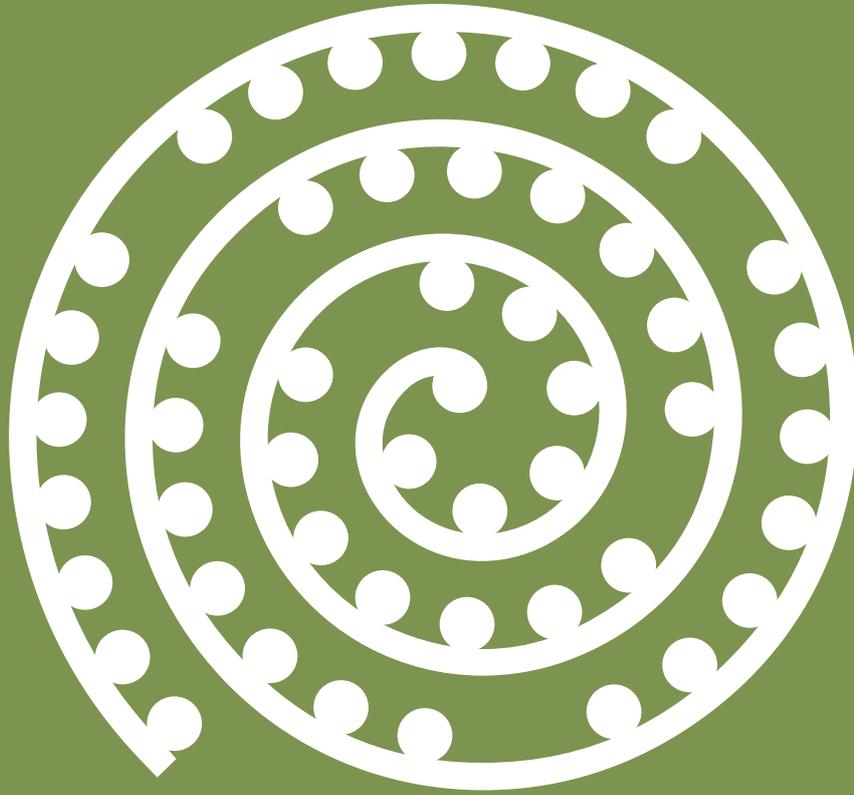

Muslim Community Reference Group: Lessons for the future



ROYAL COMMISSION OF INQUIRY
INTO THE TERRORIST ATTACK
ON CHRISTCHURCH MOSQUES
ON 15 MARCH 2019

TE KŌMIHANA UIUI A TE WHAKAĒKE
KAIWHAKATUMA I NGĀ WHARE
KŌRANA O ŌTAUTAHI I TE
15 O POUTŪ-TE-RANGI 2019

26 November 2020



Our symbol is inspired by an enduring and perpetual Aotearoa New Zealand icon, the koru.

The unfurling fern frond is representative of peace, tranquillity, growth, positive change and awakening. This dimension of peace is also inherent in the meaning of the living faith of Islam. We draw parallels between this taonga and the journey that New Zealanders have ahead of them to become a safer and more inclusive society.

The koru design with seven groups of seven unfurling fronds also acknowledges that 15 March 2019 was, according to the Islamic lunar calendar, 7 Rajab 1440, that is, the 7th day of the 7th Islamic month.

Foreword from Commissioners



Assalaam alaikum and tēnā koutou.

The Government made the decision to establish this Royal Commission to investigate the terrorist attack at the Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019 – what had happened, and why, and what should be done to reduce the risk of future attacks.

At the heart of our inquiry were the whānau of the 51 shuhada of the 15 March 2019 terrorist attack and the survivors and witnesses and their whānau. Connecting with Muslim communities was an expectation in our Terms of Reference and also the right thing to do.

We established a Muslim Community Reference Group to provide advice to us, and ensure that we had access to a diverse range of opinions from Muslim communities and that people within those communities had access to us. Membership was diverse with women and men, youth, adults and elders and different religious perspectives. Around a third of the members live in Christchurch, with the remaining members coming from across Aotearoa New Zealand. We held nine hui over the course of the inquiry with our Muslim Community Reference Group. We also attended hui with Muslim communities that had been arranged by members of the reference group. Each engagement was well attended and vigorous and confidential discussions ensued.

