

Briefing for Incoming Minister

Ethnic Affairs

November 2008

THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS

Te Tari Taiwhenua

Leadership in Ethnic Affairs

1. The Department of Internal Affairs takes a leadership role across government in ethnic affairs. The Office of Ethnic Affairs (OEA) continues to develop “Strength in Ethnic Diversity” as its strategic direction, to help recognise and respond to the issues and opportunities arising from New Zealand’s increasing ethnic diversity.

Overview

2. The Ethnic Affairs¹ portfolio was established in 1999 to represent the population whose ethnic heritage distinguishes them from most other people in New Zealand and from Māori and Pacific people. The Ethnic sector definition includes migrants, refugees, long-term settlers and people born in New Zealand who identify with Asian, Continental European, Middle Eastern, Latin American or African as their ethnic heritage. There are now about 200 ethnic groups in New Zealand.
3. As the Minister for Ethnic Affairs, your role is to advocate for Ethnic communities in government. There is no legislation, Crown entities or statutory bodies associated with this portfolio. However, the Minister for Ethnic Affairs is the ‘Settlor’ for the Chinese Poll Tax Heritage Trust (the Trust).
4. The role of the Trust ‘Settlor’ involves appointing eight members to the Trust every three years. Current members of the Trust are shown in Appendix I. The Trust was established in 2005 following the New Zealand Government’s apology to the Chinese community for the historical Poll Tax. The objective of the Trust is to support the promotion of Chinese New Zealand history, language and culture.
5. The Ethnic Affairs portfolio has strong links to other Ministerial portfolios administered by the Department, such as the Community and Voluntary Sector, Local Government and Community, Identity Services (Citizenship), as well as other portfolios such as Police, Social Development, Education, Employment, Immigration, Housing, Health, Women’s Affairs, Justice and Foreign Affairs and Trade.

¹ Ethnicity is a broad concept of group affiliation, based on elements of race, language, religion, customs, heritage and tradition as well as geographic, tribal or national identity. In this paper, the word ‘Ethnic’ (upper case) is used to denote people who identify themselves as Asian, Middle Eastern, Continental European, Latin American or African.

6. The Office of Ethnic Affairs was established in 2001 to support the Ethnic Affairs Ministerial portfolio and provide policy advice and services to the growing Ethnic sector. The total appropriation for services for 2008/09 is \$5.143 million, of which \$4.418m is funded by the Crown (through Vote Internal Affairs) and \$0.725m from third party revenue.²

Increasing ethnic diversity in New Zealand: composition and projections

7. New Zealand is becoming more ethnically diverse. Between 1991 and 2001, the Ethnic sector's population doubled. In 2006, the Ethnic sector was estimated to be 12% of the total resident population. By 2021, it is projected that the Ethnic sector will be 18% of the total resident population. The Asian group has grown the fastest and this trend is projected to continue and reach 16% of the resident population by 2026.
8. The largest groups in the Ethnic sector are:
 - Asian with 354,552 people (9.2%)
 - Continental European³ with 102,000 people (2.3%)
 - Middle Eastern, Latin American or African (MELAA) group with 34,743 people (0.9 %)
9. Auckland is the most ethnically diverse region, with approximately 19% of its population identifying themselves as Asian.

Key implications of increasing ethnic diversity for New Zealand

10. The increasing ethnic diversity presents both challenges and opportunities. In some countries, the rapid increase in ethnic and religious diversity that New Zealand has experienced has led to an increase in racism, alienation and sometimes open conflict.
11. Harnessing the benefits of ethnic diversity is crucial to New Zealand achieving positive social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes. Understanding and utilising the strengths of New Zealand's increasingly diverse population enables New Zealand to respond effectively to an increasingly globalised environment.

² Revenue received from agencies that use the Language Line service.

³ This group is normally included in the European ethnic group. However, the figure of 102,000 people (2.3%) is an estimate based on level 3 ethnicity data provided by Statistics New Zealand.

12. Countries with strong, cohesive and multicultural communities are often more productive, innovative and dynamic than other societies. These qualities attract talented and skilled people from around the world. Attracting talented and skilled people will be essential as migration continues to increase and countries like New Zealand continue to compete for skilled migrants
13. Cultural diversity has economic and social benefits that all New Zealanders can share. Studies have shown that people raised in bi-lingual or multi-lingual environments have more mental dexterity, are more innovative and are more successful than people raised in monocultural environments. In 2006, 17.5% of people in New Zealand could speak two or more languages.

