



Ministry for
**Ethnic
Communities**
Te Tari Mātāwaka

2021

**Inclusive
& Diverse
Futures
Together**

Momentum with ethnic communities

**Foreword by
Mervin Singham
Chief Executive**



Kia ora koutou katoa,

On 1 July 2021 the Government established the Ministry for Ethnic Communities, in line with recommendation 30 of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019. The existence of the new Ministry signals the importance the Government places on ethnic communities, their potential and contributions to Aotearoa New Zealand. The Ministry is the Chief Adviser to Government on ethnic communities, ethnic diversity and the inclusion of ethnic communities in wider society.

Since 1 July I have been privileged to lead this new organisation as the inaugural Chief Executive for the Ministry. It is a humbling and extraordinary role to have.

In the first three months of the Ministry's establishment, I focused on going out across the motu and engaging with communities and key stakeholders. I wanted to listen and understand their needs and aspirations. I met with ethnic community and faith leaders and growing, smaller ethnic groups in Auckland, Hamilton, Palmerston North, Dunedin, and Christchurch. This was my first step to connect with people and build trust and confidence in the new Ministry.

I also connected with Mayors and executive leaders of local Councils in these regions to develop and cement strong collaborative relationships that ensure ethnic communities have a voice and are encouraged to participate at local levels.

It has been an incredible six months! I learnt a lot. I reconnected with many wonderful people I used to work with in the community in my old role of Director of the Office of Ethnic Affairs almost a decade ago. I listened carefully to many of you – old friends and new ones alike. There were powerful narratives shared, insights gleaned through tears of joy and scars from grief.

I was inspired by the wonderful work being done by communities around our country to help improve the wellbeing of our people. The commitment to lifting people to reach their aspirations and the resilience of ethnic and faith communities is astounding. Our hui reminded me about the honour of being a public servant and working in partnership with communities to support them to achieve their goals. This is in the interest of our country.

The demand for the Ministry's expertise and resources has significantly increased since it was stood up by the Government this year. Communities, public sector and local government agencies have all increased their expectations and reliance on the Ministry's knowledge and expertise, far more than was anticipated. This was evident in the advice and support requested by agencies and communities to respond to the Covid-19 crisis. In addition, we have been active in areas such as setting up the Ministry in accordance with legislative requirements, championing ethnic and faith community needs to Government and, supporting ethnic communities to develop their own solutions to a range of issues.



Building a more equitable future

Further support is also needed by groupings of ethnic communities such as Muslim women and youth who face compounded layers of trauma following the Christchurch mosque attacks and the Lynn Mall terrorist attack, in addition to the impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. All these are pressing issues that the Ministry and I are committed to help address.

Over the last few months you have received a huge amount of information about COVID-19, and rightly so. It has dominated our lives and, in turn the Ministry's focus and efforts. The silver lining to the pandemic is it united many people in the face of a single threat. That is something we must never forget. Our diversity is a strength and we are stronger together!

We will only succeed if we work together in the spirit of partnership. In this update we feature the work we are doing together. You can see how with the combined efforts of the Ministry and communities, we can achieve the greatest impact for our ethnic communities and for Aotearoa New Zealand.

I acknowledge and appreciate all of you and your efforts - the communities, networks, associations, leaders, young people and event organisers we have worked with from all walks of life. It has been inspiring to hear people's stories and see some of the amazing things ethnic and faith community groups have achieved, especially during the pandemic. You are our community heroes!

2021 has been a very challenging year. In this final update for the year, I hope you will see how together we have strengthened relationships, brought people along, and started championing the needs of ethnic communities to wider Government.

There is much more to do. In the coming months I will share more on how we are working together with you on many critical fronts to lift the wellbeing of ethnic communities. We will continue to work to connect individuals to one another, to Māori, and to central and local government initiatives or opportunities. These connections are important for ensuring the development of trusting relationships and therefore, social cohesion. Our relationship with Māori is particularly significant given their role as tangata whenua and our communities as manuhiri. Together, we will make a difference so all of Aotearoa New Zealand can benefit from the meaningful contribution that ethnic communities bring.