We give special thanks to the members of our Muslim Community Reference Group for their commitment in attending each hui, actively listening, asking hard questions, robustly discussing and developing effective working relationships with each other, and with us and our secretariat. Their opinions and ideas were gratefully received and were invaluable to developing our thinking.

This publication brings together the insights we have collated from members and also from our review of the processes we developed regarding the Muslim Community Reference Group. We made a few mis-steps, which we do not shy away from, but we learned fast and adapted along the way. We offer these insights so that organisations that may interact with Muslim communities can learn from what went right and what could have been better.



Hon Sir William Young KNZM
Chair



Jacqui Caine
Member



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Chapter 1: Background

- 1 On 15 March 2019, Masjid an-Nur and the Linwood Islamic Centre in Christchurch were attacked by a right-wing terrorist while worshippers were at prayer. Fifty-one people were killed and another 40 people suffered gunshot injuries.
- 2 We use the description “affected whānau, survivors and witnesses” to refer to whānau of the 51 shuhada, and the survivors and witnesses of the terrorist attack and their whānau.
- 3 On 26 March 2020 an Australian man pleaded guilty to 51 counts of murder, 40 counts of attempted murder and one terrorism charge relating to the attacks. On 27 August 2020, he was sentenced to life imprisonment without parole – the first time in New Zealand history this sentence has been imposed. He was later designated as a terrorist entity under section 22 of the Terrorism Suppression Act 2002.

Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Masjidain on 15 March 2019

- 4 Following the terrorist attack, the Government announced that a Royal Commission of Inquiry would consider the events leading up to the terrorist attack. The Royal Commission was established by Order in Council on 8 April 2019. It appointed the Honourable Sir William Young as Chair and set out our Terms of Reference. Jacqui Caine was appointed as a Member of the Royal Commission on 22 May 2019.
- 5 Our Terms of Reference directed us to inquire into what Public sector agencies knew about the individual’s activities before the terrorist attack, what (if anything) they did with that information, what they could have done to prevent the terrorist attack and what they should do to prevent such terrorist attacks in the future.
- 6 As well, we were asked to investigate the individual’s activities before 15 March 2019, including his time in Australia, his arrival and residence in New Zealand, his travel within New Zealand and internationally, how he obtained a firearms licence, weapons and ammunition, his use of social media and other online media and his connections with people, whether in New Zealand or internationally.

7 Our Terms of Reference also directed us to make findings on:

- 4(a) whether there was any information provided or otherwise available to relevant [Public] sector agencies that could or should have alerted them to the terrorist attack and, if such information was provided or otherwise available, how the agencies responded to any such information, and whether that response was appropriate; and
- (b) the interaction amongst relevant [Public] sector agencies, including whether there was any failure in information sharing between the relevant agencies; and
- (c) whether relevant [Public] sector agencies failed to anticipate or plan for the terrorist attack due to an inappropriate concentration of counter-terrorism resources or priorities on other terrorism threats; and
- (d) whether any relevant [Public] sector agency failed to meet required standards or was otherwise at fault, whether in whole or in part; and
- (e) any other matters relevant to the purpose of the inquiry, to the extent necessary to provide a complete report.

8 And we were directed to make recommendations on:

- 5 (1)(a) whether there is any improvement to information gathering, sharing, and analysis practices by relevant [Public] sector agencies that could have prevented the terrorist attack, or could prevent such terrorist attacks in the future, including, but not limited to, the timeliness, adequacy, effectiveness, and co-ordination of information disclosure, sharing, or matching between relevant [Public] sector agencies; and
- (b) what changes, if any, should be implemented to improve relevant [Public] sector agency systems, or operational practices, to ensure the prevention of such terrorist attacks in the future; and
- (c) any other matters relevant to the above, to the extent necessary to provide a complete report.

9 In doing this, our Terms of Reference also specified:

- 1(4) The Government expects the inquiry to connect with New Zealand's Muslim communities on these matters.

