

Briefing Note: Meeting with the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Minister of Education		
Date:	2/03/2023	Priority:	Medium
Security Level:	In Confidence	METIS No:	1304852
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Messaging seen by Communications team:	No	Round Robin:	No

Purpose of paper

This paper provides you with background information and relevant work programme updates in preparation for your meeting with the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand on Monday 6 March, from 4 – 4.30pm.

Summary

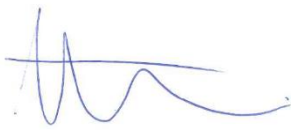
- The Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand (IWCNZ) is a national umbrella organisation that represents and advocates for Muslim women in Aotearoa New Zealand.
- The Ministry of Education (the Ministry) engages with IWCNZ on an ongoing basis. IWCNZ also has representation on Kāpuia, the Ministerial Advisory Group on the Government's Response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch mosques.
- IWCNZ have asked to meet with you to discuss the following education topics:
 - Ongoing harassment and bullying of students
 - The mental and physical wellbeing of Muslims within the school system
 - Representative educational and professional resources.
- IWCNZ have shared a policy paper with you that includes as a priority area "a public service that works for all of the public including Muslim women". An ongoing partnership with the Ministry is specified as being an important part of this.
- A key work programme update you may like to share is that the Ministry will be holding Introduction to Ramadan Webinars for school leaders and staff ahead of Ramadan beginning in late March.

- Ministry officials will be available to support your meeting with IWCNZ if needed:
 - Sean Teddy – Deputy Secretary, Te Pae Aronui
 - Anne O'Brien – Senior Policy Manager, Investing in Educational Wellbeing
 - Tahirah Moton – Policy Analyst, Investing in Educational Wellbeing.

Proactive Release

- a **agree** that the Ministry of Education release this briefing in full once it has been considered by you.

☒ Agree / ☐ Disagree



Anne O'Brien
Senior Policy Manager
Te Pou Kaupapahere

02/03/2023



Hon Jan Tinetti
Minister of Education

04/03/2023

Background

1. The Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand / Te Kotahitanga o ngā Wāhine Ihirama o Aotearoa (IWCNZ) is a national umbrella organisation established in 1991 that represents and advocates for Muslim women in Aotearoa New Zealand.
2. IWCNZ has been active in responding to the needs of the Muslim community both before and following the March 15 terror attacks, including by working closely with the Ministry to co-develop educational resources reflecting the experiences of Muslim women in education and wider society, including posters and books.
3. The Government has a direct relationship with people from the Muslim community, including IWCNZ, through Kāpuia. You last met with Kāpuia on 27 October 2022. Kāpuia are confirming their meeting dates and forward agenda for 2023.

Meeting with the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand

4. You are meeting with IWCNZ on Monday 6 March, from 4 – 4.30pm.
5. There will be two IWCNZ members in attendance:
 - a. Aliya Danzeisen, IWCNZ National Coordinator. Aliya leads IWCNZ matters relating to secondary and tertiary education and is a member of Kāpuia.
 - b. Dr Maysoon Salama, IWCNZ Emeritus National Coordinator. Dr Salama leads IWCNZ matters relating to ECE and primary education and is also a member of Kāpuia.
6. IWCNZ have asked to meet with you to discuss the following in relation to education:
 - a. Ongoing harassment & bullying of students. IWCNZ has signalled they will be sharing examples of poor practice occurring presently in relation to bullying of students and the lack of appropriate redress.
 - b. The mental and physical wellbeing of Muslims within the school system (i.e. the recent ERO findings).
 - c. Representative educational and professional resources.
7. An update on each of these matters is provided below.
8. IWCNZ have also asked to discuss the wider issues relevant for Muslim women. You are being briefed separately by the Ministry for Women on these.
9. Ahead of the meeting, IWCNZ have shared a policy paper with you that lays out the three policy priority areas it sees as requiring urgent attention by Government. This includes “a public service that works for all of the public including Muslim women”. An ongoing partnership with the Ministry of Education is specified as being an important part of this policy priority.
10. In the policy paper, IWCNZ state that a policy focus on building a culturally responsive public sector is about more than addressing the inequities Muslims experience. They are also seeking system shifts within the public sector, including the education system, to meet societal aspirations for an inclusive Aotearoa New Zealand. They see this as an opportunity to “bridge the gap between rhetoric and reality” so that “Aotearoa New Zealand can truly live up to being a welcoming and accessible place for all”.

Topic One: Ongoing harassment & bullying of students

11. The social climate of schools, kura and early learning centres is important for students' mental wellbeing. The Ministry takes the issue of bullying seriously and recognises the significant negative and ongoing impacts it can have on the wellbeing of children and young people.

