

# Aide-mémoire



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL  
DEVELOPMENT**  
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA

## Cabinet paper

**Date:** 17 May 2021 **Security Level:** Cabinet Sensitive

**For:** Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan, Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment

**File Reference:** REP/21/5/505

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## Approach to Improving Social Cohesion and Public Engagement

<b>Cabinet Committee</b>	Social Wellbeing
<b>Date of meeting</b>	19 May 2021
<b>Minister</b>	Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan, Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment
<b>Proposal</b>	<p>This Cabinet paper seeks agreement on your approach to improving social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand. It also seeks endorsement of Cabinet for public engagement plans in June-July 2021.</p> <p>Note that the following officials will attend the SWC meeting to support you as needed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Molly Elliott: General Manager, Social Development, Child, and Youth Policy, Ministry of Social Development (MSD)</li><li>• Sacha O’Dea: Advisor, Policy Advisory Group, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC)</li></ul>
<b>Key issues</b>	<p><b><i>Seeking agreement to your approach on social cohesion</i></b></p> <p>The Cabinet paper seeks agreement to your approach on social cohesion, outlined as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engaging with communities to create a strategic framework based on a shared understanding of social cohesion that is focused on what unites us as people in Aotearoa New Zealand, while valuing diversity and taking tangible steps to become an inclusive society</li><li>• Building on the Government’s existing work programme through tangible government actions in the short, medium, and long-term to improve social cohesion</li><li>• Identifying how to support and enable communities, the business sector, the cultural sector, and central and local</li></ul>

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government to undertake actions to improve social cohesion.

### ***Public engagements***

You are also seeking agreement to have public engagements from June to July 2021 on the social cohesion work, and to the release of the engagement material. The engagement material will be published online for public consultation, simultaneous with the face-to-face public engagements. These engagements will be aligned with:

- Ministry of Justice (MoJ): Engagement on the Incitement of Hatred and Discrimination proposals (Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain (RCOI) recommendation 39)
- Department of Internal Affairs: Engagement on the current definition of 'objectionable' in section 3(1) of the Films, Videos, and Publications Classification Act (FVPC) 1993 to include racial superiority, racial hatred and racial discrimination (RCOI Recommendation 41).

We are aiming to operate on the 'Involve' pillar of the Public Participation Spectrum as much as possible. This means that the Government and communities will work together to identify issues and develop solutions. Communities will be involved in the decision making, with the Government as the ultimate decision-maker.

### ***Comments on the public engagements' timeframes***

There have been concerns raised by the Human Rights Commission (HRC) and the Office of Children's Commissioner (OCC) about the timing of the engagements that may not allow comprehensive engagements with all communities. These concerns may be raised at the SWC meeting as well. You may wish to consider the following points in responding to these concerns:

- The timing and alignment of the engagement enable a more coordinated approach to public engagement across the Government
- The coordinated approach will minimise impact on our communities that have expressed consultation fatigue on multiple occasions
- It is in line with the work of the lead coordination Minister for the RCOI recommendations
- There will be opportunities to have more targeted engagements to inform different aspects of the work and involve under-represented groups in the public engagements.

### ***Incorporating Te Tiriti o Waitangi***

Incorporating Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles in the work on social cohesion is a priority. This intention was endorsed by Cabinet in December 2020, and March 2021. We are currently working with Te Arawhiti and Te Puni Kōkiri, and are seeking advice from

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MSD's Māori Reference Group on developing a plan to work more closely with tangata whenua over the course of this work.

For this purpose, MSD officials had a meeting with Te Arawhiti officials on Friday 14 May 2021, where they discussed the two potential stages of engagement with Māori:

- General engagements with Māori as citizens in the June-July 2021 public engagements
- Developing a relationship with tangata whenua on the social cohesion work more broadly.

MSD is currently maintaining engagements in the 'Involve' pillar. However, close engagements and relationships with tangata whenua will provide an opportunity to work together on other levels of engagements where possible.

MSD and MoJ are exploring whether these conversations can be held with National Iwi Chairs Forum (NICF) and Ngāi Tahu, especially considering their important role in responding to the Christchurch terrorist attacks and their role in the RCOI response more generally. The Ministries are reaching out to NICF this week.