Limits to the inquiry

10 Our Terms of Reference set out matters that were not allowed to inquire into:

- 6 (2) The inquiry must not inquire into the guilt or innocence of any individual who has been, or may be, charged with offences in relation to the terrorist attack.
- 6 (3) The inquiry must not inquire into, determine, or report in an interim or final way on, any of the following matters:
 - (a) amendments to firearms legislation (because the Government is already pursuing this issue);
 - (b) activity by entities or organisations outside the [Public] sector, such as media platforms; and
 - (c) how relevant [Public] sector agencies responded to the terrorist attack on 15 March 2019 once it had begun.

Inquiry timeline

- 11 The Royal Commission started on 10 April 2019 and began receiving evidence from 13 May 2019. Our inquiry had several overlapping phases, from establishment to engagement with communities, information and evidence gathering, analysis and deliberations, holding evidential interviews and report development and presentation.
- 12 Initially we had to present our report to the Governor-General by 10 December 2019, but this was subsequently extended on two occasions, resulting in a final reporting date of 26 November 2020. These extensions were necessary because of the sheer volume of material we had to assess and the disruption resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 13 The Governor-General will present the report to the Minister of Internal Affairs. It is then for the Minister to present the report to Parliament as soon as practicable. Our report has been written on the basis that it can be publicly released in full.

Chapter 2: Operation of the Muslim Community Reference Group

Establishment of the Muslim Community Reference Group

1 On 13 May 2019, we issued our first Minute setting out the procedures that the Royal Commission had determined it would use for gathering information and evidence and the reasons for adopting this procedure.¹

2 The Minute noted the establishment of a Muslim Community Reference Group:

Work is underway towards the establishment of a Muslim Community Reference Group to ensure the Royal Commission process builds in appropriate and accessible opportunities for Muslim communities to take part in the inquiry.

The Muslim Community Reference Group will be advisory only, and will not have decisionmaking powers. The need to ensure that the Group is of manageable size may mean that it may not be fully representative. The Royal Commission will determine membership. The Terms of Reference for the Muslim Community Reference Group will be published on the Royal Commission's website.

Determining membership

3 A date for the first hui was set for late July 2019. This was to enable time for us to develop our approach and have initial discussions with the Christchurch Muslim Liaison Group, the Imams of the Christchurch masjidain (Masjid an-Nur and the Linwood Islamic Centre) and some representative organisations. Initial discussions occurred in May and early June 2019. Nominations for Muslim Community Reference Group membership were received from Muslim individuals and organisations from May to August 2019.

4 The initial discussions helped focus our thinking to ensure that:

- a) female voices were to be acknowledged and respected and provided equal representation;
- b) religious diversity within Islam was to be acknowledged and respected;
- c) around a third of the membership of the Muslim Community Reference Group would be from the Christchurch Muslim community, with the remaining members from across Aotearoa New Zealand; and
- d) the Muslim Community Reference Group would not speak on behalf of affected whānau, survivors and witnesses. Instead, the Royal Commission would be open to meeting with all affected whānau, survivors and witnesses on their terms.

- 5 We developed a set of criteria to guide decision-making as to possible membership of the Muslim Community Reference Group. The criteria we agreed to were diversity of:
 - a) gender, with a desire to achieve a 50/50 gender balance, if possible;
 - b) ethnicity, with a desire to ensure a diverse range of ethnicities were represented;
 - c) age, with a desire to ensure that the Muslim Community Reference Group included a range of ages (including youth, adults and elders);
 - d) religious perspective, with a desire to ensure different religious perspectives were represented;
 - e) potential to contribute to the inquiry, including connections with organisations; and
 - f) geographical location, with a desire to ensure a geographical spread of Muslim Community Reference Group members, while acknowledging that the terrorist attack took place in Christchurch.
- 6 Based on nominations from representative groups and individuals and our own research, we settled on a long-list of potential members. All were contacted to assess their willingness to participate.
- 7 Some of those we contacted did not wish to be involved. Others were unsure and decided to attend the first hui before making a final decision. One issue that arose was whether we should publish members' names before the first hui. Some members did not want their name published before the first hui. This was for a number of reasons, including safety concerns. As there was no consensus on publishing members' names, we decided not to publish their names until after the first hui. This contributed to a perception that our procedures were too closed and lacked transparency. We come back to this later.

