explicitly reflect the needs of faith communities.

# Next steps: Using community feedback to guide the Government's response

This is just the beginning of the conversation. The Government recognises that there is now a need to pivot from listening to communities to taking action to address the concerns that we have heard. It is important, however, to note that while some of the Report's recommendations can be implemented quickly, others will take more time.

The Government intends to ensure that its progress towards implementing the recommendations is transparent, and that it regularly communicates with communities on what is happening, and how it is listening and responding to feedback that it is receiving.

The next steps are:

- All written feedback provided at the hui and in the weeks afterwards is being collated. This will also be used to inform next steps. A report on what we have gathered from the written feedback will be published on the DPMC website.
- There will shortly be an announcement about the next step in the process of establishing the Implementation Oversight Advisory Group.
- These hui are only the beginning of the dialogue between the Government and communities. Engagement with those communities that the Government has not yet formally consulted will continue while work progresses. More detail will be made available shortly on the DPMC website.
- The Government plans to return to communities mid-year to discuss progress that has been made, and to continue the dialogue on the response.
- The DPMC website will be regularly updated with information on upcoming engagements and government initiatives that are underway to address the concerns highlighted at the hui.

## How can you stay involved?

There will continue to be opportunities to help shape the Government's response, and further information on this will be provided soon on the DPMC website. In the meantime, please continue to send us feedback and ideas, all of which will be used to guide the Government's response planning.

You can contact us through emailing [rcoi@dpmc.govt.nz](mailto:rcoi@dpmc.govt.nz)

Alternatively, the DPMC website [dpmc.govt.nz](http://dpmc.govt.nz) will be regularly updated with upcoming engagements and initiatives.

# Who attended the hui?

## Members of Parliament

in attendance

**Ibrahim Omer** (all hui)

**Hon Stuart Nash** (14 February, Napier)

**Dr Liz Craig** (21 Feb, Invercargill)

**Anna Lorck** (14 February, Napier)

**Penny Simmonds** (21 Feb, Invercargill)

**Naisi Chen** (13 February, Auckland)

**Rachel Brooking** (20 Feb, Dunedin)

**Helen White** (7, 13 February, Auckland)

**Ingrid Leary** (20 Feb, Dunedin)

**Vanushi Walters** (13 February, Auckland)

**Hon Michael Woodhouse** (20 Feb, Dunedin)

**Melissa Lee** (7, 13 February, Auckland)

**Jo Luxton** (19 Feb, Ashburton)

**Dr Gaurav Sharma** (13 February, Hamilton)

**Rachel Boyack** (18 Feb, Nelson)

**David Bennett** (12, 13 February, Hamilton)

**Tangi Utikere** (9, 10 February, Palmerston North)

**Hon Simon Bridges** (1 February, Wellington,  
10 February, Palmerston North)

**Minister Michael Wood** (7, 13 February,  
Auckland)

**Minister Phil Twyford** (7 February, Auckland)

**Greg O'Connor** (31 January, Wellington)

**Ginny Andersen** (31 January, Wellington)

**Nicola Willis** (31 January, Wellington)

**Chris Bishop** (31 January, Wellington)

## Government agencies

in attendance

**Department of the Prime Minister  
and Cabinet**

**New Zealand Police**

**Office of Ethnic Communities**

**New Zealand Security and Intelligence Service**

**Ministry of Business Innovation and  
Employment (Immigration New Zealand)**

**Ministry of Social Development**

**Ministry of Education**

## Independent actors/agencies

**Mele Wendt** – independent facilitator

**Human Rights Commission**