

# Weaving

*New Zealand's Future*



*The work of the Office of Ethnic Affairs*



THE OFFICE OF  
ethnic affairs  
*Te Tari Matawaka*

New Zealand Government



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## *Kia ora and welcome to Weaving New Zealand's Future.*

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The Office of Ethnic Affairs (OEA) is committed to helping New Zealand build strong, sustainable communities. Our purpose is to encourage and promote the benefits that ethnic diversity offers New Zealand, by being one of the principal sources of information and advice. We also build strong connections with Government and across communities. We acknowledge

the status of Māori as tangata whenua and a Treaty of Waitangi partner in this.

Ethnic communities are projected to make up nearly 20 per cent of New Zealand's population in the next decade. This rise in ethnic diversity presents us with many economic, cultural, and social opportunities.

This booklet outlines the background to ethnic diversity, what we're doing in New Zealand to make the most of the opportunities that it offers, and how OEA is involved. There is also a list of additional resources if you want to find out more.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us here at the Office of Ethnic Affairs (see the back page for contact details). Together, we'll help New Zealand grow into a diverse, prosperous society, well into the future.

**Mervin Singham**

Director of Office of Ethnic Affairs

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# Setting the scene

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*“Diversity is not about how we differ.  
Diversity is about embracing one  
another’s uniqueness.”*

Ola Joseph

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In the last 50 years, the world has experienced rapid change in economies and across culture. National boundaries are now less defined, people move easily between countries, and communication is much easier.

Globalisation has led to larger numbers of people migrating, and there has been an increase in the number of refugees to other countries. New Zealand is also required to meet its humanitarian obligations under international law. These factors mean that people expect countries to be responsive to all ethnicities.

## Challenges

As Rt Hon Dame Jenny Shipley, former Prime Minister of New Zealand, said, “Ethnic diversity is one of the biggest challenges in the globalised world”.

When there are significant numbers of newcomers in any country, people can start to worry about losing the identity and values of their community. The benefits of ethnic diversity are often overlooked, as people focus more on the challenges it presents.

Different values and attitudes can lead to tension, prejudice, and conflict. Examples of this include the recent Cronulla riots in Sydney, conflict over the rights of immigrants in the USA, and reactions to the banning of the burqa in France.

## Benefits

It is important to understand that ethnic diversity can be a strength.

Ethnic diversity:

- is associated with superior decision-making, problem-solving, creativity, and an increase in innovation
- opens doors to economic opportunities through social, cultural and technological connections
- opens up trade opportunities in emerging economies such as China, India and Brazil, and expanding industries, such as halal tourism from the Muslim world
- provides opportunities to develop new shared ideals and increase community strength.

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*Did you know?*

*With over three billion letters in the human genome, only a handful of mutations form our entire notion of ethnicity.*

<http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/episode/the-human-family-tree-3706/Videos>

*An estimated 175 million people reside outside of their country of birth or nationality.*

<http://www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=222>

*Since 1840, New Zealand has given refuge to people from Europe, South America, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.*

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/refugees/1>

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# Ethnic diversity in New Zealand

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*New Zealand has developed an international reputation as a welcoming and tolerant country for immigrants. Among others, Chinese, Indian, Dalmatian, Dutch, and Pacific people have lived here for generations, and they have played a significant part in shaping New Zealand society.*

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As a small country, New Zealand needs new immigrants to increase our skilled workforce and provide foreign investment.

## Key facts

- In the last five years, there have been increasing immigrant numbers from China, India, and South Korea, as well as steady migration from Australia and the United Kingdom.
- Over seven per cent of people in New Zealand have been living here for four years or less.
- Almost one in four people in New Zealand was born overseas.
- 18 per cent of our population speaks two or more languages.
- Asian ethnic groups are now New Zealand's fourth largest, increasing 40 per cent between 2001 and 2006.<sup>1</sup>

## Current attitudes

Overall, New Zealanders respond positively to ethnic diversity. Over 80 per cent of New Zealanders believe immigrants make an important contribution to New Zealand, and 89 per cent agree it is good for society to be made up of people from different races, religions and cultures.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Census 2006, Statistics New Zealand

<sup>2</sup> *Attitudes towards immigrants, immigration and immigration policy in New Zealand*, Centre for Applied Cross-cultural Research, 2008

However, consultation with ethnic communities in New Zealand highlights that there are still a number of challenges for them, including:

- equal employment opportunities<sup>3</sup>
- alleviating discrimination
- equal access to information and services
- preservation of community identity
- gaining genuine integration into New Zealand society
- keeping their business interests viable and healthy (following the recent global financial crisis).

To overcome these challenges, we need the support and effort of government and local communities. This is where the Office of Ethnic Affairs comes in.

