



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

Waiho i te toipoto, kua i te toiroa

Let us keep close together, not wide apart

Minister's Foreword

Tēnā koutou

The terrorist attack on the Christchurch mosques on 15 March 2019 was an abhorrent act, condemned here and abroad. I acknowledge the 51 shuhada, their families, the injured and the affected communities. I also acknowledge others who have been affected by this tragic event.

In response to the attack, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern commissioned a Royal Commission of Inquiry to investigate whether public sector agencies had done all they could to protect the people of New Zealand from terrorist attacks and whether more could be done. The Royal Commission of Inquiry's report was released on 8 December 2020. The Government accepted the findings of the report and agreed in principle to its 44 recommendations.

The vision of a diverse, inclusive, and safe New Zealand guides the Government's response to the report. New Zealand should be a place where all people can openly express their identities, culture and beliefs, and feel valued, accepted and safe.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry's recommendations affect all New Zealanders. The Government is committed to working with communities, groups and individuals across New Zealand to ensure our response to the report reflects their concerns and priorities. Over the past six months the Government has engaged with communities throughout the motu. In January and February, Minister Radhakrishnan and I led hui with Muslim communities and wider faith and ethnic communities around New Zealand. You can read the report of what we heard [here](#).

During May, the Government extended its engagement to meet with participants from Disability, Pacific, and Rainbow organisations. I am immensely grateful to everyone who took part in these hui and gave their time and expertise. Thank you for your willingness and courage to share your stories.

This report summarises the key concerns and priorities of participants. The Government heard that transformational change is needed to make Aotearoa secure, safe, and inclusive for all. It also heard that the Royal Commission of Inquiry's report offers an incredible opportunity for that transformational change.

I thank you again for sharing your time, experience, and expertise.

Ngā mihi nui,



Minister Andrew Little

Lead Coordination Minister for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch mosques on 15 March 2019

How we engaged with communities

In the week of 17 May 2021, Tony Lynch, Lead Official for the Government's Response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry, led hui with participants from Disability, Pacific, and Rainbow organisations.

These hui followed on from the hui held in January and February 2021 with Muslim communities and wider faith and ethnic communities around New Zealand.

We engaged with participants from organisations, rather than directly with communities, because other government agencies will soon be undertaking engagements with communities on specific policy issues. We sought to manage engagement fatigue while ensuring that participants from these communities had an opportunity to respond to the Royal Commission of Inquiry's report.

The hui were held to:

- Share information and increase awareness about the Royal Commission of Inquiry's report and the Government's response.
- Understand reactions to the Royal Commission of Inquiry's report.
- Identify the key concerns and priorities of communities.
- Initiate relationships with communities that endure beyond the response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry.

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

- We will strive for safer communities and a New Zealand that's more inclusive, with equal protections for all.
- We will be accountable and forward looking.
- We will be proactive in reaching out to communities.

There were two hui with participants from Disability organisations and one hui each with participants from Pacific and Rainbow organisations respectively.

The two hui with Disability organisations were held on Zoom. The hui with participants from Pacific and Rainbow organisations were held in person in Auckland. Mele Wendt facilitated the hui with Pacific and Rainbow organisations.

Officials from government agencies also attended. A list of government agencies in attendance is included at the end of the report.

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

Throughout the hui we heard that transformational change is needed to make Aotearoa secure, safe, and inclusive for people from Disability, Pacific, and Rainbow communities.

WE HEARD THAT:

People from these communities do not feel safe in New Zealand

Hui participants expressed a persistent feeling of insecurity which materially affects their daily lives. Many shared that they regularly experience racism and/or hate incidents.

There was widespread dissatisfaction with the message following the March 15 terrorist attack that “this is not us”. Participants stated that this message obscured the realities that people in these communities face every day.

There were expressions of sadness and anger that it took the tragic event of March 15 for the Government to listen to what these communities had been saying for a long time, and for others to realise that New Zealand is not safe and inclusive for all.

Many continue to feel excluded from New Zealand culture and society

Many people in these communities do not feel like they belong or are valued in New Zealand. The examples of exclusion varied across the groups, but all shared that they do not feel included or respected in Aotearoa, and are unable to participate fully in social and community activities or political and civic life.

Participants in the Pacific hui shared that many from Pacific communities do not feel equal in New Zealand. They are treated differently from others and not regarded as New Zealanders, although many were born in New Zealand.

Some in the hui with Disability organisations said that the disability communities feel like an invisible minority in New Zealand: their stories are not told, and their voices are not heard.

Others observed that people with disabilities are not often visible in New Zealand media. If they are, it is usually in stereotypical ways that fail to normalise disability or recognise the individual.

Participants in the Disability hui also noted that data is not collected about people with disabilities in New Zealand. This has a significant impact: “if we are not counted, we don’t count”. Better collection of data would substantially improve New Zealand’s strategies and policies regarding disability.

Some in the Rainbow communities are unable to participate fully in society or access public services because they face legal obstacles associated with changing their names and obtaining official identification. This is a problem particularly for people who are not residents in New Zealand.

At the Rainbow hui it was observed that security systems are designed to focus on the abnormal or out of the usual. People whose bodies, identities, or gender are ‘different’ are singled out by security measures such as requirements to produce official identification and airport security scanners. This particularly affects transgender people.

People from Disability, Pacific, and Rainbow communities want to see further action to address the discrimination they face in a range of settings

We heard that people from these communities face discrimination in accessing services, such as health care and social housing. They also experience discrimination in the education, immigration, and justice systems.