Let me once again thank all of you, the people and groups we have worked with and wish you all a very restful holiday, seasons greetings, and a happy new year.

Ngā mihi nui

Mervin Singham
Chief Executive



COVID Kindness



Building trust in vaccination

COVID-19 has featured strongly in our lives and the headlines in 2021. We have been through lockdowns, needed to wear masks and not been able to see our loved ones overseas. Aucklanders have had an especially tough time with months of lockdowns and restrictions and being unable to travel. Businesses have been affected and people have struggled financially. For many, COVID-19 has made this last year a stressful one.

For the Ministry, two things have lightened our spirits. Firstly, the high rates of ethnic community vaccination – our ticket to living with greater freedom. The second thing is the many projects, events and activities we have been involved with.

There have been plenty of heart-warming stories about people and organisations helping others in need. Ethnic and faith communities have made an outstanding contribution, feeding the hungry, checking on the lonely and vulnerable as well as helping spread the word about getting vaccinated. We would like to share some of these stories with you. There is not sufficient room to include the many, many people who helped others and this section is a tribute to everybody across the country who made a kind difference.

The response to COVID-19 has shown us our engagement model in action. As a Ministry we have worked alongside ethnic and faith communities to build trust in the vaccine process, connected communities with health providers, shared information in multiple languages, ensured community needs are factored into wider Government planning and, secured funding for community projects. It has been heartening to see what can be achieved when government and ethnic communities work in partnership.



Empowering communities

During the pandemic our conversation with ethnic communities made two things clear. Firstly, communities themselves could reach people others couldn't and speak credibly about the importance of vaccination. Secondly, lack of funding was a barrier.

Having been closely involved with the All of Government response we were able to work with the Ministry of Health to secure funding for multiple community initiatives.

The Ethnic Communities Communications Fund provided \$2m to 71 community initiatives across the country. These included translation services, community health forums, educational workshops and social media campaigns.

Following this success, the Ministry received a further \$1m to create a Vaccine Uptake Fund. This continues to support events and activities that increase vaccination rates. It has shown the power of communities when they receive a little extra support.



Helping ethnic youth lead

Ethnic youth leaders asked for our help to make 20 November Ethnic Youth Vaccination Day. We funded and helped organise vaccination events in Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington and Palmerston North. Leaders came up with the idea of 'Take two for the team', a concept that reflected young people's motivation to do things together and for each other. It became the campaign slogan. Mirroring the wider national picture, vaccination rates amongst ethnic youth were lower than for other age groups. Our support gave ethnic youth leaders a platform to reach out to other young people and share the importance of getting vaccinated.



Connecting leaders with government

Earlier in the year, we organised a series of hui between health representatives and community leaders, finishing with a meeting between national bodies and Dr Ashley Bloomfield at the National Library in Wellington.

Leaders have mana with their communities and can talk about vaccination with a reach and credibility that others cannot. By bringing everyone together we gave these leaders the opportunity to have honest conversations, ask questions and go away with the confidence and knowledge to speak with others.



Community champions have cultural cut-through

Vaccination is important in any language. Knowing that some ethnic people particularly trust information in their own language, and from their own communities, we worked with community champions to produce a series of videos about vaccination. Along with the videos our team made this meant information was available in 19 languages.



Kelly Feng, Asian Family Services
Mandarin Covid-19 vaccine rollout



Community
champions
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cultural cut-through

Right Images, Top to Bottom

Velmurugan Sellakkannu
Aotearoa NZ Federation of Tamil Sangam

Jackie Reyes
P. R. O. Pinoy C. A. R. E. S. of Canterbury

Francois Kayembe
Chairman, Okapi Alliance NZ Inc.

Communities open their doors to host vaccine events

Getting a needle put in your arm can be an intimidating prospect, especially if you are not used to our public health system or have needle phobia. We were delighted to provide funding so community groups could host vaccination events at community centres, places of worship and hired venues. The aim was to provide an environment where different communities felt comfortable and welcome. These events made all the difference for groups who might not otherwise have got their shots.