Venue arrangements

- 8 Given the nature of the issues that were being considered by the Muslim Community Reference Group and members being directly or indirectly affected by the terrorist attack, we knew that it was imperative to build a culturally, spiritually and emotionally safe environment.
- 9 Secretariat staff arranged the hui venue. For the initial hui we wanted a venue that would be private and enable space for:
 - a) separate hui, prayer and kai (dining) rooms;
 - b) breakout sessions both inside and outside of the hui room; and
 - c) reflection to occur if required.

- 10 A masjid was considered. However, due to its regular use for prayers and community meetings, and our desire to use a space that would only be used for our meeting and that would not be interrupted and protocols relating to gender separation, we decided to look at other options. A marae was determined to be the best space. After discussions with Te Maire Tau (Upoko for Ngāi Tūāhuriri) and finding out that Tuahiwi Marae was not available for our proposed first hui, we decided to use Ngā Hau e Whā National Marae in east Christchurch. It seemed symbolic that the name of the marae translates to “the four winds”, meaning a meeting place for all peoples from everywhere.
- 11 At the first hui it was discussed and agreed with members that all hui would be held in Christchurch. All hui except one, due to a scheduling conflict, were held at Ngā Hau e Whā National Marae.

Supporting members to attend

- 12 We did not want travel to be a barrier to attendance at meetings. Secretariat staff made all travel and accommodation arrangements to enable members to attend each hui. Generally, members arrived the night before the hui and departed in the evening after the hui had finished. Once travel arrangements had been made, secretariat staff would contact each Muslim Community Reference Group member a few days prior to the hui to ensure that their travel arrangements were still suitable and see if there were any issues or concerns the member would like to discuss prior to the hui.
- 13 Many Muslim Community Reference Group members needed to take a day off from paid employment to attend each hui. Where members faced difficulty in getting permission from their employer to take the time off, the Royal Commission’s Executive Director provided a letter for the member to provide to their employer explaining the importance of the Muslim Community Reference Group, the valuable contribution that members make to the group and expressing support for their attendance at the hui.

Independent facilitation

- 14 To ensure that our engagement with the Muslim Community Reference Group was robust, we had to make sure that all members were given opportunities to voice their views at each hui. We decided against having a secretariat staff member as the facilitator for our hui because this would have had the potential to compromise the impartiality of the process and the robustness of our engagement. We therefore decided to engage an independent facilitator.
- 15 We contacted several potential independent facilitators with a range of backgrounds and experience. While some of those we contacted had more relevant cultural experience, we settled on an independent facilitator with strong experience in dealing with complex matters who also had cultural competence, although not directly related to Muslim communities.

- 16 The independent facilitator was involved in the design of each hui, working with secretariat staff. They also briefed the Executive Director and Commissioners on the design of each hui.
- 17 Overall, having an independent facilitator was well received by the Muslim Community Reference Group, but we learned some lessons as set out in chapter 3.

Engagement approach

- 18 We took into account the *International Association for Public Participation IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum*² in the development of the design of the Muslim Community Reference Group. The desire was to use a procedure that would include elements of the “involve” and “collaborate” levels of engagement. The approach would also complement the broader community engagement we designed concurrently.
- 19 For example, the Muslim Community Reference Group’s Terms of Reference³ were developed collaboratively with the reference group members over several meetings. The Terms of Reference were finalised by the Muslim Community Reference Group.

Agenda development, note taking

- 20 The agenda for each hui was informed by what stage we had reached in the inquiry process and any evidence or thinking that we needed to test with Muslim communities. We generally provided the agenda to Muslim Community Reference Group members four or five working days in advance of each hui but did not always meet this target.
- 21 The agenda were developed carefully with a balance of presentations from the Commissioners, question and answer sessions and workshops for members to share their views. We always did our best to provide enough time to be flexible with the agenda. We were also able to make changes on the day to allow conversations to develop as required.
- 22 A secretariat staff member was assigned to take notes at each hui. After the hui the draft notes were provided to Muslim Community Reference Group members for their consideration and feedback. Agreement was sought from our Muslim Community Reference Group at the following hui as to whether the notes were an accurate reflection of the hui.
- 23 The meeting notes were not treated as formal minutes. We sought to provide a record of what was discussed at hui that would be made available on our website, without compromising free and frank discussion among members of the Muslim Community Reference Group and between the reference group and the Royal Commission. The nature and extent of the notes was discussed and agreed.