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### *Did you know?*

*89 per cent of New Zealanders agree it is good for society to be made up of people from different ethnicities, religions, and cultures.*

[http://dol.govt.nz/publications/research/sopemi/sopemi\\_08.asp](http://dol.govt.nz/publications/research/sopemi/sopemi_08.asp)

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<sup>3</sup> See the *Annual Review of Race Relations* by the Human Rights Commission for further information.



# Introducing the Office of Ethnic Affairs (OEA)

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*The Office of Ethnic Affairs (OEA) is part of the Department of Internal Affairs. Our overall aim is to ensure that ethnic communities are equal, confident, and proud participants in shaping New Zealand today, and into the future. We are the pre-eminent source of information, support and advice on ethnic diversity in New Zealand.*

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Our three key priorities are:

- 1 Maximising economic development capacity, using ethnic people's international connections and cultural skills to benefit ethnic and mainstream business people, and the New Zealand economy.
- 2 Increasing government responsiveness for ethnic communities, so people are empowered to access government resources and services.
- 3 Maintaining New Zealand's reputation as a successful model of social harmony.

## What we do

To make sure we deliver on our priorities, we provide support in the following areas. Each of these points is expanded on in the next section.

- Increase access to economic development opportunities and employment for ethnic communities.
- Offer expert advice on the benefits and challenges of ethnic diversity and how to manage diversity effectively (including providing high quality interpreting services in 40 languages across key government agencies).
- Build and maintain strong connections between ethnic and mainstream communities, government agencies, non-government organisations, iwi, and the private sector.
- Help build capability across the ethnic sector, to encourage ethnic people to participate actively in all aspects of New Zealand life.
- Raise intercultural awareness, competence, and skills (including providing information about ethnic communities in New Zealand).

## How we work

Our staff require strong relationship building skills, the ability to navigate through complex issues, and a high level of strategic thinking. We keep up to date with the latest issues relating to ethnic diversity in New Zealand and overseas. Taking a partnership approach with our stakeholders is the key to how we achieve outcomes.

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### *Did you know?*

*The New Zealand Government's goal is for New Zealand to catch up to the Australian GDP per capita by 2025.*

<http://www.2025taskforce.govt.nz/abouttaskforce.htm>

*China, Brazil, and India are projected to have higher GDP than the US and UK by 2050.*

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BRIC>

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## More about what we do

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*The Office of Ethnic Affairs provides ethnic diversity advice and support in a range of ways. To get a better understanding of what we do and some examples of what we've done previously, review the following pages.*

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## 1 Increasing access to economic development opportunities and employment for ethnic communities

We play a crucial role in connecting ethnic and mainstream business people, and economic development agencies.

We achieve this by:

- hosting forums for business leaders
- publishing case studies on best practice
- improving access to economic development and employment opportunities for ethnic communities
- building ethnic businesses' understanding of New Zealand's regulatory environment and the support available to them to exercise their entrepreneurial skill.

### **Examples**

Examples include the business leaders' forums we've held, including ASEAN Business Leaders' Forum, FIANZ Economic Development Forum, and the Shanghai Expo Forums. The forums focus on the opportunities that arise from New Zealand's Free Trade Agreements. Participants provided good feedback on further measures that could be taken by the business community and government to improve access to these opportunities.

## 2 Expert advice on the benefits and challenges of ethnic diversity and how to manage diversity effectively

Faced with increasing ethnic diversity, many agencies need more advice and support to respond effectively to the needs of clients and stakeholders. We provide policy advice, specialist knowledge, and expertise to ethnic and mainstream communities, government, non-government organisations and the private sector on a wide range of issues relating to ethnic communities and diversity.

A key focus for OEA is making sure that government policies and services are responsive, accessible, and culturally appropriate for *all* New Zealanders (for example, health, immigration, tourism).

### **Examples**

The Office of Ethnic Affairs promotes its Language Line telephone interpreting service to agencies who provide government services to the public, especially those that work with ethnic people.

We provide around 50,000 Language Line interpreting calls each year.

We're providing training for central government policy staff on using ethnic perspectives in their policy frameworks.

The Office of Ethnic Affairs is creating a way to see how ethnic communities are achieving in such areas as health, well-being, economics and justice and are publishing the results in the *State of the Nation of Ethnic Communities* resource.

### 3 Building and maintaining strong connections

It is important for people and communities to be able to meet and interact with others from different ethnicities. Strong connections are vital to building social cohesion and realising the benefits of migration to New Zealand. This will help us avoid misunderstandings, discrimination, or other concerns. We also need to create a society where people are able to maintain their cultural identity and heritage.

