

Share your Views on Social Cohesion

# Minister’s Introduction

Tēnā Koutou,

Aotearoa New Zealand is home to people from over 213 different ethnic groups, who speak over 150 languages, and belong to different faith communities. About a quarter of New Zealand’s population was born overseas and about a quarter identify as disabled. We are a superdiverse nation and over the next twenty years we are expected to become even more diverse.

Our diversity includes diversity of ethnicity, culture, gender identities and expressions, religion, values and beliefs, ages, disabilities, sexual orientation, and whānau structure. This diversity makes our society stronger and brings huge potential for social and economic benefits.

But for the benefits of our diversity to be realised, everyone who calls New Zealand home must feel safe, that they belong, have fair opportunities, that they are able to access, and have the ability to participate in all aspects of life.

Any work to strengthen social cohesion must acknowledge the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and our bicultural foundation. Our diversity is a source of strength and there is so much that unites us.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us how we can do this in times of crisis, when the team of five million came together for a common cause.

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain found that while New Zealand is generally regarded as a country with high social cohesion, there are underlying vulnerabilities that need to be addressed.

The Royal Commission made recommendations to improve social cohesion and embrace our increasing diversity. As the Minister responsible for the whole-of-government approach to strengthening social cohesion, I attended a nationwide series of hui to discuss the Government’s response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission report and get a better understanding of community perspectives. At these hui, I heard first-hand about the incredible work going on in grassroots communities. I have also seen how we come together to support one another through crises. There is more that we need to do collectively to create an Aotearoa New Zealand where everyone feels safe, valued, and has equitable access to opportunities.

Strengthening social cohesion involves changing attitudes and behaviours and is, therefore, a complex process. We need evidence-informed actions. The Government has a leadership role to play, but to make a real difference we will need to work collectively - individuals, communities and organisations across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors – from grassroots campaigns and community-led programmes right through to changes to wider policy settings and legislative safeguards. We all have a role to play.

Social cohesion is not about making all New Zealanders the same. We want our communities to value and welcome diversity, and to be able to share and discuss different points of view in a constructive and respectful way.

I encourage you to share your views with us on an Aotearoa New Zealand you would be proud to call home.

Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan

**Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment**

# How you can make a submission

## Government wants to hear from you

The Government wants to receive feedback from a wide range of groups and people on the work to implement the Royal Commission of Inquiry recommendations to strengthen social cohesion. Your feedback and suggestions will inform the Government’s final decisions.

[Information on work being done to implement other recommendations can be found here.](file:///C:\Users\pscot011\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\7TUPDPYF\Information%20on%20work%20being%20done%20to%20implement%20other%20recommendations%20can%20be%20found%20here:)

<https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/national-security/royal-commission-inquiry-terrorist-attack-christchurch-masjidain-1>

## Submissions can be made from 25 June to 6 August 2021

Submissions open on 25 June and will close on 6 August 2021.

## You can make a submission online or write to us

You can make a submission on the MSD website. This site provides easy ways for you to provide us with your feedback.

You can also send us your feedback by email to [social\_cohesion@msd.govt.nz](mailto:social_cohesion@msd.govt.nz)

We also welcome written submissions to the Ministry of Social Development, PO Box 1556, Wellington 6140.

Importantly, you do not need to answer all the questions we ask. You can choose the questions that are important to you.

## Privacy of your information

The information you give MSD will be used to inform the Government about how to strengthen social cohesion. Your response will be analysed for themes, put into a report and shared with other Government agencies. MSD will also publish on its website a summary of the report. Both will be presented in such a way that you will not be identified.

The Ministry of Justice and the Department of Internal Affairs are also carrying out work to implement other recommendations from the Royal Commission of Inquiry. Please note your response may be shared with one of those agencies if MSD believe they are best suited to analyse a response that relates more to their work. Any information MSD shares with those agencies will be transferred to them securely. Please tell us if you do not wish for your information to be shared with them.

All information you give MSD will be collected, held, used and disclosed in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020. You have the right to access and correct any information MSD holds about you.

Please note your response may be subject to a request to MSD for information under the Official Information Act 1982. Please do not give any information in your response that could identify you or someone else. Please note also that when you submit your response MSD will also record your IP address for the purpose of detecting and responding to IT security incidents.

## Making a submission in another language

This survey is available in several languages, including te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL). You’re welcome to make a submission in the language of your choosing.

MSD will arrange for your response to be translated into English by a qualified translator so that MSD can analyse it. The translator will send back to MSD both your original response and the English version and will then delete this information from their system. Your information will be transferred between MSD and the translator securely and will be handled by the translator appropriately and in accordance with the Privacy Act 2020.

