



New Zealand Federation of Multicultural Councils Inc.

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New Zealand
Newcomers Network

Connecting People

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Submission of Multicultural New Zealand (MNZ) to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) on New Zealand's compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) in August 2017.

Introduction

Multicultural New Zealand (Legal name: The New Zealand Federation of Multicultural Councils) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Committee for its consideration of New Zealand's compliance with the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination at its 93rd session in August 2017.

Matters arising from the Committee's previous consideration of New Zealand in 2013 National Human Rights Institution:

The Committee expressed its concern at the proposed removal of the position of Race Relations Commissioner through the Human Rights Amendment Bill. We are pleased that in the event the position was retained and that an additional primary function – the promotion of racial equality and cultural diversity – was added to the functions of the NZ Human Rights Commission.

National Action Plan in Human Rights: The Committee urged the adoption of a new National Action Plan for Human Rights, including plans on how to combat racial discrimination. Although the Human Rights Commission has produced an online checklist of UPR recommendations and called it a National Action Plan, we do not consider it to meet the requirements of a national plan for either human rights or racial discrimination. While it is important to monitor government implementation of recommendations from UN human rights bodies, this is not a substitute for a properly developed, consulted and comprehensive local action plan.

Languages: The Committee called for specific measures aimed at preserving the Māori and Pasifika languages, as well as other community languages. While a range of measures have been taken in relation to the former, there is a lack of cohesive action nationwide, in relation to community languages, despite large and growing communities of Chinese, Indian, Filipino and other ethnic communities. This lack of government action is despite representations from ourselves and other organisations, and a report from the Royal Society of New Zealand recommending the development of a national languages policy.



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Our Multicultural Future Report, 2015: In 2015, with the support of the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO, we commissioned former Race Relations Commissioner Joris de Bres to undertake a consultation process on visions for a multicultural New Zealand, and obstacles to their achievement. Thirty four workshops were held throughout New Zealand with a total of 581 participants. The results were published in the report Our Multicultural Future. The report contains a wide range of suggestions for action and five immediate priorities. These are:

The Treaty of Waitangi: Implementing the recommendations already made by the Constitutional Advisory Panel concerning the Treaty. (Note: we urge the Committee to consider these recommendations as the Government has to date done nothing to advance them despite the widespread process of consultation that took place).

Individuals: Engaging the education community on how best to deliver the existing NZ Curriculum principle of cultural diversity in practice in early childhood centres and schools (Note: although the NZ Curriculum has cultural diversity as one of its overarching principles the Education Review Office has found that it has not been widely implemented).

Communities: Strengthening community capability for cultural diversity.

Institutions: encouraging public sector organisations to address structural discrimination, developing a national languages policy and a community languages framework and encouraging efforts to increase the diversity of school trustees and local government.

Newcomers: developing an orientation process for new migrants, increasing support for non-government organisations that provide settlement support and addressing difficulties in skilled migrants finding appropriate employment.

Current priorities for consideration by the Committee:

In view of the above we urge the Committee to consider the following issues that impact directly on the ethnic, migrant and refugee communities (as distinct from Māori, Pasifika and European peoples) and support greater equality and enjoyment of human rights for all peoples in New Zealand:

National Action Plan for Human Rights: We urge the development of a new and comprehensive New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights, fully consulted with civil society, which sets an agenda for the equal enjoyment of human rights and harmonious race relations.

Community languages: We urge the development of a national languages policy and a community languages framework through which New Zealand's diverse languages can be



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supported and maintained, both in schools and in the community, with tangible government support for community initiatives.

Constitutional Review: We want the recommendations of the recent constitutional review process properly considered by government, including those relating to community understanding of civics and the Treaty of Waitangi.

Structural discrimination: We consider the unequal representation of Māori, Pasifika and ethnic peoples in government and public services and the institutional racism that underlies it to be a major obstacle to the equal enjoyment of rights by all. We urge you to recommend that the government specifically addresses this issue through a comprehensive programme of action.

Migrant workers and international students: We are concerned at the increasing incidence of exploitation of temporary migrant workers and international students in employment. We welcome the government's focus on this through the labour inspectorate, but consider that more inspectors are needed to address this growing problem.

Support for community organisations promoting cultural diversity and migrant settlement: Successful integration of diverse ethnic and migrant groups in the community requires active involvement by communities. Organisations such as ours – including a total of 57 local multicultural councils and newcomers' networks – rely largely on volunteers and philanthropy. To make the best use of volunteers, we need to receive support for staff who can coordinate and support them and for training programmes for governance and voluntary work. We receive very little ongoing support from the government to perform this important function. Government funding, such as it is, is mostly short term and project based. We ask you to encourage the government to engage with community organisations involved in promoting harmonious relations, cultural diversity, settlement support and integration to develop multi-year funding arrangements that enable us to deliver services effectively.

ENDS



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