

Article 6

Delivering better outcomes together

Policies that reflect our diverse cultures

The Race Relations Commissioner is looking into it, Taika Waititi famously posted about it on social media, and, if the 2019 Canterbury Law Review is anything to go by, the Christchurch community needs to continue to rally against it: racism.

New Zealand is proud of its diversity and on average our prosperity is growing, but this masks the fact that many of our people do not have the same experience or opportunity of quality of life, equality and social inclusion.¹ Minorities, immigrants, our Pasifika whānaunga, Chinese and Māori often, sadly, share a common unifying experience of being diminished because of our culture, race or ethnicity.

This article explores why our government institutions need to move closer toward multi-culturalism, asks why are they still largely representative of the majority Pākehā / Western culture, contemplates what the impacts could likely be on 'the other', on Aotearoa NZ as a whole and where the bright spots might reside. ➔

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Why do we need to change? Because the cultural and ethnic face of Aotearoa New Zealand is changing. Over the next 19 years, Māori, Asian, Pasifika and MELAA² populations are projected to increase their share of the overall population to 18.4 percent, 22 percent, 10.2 percent and 3 percent, respectively.³ By 2038, New Zealanders who identify with a European ethnicity are the only group projected to decrease its share of our population. Our future success and prosperity as a nation relies upon meeting the needs of non-Pākehā, and addressing the inequities that this growing share of the population experiences.

Before we begin, we need to know the terminology (see sidebar).

Māori, Pasifika and Chinese

In relation to Māori, the Treaty of Waitangi provides important direction for the Government. Under the Treaty, the principles of partnership, participation and protection underpin the relationship between the Government and Māori:⁴

- Partnership involves working together with iwi, hapū, whānau and Māori communities with respect to Government services.
- Participation requires Māori to be involved at all levels of Government – decision-making, planning, development and delivery.
- Protection involves the Government actively working to ensure Māori have equality and equity and safeguarding Māori cultural concepts, values and practices.

However, for many Māori, their status as tangata whenua does not offer privilege nor anything approaching equity when it comes to comparisons with non-Māori. As we have discussed in previous State of the State articles, Māori are over represented in suicide rates, imprisonment rates, unemployment rates, and social welfare reliance.⁵

Within Pasifika there is a growing middle class but there is also a large proportion struggling and living below the poverty line. This includes families who have lived here for decades and are unable to make socio-economic progress plus new migrants,

who have moved here with the perception that New Zealand offers a Pacific equivalent of the “American dream”. However, for many this dream is increasingly illusory. Pacific people’s weekly income is 34 percent lower than the national average and has been declining in recent years.⁶ And overcrowding and housing is an entrenched issue, with around 40 percent of Pacific people living in crowded homes.⁷

Pacific people in New Zealand encompass 16 distinct ethnicities, languages and cultures. All are unique with their own story but there are some common values that bind them together. Two thirds live in Auckland, which is the largest Polynesian city in the world. However, Pacific people are largely segregated and live in low socio-economic areas without access to high quality schools and other resources. Like many Māori, Pacific people have not won the “postcode lottery”.

With such a young population, compared with our overall population, Pasifika and Māori represent a large potential talent pool that needs to be nurtured and supported now in order to sustain and grow New Zealand’s future wellbeing.^{8,9} For example, by 2026 Pacific people will make up 30 percent of the Auckland working population. They will be a big component of our future labour force in our biggest city.

What issues and challenges face our largest Asian group: Chinese ethnic New Zealanders? Chinese New Zealanders account for more than 5 percent of the population.¹⁰ According to the 2013 Census, 86.7 percent of Chinese New Zealanders aged 15 years and over had a formal qualification and 57.1 percent were in the labour force.¹¹ This compared with the national figure of 79.1 percent with a formal qualification and 48 percent in the labour force.

As a group, ethnic Chinese people living here are well educated and active in the workforce. With more Chinese immigrants coming to New Zealand, the economic ties with China have also strengthened. China is now New Zealand’s largest trading partner in goods and second largest trading partner in services.

Terminology definitions

Institutional bias

A tendency for the procedures and practices of particular institutions to operate in ways which result in certain social groups being advantaged or favoured and others being disadvantaged or devalued. This need not be the result of any conscious prejudice or discrimination but rather of the majority simply following existing rules or norms. Institutional racism and sexism are the most common examples.