'The Supreme Sikh Society New Zealand did not rest on its laurels ... a lifeline for Auckland locals!'

Supreme Sikh Society feeds those in need

There were many community groups we worked with who selflessly helped others. A special mention needs to go to the Supreme Sikh Society New Zealand. In 2020 they were winners of the New Zealand Food Hero Award under the People's Choice category. That award was in recognition of the amazing job the Society did by providing free food and essential services to thousands of struggling families in Auckland.

In 2021 the Supreme Sikh Society New Zealand did not rest on its laurels. Once again, they have been consistently providing food parcels. During the different stages of lockdown these parcels have been a lifeline for Auckland locals, including international students and overseas visitors across a variety of ethnicities. To further support the wider community, the Supreme Sikh Society helped run vaccination camps every weekend during the lockdown.

We would like to say a huge thank you to the Supreme Sikh Society New Zealand and every hardworking organisation on behalf of the people from every community who have benefitted from their kindness and tireless work.



Trust & Connections



Building relationships of trust with ethnic communities across the country is central to the work of our ministry. One lesson we learnt from the aftermath of the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain is the importance of building these relationships before – and not when – they are needed.

Community engagement is something we have done for a long time. In the last few months we have stepped up our proactive engagement, meeting regularly with community groups and leaders who are not familiar with our work. We have developed and maintained relationships with emerging ethnic communities, specific groups within ethnic communities – such as youth and rainbow organisations – and expanded our regional presence to Hamilton, Dunedin, Hawke's Bay, and Taranaki.

The other important part of building trust and ensuring communities feel comfortable in Aotearoa New Zealand is connecting different groups with each other, to Māori and to central and local government.

We have been setting up opportunities for dialogue between ethnic communities that have resulted in stronger relationships and enhanced community action. This includes giving ethnic communities the opportunity to start conversations with government about a variety of challenging issues, such as immigration policies and services.



Building relationships of **trust**



Supporting Afghan Communities

In September there was a sudden and significant change to the government in Afghanistan. It was a time of stress and fear for some members of our Afghan communities as they worried about friends and relatives overseas.

To ensure they felt supported we quickly organised two online hui for Ministers to meet with Afghan women and young people. The young people leaders hui was hosted by Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan in her role as Minister for Youth and Minister for Diversity, Inclusion and Ethnic Communities, while an all-women hui with Afghan women leaders was co-hosted with the Minister for Women Hon Jan Tinetti.

One aim of these hui was to make our Afghan communities feel cared about and acknowledge their concerns. On a more practical level we were also able to connect people with organisations who provide counselling and other support services. We also connected relevant government agencies to representatives of our established Afghan communities to enable their support in re-settling newer Afghan members who arrived in New Zealand.

Rainbow Hui

In November we joined ethnic community rainbow groups for an online hui which featured a number of rainbow leaders who shared their journeys and experiences during COVID-19 and their everyday work supporting the rainbow community.

The hui was also an opportunity for rainbow ethnic community members to connect with us to discuss their concerns and explore partnership opportunities.



Introducing ethnic leaders to DPMC

In November we hosted two online hui between ethnic leaders and the team managing COVID-19 communications at the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC). We knew communities had a lot of questions about the new Traffic Light System. We also knew a conversation with experts would be a better experience than pointing people at online content.

Ethnic leaders were able to hear in detail about the decisions government had made and ask questions. DPMC was able to hear directly from a group they normally would not and understand what was important to them. We are planning more sessions like this. The more government can sit down, even virtually, with ethnic communities the better.

Community visit to Te Aranga Marae

Earlier this year we helped fund a historic event when over 20 different ethnic groups in Hawkes Bay were welcomed on to Te Aranga Marae. The purpose of the event, organised by a Multi-Cultural Association, was to strengthen the relationship between migrants and Māori.

Forging connections between Tangata Whenua and ethnic communities will be an important part of our engagement work in future. We hope to see many more such visits.