### ***Consultation on the Cabinet paper***

The Cabinet paper has been consulted with 30 Government agencies and offices, as well as the HRC and the OCC. All Government agencies have been supportive of your approach to social cohesion. We provided a summary of key feedback received on the Cabinet paper to your office on 13 May 2021 [REP/21/5/457 refers].

### ***Key decisions to be made before public engagements***

Due to the joint agency nature of social cohesion engagement with engagements in the Ministry of Justice and the Department of Internal Affairs, officials are working on the joint narrative of the engagements and key messages to ensure appropriate links are established. Officials are also working on the involvement of stakeholders, peak bodies, Iwi, and Māori organisations and groups.

### ***Next steps***

MSD officials will provide advice by early June 2021 to outline next phases of the work after the June-July engagements. The advice will include likely financial implications to MSD that will need to be discussed with Minister Sepuloni.

Next steps after Cabinet agreement and public engagements include:

- Having more targeted engagements, if required, to inform and test the findings of the public engagements
- Analysing public submissions and themes to inform the social cohesion strategic framework and monitoring and evaluation regime
- Sharing information with the public about what we heard at the engagements

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- Report on progress to Ministers through the RCOI workstream coordination, DPMC Cabinet report back (by the end of 2021) and quarterly updates to the responsible Ministers for the RCOI response
  - Report back to the SWC by the end of June 2022 on the results of the public engagements and to seek approval for next stages of the work.

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**Talking Points**

You may wish to consider the following talking points for presenting the Cabinet paper to the SWC:

- I intend to deliver a consolidated work programme building on Government actions already underway to strengthen social cohesion, as well as new initiatives to complement the work.
- There have been many initiatives to improve social cohesion in Aotearoa, more importantly after the Christchurch terrorist attacks. The Royal Commission report tabled in Parliament in December 2020 also provided a good framework for enriching the work already underway.
- I wish to acknowledge the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the bicultural foundation of Aotearoa New Zealand in the social cohesion work. My intention is to incorporate the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi as endorsed by Cabinet in March 2021. In our ongoing work on social cohesion, MSD officials are currently working with Te Arawhiti and Te Puni Kōkiri, and are seeking advice from MSD's Māori Reference Group on developing a plan for deeper engagement with tangata whenua.
- My work on social cohesion goes beyond ethnicity and faith, and includes a broad definition of diversity including ages, cultures, beliefs, disabilities, family composition, where people live, gender identities, and sexual orientation.
- I am seeking your agreement on my approach to:
  - Engage with communities to create a strategic framework based on a shared understanding of social cohesion that is focused on what unites us as people in New Zealand, while valuing diversity and taking tangible steps to become an inclusive society
  - Build on the Government's existing work programme through tangible government actions in the short, medium, and long-term to improve social cohesion
  - Identify how to support and enable communities, the business sector, the cultural sector, and central and local government to undertake actions to improve social cohesion.
- As part of this approach, and the medium-term actions, I propose having public engagement from June to July 2021, aligned with engagement on the Incitement of Hatred and Discrimination proposals being led by the Minister of Justice, and the engagements for amending the definition of "objectionable" in section 3 of Films,

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Videos, and Publications Classification Act 1993 led by the Minister of Internal Affairs.

- Aligning the engagement across of the Government has merits both for the Ministries that are leading Royal Commission workstreams, and for communities that have expressed fatigue and resource challenges to participate in engagements on multiple occasions. It will also demonstrate that we, as the Government, intend to do things differently and deliver on work programmes in a more coordinated and harmonised way that recognises the inter-dependence of our goals and work.
- The public engagements will provide a good starting point to develop the social cohesion strategic framework, and a monitoring and evaluation regime. It will enable me and MSD officials to incorporate the voices of our communities in the ongoing work, and to understand priorities for people in New Zealand, and the roles different sectors can play in improving social cohesion.
- The public engagements on social cohesion are only a first step. There will be follow-up work with key stakeholders. MSD is providing me with advice on what the next steps can look like.
- I will provide regular progress reports to the responsible Ministers for the RCOI response, including through Minister Little's update to Cabinet at the end of the year.
- I will provide a more fulsome report back to you by June 2022 on the results of the social cohesion work.

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