Racism

Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one’s own race is superior.

Prejudice

Preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience.

Colonisation

The action or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area.

Discrimination

The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, or gender.

Ethnicity, race and culture

Race is associated with biology, whereas ethnicity is associated with culture. Ethnicity is the term for the culture of people in a given geographic region, including their language, heritage, religion and customs. To be a member of an ethnic group is to conform to some or all of those practices.¹²

Definitions from online Oxford Dictionary / Oxford Reference

However, our Chinese ethnic group continues to be subject to overt racial scrutiny. Although significant improvement has been made since the 19th century, the situation more recently has moved backwards. During the past several years, Chinese home buyers – based here and overseas – have been publicly blamed by politicians and others for our housing crisis, particularly in Auckland.

In July an MBIE-funded study challenged claims that increased immigration has driven Auckland’s housing crisis.¹³ The Motu Economic and Public Policy Research study analysed Auckland data from between 1986 and 2013. Researchers found that moving New Zealanders put more pressure on house prices than the same number of immigrants would.

This report post-dates the amendments to our Overseas Investment rules, restricting foreign land and property ownership in order to help cool the housing market.¹⁴ Was this response an example of prejudice i.e. a “preconceived opinion that is not based on reason”?

Chinese people living here are also subject to social exclusion and covert and overt racism, sometimes in a violent manner.¹⁵ A recent Human Rights Commission report recorded many instances of racist crime against Chinese peoples, and also against many other of our minority groups.¹⁶

Embracing other cultural approaches

All institutions and service providers need to acknowledge the underlying differences between the general cultural values of Pākehā and those of Asian, Māori, Pacific people and other ethnic groups.

Māori, Pacific and Asian cultures share many similar cultural values says a recently released study from the Asia New Zealand Foundation; valuing kaumatua/elders, intergenerational living arrangements, food customs, hosting guests/ manaakitanga and valuing the importance of whanaungatanga/relationships.¹⁷

A new approach could be used to test new policies and interventions against the biases inherent in a Pākehā worldview to ensure they work equally well with Māori, Pasifika, Chinese, and other ethnic worldviews. Another approach would be to target specific funding and support – especially at the local level, where ground-up initiatives can get the most traction – towards addressing those inequities that exist today, whether they relate to housing, health, education, social welfare or justice.

A cultural lens must be a large part of the design of future solutions in order to achieve the scale of change necessary to meaningfully alter the status quo.

In [Article 9 of our 2018 State of the State series](#) we explored wellbeing frameworks for Māori and how, in order to improve wellbeing, customer-led interventions using a collective impact and cultural approach have proven to be a viable solution.¹⁹

Treating a person or groups of people in an equitable way means acknowledging that some people require additional resources or assistance to achieve an equal result or outcome as others.