Key issues and priorities for Ethnic sector communities

14. Discrimination against ethnic groups based on nationality, religion, race or colour, ethnic or national origin is prohibited under New Zealand's legislative framework. New Zealand is party to several United Nations' conventions that serve to eliminate discrimination and to protect the interests of minority ethnic groups, refugees, women and children. These conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, include support for economic, social and cultural rights (including the right of indigenous and ethnic minorities to maintain their languages and cultures).
15. Despite New Zealand's strong legislative framework, research and feedback from Ethnic communities suggest that Ethnic people still experience discrimination and face issues different from the rest of New Zealand. While the needs of more recent arrivals focus on initial settlement, the concerns of established Ethnic communities tend to have a different focus. Feedback from Ethnic communities indicates that their priorities are:
 - access to employment, especially employment suitable to their qualifications and skills
 - a more responsive and accepting wider community, including the business sector
 - better access to information and services (culturally appropriate and with language support)
 - effective participation to be able to contribute to New Zealand's socio-economic prosperity

- greater support for the preservation of heritage cultures, identity and languages
 - greater access to funding for community projects.
16. The current global financial crisis is predicted to cause a significant global economic slowdown and result in considerable job losses. Over the September 2008 quarter, the unemployment rate increased by 0.3 percentage points to 4.2 percent in New Zealand⁴. Such times of economic downturn and job losses may have some negative implications for this portfolio. Implications may include:
- less focus on employment opportunities for migrants and refugees
 - an increased perception of competition for scarce resources that can affect race relations and social cohesion

Role of the Department

Office of Ethnic Affairs' interventions and key projects

17. Our interventions and key projects aim to ensure that New Zealand minimises the challenges and maximises the benefits of diversity, so that New Zealand has strong, sustainable communities/hapū/iwi⁵. These interventions are based on the 'strength in diversity' paradigm, which seeks to find ways to harness the benefits of diversity for all New Zealanders.
18. In consultation with agencies such as the Department of Labour and the Ministry of Social Development, we focus on:
- providing specialist intercultural awareness and communication services to government, communities and businesses
 - building the capacity of Ethnic communities
 - facilitating connections between Ethnic business communities and economic development agencies
 - improving sector responsiveness to ethnic diversity
 - utilising various forums and visual media to promote the visibility and benefits of diversity.
19. We manage Language Line, a professional telephone interpreting service, to enable people with limited or no English access to government services. The

⁴ Statistics New Zealand.

⁵ This is one of the Department's outcomes, as stated in its Statement of Intent 2008-11, towards which OEA interventions contribute.

service provides professional interpreting services in 39 languages, receives about 700-800 calls per week and more than 50 government agencies participate. The pilot service began in April 2003 with just six participating agencies. The service is free for clients. We are continuing to expand this service to local government authorities, health care providers and schools as these services are essential to communities.

20. We are also involved in whole-of-government strategies including the New Zealand Settlement Strategy, and Auckland and Wellington regional settlement strategies. We are also working with the Royal Commission on Auckland Governance in the area of local government's role in promoting the participation of diverse communities and harnessing the benefits that these communities can offer the Auckland region.
21. We facilitate relationships between Ethnic business communities and trade and economic agencies like the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Economic Development and New Zealand Trade and Enterprise to:
 - provide information and support to these communities to encourage investment in New Zealand businesses
 - utilise these communities' cultural and market expertise to expand business opportunities in overseas markets.
22. The key projects we are involved in include:
 - **Capability building of Ethnic sector NGOs** - a project funded by the Migrant Levy fund⁶ to identify ways to build the capacity of migrant, refugee and Ethnic sector NGOs to enable them to provide services to their communities.
 - **Connecting Diverse Communities (CDC) work programme** - a whole-of-government approach containing more than 70 initiatives across agencies to improve and better co-ordinate policies aimed at strengthening relations between diverse ethnic, cultural and religious groups and improving social cohesion. We co-lead this work programme with the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), which focuses on five areas:
 - strengthening intercultural relations

⁶ The Migrant Levy is charged by the Department of Labour to new migrants before entering New Zealand. This funds a range of ongoing settlement initiatives across agencies

- addressing discrimination and promoting respect
- improving connections with cultural identity
- capacity building and community development
- building the knowledge base.

