



6 April 2020

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Dear [REDACTED],

Thank you for your email of 7 February 2020 to the Ministry of Education requesting the following information:

- 1. All email correspondence regarding the issue of discrimination in schools, including Ministry of Education staff, the Minister for Education. In particular I am interested in correspondence between the Ministry and with the Office of Ethnic Communities about this topic.*
- 2. All memos, briefings, aide memoirs and other documents created with regard to this issue.*
- 3. I request both sets of information for the time period January 1 2018 until February 1 2020.*

On 18 February 2020 we wrote to you to clarify your request and revised the scope to:

- Correspondence & related documents between senior managers in the Ministry of Education to organisations involved with ethnic communities regarding discrimination in schools.*

Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

We have identified three documents in scope of your request.

The Ministry has heard, through our engagements with a range of learners, schools, communities and organisations, that issues around racism and discrimination continue to impact on the wellbeing and educational outcomes of ethnic communities.

We have sought to support the education system to promote social inclusion and respond to the identity, language and culture of all learners through a variety of ways.

A summary of some of our more recent engagements and how we are working to address issues around racism and discrimination in education is set out below.

### **Supporting social inclusion and responding to identity, language and culture**

In 2017, the Ministry participated in cross-agency workshops led by the State Services Commission (SSC) and attended by members of the Muslim community to understand the challenges faced by Muslim communities in New Zealand and how government can best support them.

Following the workshops, Aliya Danzeisen from the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand (IWC) provided the Ministry with a range of suggestions for education to address issues raised about bullying and harassment of Muslim youth, and an apparent lack of understanding of Muslim perspectives in the community. We are providing this document to you in **Annex One**. Contact details of Ministry staff have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons.

The Ministry of Education, alongside other education agencies, has worked to promote awareness of cultural diversity and reduce bullying, and provide resources and initiatives to schools and educators on inclusive and culturally responsive education, including the following:

- We have worked with NZSTA to strengthen accountability for Boards of Trustees to meet the needs of their communities,
- We have worked with the Teaching Council of New Zealand to approve a new Code of Professional Responsibility<sup>1</sup> that respects the diversity of the heritage, language, identity and culture of all learners, and
- Resources and guidelines to support teachers and educators are available on Te Kete Ipurangi (the Ministry's education resource portal) e.g. Inclusive Education section<sup>2</sup>, Defining Diversity resource for schools.<sup>3</sup>

## Education Conversation | Kōrero Mātauranga

Since May 2018, in partnership with the Office of Ethnic Communities (OEC), we have undertaken a series of nation-wide conversations (Kōrero Mātauranga) to bring in the voices of parents and whānau, iwi and community leaders, young people, Pacific peoples, and disabled people, with a particular focus on the voices seldom heard in shaping education decision-making. This included holding five engagements with ethnic communities in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, together with the Office of Ethnic Communities, to hear from young people and families from ethnic communities about their experiences in education.

We are providing you with the *Briefing Note: Summary of themes from five ethnic communities' engagement meetings* which summarises the themes that emerged from these engagements, one of those themes being that bias and racism exist. This is attached as **Annex Two**. Contact details of Ministry staff have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons.

Summaries on the engagements with ethnic communities in 2018 are available on the Kōrero Mātauranga page here: <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/education-conversation/what-you-told-us/the-voices-of-ethnic-communities/>

The planning of these workshops did not have a discrimination focus and therefore the correspondence with OEC prior to these workshops is out of scope of this request.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://teachingcouncil.nz/sites/default/files/Code%20Guidance%20FINAL.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.inclusive.tki.org.nz/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Principles/Cultural-diversity/Resources/Defining-Diversity-activities>

## Response to the Terrorist attack on Christchurch Mosques

Immediately following the tragic events of 15 March 2019, the Ministry began work to support the safety, security and wellbeing of schools, early learning services, students and families affected by the Terror Attacks. Regional offices also worked closely with social service agencies to respond to issues with student behaviour and extremist views.

In May 2019, the Auckland and Christchurch representatives of non-profit organisation whoishussain.org presented Christchurch Ministry of Education staff with an award in appreciation of the work we are doing to support communities.

In Wellington, Ministry staff visited the local mosques to discuss what communities needed from the Ministry. As a result of these discussions, the Ministry provided seed funding for the establishment of an Arabic study centre in Porirua where qualified teachers from Syria and Jordan provide classes in Arabic three times a week for 45 children from 13 schools. Students' attendance at school is positive and parents report feeling more comfortable engaging with their children's school and education.

