

Government response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain report

The Royal Commission Report makes 44 recommendations, with the supporting rationale and context for these woven throughout the comprehensive Report. This outlines the Government's initial response to the Report which includes updates on relevant work that was already underway and several new initiatives. We will work with community and interest groups across New Zealand as we continue our longer term work to implement the Royal Commission.

Supporting our diverse communities

1. The new Ministry for Ethnic Communities

In line with recommendation 30 of the Royal Commission report, this Government is establishing the Ministry for Ethnic Communities.

This new Ministry will take the place of the Office for Ethnic Communities and will increase the standing and mana of the agency, improve the leadership within the public sector and provide a greater ability to deliver on the ongoing work to better support and respond to the needs of our diverse communities.

This new Ministry will be a departmental agency, hosted by DIA and will take effect from 1 July 2021.

2. An Ethnic Communities' Graduate Programme

We will provide meaningful work experience and pathways into the public service for graduates from ethnic communities through a newly established graduate programme. People from ethnic communities remain underrepresented in leadership roles in the public sector, and recommendation 35 of the Royal Commission report recommends greater diversity in the public service at all levels.

By establishing this graduate programme we can create opportunities for graduates and build the diversity of knowledge and experience within the public sector. The programme will have an initial focus on recruiting graduates into the intelligence agencies, Ministries of Justice, Social Development, and Education.

3. Wrap around services to support the families of 51 Shuhadah and others affected by the attack

The Government will implement recommendations 25 and 26 of the report by establishing a Collective Impact Board and rolling out wrap around services and navigators as part of the ongoing recovery support for affected whanau, survivors and witnesses.

The Collective Impact Board will enable government to work in partnership with the community by bringing together public sector agencies, non-government organisations and affected whanau, survivors and witnesses to help design ongoing wrap around services. This

will ensure these services are fit for purpose and respond to the needs of the community, including being trauma-informed and responsive, culturally appropriate and accessible by those who may not speak English. The type of support will likely be a single point of contact for families to navigate government services, such as MSD and Housing, and other potential support services. The Ministry of Social Development will work with the Board to operationalise these services by building on current specialised case management support they offer. Once in place, it will benefit around 300 individuals and their families.

4. Establishing a National Centre of Excellence to focus on understanding diversity, promoting social cohesion, and preventing and countering violent extremism;

The report reiterates the need for more informed public understanding and conversations about diverse communities and fostering social cohesion. This is an important part of understanding how we can prevent the rise of radicalisation and violent extremism.

In particular, recommendation 14 of the report suggests that government establish a programme to fund independent New Zealand-specific research on the causes of, and measures to prevent, violent extremism and terrorism.

We will be establishing a Centre of Excellence that will bring together academia, civil society and government to research the prevention of radicalisation and the promotion of social cohesion. This will help inform public discussion and guide the work of policy agencies across government.

5. Implementing a trial to support young children to improve their self-regulation, resilience, and social skills

The ability for children to regulate their emotions is important in order for them to have positive social interactions and the capacity to learn. Self-management and regulation are essential aspects of a child's growing capacity to effectively interact with others. However some children may require further support to develop their self-regulation, for example those from deprived and high-stress environments.

In line with recommendation 36, we will be rolling out a one year trial to 2,500 children in around 70 early learning services to support children's development of key skills, such as self-regulation. This trial will test the optimal programme design for promoting self-regulation and language development in Early Childhood Education services.

Tackling harmful behaviour and discrimination

6. Establishing the New Zealand Police programme Te Raranga, The Weave, as an organisational response to hate crime and hate incidents

As is reflected in the report, there are many groups of people in New Zealand who do not always feel safe due to threats and hate crimes that most others do not encounter. Recommendation 42 proposes changes that the Police can make to better record and respond to hate crime.

We will implement this by establishing Te Raranga, The Weave to make improvements in Police's frontline practice to identify, record, and manage hate crime, and deliver a service that is more responsive to victims.

In particular this will include:

- Tailoring the response system for hate crime and hate incidents
- Providing culturally appropriate responses and training to consistently deliver more aware and effective responses to hate events

Improving data sets and increasing engagement with communities to address fears and reduce the levels of victimisation

7. Strengthening the capacity of the Human Rights Commission to respond to hate speech, racism and discrimination

The Government will increase the capacity of the Human Rights Commission by increasing the funding so they can develop a team of highly skilled individuals who can provide mediation, facilitate conversations or be more proactive in exercising the Commission's inquiry function. This specialised team will be able to provide mediation and facilitate conversations for people who have been hurt by harmful behaviour, and where the threshold for a legal response may not be met.