Community Voices

29 Community Consultations

645 Community Members & Leaders

all played an instrumental role in defining the Ministry's first priorities

Through our multiple engagements we are constantly gathering information from ethnic communities and building our understanding of what is working for them and what isn't in terms of government policies and services. We then turn these insights into advice for government agencies, deepening and expanding their own understanding of the needs and aspirations of ethnic communities across Aotearoa New Zealand.

Listening to ethnic communities to ensure their views are considered in the design of government policies and services has been an important guiding principle for our Ministry's work since its establishment. Input from ethnic communities, gathered in the course of 29 community consultations across the country, in which we heard from 645 community members and leaders, played an instrumental role in defining the Ministry's first priorities.

Another important aspect of our work has been ensuring ethnic communities can make their voices heard directly through civic participation. We have worked to gain a better understanding of the incentives and barriers ethnic communities face when it comes to participating effectively and have developed a formal partnership agreement with the Electoral Commission to enhance civic participation by ethnic communities.



Ethnic Communities Graduate Programme

Ethnic Communities Graduate Programme

The Ethnic Communities Graduate Programme seeks to improve ethnic diversity across the Public Service by providing a meaningful first employment opportunity to skilled graduates from Aotearoa New Zealand's ethnic communities.

The programme addresses the low representation of ethnic employees and the barriers they face to access work in the public sector, with the expected benefits of improving its representativeness and broadening its cultural competency. Graduates who come through this programme are set up to influence and drive positive change that directly affects ethnic communities and the whole of Aotearoa New Zealand society.

Graduates from the first intake of the programme started their 18-month placements across 12 government agencies in July, and a second intake is scheduled to enter the Public Service in February 2022.



Partnership with Tauranga City Council

In early December we signed a Statement of Intent to Collaborate with Tauranga City Council. This was the first partnership of this kind we had formally agreed since becoming as Ministry and, we hope the first of many.

Both organisations share strategic goals of developing and supporting ethnic communities, so working in partnership is an obvious move.

Our collaboration will include developing a multi-ethnic forum to support an amplified voice for ethnic communities and increased civic participation; building the capacity of ethnic groups and organisations for sustainable funding capability; promoting participation of ethnic people in mainstream activities and wider community participation in ethnic events; supporting emerging ethnic groups in Tauranga and enhancing the understanding and practice of diversity and inclusion.

Creating this kind of formal relationship is something new and strengthens our ability to influence on behalf of ethnic communities. It also shows local government is starting to give ethnic communities the consideration they deserve.

Sharing ethnic perspectives with government



In October Mervin Singham spoke to the Institute of Public Administration New Zealand about his personal experiences as an immigrant and ethnic public servant. It is one of several opportunities we have taken to talk to other public servants about the challenges and opportunities that Aotearoa New Zealand's diversity presents.

Ethnic communities have not been considered enough in policy making and the design of services, so such meetings and speaking opportunities will be part of our ongoing work.



Talented Communities

Ethnic communities do not lack talent or ambition. Sometimes though, groups can struggle to navigate a government system and culture they are not used to. Creating a socially inclusive society needs everyone equipped to participate and make the most of the opportunities that exist.

We believe a key aspect of our work is to support ethnic communities in the achievement of their aspirations by connecting them to the right information and resources. We help organise workshops to upskill people and we connect ethnic people with the right contacts and resources.

Directly funding projects that help community development is another way we provide support. Our Ethnic Communities Development Fund has \$4.2 million a year available for projects that support ethnic communities to grow their skills, celebrate their culture and take part in society.

We also advise community groups and organisations on how they can strengthen their funding applications to other government agencies. This is an area we will develop further in 2022.



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Good governance

Good governance is diverse governance, but ethnic communities are significantly underrepresented on boards. That is why we run our Nominations Service – a programme to match suitably qualified ethnic people with roles on public sector boards.

An early decision the Ministry took was to strengthen this programme by setting up a partnership with the Superdiversity Institute and Leadership New Zealand. By working together and joining resources, our teams have created a larger talent pool of potential ethnic board members. There are many talented people in Aotearoa New Zealand's ethnic communities and this programme is one way we can help overcome barriers to them achieving their potential.