A number of our projects are aimed at imparting knowledge and skills for forming strong and enduring relationships among people and groups from different ethnic backgrounds (including government, mainstream communities, non-government organisations, and the private sector).

#### **Examples**

Continuation as the New Zealand Focal Point for the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, and coordinating a National Plan of Action across government.

The Young Leaders and Collaborators Project which aims to identify highly skilled potential leaders within ethnic communities and develop their skills and networks within professional disciplines.

Sponsorship of the ASB Polyfest which brings young people together from diverse backgrounds and celebrates cultural heritage.

## 4 Building capability across the ethnic sector, to encourage ethnic people to participate actively in all aspects of New Zealand life

Ethnic people, particularly newcomers, may be unaware of how to get involved in their community. We build capability within ethnic communities, to encourage active and confident involvement in New Zealand life. We lead a number of activities and events to raise awareness about civic participation and how to get involved.

We also actively promote the representation of ethnic people at governance level on community and statutory boards, in order to increase leadership opportunities for ethnic people.

### **Examples**

Examples of initiatives that empower ethnic people to get involved include:

- actively seeking high calibre nominations for community and statutory boards
- law and order forums
- building media literacy for ethnic and mainstream media
- developing leadership among women and youth
- running the South Asian Media Forum
- workshops on civic participation and law and order (including how to write submissions).

## 5 Raising intercultural awareness, competence, and skills

Education and awareness about ethnic diversity is vital to achieving OEA's priorities, and building stronger communities in New Zealand. We also need to build intercultural skills, so that respect and trust between ethnicities are developed.

The Office of Ethnic Affairs is an expert at building intercultural awareness and ethnic diversity management. We deliver nearly 200 presentations about ethnic diversity and its implications each year. In the last year we've also:

- trained approximately 400 people on intercultural awareness and communication
- educated 40 central government policy staff on using ethnic perspectives in the development of their policies
- raised public awareness through case studies and publications about the gains ethnic diversity brings, and how to benefit from this.

### **Examples**

Examples of OEA's work in this area include providing the *Intercultural Awareness and Communication Training Programme* to private and public organisations to help them communicate across cultural boundaries and build effective workplaces, and publishing the manual, *Riding the Wave*, a guide about ethnic diversity in the workplace (including bias-free recruitment) – what it is, why it's important, and how an organisation can put it into practice.

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*Did you know?*

*In 2005, Asia and the Pacific were home to 30 per cent of the world's migrants.*

[http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/EGM\\_Ittmig\\_Asia/BGpaper\\_ESCAP.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/meetings/EGM_Ittmig_Asia/BGpaper_ESCAP.pdf)

*Mandarin is the language most commonly requested by people using Language Line interpreters.*

[http://www.ethnicaffairs.govt.nz/oeawebsite.nsf/wpg\\_URL/Language-Line-Languages-Available-Language-Line-Top-10-Languages?OpenDocument](http://www.ethnicaffairs.govt.nz/oeawebsite.nsf/wpg_URL/Language-Line-Languages-Available-Language-Line-Top-10-Languages?OpenDocument)

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# Resources you can access

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*If you'd like to find out more about ethnic diversity, you can access a range of resources from the Office of Ethnic Affairs.*

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## DVDs

- *Language Line* – A guide to how, why, and when to use a professional interpreter.
- *Clarity through Understanding* – A training resource to introduce Language Line telephone interpreting service to non-English speakers.

## Books and booklets

- *Building Bridges* – A summary of the *Building Bridges* project, which aims to build understanding between Muslim and mainstream communities.
- *Foot in the Door* – A guide about fair recruitment practices.
- *Interpreting in New Zealand: the pathway forward* – A resource (including DVD) for interpreters, discussing interpreting standards in New Zealand.
- *Riding the Wave* – Guidelines to provide bias-free consultation, advice, and training on diversity management.
- *Weaving New Zealand's Future* – A booklet to introduce the work of the Office of Ethnic Affairs.

## Resources released in 2010/2011

- *Cultured Cook* – An education booklet about ethnic food, for caterers and mainstream restaurants in Christchurch.
- *Government Responsiveness Toolkit* – A toolkit for government to provide responsiveness to ethnic communities.



# Where to from here?

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*Cultural change is constant, and will continue to gather momentum.*

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What we can learn from overseas experience of ethnic diversity is that it must be dealt with carefully, to maximise the opportunities and minimise the risks it presents. Education about ethnic diversity, and strong connections across ethnically diverse communities are ultimately the foundation for the long-term success of any nation.

The Office of Ethnic Affairs is committed to helping set a solid foundation and then building on this, to benefit New Zealand now and into the future.

## Want to find out more?

For more information about the Office of Ethnic Affairs contact us on:

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