8. Early intervention to prevent terrorism and violent extremism through the Multi-Agency Coordination and Intervention Programme

As is outlined in the Report, there is a range of risk factors that can contribute to the development of extremist ideologies and behaviour. Radicalisation and harmful behaviour can arise in a number of different and often unique ways.

That's why the Government is implementing the Multi-Agency Coordination and Intervention Programme to disengage people from this type of behaviour and mind-set by working collaboratively to address risk factors, increase protective factors and promote social activities.

The intention of this programme is to work with individuals displaying concerning behaviour and direct their behaviour away from violent extremism and violent acts of hate by providing wrap around services and support. The programme will be led by New Zealand Police.

9. Changes to the incitement provisions in the Human Rights Act

Hate speech causes significant harm. It seeks to divide communities and hinders social inclusion. Through engagement with those affected, we have heard that these demeaning and derogatory comments have a cumulative negative effect, and at the extreme end can be a precursor to violence.

Hate speech is best understood through the incitement provisions in the Human Rights Act which prohibit speech that is likely to incite others to feel hostility or contempt towards a group based on their colour, race, or ethnic or national origins.

We propose to continue our work to make changes to protect against hate speech in the Human Rights Act and taking into account recommendation 40 of the report.

The Government is proposing in principle that the following changes be made:

- Redefining the criminal offence to provide a clearer standard of behaviour
- Shifting the criminal offence for incitement to the Crimes Act 1961 to reflect the seriousness of the behaviour
- Increasing the penalty for the criminal offence to align with crimes of a similar seriousness
- Extending the incitement provisions to protect all groups listed under the prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Act: sex, religious belief, age, sexual orientation, and disability
- Extending the civil provisions in line with international obligations by including prohibition of incitement to discrimination against a group
- Amending the prohibited grounds of discrimination in the Act to include a separate ground of “gender, including gender identity and gender expression”, and to amend the ground of sex to explicitly include sex characteristics or intersex status

We will be undertaking consultation with community groups and parties across Parliament to test these proposals before bringing forward legislative change.

10. Extending the Safer Communities Fund for security measures for communities at risk from hate incidents and terror attacks

The Safer Communities Fund was established in 2019 to provide communities with additional funding to upgrade and implement security measures that will reduce the threat and fear from a potential attack. This is specifically for communities who may feel ‘at risk’ of terrorism or hate incidents. We have already given out \$7 million from this fund and there have been continued requests for additional assistance, which is why we have committed to another year of funding so people can address their immediate safety concerns.

Keeping New Zealand safe

11. Strengthening New Zealand’s Counter Terrorism Laws

Enforcement agencies need the appropriate statutory and operational tools to intervene early to prevent harm and to avert escalation to a terrorist act. Following the Christchurch Terrorist Attack, the Government fast tracked work on counter-terrorism so we could make changes to enable agencies to intervene early and respond to the evolving nature of terrorist acts. Following a targeted review of counter-terrorism legislation, in line with the suggestion in recommendation 18 of the Report, we will be progressing with the following amendments to the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002 and Terrorism Suppression (Control Orders) Act 2019:

- making amendments to clarify the definition of a “terrorist act”

- creating a new offence to criminalise planning or preparation for a terrorist act
- creating a new offence to more clearly criminalise terrorist weapons and combat training
- creating a new offence for international travel with the intention to carry out terrorist activities
- expanding the criminal offence of financing terrorism to include broader forms of material support
- extending the eligibility for a control order to include individuals who have completed a prison sentence for a terrorism-related offence if they continue to present a real risk of engaging in terrorism-related activities.

12. Accede to the Budapest Convention

In line with part of recommendation 18, the Government will look to finalise New Zealand's path for acceding to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime. The Budapest Convention is an international treaty seeking to address internet and computer crime, by aligning nations' laws, facilitating information-sharing on current threats and best practice, increasing international cooperation, and fostering international dialogue. Once New Zealand accedes we will fulfil the recommendation in the report and join the agreement alongside key international partners in the EU, Australia, Canada, Japan, the UK, and USA.