² International Association for Public Participation Australasia Quality assurance standard for community and stakeholder engagement (2015) https://iap2.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/IAP2_Quality_Assurance_Standard_2015.pdf; International Association for Public Participation IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (2020).

³ Terms of Reference for the Muslim Community Reference Group, to support the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019 <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/muslim-community-reference-group/terms-of-reference/>.

- 24 As agreed in the Muslim Community Reference Group's Terms of Reference, we treated information shared by members of the reference group as confidential. Our sharing of information with the Muslim Community Reference Group was with an expectation of confidence, unless otherwise agreed.

Intent to ensure that all members were working from a similar knowledge base

- 25 We were mindful that Muslim Community Reference Group members were coming into the process with varying degrees of knowledge on government processes and concepts and relevant subject matter knowledge. We wanted to ensure that members had equal opportunities to engage on the content we were discussing and seeking their views on. To support this, we held several sessions during our hui on the concepts that were relevant to our inquiry, including providing an overview of New Zealand's national security system and the firearms licensing process.
- 26 A key contribution that many members of the Muslim Community Reference Group made to the Royal Commission outside of attending hui was to undertake engagement within their own communities. We offered community engagement facilitation training to those members who wanted to participate.

Chapter 3: Insights

What worked well

A diverse group

- 1 A number of the members of the Muslim Community Reference Group had not met each other before the first hui. The first hui included a whakawhanaungatanga (the process of establishing relationships and making connections) session where people could introduce themselves. Many members commented that they appreciated having people with diverse perspectives and backgrounds on the Muslim Community Reference Group, including having youth and female representation. A number of members felt this allowed them to learn about each other and the common and different issues they deal with. Members expressed that the different views presented challenges at times, with a balance needing to be struck between having empathy and listening to others' opinions and expressing one's own opinion.
- 2 We were told that networks that did not previously exist had been established between members and communities as a result of being on the Muslim Community Reference Group.

Effective facilitation

- 3 Effective facilitation was important to ensure that all members were given an opportunity to voice their views and work through ideas. Many members felt having an independent facilitator was important and that the facilitation of the Muslim Community Reference Group hui was effective in this respect. We were told by some members that if the engagement period had been shorter, for example a one-off meeting, it would have probably been beneficial to have a facilitator who was familiar with Muslim communities. Many members felt the tough situations and disputes that arose from time to time were well managed. Some members considered that the facilitation helped break down barriers to enable members to engage with their peers in the Muslim Community Reference Group.

Changing formats to bring out different voices and perspectives

- 4 In addition to effective facilitation, we also sought to find other ways to ensure that everyone felt comfortable and empowered to voice their views. This meant that sometimes different formats were needed during our hui. For example, one format involved breaking into smaller groups supported by a secretariat staff member who engaged in the conversation but also acted as a facilitator and note taker. This allowed secretariat staff to hear Muslim Community Reference Group members' views directly and record their comments to be used in the report. A number of members expressed positive feedback about this hui format.

Preparation, listening and following up are all important

- 5 We prepared extensively for each hui and structured the agenda to ensure that we could provide an update on the inquiry, answer questions that might arise, provide for different discussion formats to allow members to share their views and be flexible. Several members noted in their feedback to us that they considered Muslim Community Reference Group hui to be well organised and prepared.
- 6 Following each hui, we provided draft hui notes to members for feedback to ensure that we had accurately recorded and reflected their views, and what had happened at the hui. A number of members appreciated this follow-up and felt that it showed that we were listening and valued what members had to say. This contrasted with some of their previous experiences of engagement, where there was no further follow-up once a meeting had ended. This had left them with no real indication as to where their feedback went and if their effort and time had had impact.

Take care to build a safe environment

- 7 We took steps to ensure that we met and supported the cultural and spiritual needs of members and took care to approach the hui process with sensitivity. This included ensuring that a prayer space was available, allocating prayer time within the hui agenda and opening and closing hui with a du'a (prayer). Members acknowledged our commitment to supporting cultural and spiritual norms, as well as our openness to learning about Islamic culture. One member did comment though that having a gender-specific session may have generated more open discussion amongst the women. Feedback was provided from a few members that having psychosocial support available onsite would have been appropriate at times.