Islamic Womens Council of New Zealand Community Programme

Muslim women in Aotearoa New Zealand have long faced prejudice and Islamophobia. The Islamic Womens Council of New Zealand Incorporated were determined to do something about this. They developed an ambitious programme of community development to build resilience, confidence and increase social participation. With some funding, the community was able to show what it could do. We were delighted to help through the Ethnic Communities Development Fund.

Migrant Action Trust

From the many conversations we have had with different communities we know that language barriers and a lack of Kiwi work experience can make finding employment hard for some migrants and refugees. This situation has been made worse by COVID-19.

In November the Ethnic Communities Development Fund helped fund a programme run by the Migrant Action Trust that is designed to provide intensive and customised one-on-one job search coaching for migrants and former refugees. This includes CV and interview webinars, as well as one-on-one coaching sessions.

Refugee-background learners and migrants needing extra support will be supported with free English classes for everyday English, job interview preparation and workplace communications, computer and online tutorials relevant for job search. Candidates will get further support through a Job Placement Project Officer who will match their CVs with the needs of recruitment specialists.

Using funding in this way removes very real barriers for people and gives them a chance to use their skills, earn a living and participate more fully in society.



Sense of Belonging

Connections across communities

Being able to freely express one's cultural identity, and to have it welcomed by all in Aotearoa New Zealand is a key foundation for building an inclusive society. Our Community and Partnerships Teams have regularly supported communities to preserve and celebrate their cultures and identities. We fund, help organise and attend many events and celebrations across the country.

As well as making individual communities feel valued, these gatherings help forge connections across communities. People get to learn more about their neighbours and how their traditions often resemble their own. And if there's one thing that can bring people together, it is food – so often a highlight and a memory people take with them.

Below we have shared a few special memories from the last six months.





Colombian Fusion

We were delighted to join Southland's Colombian community who came together in Invercargill in July to celebrate their culture. Funded by the Ministry and organised by Southland Multicultural Trust and MAR Colombia, the event marked Colombia's national day. There was music, traditional dancing and, of course food.



Dia De Los Muertos

In November, we were proud to support the Palmerston North Latin American community to celebrate Día De Los Muertos (The Day of the Dead). The meaning of this occasion is to remember and celebrate those who are no longer with us.

It was a great event that gave us the opportunity to connect with members of the community, including His Excellency Mr Alfredo Rogerio Pérez Bravo, Ambassador of the United States of Mexico to New Zealand, and the leader of the Palmerston North Mexican community, Mr Luis Solano Rangel. One of the highlights of the celebration was the special cultural dances from Ollin Yoliztli.



Immigrant Journeys

If prejudice is based on ignorance, then meeting people from different cultures and hearing their stories is perhaps the best way to realise how much we all have in common.

Immigrant Journeys is a unique project that sets out to tell the stories of people who have come to Aotearoa New Zealand from many places and cultures. We were thrilled to help fund this work as the stories are a powerful and sometimes moving tribute to living in New Zealand, from many perspectives.



Kia ora Berlin Wall

In November we funded a special event in Christchurch for the German community. A piece of the Berlin Wall was gifted to the city and now sits proudly in Cashel Street. Kia Ora Berlin Wall brought together different communities to witness an important piece of history, and see it preserved in New Zealand.



What's next?



The last six months have been very busy and incredibly fulfilling. A new leadership team is in place, we have built partnerships with other organisations and we are working with greater purpose. This is just the start.

In early 2022 we will be meeting many of you again as we keep our eyes and ears closer to the ground while managing the impact of Covid-19 in our communities. We will also be organising a celebration of Chinese New Year at Parliament and the second intake of the Ethnic Communities Graduate Programmes will be welcomed into the Public Service on 14 February. Furthermore, there will be work to finalise our Ministry's strategy - something that has been driven by the needs and views of ethnic communities.

We will keep you up to date with everything that is happening so watch this space!



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Let us know what you think

We want to know what you think about this update. All comments and suggestions are welcome. For example, you can let us know if there are subjects you want to hear more about, so we can make sure we cover them in future updates.

Getting in touch is easy, just drop us a line at info@ethniccommunities.govt.nz