# Background and context

The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the attack on Christchurch Mosques (RCOI) report was published in December 2020. The Government agreed in principle to all the recommendations in the report, including those that focus on improving social cohesion and embracing Aotearoa New Zealand’s increasing diversity. [Read the RCOI report and social cohesion recommendations](https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/findings-and-recommendations/chapter-4-recommendations-to-support-the-ongoing-recovery-needs-of-affected-whanau-survivors-and-witnesses/)

<https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/findings-and-recommendations/chapter-4-recommendations-to-support-the-ongoing-recovery-needs-of-affected-whanau-survivors-and-witnesses/>

Since the Royal Commission report was published, community engagement has been a top priority for the Government. Immediately after the release, Ministers met with affected whānau and survivors of the attacks. Then in January and February 2021 Ministers led 33 community hui with Muslim, other faith and pan-ethnic communities. Communities raised several issues related to social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand, including racism and discrimination and the need for long-term work on social cohesion that brings together all communities to bring about societal change.

[Read a summary of the feedback communities provided at the hui can be found here](https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/national-security/royal-commission-inquiry-terrorist-attack-christchurch-masjidain-0)

<https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/national-security/royal-commission-inquiry-terrorist-attack-christchurch-masjidain-0>

Social cohesion is about enabling everyone to belong, participate and have confidence in our public institutions. The Royal Commission acknowledged that while there is a lot of government activity in this area, there isn’t a purposeful and overarching strategy and action plan that shows what the government is trying to achieve, what work is being done and the areas for improvement. They also noted that the voices of communities, civil society, local government, and the private sector have been missing from this work.

From mid-2019 to the end of 2020, the Government has done some work including gathering evidence, doing a stocktake of past work and identifying tangible outcomes. Now as the Government implements the social cohesion recommendations, we want to hear from you. We invite you to tell us what’s important to you. Your feedback will help us develop a unique Aotearoa perspective on what social cohesion means to us, the steps we need to take as a nation to build stronger communities and to develop a draft strategic framework and monitoring and evaluation regime to achieve our goals and monitor progress.

# What we want to know from you

The purpose of engaging with the public is to understand what’s important to you and what changes you would like to see for Aotearoa New Zealand to be more socially cohesive. Your input will help the Government understand where we need to focus our efforts and what action we need to take.

We are asking questions in four key areas:

**1.** What does social cohesion mean to you and what would Aotearoa New Zealand look like if social cohesion was improved?

**2.** How will we know if we are making progress? What does success look like?

**3.** We have done a review of the research about what works to strengthen social cohesion – this is summarised as the six ways of building social cohesion. We are keen to know whether these six ways look right to you and whether there are other things that might work.

**4**. What actions should government take or support to build better social cohesion, and who could be involved in the work?

# Social cohesion outcomes – what’s important to you?

Government has agreed to use the definition of social cohesion outlined in the RCOI report. That definition was developed by Professor Paul Spoonley, Robin Peace, Andrew Butcher and Damian O’Neill. They describe a socially cohesive society as one in which everyone has a sense of:

* Belonging– a sense of being part of the community, trust in others and respect for law and human rights.
* Inclusion– equity of opportunities and outcomes in work, income, education, health and housing.
* Participation – involvement in social and community activities and in political and civic life.
* Recognition – valuing diversity and respecting differences.
* Legitimacy – confidence in public institutions.

For Māori, social cohesion is a collective sense of identity and belonging (as Māori) which is respected by broader society. Manaakitanga, the process of showing respect, generosity and care for others is at the heart of the social cohesion work.

Aotearoa New Zealand is much more diverse than many people realise and is becoming more diverse over time. This includes diversity in ages, ethnicities, cultures, regions, citizen status, values and beliefs, disabilities, family composition, gender identities and expressions, and sexual orientation.

Social cohesion is not about uniformity. It exists where people feel part of society, family and personal relationships are strong, differences are respected, there is fair access to opportunities, and people feel safe and supported by others.

Social cohesion is an ideal rather than a goal to be achieved and needs to be continually nurtured and grown. We have seen communities pull together to support and look out for one another, after the attack on Christchurch Mosques and also more recently during the COVID-19 pandemic where the country united around a shared challenge.

**Question 1: Tell us your views on Social Cohesion**

What’s important to you in achieving social cohesion? Does the definition of social cohesion resonate with you?

If so, tell us more about what each of the outcomes (belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition, legitimacy) means for you and what Aotearoa New Zealand might look like if these outcomes were achieved.

If not, tell us why not and what you would change about the definition.

# How will we know if we’re making progress?

The RCOI recommended that government develop measures and indicators of social cohesion. It reported that to build social cohesion in a rapidly diversifying society, public sector agencies need to collect the right data to know whether their policies and programmes are working as intended.

We would like to know what changes communities would like to see, so we can consider this when we work out what’s important for government to measure.