12. The Ministry has initiatives and resources which aim to support schools to develop safe, inclusive environments, where children and young people feel they belong, including:
 - a. Positive Behaviour for Learning (PB4L) initiatives
 - b. Bullying-Free NZ website
 - c. Wellbeing@School survey toolkits
 - d. Access to counselling services

PB4L-SW refresh

13. Positive Behaviour for Learning School-Wide (PB4L-SW) is a whole-school framework designed to enable schools, kura, and families and whānau to create inclusive and supportive school environments.
14. Funding through Budget 2022 provided \$11.2 million in operating expenses and \$0.3m in capital expenses over the next four years to strengthen PB4L-SW. This will provide for a refresh and strengthened delivery of PB4L-SW in schools currently using the initiative and the provision of 14 new School-Wide Practitioners to work with schools from July 2023.
15. The key intended outcome for the refresh is to strengthen the PB4L-SW framework to better support positive school relationships and safe and inclusive environments, which enhance engagement and hauora for all ākonga. A report from NZCER¹ stated that overall, PB4L-SW schools are making better progress at reducing aggressive behaviours than the schools in a non-School-Wide comparison group. This indicates that positive change could be achieved if schools use PB4L-SW to focus on reducing aggressive behaviours and bullying.

The Bullying-Free NZ Website

16. The Bullying-Free NZ website provides evidence-informed resources aimed at supporting school communities to work together to develop effective whole-school bullying prevention and response approaches.
17. We are currently undertaking an evaluation of the Bullying-Free NZ website in order to determine how well it meets the information needs of target audiences – schools, parents and whānau and students.

Wellbeing at School Survey

18. The Ministry provides free access to the Wellbeing@School (W@S) survey tools, developed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). Student, teacher and school systems surveys help schools understand the level and type of bullying which may be occurring and the wider context of key protective and risk factors across all layers of school life. New W@S survey items relating to resilience strategies and racism/fairness were added to W@S in 2022.

Access to Counselling Services

19. Evidence tells us that schools are best able to support the mental wellbeing of students when they develop holistic, multi-component, approaches that address both protective and risk factors. Ensuring students have access to appropriate counselling support when needed is one part of such an approach.
20. The Counselling in Schools initiative is designed to provide students in selected primary, intermediate, kura and small secondary schools with access to locally provided counselling to support their mental health and wellbeing in the wake of COVID-19. Students in selected schools began receiving counselling support during Terms 3 and 4, 2021.

¹ *What can Wellbeing@School data tell us about change in PB4L-SW school outcomes?* Mohamed Alansari, Elliot Lawes, and Sally Boyd, September 2020.

21. The Mana Ake programme is another way the Government is working to meet the increased need for counselling services for children and young people. The programme is a significant step towards ensuring every primary and intermediate-aged child has access to mental health and wellbeing support services. Mana Ake kaimahi support schools and whānau when children are experiencing issues that affect their wellbeing including bullying.

Topic Two: The Mental and Physical Wellbeing of Muslims within the School System

22. IWCNZ wish to discuss the wellbeing of Muslim students in relation to the recent ERO report *Education for All Our Children: Embracing Diverse Cultures*. You are being briefed separately by ERO in preparation for your meeting with IWCNZ.
23. The ERO report found that:
- a. Whānau and learners are concerned about teachers' lack of cultural knowledge and awareness.
 - b. Many, but not all, learners from ethnic communities achieve well in education.
 - c. Learners from ethnic communities often do not feel they belong.
 - d. Learners from ethnic communities experience widespread racist bullying, which too often is not taken seriously by their school.
 - e. Whānau from ethnic communities face barriers to engaging with schools.
 - f. Many learners from ethnic communities go on to tertiary study, but pathways are confusing; and, for some, choices are unfairly constrained by teachers' biases.
24. The Ministry recognises that initiatives to support the wellbeing of students must respond to students' specific needs in a way that sustains their identities, languages and cultures.
25. In relation to the ERO findings you may like to discuss:
- a. Community Learning Hubs
 - b. Introduction to Ramadan Webinars.

Community Learning Hubs

26. The Community Learning Hubs are a way to address the ERO finding that whānau from ethnic communities face barriers to engaging with schools.
27. Community Learning Hubs provide workshops and information to support ethnic communities' engagement with the education system. Following the Christchurch pilot, the initiative has since been expanded to Auckland, Hamilton and Wellington.
28. Budget 2022 provided \$6.411m to maintain the Community Learning Hubs and fund an impact evaluation of the model. Implementation of Budget 2022 funding has included establishment of a Community Partnerships team that has undertaken a review of the 2022 Learning Community Hubs programme and started planning implementation for around 30 hubs in 2023.
29. The hubs have received positive feedback and fostered engaging discussions among attendees. Topics and concerns raised by parents have included meaningful education pathways, relationship and sexuality education, bullying and discrimination and supporting culture, language and identity for learners. Whānau appreciate opportunities to better understand the education system and guidance on how to best support their children on their educational journeys.

