

Muslim Community Reference Group Hui 2

Record and summary of meeting

Date and time of meeting	3 September 2019
Location	Ngā Hau e Wha National Marae, Christchurch
Attendees	Muslim Community Reference Group members Chris Mene, Facilitator Commissioners Sir William Young and Jacqui Caine Benesia Smith, Executive Director Secretariat staff
Apologies	Ikhlaq Kashkari, Shagaf Khan

The purpose of these notes is to provide a record of the meeting, to provide background for those who were unable to attend and to capture actions arising from the hui.

Pōwhiri (Welcome) and Whakawhanaungatanga (introductions)

The mana whenua (host people) welcomed the manuhiri (visitors) into the Whare Iti (small meeting house) – Te Aritaua Pitama at 9.00am. Alamein Connell was the kaikaranga (caller) for the mana whenua (host people) and Mere Balsom kaikaranga (caller) for the manuhiri (visitors).

Henare Edwards spoke for the mana whenua (host people) and Tyrone Smith for the manuhiri (visitors). We then greeted Henare and Alamein with hongī (press noses) and harirū (handshakes). We then all moved into morning tea in the whare kai (food hall). Sheikh Mohamed Amir performed a du'a to bless the kai. We then moved back to Te Aritaua Pitama.

Sir William introduced the day. He congratulated those who had recently completed Hajj and welcomed the new members of the group.

Whakawhanaungatanga were delivered by three reference group members and one secretariat staff member.

Jacqui Caine then described how the Terms of Reference under which the Royal Commission of Inquiry operates have been set by the Government; and the Inquiries Act 2013. She also spoke of looking forward to our korero (conversation) together.

Session 2: Royal Commission presentations

Benesia Smith then presented about the Royal Commission covering:

- administrative matters for the Muslim Community Reference Group;
- the key elements of the Royal Commission's Terms of Reference highlighting the four key inquiry focus areas, the findings focus areas and the nature of the recommendations that will need to be set out in the Royal Commission's report to the Governor-General; and

- the Royal Commission's approach to information and evidence gathering and research.

A number of questions were asked and answered by Benesia covering:

- the approach to meeting/interviewing people or organisations by the Royal Commission
- the deadline for the Royal Commission to deliver its report to the Governor-General
- auditing/quality of the Royal Commission's investigative/inquiry work
- what was the Royal Commission's approach to recommendations in the report
- the need for a public conversation about countering terrorism in New Zealand
- how agencies need to be held to account for their actions or omissions
- how the Royal Commission could further advertise its work to gain wider engagement.

The Royal Commission presented its draft thoughts on its proposed approach to Muslim Communities Engagement, how it will ensure the insights of Muslim communities are threaded through the Royal Commission's deliberations, and cascade advice back to Muslim communities and individuals. The presentation also discussed the increasing engagement with communities over the timeframe of the inquiry.

Sessions 3 and 4: Small group facilitated discussions

Facilitated discussions then began, in small groups at tables. Groups were self-selected by the Muslim Community Reference Group members, and a Royal Commission staff member then joined each table as a facilitator. The topics discussed before lunch included feedback, responses and questions about the Royal Commission process.

Key points were:

- concerns over State sector agencies being held accountable for inaction
- of the level of competence and bias of State sector agencies
- the level of accountability of Muslim Community Reference Group members to communities
- strong desire not to appropriate voices of affected families and survivors
- opportunity for guiding principles to reflect accountabilities back to communities
- opportunity to change the future by being part of this process
- trust has increased with Royal Commission
- concerns over Royal Commission reporting timeframe to the Governor-General being too tight
- communications from the Royal Commission needs to be more succinct
- the reference group would like to help the Royal Commission to address the cultural and language barriers which may impact Royal Commission engagement
- there is a need to address concerns over personal safety due to being members of the group

- there is a need to have official correspondence from the Royal Commission to share with communities.

Feedback, responses and questions about the Royal Commission's proposed approach to engaging with Muslim Communities

Key points were:

- call for engagement needs to be simple and clear
- make engagement more informal
- concern over level of cultural competency at Royal Commission
- requests for material to share with communities – e.g. summary sheets on Royal Commission. Also, material to share on WhatsApp
- suggestions to work directly with Reference group members to access communities and networks. Requests to have a greater and more direct role in community engagement
- suggestions for the Royal Commission to work with schools, international students, young people
- engagement with affected families and survivors of the attack – suggestions of working with FIANZ list, MAC, Imam from Linwood Islamic Centre
- request for mental health support at Hui
- Reference Group members don't want to be "used". Being in the reference group is a form of ibadah (worship) and their time is charity
- in person presentations work well.

Midday prayer and lunch

We had a break for Zuhr Salat (midday prayer) and moved into the whare kai (food hall) for lunch.

Role of the Muslim Community Reference Group

Key points were:

- offers to create more individualised relationships with Reference Group members to aid the Royal Commission's engagement with communities
- care should be taken to engage with less powerful and younger communities
- work with Imams
- Muslim Community Reference Group could help connect the Royal Commission with mosques
- conduct hui connecting with particular groups.

Guiding Principles for the Reference Group

Key points were:

- need to have something we can share on what the hui are about
- it's important to add our cultural concepts and words into the Terms of Reference (words noted on sheets, including Niyah – what is our intention, Aml – How we do our work, Iman – our faith, Hikmah – wisdom, and Sadaqah – charity)
- “do no harm” should be in the principles
- a lot of Muslim principles are already included.

Any other points to be included in the Terms of Reference for the Muslim Community Reference Group

Key points were:

- concerns over privacy of information shared
- Muslim Community Reference Group would like to assist Royal Commission to identify groups and provide cultural competence to engage
- ‘no decision-making powers’ means that the Reference Group will not make decisions on behalf of, or instruct, the Royal Commission.
- the Muslim Community Reference Group is the ‘conscience and critical friend’ of the Royal Commission.

The following interrelated questions were also asked:

What do you and your communities want the Royal Commission to know?

Key points were:

- suggestions on who to meet with or interview (rifle club, neighbours, landlord of the accused)
- structural racism in State sector agencies needs to be addressed
- ‘We need one more eye, on the right stuff’
- requests for logistical support from Royal Commission to support the Muslim Community Reference Group to organise engagements
- interpreters are needed for engagements
- we have been reporting security issues and racism for a long time to State sector agencies but to no avail
- concerns about potential for harassment of reference group members from State sector agencies
- Muslim Community Reference Group can provide advice and support to the Royal Commission.

How would you like to share this?

- give confidence about privacy and safety

- face to face meetings. Don't rely on the written word
- easy to read materials.

What could enable your sharing?

- State sector agencies need regular and up to date cultural awareness training
- State sector agencies should share information better
- an idea is for the Royal Commission or Muslim Community Reference Group members to conduct community workshops around the country
- the Royal Commission should consider conducting confidential meetings. Will need translated material – Urdu and Arabic, and in other languages of the communities.
- support people and scribes will be required.

What could inhibit your sharing?

- communication and culture
- fear – within community, of surveillance
- community politics
- concerns engagement is a waste of time.

Next hui

The location of future hui was discussed, with options of Christchurch or Wellington proposed (and why Hamilton and Auckland were discounted as options). The Reference Group agreed for all subsequent meetings to be held in Christchurch.

The meeting formally closed at 3.30pm.