The discrimination takes the form of barriers to receiving services that they are entitled to, as well as receiving different treatment from others. Sometimes the discrimination is explicit and intentional, and sometimes it is implicit.

Some hui participants observed that their communities are commonly described as 'resilient'. They stated that their communities have had to be resilient in the face of so many challenges, but they should not have to be.

Participants in the Pacific hui spoke of how generations of their communities had faced discrimination and racism in the public education and healthcare systems. They are required to fight for equitable treatment and for access to services to which they are entitled.

In the hui with groups representing people with disabilities, we heard that all parents and carers of disabled people face obstacles in navigating public services and wider society. This is considerably more challenging for parents and carers who are not white.

The lack of accessibility to many buildings (including public buildings and social housing) is an issue which severely impacts some people with disabilities. Better policies and planning for accessibility would make a significant difference.

We heard at the Rainbow hui that Rainbow communities continue to experience hostility in New Zealand, but this is not often discussed. People in Rainbow communities face discrimination in many contexts, including in their interactions with police and in education, employment, and healthcare settings.

There was support in the Rainbow hui for proposed changes to incitement to hate legislation, as well as for proposed changes to the Human Rights Act. Participants stressed the importance of keeping work on incitement to hate separate from work on the Human Rights Act: the incitement proposals are more controversial and will likely take longer than the proposed changes to the Human Rights Act.

It was also emphasised that legislative changes are not enough on their own to change attitudes on the ground.

Participants in the Rainbow hui pointed to examples of how taking a human rights approach has helped address some of the discrimination and harm faced by intersex people, particularly in healthcare.

The Government must take this opportunity to improve its engagement with communities

Many participants expressed frustration that previous engagements with the Government had not resulted in much clear benefit for communities. They could not see what had been done with the feedback they had provided.

Participants at the Rainbow hui said that engagement with the Government is a huge burden for many in the Rainbow communities, most of whom are volunteers. Rather than 'harvesting' communities' intellectual property, the Government should fund and support existing community organisations and programmes to recognise the substantial work that they do.

At the Pacific hui we heard that there is often a lack of understanding in Government about how best to engage with Pacific communities. They observed that churches are a critical part of Pacific communities, even if some individuals do not attend church regularly, and they should be an integral part of the Government's engagements with Pacific communities.

Some in the Pacific hui noted that Pacific leaders sit on a range of Government advisory groups, but these groups are often perceived as ineffective and 'token'.

The Disability groups stressed that people with disabilities should have agency and choice in how they engage with the Government. Some people with disabilities prefer to be engaged as part of the wider public conversation and some prefer to be engaged in disability-specific engagement. All Government engagements should be accessible.

The Government should empower communities and work with them to effect true change

All groups expressed strongly that they know their communities and what will best work for

them. We heard a desire for Government to resource communities (through funding, information, and time) so that they can effectively work with the Government to effect true change.

At the Rainbow hui it was observed that there is no office or ministry for Rainbow communities and no one in Government has ultimate responsibility for supporting Rainbow communities. This can undermine support for the Government's work with these communities, as well as its effectiveness.

Participants at the Pacific hui stressed that the Government needs to put trust and resources in the hands of Pacific communities and work in partnership with them. Some observed that the Government tends to work with Pacific communities only in response to big problems, such as non-attendance at schools and COVID-19. This reactive approach is not the path to achieving transformational change.

Some at the hui with Disability organisations observed that a devolved system for the provision of public services does come with risks. They said that New Zealand has very devolved education and health systems which often means a lack of accountability in the delivery of services and detrimental outcomes for people with disabilities.

The Government needs to show it is committed to doing what it says it will. All groups were concerned with what funding is available to ensure the Report recommendations are delivered. They wanted reassurance that the Government will be accountable for delivering on its stated commitments.

The realisation of social cohesion was a key focus for all groups. Some observed that the Government has many high-level goals for social cohesion, but it needs to concentrate on how to make social cohesion a reality. It must articulate a clear vision of social cohesion and commit resources and policies to building social cohesion 'on the ground'.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry report offers an opportunity for transformational change

We heard from all the groups that these problems are not owned by just one community. For effective change, all New Zealanders must be involved in these conversations and in any work to address these problems.

Overwhelmingly, we heard that transformational change is required to build social cohesion in New Zealand, and the Royal Commission of Inquiry's report offers an incredible opportunity for that transformational change.

Next steps

The Government will ensure that its progress towards implementing the Report's recommendations is transparent.

It will regularly communicate with communities on what is happening and how it is listening and responding to feedback. It is important to note that while some of the recommendations can be implemented quickly, others will take more time.

The next steps are that:

- This report will be distributed amongst relevant Government agencies.
- Other Government agencies will be engaging with communities on specific issues. This includes targeted engagement on social cohesion and incitement to hate proposals in late-June to early-August.
- The newly established Kāpuia - Ministerial Advisory Group on the Government Response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry on the terrorist attack on Christchurch mosques will meet and start its work. Kāpuia will help to ensure timely, effective, and accountable implementation of the Government's response to the Royal Commission's report.
- The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet's website will be regularly updated with information on government initiatives underway in response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry's report.

How can you stay involved?

There will continue to be opportunities to help shape the Government's response. Other agencies are undertaking engagements on specific issues related to the Royal Commission's report. You may also continue to send us feedback and ideas by emailing RCOI@dpmc.govt.nz

Agencies in attendance

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

Ministry of Social Development

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Justice

Department of Internal Affairs

Office for Disability Issues (hui with Disability organisations only)

Ministry for Pacific Peoples (hui with Pacific organisations only)

INDEPENDENT AGENCIES

Human Rights Commission (hui with Rainbow organisations only)