Introduction to Ramadan Webinars

30. This initiative is a way to address the ERO finding that whānau and learners are concerned about teachers' lack of cultural knowledge and awareness.
31. The Ministry's Refugee & Migrant team will be hosting opt-in webinars about Ramadan for school leaders and staff. The webinar will cover an introduction to Ramadan, the meaning, common practices, and guidelines for school communities on how to support students, learners, colleagues and whānau who are observing Ramadan.
32. Practicing Muslims will be observing the holy month of Ramadan from late-March to late-April this year. During Ramadan, observing Muslims will continue to work and attend school as per normal. It is likely that students and staff in school communities are observing Ramadan.

Topic Three: Educational and Professional Resources

33. The Ministry knows that educational and professional resources play an important role in fostering school environments that are inclusive and restorative and free from bullying.
34. The Ministry has developed a number of resources in partnership with Muslim communities over the last few years, including IWCNZ.
35. The resources are designed to build understanding, respect, acceptance, cultural awareness, and inclusion. Teacher supports have been developed alongside some of them to guide and support the complex classroom discussions that are prompted by the resources.
36. Along with many others, these resources help share the stories of the diverse peoples of Aotearoa New Zealand. For Muslim learners, they can see themselves, their families, and their futures in the resources. For non-Muslim learners, they will have the opportunity to learn more about Islamic cultures and identities through the stories being shared.
37. Our key resources include:
 - a. *All as One* (School Journal, Nov 2020)². The article provides a brief introduction to the Muslim community's values, as seen through the eyes of four people involved with the Kilbirnie and Hāwera mosques.
 - b. *Ā Mātou Kōrero – Our Stories*³ (including Aya and the Butterfly). This is a series of illustrated storybooks that have been developed to support, reflect, and celebrate Kiwi Muslim communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. They are also a way for non-Muslim Kiwis to "learn about others, so that they are no longer others."
 - c. *From Afghanistan to Aotearoa*⁴ (School Journal, June 2022). Abbas Nazari's family fled Afghanistan in 2001. After a harrowing six months, they were granted asylum in New Zealand. Although the family has thrived, adjusting to life in a new country has had many challenges. This graphic text tells his story.
 - d. We also provided some funding for *Our Stories from the Heart* project ICWNZ created which is available here: <https://iwcnz.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Stories.pdf>

Challenging Racism toolkit

² <https://instructionalseries.tki.org.nz/Instructional-Series/School-Journal/School-Journal-Level-3-November-2020/All-As-One>

³ <https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Principles/Cultural-diversity-principle/A-matou-korero-Our-stories>

⁴ <https://instructionalseries.tki.org.nz/Instructional-Series/School-Journal/School-Journal-Level-4-June-2022/From-Afghanistan-to-Aotearoa>

38. As part of ongoing work to provide curriculum resources that support schools and teachers to challenge racism and discrimination and embrace diversity, a Challenging Racism Toolkit for year 9 and 10 students has been piloted. As a result, more than 1200 Challenging Racism 19 kits have reached more than 38,000 learners as well as 342 Challenging Racism 21 kits that have reached over 10,000 learners.

Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

39. In addition to the topics that have been raised by IWCNZ, you may want to mention the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy (CYWS) which is the Government's framework that provides direction for promoting wellbeing and equitable outcomes for children and young people.
40. You may like to share with IWCNZ that the CYWS was reviewed in 2022. There was targeted engagement with stakeholders including children and young people. The review was also informed by the findings of recent reporting and insights gathered from a range of research reports released since the development of the Strategy in 2018.
41. One finding of the review was that much more needs to be done to support better outcomes for communities, and for priority populations in particular.
42. As a result of the review, the work has been refocused around four priority areas including addressing racism, discrimination and stigma; and enhancing the mental wellbeing of children and young people.

Next Steps

43. We will continue to work with IWCNZ and other community groups in our work to support the wellbeing of Muslim students through education.
44. IWCNZ have signalled in their policy paper a desire to continue the successful partnership they have with the Ministry, with a goal to both develop additional educational resources, and to support structural changes to meet societal aspirations for an inclusive Aotearoa New Zealand. The Ministry is supportive of continuing with this approach.