Figure 1: Fundamental values – Pākehā vs. Pacific peoples/Māori¹⁸

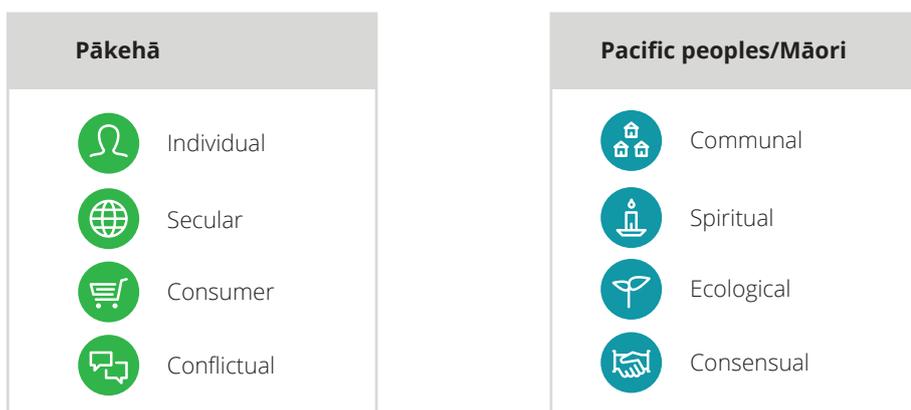
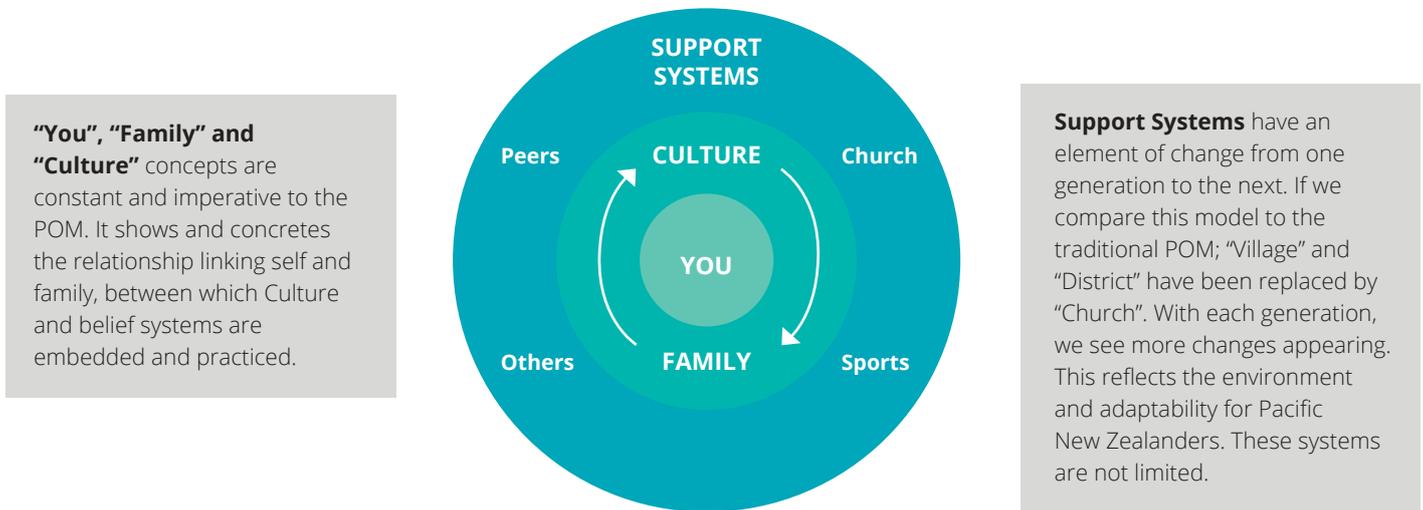


Figure 2: Pacific Operating Model (POM) 2018



“You”, “Family” and “Culture” concepts are constant and imperative to the POM. It shows and concretises the relationship linking self and family, between which Culture and belief systems are embedded and practiced.

Support Systems have an element of change from one generation to the next. If we compare this model to the traditional POM; “Village” and “District” have been replaced by “Church”. With each generation, we see more changes appearing. This reflects the environment and adaptability for Pacific New Zealanders. These systems are not limited.

The Treasury’s Pacific Operating Model will also be a vital tool for the success of programmes.²⁰

Key cultural values include collective responsibility, consensus in decision making, placing family as the dominant relationship and the importance of the church and spirituality. The Ministry for Pacific People’s Pacific Aotearoa project is an example of where the collective voice is heard.²¹ The focus is on Pacific-led solutions for Pacific people that embed their shared cultural values.

In terms of support for Chinese New Zealanders, there are many community initiatives within Chinese community groups and business initiatives through the China New Zealand Council, New Zealand China Trade Association, Asia New Zealand Foundation and through Chinese business leaders themselves.

Overall, our Government institutions are still largely representative of the majority Pākehā culture but new initiatives are underway to begin to unlock the full potential of our diverse identities.²² So how can we ‘decolonise’ our institutions, which are so Western worldview focused, to help ensure all of us in Aotearoa New Zealand can live prosperous, healthy and vibrant lives?

Where to from here?

Given the statistics and evidence above, institutional racism (certain groups are favoured over others) is a problem within our government service providers, as they are not meeting some or all of the needs of non-Pākehā. Increasingly, studies are also shining a light on these issues and the need for change.²³

Addressing unconscious bias, race-based inequity, institutional racism and overt racism is always the responsibility of the more powerful group. Public policy has a vital role in paving the way to a more socially cohesive New Zealand. Treating a person or groups of people in an equitable way means acknowledging that some people require additional resources or assistance to achieve an equal result or outcome as others.