The CDC work programme includes the Building Bridges initiative, launched in early 2006 in conjunction with the New Zealand Federation of Islamic Associations. This programme aims to help New Zealand's Muslim communities deal with the challenges of dispelling stereotypes, promote inter-ethnic understanding and encourage civic participation in the post-9/11 environment. Due to its promising results, this programme is being extended to African communities in New Zealand.

The work programme also includes the Intercultural Awareness and Communication (IAC) programme. In response to New Zealand's growing diversity and to enhance communities' access to government, the IAC programme provides specialist services, advice and training to government and other agencies. This programme also includes the "Authentic Dialogue Kits". These kits facilitate discussions to promote intercultural dialogue among the wider New Zealand society, including youth.

- **UK/NZ Policy Dialogue on multicultural communities** – an exchange of policies and best practices, primarily with officials from the Department for Community and Local Government (DCLG) in the United Kingdom.

Key issues that may arise immediately

23. The key issues likely to arise immediately include:

- community organisations wanting to interact with you
- issues arising following the Community Engagement Forums in response to Ethnic communities' perceptions about safety, security and law and order.

Community organisations wanting to interact with the Minister

24. Ethnic sector community organisations and community leaders may seek an opportunity to meet and build relationships with you. Some of these organisations include: the New Zealand Chinese Association, New Zealand Federation of Ethnic Councils (NZFEC), Ethnic Voice New Zealand, ChangeMakers Refugee Forum, Federation of Islamic Associations of New

Zealand, Shakti Community Council and the New Zealand Indian Central Association.

25. Issues that Ethnic sector communities and non-governmental organisations may raise include:
 - access to Crown funding
 - the introduction of a Multicultural Act.
26. Ethnic communities report that they experience barriers in obtaining Crown funding. We are working on the Ethnic sector NGOs' capability building project, outlined in paragraph 22, to address these issues.
27. During the last six months, NZFEC have facilitated a number of forums promoting the introduction of a Multicultural Act and have lobbied Members of Parliament. While New Zealand does not have specific multicultural legislation, there are human rights and anti-discriminatory legislation, various frameworks, policies and initiatives already in place that work towards positive outcomes for the Ethnic sector.

Public engagement on safety and security

28. A number of Community Engagement Forums were conducted by MSD, New Zealand Police and OEA in response to the series of incidents and criminal activities in Manurewa and subsequent communities' reactions, in August and September 2008.
29. We will continue to follow up on issues raised by Ethnic communities around building confidence in community safety and security, greater access to information and services, and ongoing contact and liaison between government agencies and Ethnic communities to work together for better outcomes.

Key activities over the next three months

30. Key activities over the next three months include:
 - being invited to and asked to host key ethnic celebrations
 - reporting on the Government's progress on the CDC and Alliance of Civilisations work programmes.
31. The Minister for Ethnic Affairs and the Prime Minister are regularly invited to and asked to host key ethnic celebrations. In recent years, some of these events have been hosted in Parliament by the Minister for Ethnic Affairs to publicly

celebrate these ethnic events and groups. For instance, a Chinese New Year's function has been hosted at Parliament for the last six years.

32. There are some significant community events within the next three months, which include:

- **Indian Republic Day** (26 January): This day marks India's emergence as a republic on 26 January 1950
- **Sri Lanka Independence Day** (9 February): This day commemorates Sri Lanka's gaining of independence on 4 February 1948
- **Chinese New Year** (26 January): This day celebrates the Chinese New Year based on the Chinese Lunar calendar
- **Race Relations Day** (18 March): OEA organises this event every year to promote respect for differences, tolerance and racial harmony.

33. OEA and the Ministry of Social Development are required to report to Cabinet on the Connecting Diverse Communities work programme and Alliance of Civilisations implementation plan by March 2009.

Appendix I

MEMBERS OF THE CHINESE POLL TAX HERITAGE TRUST

Name	Date of appointment	Expiry of term
Dr James Ng (Chair)*	November 2004	November 2010
Kai Luey*	November 2004	November 2010
David Wong*	November 2004	November 2010
Ron Hoy-Fung*	November 2004	November 2010
Debbie Sew-hoy*	November 2004	November 2010
George Sue	April 2008	April 2011
Tony Thackery	April 2008	April 2011
Maureen Leong	April 2008	April 2011

*Indicates members who will be vacating office at the end of their current term. All other members are eligible for reappointment

Appendix II

OFFICE OF ETHNIC AFFAIRS' ORGANISATIONAL CHART

Ethnic Affairs

