



Ministry for Ethnic Communities

Overview from the Chief Executive

Since our inception on 1 July 2021, we have embraced our role as the Government’s lead for supporting Ethnic Communities and working to maximise the benefits of diversity and inclusion for all people in New Zealand. We are the Government’s chief advisor on Ethnic Communities, ethnic diversity and the inclusion of Ethnic Communities in wider society.

Our Ethnic Communities make up around 20 percent of New Zealand’s population, an increase of 45 percent since the 2013 Census. Ethnic Communities in New Zealand are the fastest-growing populations and are becoming more diverse, tripling in size since 1996. Within the next decade, Ethnic Communities will make up more than 25 percent of the population, as New Zealand’s Asian population reaches one million people.

There is a correlation between economic performance and social cohesion in any society. Our aim is to be an inclusive New Zealand, where Ethnic Communities are empowered to contribute their skills, culture and voice. We will do this through our four enduring strategic priorities:

- » Promoting the value of diversity and improving the inclusion of Ethnic Communities in wider society
- » Ensuring government services are accessible for Ethnic Communities
- » Improving economic outcomes for Ethnic Communities, including addressing barriers to employment
- » Connecting and empowering ethnic community groups.

Today, Ethnic Communities are employees, employers and business owners across New Zealand. They are involved in a range of sectors from technology, primary industries, manufacturing and exports. From an economic point of view, New Zealand’s super-diversity offers up a refreshing opportunity to positively respond to and navigate the changing economic environment.

Diverse communities contribute to New Zealand’s economy in a myriad of ways. Ethnic businesses are uniquely placed to positively contribute to international trade by fostering relationships and opportunities between New Zealand and the countries they have migrated from and still have connections with. They can also support innovation in all sectors of our society by bringing new ideas and ways of solving problems to New Zealand. The Ministry is uniquely positioned to facilitate and mediate in all these spheres, with deep and trusted relationships that have been established since the Ministry was created.

Mervin Singham

Chief Executive

Ministry for Ethnic Communities – Te Tari Mātāwaka

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Nature of scope and functions

Our vision and direction reflect the priorities of the communities we serve. When we were shaping our 2022/2025 strategy, Ethnic Communities told us that their main priorities included education, health and economic development, and that their contribution to New Zealand’s economic and social fabric is seen and valued.

As we have matured as a Ministry, we have continued to build our capability to support and empower our Ethnic Communities, and raise the visibility of these and other issues that impact their contribution and potential in New Zealand.

Our remit includes people who identify as African, Asian, Continental European, Latin American or Middle Eastern. They include former refugees, asylum seekers, new and temporary migrants, long-term settlers and multi-generational New Zealanders.

As New Zealand’s diversity increases and our Ethnic Communities grow and develop, more focus needs to be put on building social cohesion and supporting Ethnic Communities to integrate successfully into their host community. This is especially important with the ever-changing local, national and international environment, in particular overseas conflicts and tensions that are having an impact on social cohesion internationally as well as in New Zealand. In this context it is important that diversity be considered a strength and is valued in areas such as education, employment and business opportunities.

The Ministry is directing its efforts to support newcomers to navigate obtaining government services that differ from their countries of origin. It is also supporting ethnic people to contribute to the New Zealand economy through active participation in employment, and small and large-scale businesses, and to tap into the networks they have in their home countries to expand business and trade opportunities.

Finally, foreign interference is a core national security issue in New Zealand. The Ministry is leading engagement with a selection of Ethnic Communities to determine the impact of foreign interference on Ethnic Communities, build resilience in those communities impacted by this, and build the capability of the public sector to respond to foreign interference in Ethnic Communities.

By focusing on supporting our Ethnic Communities we will contribute to building an inclusive, resilient society for all New Zealanders.

Strategic priorities

We work with communities, other government agencies and a range of organisations to help increase social cohesion and ensure New Zealand is a place where everyone feels welcome, valued and empowered.

Our mandate comes from the communities we engage with and their priorities are ours:

- » Promoting the value of diversity and improving the inclusion of Ethnic Communities in wider society
- » Ensuring government services are accessible for Ethnic Communities
- » Improving economic outcomes for Ethnic Communities, including addressing barriers to employment
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The Ministry is the chief advisor to the Government on Ethnic Communities and does not directly provide services to Ethnic Communities. However, to focus on the above priorities we have agreed to the following:

- » Influence changes in policy by providing advice to government agencies and decision-makers on issues that impact on Ethnic Communities
- » Collect and analyse data so that we can demonstrate where government policies are not working well for Ethnic Communities. This includes analysing evidence to identify systemic issues
- » Work with ethnic businesses, economic development agencies and government to realise the economic potential of Ethnic Communities so they can make a stronger contribution. In 2024 the Ministry is organising an inaugural business symposium that brings together Government Ministers, policy-makers, investors, business leaders and entrepreneurs to discuss how Ethnic Communities can add more to New Zealand's economy
- » Work to build intercultural capability within government that leads to positive change for all New Zealanders
- » Use our connections into Ethnic Communities who see us as impartial, to bring communities together
- » Provide funding and other support to enable communities to grow their skills, celebrate their culture and take part productively in society.

These areas will be our focus now and into the future. As well as our enduring priorities we are, as already noted, also engaged in a programme to improve the security and resilience of Ethnic Communities to foreign interference.