Collaborating on the development of the Terms of Reference built trust and understanding

- 8 Taking the time to collaborate on developing the Terms of Reference to adequately reflect the process and the intent of both members and the Royal Commission was important. It helped set the foundation for discussions, and for both us and members to discuss and clarify roles and responsibilities. The Terms of Reference recorded that the members of the Muslim Community Reference Group came with good intentions (Niyah) to contribute to the work of the Royal Commission and with the hope that the work would be part of creating a better future for New Zealand. Members noted they appreciated our willingness to build respect and trust with members.

Be empathetic and seek to build long term relationships

- 9 Empathy, respect and working to build trust are key principles to approaching any engagement and in the case of the Muslim Community Reference Group these were particularly important. Members noted they appreciated our empathy and respect for members during engagements and hui.
- 10 We also sought to build trust by being open and seeking to answer questions from members as well as the questions they passed on from other people in their community. While we could not share everything, we shared what we could and answered questions. We were also upfront when we could not respond and why that was the case.
- 11 We gave members advance notice of any publicity such as media releases so they would be prepared if they received any questions from other people in their communities or approaches from the media. Members spoke positively about this approach and what they saw as the Commissioners and secretariat staff making genuine effort to gain the trust of the community.

Getting the fundamentals right can make a big difference for participants

- 12 We also took steps to ensure that we supported and facilitated members' participation. This included booking members' travel and accommodation and writing letters to employers advocating for members' attendance at full-day hui. In their feedback to us, several members noted that they appreciated having secretariat staff organise their travel and accommodation for hui attendance.
- 13 We also carefully managed any real or perceived conflicts of interest when they arose, ensuring we took a transparent approach with the group.

Understanding and meeting the needs of members

- 14 Members' needs must be carefully considered in the planning, design and implementation of any engagement. What these needs are may depend on the participants and the issues that are the focus of the engagement. For example, the experiences, backgrounds and levels of knowledge of particular participants may mean they need particular support. This includes understanding and considering how to address supportively differing levels of proficiency in English and of knowledge about relevant issues, systems and subject areas. Recognition of trauma and the need for social support is also important.
- 15 As part of our engagement process, we delivered information sessions on the key issues and systems we were going to discuss, to ensure that all members had a base level of knowledge to confidently engage with us and our work.

- 16 Another aspect that needs to be considered and planned for as part of any engagement process may be psychosocial support. This can be helpful when discussing traumatic or difficult topics, particularly if people involved in the engagement have been victims of crimes or other hurtful incidents. As the Muslim Community Reference Group included affected whānau of the 51 shuhada and survivors of the terrorist attack, as well as members from a traumatised community, participants felt that we could have taken more steps to ensure that members had access to culturally responsive psychosocial support to ensure that the process minimised any potential re-traumatisation.

Muslim Community Reference Group members would be willing to be involved in something similar

- 17 The majority of members said that they would be willing to be involved in similar engagement initiatives or groups in future if they were asked to and felt that they could be helpful and make a meaningful contribution. They appreciated that the Muslim Community Reference Group gave them and their communities a platform and a voice.
- 18 Some members noted that they would be willing to engage in similar processes provided their voices were taken seriously. Many members were grateful to be part of the Muslim Community Reference Group to contribute to their communities and New Zealand. One member said that they consider the Muslim Community Reference Group process has set the standard for what a good process looks like.

Areas for improvement

Diverse representation and views are necessary but challenging to identify and depends on the context

- 19 We sought to ensure diverse representation on the Muslim Community Reference Group, to reflect the diversity of the Muslim communities in New Zealand. This received positive feedback from members. At the same time, a number of members felt that the group could have been more diverse to ensure that even more Muslim communities were represented, for example ensuring that the Muslim Community Reference Group included the views of recent migrants.
- 20 We made a concerted effort to balance Christchurch representation with representation from other areas around Aotearoa New Zealand. While Christchurch Muslim communities were directly impacted by the terrorist attack, the issues we traversed affected other Muslim communities around New Zealand. Nonetheless, some members felt that more representation from Christchurch would have been better.