**Question 2: Tell us your views on the changes we’ll see if we make progress**

What changes might show us that Aotearoa New Zealand is becoming a more socially **cohesive** society?

What would success look like?

# What the evidence says about building social cohesion

Government has reviewed the research on what works for building social cohesion. From the research we have identified evidence for six key ways to help make Aotearoa New Zealand more socially cohesive. In summary these are:

**1.** Fostering common values and inclusive social norms.

**2.** Encouraging and facilitating positive interactions between people.

**3.** Tackling harms to inclusion, including prejudice, discrimination, and other harmful behaviours.

**4.** Supporting people to have the knowledge and skills they need to participate.

**5.** Supporting people to have a voice and feel heard.

**6.** Reducing inequality and improving opportunities for people by providing support and resources.

The Ministry of Social Development’s review of the New Zealand and international evidence about the process of building social cohesion can be found on the MSD website. [Read MSD’s Rapid Evidence Review on Social Inclusion](https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/social-inclusion-in-new-zealand-a-rapid-evidence-review/index.html)

<https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/social-inclusion-in-new-zealand-a-rapid-evidence-review/index.html>

**Question 3: Tell us your views on what works to improve social cohesion**

Do the six ways look right to you?

Which of the six ways are the most important to you? Why?

What else is important for building social cohesion?

# Taking action to strengthen social cohesion

Following the 15 March terror attacks, the Government’s initial focus was on responding to the immediate needs of the victims, their families, and the Muslim community, security concerns and making immediate changes to our gun laws to reduce the likelihood of future incidents.

Once the immediate response was in place, calls came from various communities for the Government to assess its role in supporting social cohesion. The Prime Minister asked the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet to lead some work with the Ministry of Social Development and other agencies to review the evidence on social inclusion, identify the work underway across government, and provide some initial advice on potential interventions to strengthen social inclusion.

In September 2019, Cabinet agreed to some evidence-based actions to improve social inclusion to:

* reduce discrimination in our communities;
* show government and public service leadership on social inclusion;
* support community-based activities that promote an inclusive national identity;
* strengthen our focus on equity and social inclusion in priority work programmes.

Additional actions were agreed by Cabinet in June 2020. Examples of the range of work Cabinet agreed to being progressed to strengthen social cohesion, include:

* Continuing work to increase diversity in public sector leadership roles, as well as increase diversity of staff working in frontline positions.
* Supporting community-led initiatives that promote an inclusive national identity, e.g. Huarahi Hou; Pathway to Treaty-based Multicultural Communities.
* Expanding bullying prevention programmes in schools.
* Supporting young children to develop social and emotional skills by providing access to play-based programmes and tools for teachers. Social and emotional skills, including self-regulation, empathy and perspective taking, help young children understand, communicate with and relate to children who are different from themselves, supporting the creation of a more cohesive society.
* Expanding the ‘give nothing to racism’ campaign.
* Strengthening and extending refugee support packages, including improving community engagement and family support.
* Exploring what could be done to facilitate positive interactions between different groups in the areas of grassroots sport, volunteering, schools, the creative sector, and interfaith.
* Partnering with schools and communities to prepare for Aotearoa New Zealand histories being taught as part of the curriculum in all schools and kura.
* Building in opportunities to strengthen social cohesion in existing equity programmes – such as the welfare overhaul, public housing, Oranga Tamariki, health and disability system review, and education system work programme.

[Here is a link to the fuller summary of additional work Cabinet agreed to in September 2019 and June 2020](https://dpmc.govt.nz/publications/documents-relating-governments-response-royal-commission-inquiry-terrorist-attack).

<https://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/research/social-inclusion-in-new-zealand-a-rapid-evidence-review/index.html>

Please note it does not capture all the work going on across government and in communities (such as the Inclusive Aotearoa Collective work) to improve social cohesion.

We want to continue to build on the work that is already underway. Where possible, we will deliver actions that are informed by evidence about what works to improve social cohesion. We will be focusing initially on government actions, including what government can do to support and enable leaders in communities, businesses, and local government to undertake to strengthen social cohesion in their communities.

**Question 4: Tell us your views on where government should focus its efforts**

Looking at the types of actions underway, which ones do you think are the most important to progress?

Is there other work that government is not doing that you think is a high priority for strengthening social cohesion?

Who could contribute to these actions? (For example, Government, local government, NGOs, Iwi/hapū, private sector, communities)

# Next steps

A summary of submissions will be provided on the MSD website: [www.msd.govt.nz](file:///C:\Users\pscot011\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\INetCache\Content.Outlook\7TUPDPYF\www.msd.govt.nz)

[You can find more information on this work and the implementation of the Royal Commission recommendations on this here](https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/national-security/royal-commission-inquiry-terrorist-attack-christchurch-masjidain-0)

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