A pilot programme<sup>4</sup> to provide Bilingual Support Workers (BSW) to work with migrant students has received positive feedback from participating schools (this initiative is in its third year). The BSWs work with groups of migrant students with the same first language supporting them to access the New Zealand curriculum. In addition, they provide emotional and social support and liaison work between the schools and families and communities, where appropriate. One senior school manager stated the following:

*Our BSW has opened our eyes to the needs of our migrant students in a way that we'd not seen before. She has been so enlightening. Our BSW has brought our migrant parents into our school, some for the very first time which has been of great benefit to both teachers and students.*

The Prime Minister met with the head of the IWC. Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) arranged for agencies to meet with the IWC to discuss what we can do to address issues of racism and bias in regards to Muslims in New Zealand.

In January 2020, Ministry officials met with Aliya Danzeisen from the IWC to understand their education priorities and begin a process of engagement. In education, the IWC stressed the importance of challenging negative stereotypes of Muslim learners by celebrating the resilience and diversity of the Muslim community and providing educators with resources to support culturally responsive practice. Following the initial meeting, we have:

- a) begun a stocktake of resources to understand what is currently available to support cultural responsiveness and inclusion in education;
- b) published a sample of relevant curriculum resources on the Ministry's Curriculum Website in the lead up to March 15<sup>5</sup>; and
- c) published articles in the Education Gazette from interviews with educators from the IWC that highlight the support from the community following the 15 March terror attacks and the importance of educators to continually improve their culturally responsive practice<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> This programme is funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and delivered by the Ministry of Education

<sup>5</sup> <http://nzcurriculum.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-resources/National-events-and-the-NZC/Christchurch-terror-attacks>

<sup>6</sup> <https://gazette.education.govt.nz/articles/an-outpouring-of-support-and-solidarity/>  
<https://gazette.education.govt.nz/articles/becoming-culturally-responsive/>

We are currently looking at potential opportunities in education to form a wider programme of work with the IWC.

## Analysis of experiences of discrimination in schools

In June 2019 we published a report on [educationcounts.govt.nz](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz) *He Whakaaro: What do we know about discrimination in schools?* This report presents a summary of current knowledge regarding discrimination of students in New Zealand schools and synthesises what we know about discrimination experienced by children and young people and, where possible, attempts to quantify the number of students affected by discrimination.

We are providing you with the document *Briefing Note: New He Whakaaro – Education Insights paper: ‘What do we know about discrimination in schools?’* which introduces the above mentioned report. This is attached as **Annex Three**. Contact details of Ministry staff have been withheld under section 9(2)(a) to protect the privacy of natural persons.

We are withholding the report in Annex 1 of the Briefing Note (the *He Whakaaro* report referenced above) under section 18(d) of the Act as this is publically available, you can find it on the Education Counts website here: <https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/he-whakaaro/he-whakaaro-what-do-we-know-about-discrimination-in-schools>

## Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

In August 2019, the Government launched New Zealand’s first Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy<sup>7</sup>. A priority focus of the strategy is that children and young people live free from racism and discrimination. Work towards this is being co-led by the Ministries of Education and Justice. The Ministry of Education is in the process of identifying initial opportunities across education to address racism and discrimination.

The Government’s vision of shaping a stronger education system with New Zealanders is also in line with this strategy. You can read more about the objectives and the actions we are taking to achieve them here:

<https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/shaping-a-stronger-education-system-for-all/>

Also in line with this strategy we developed the *Education (Pastoral Care of Domestic Tertiary Students) Code of Practice*<sup>8</sup>, which came into force on 1 January 2020. In particular, Outcome 5: Inclusive learning and Section 15 of the code reflect the Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy vision of Accepted, Respected and Connected – children and young people live free from racism and discrimination.

Please note, the Ministry now proactively publishes OIA responses on our website. As such, we may publish this response on our website after five working days. Your name and contact details will be removed.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2019-08/strategy-on-a-page-child-youth-wellbeing-Sept-2019.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.education.govt.nz/further-education/information-for-students/code-of-practice-pastoral-care-domestic-tertiary>

Thank you again for your email. If you have further questions please feel free to contact our media team in the first instance at [media.team@education.govt.nz](mailto:media.team@education.govt.nz). If you are unsatisfied with my response, you have the right to ask an Ombudsman to review it. You can do this by writing to [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz) or Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Schöllmann', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dr Andrea Schöllmann  
**Deputy Secretary**  
**Education System Policy**