As a starting point, government institutions can start to move beyond compliance level engagement with Māori, Pasifika and Chinese, into meaningfully shared opportunities and values. There are many different techniques and approaches.

Consultation still has its place but the classic approach needs an overhaul, aided by technology, to ensure there is deep engagement and understanding of the needs and wants of non-Pākehā. Co-design of services with Māori, Pasifika, Chinese and other ethnic groups is critical and needs to include co-delivery, co-production and power sharing – ultimately it needs to lead to government services that better reflect the cultures of users.

Examples of success

The Te Hiku Iwi Social Development and Wellbeing Accord is one such example.²⁴ Launched in 2013, the Accord is about Crown agencies working collaboratively with Te Hiku iwi on the co-design of solutions to remove disparities and create socio-economic equity for iwi, hapu and whānau. The approach is a multi-agency one, requiring a significant paradigm shift in the way departments have historically operated and serviced the needs of the Te Hiku community.

The Hōkai Rangi: Ara Poutama Aotearoa Strategy for Corrections, launched by Corrections Minister Kelvin Davis in August 2019, was also co-designed with Māori.²⁵ It incorporates a Te Ao Māori worldview, and aims for greater connectedness with whānau to help address Māori reoffending and imprisonment. This theory of change offers solutions not only for Māori but indeed all prisoners. Importantly, Corrections have implemented Hōkai Rangi as the tuakana (or main) strategy and have created a new Deputy Chief Executive role to lead it. In Article 9 of our 2018 State of State series we identified a series of success indicators for Māori wellbeing initiatives; Hōkai Rangi and the implementation approach of Corrections meets many of these indicators. The strategy is also significant because it heralds a degree of change within Corrections that is arguably disproportionate to the levels Māori in prison – in order to reduce inequities Aotearoa New Zealand will need to deal with some people unequally.

The Institute for Courageous Conversation (ICCAR) was launched in New Zealand in 2016 and aims to bring people together to explore the question: “In a context of ever-increasing racial and ethnic diversity, how can I contribute to a more racially equitable and inclusive society?”²⁶ Unitec was the first to launch the initiative here in order to support students, higher education practitioners, corporations and community organisations to better understand and harness racial diversity in Auckland. The Ministry of Education has also embraced this kaupapa, delivering courageous conversations across its offices as a platform to allow staff to talk about race and inequality.

Rangatahi Courts, Ngā Kōti Rangatahi, have been operating since 2008. The Courts operate in the same way as the Youth Court, but are held on marae and follow Māori cultural processes. Pasifika Courts also operate in the same way as the Youth Court, but are held in Pasifika churches or community centres and follow Pasifika cultural processes.

The way our Government institutions provide services must, as a minimum, match the pace of our changing ethnic landscape

These Courts are designed to help Māori and Pasifika young people, families and communities engage in the youth justice process.²⁷ The outcomes experienced by participants in Rangatahi Courts include whānau participation and involvement in the Court process, cultural pride through a process that strengthened cultural identity, understanding and involvement in the Court process, established connections with the marae and improved communication skills.²⁸

Social procurement redirects the procurement process to favour groups that are usually excluded – such as Māori and Pasifika. An overseas example of success is Supply Nation in Australia.²⁹ Since 2009, Supply Nation has worked with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses along with procurement teams to help shape the indigenous business sector. Supply Nation partners with government, corporate and not-for-profit organisations to develop procurement policies that modify and redirect spend to include the traditionally underutilised indigenous businesses. Local examples include He Waka Eke Noa established by the Southern Initiative in Auckland, and recent changes to Government Procurement Rules in New Zealand may encourage further positive initiatives here.

Conclusion

A significant proportion of our government was constructed following a colonial blueprint based on the false ideal of western supremacy. The way our Government institutions provide services must, as a minimum, match the pace of our changing ethnic landscape while also acknowledging Māori as tangata whenua with a unique status. We have a short period of time, less than 20 years, to affect a profound change in the way that our government services operate so that they are more reflective of the cultures that will make up the future Aotearoa New Zealand.

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