- 21 When we set out on the process to establish the Muslim Community Reference Group, it quickly became apparent to us that there was limited guidance for government agencies on engaging with Muslim communities in New Zealand, especially outside the higher profile representative organisations that generally speak for large communities of interest. It was a challenge to identify potential members and ensure diverse representation, especially from more marginalised Muslim communities.

The process of forming can be a challenge

- 22 A number of Muslim Community Reference Group members felt that the initial establishment and forming of the reference group was a challenge.
- 23 Some individuals took some time to determine whether they wished to be on the reference group and wanted several discussions to understand what was involved. These initial discussions took longer than we had planned for. It also meant that we needed to keep informed of the names of those who had agreed to participate to ensure that our criteria continued to guide the final make-up of the reference group. We reassessed the composition of the reference group membership on at least three occasions in the four weeks prior to the first hui.
- 24 Members were not told prior to the first hui who the other members were. We explained why this was so but recognise that it created uncertainty and stress for most members ahead of the first hui. We should have provided more clarity to those who were invited to be part of the reference group about what to expect.
- 25 Our first hui was challenging for some members due to the diversity of the group, experiences and viewpoints represented and emotions expressed. However, as the Muslim Community Reference Group process progressed we learned and adapted how we operated. Building relationships takes time and things do not always go smoothly at the beginning. We invested time in building relationships, trust and confidence. Several members commented on the process and the journey of their work in the Muslim Community Reference Group, noting that while there were initial ups and downs, ultimately members built trust in us, and as a group of Muslim individuals developed further networks and relationships and openness to learning from each other.
- 26 Not all members joined the Muslim Community Reference Group at the same time, as several new members joined following the first hui. This was not ideal. It added to a perception that we were disorganised and not able to engage appropriately with community members. A few members felt that this meant the first few hui felt a bit slow. As new members came on board, they needed to be welcomed into the group and further introductory conversations needed to take place. A few members felt the further introductory sessions could have been minimised.

- 27 Given the diversity of the Muslim communities in New Zealand, Public sector agencies wishing to engage with Muslim communities must strive to ensure they are contacting and seeking representation from all Muslim communities in New Zealand, unless the issue is one that is localised to a particular community or geographic area. In practice, this may mean contacting large representative organisations as an initial step and also reaching out to other groups outside of those organisations.

Communities' dynamics can have an impact and need to be carefully managed

- 28 All communities have internal dynamics. A number of members noted that the different community dynamics that existed within the Muslim Community Reference Group affected how members engaged with each other, particularly in the beginning. Members considered that improvements could have been made to how these dynamics were managed, including the suggestion that members themselves work on these issues outside of the hui to ensure that the focus at meetings remained on the key issues.
- 29 Some members reflected that after meeting together for an extended period of time, the group started to join up more and that working together had helped them understand the dynamics of Muslim communities in New Zealand better.

High expectations on members mean more support may need to be provided

- 30 Many community leadership roles in New Zealand are unpaid voluntary positions that individuals take up in addition to their other commitments such as a full-time work and family commitments. We offered a koha (donation) to members to acknowledge and recognise their contribution and effort, and covered costs of attendance such as accommodation and transport. However, being a member was by no means a paid position and attending hui was not the only way members contributed.
- 31 Members themselves played a community engagement role within their own communities by sharing information, answering questions and passing along views and questions from communities to us.
- 32 Several members noted the challenge of this work in addition to full-time work, family commitments and, for some, existing community roles, especially considering the limited resources they had. Some members felt that increased media support and providing more communications material (that could be distributed to community members) earlier in the process would have been useful. Some members commented that having some material available in nine languages was helpful and requested more be available.
- 33 For any similar process in the future, consideration should be given to the level of expectation on participants of engaging with their communities, and where a high level of expectation exists, what type of resources could be provided to participants to support their engagement.

Chapter 4: Concluding comments

- 1 Community engagement has been a key element of our inquiry process and the Muslim Community Reference Group has been a critical component of that. When we decided on the need for a Muslim Community Reference Group we found there was little guidance available on how to engage with Muslim communities.
- 2 We used the *International Association for Public Participation IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum* and related guidance as a starting point, to ensure that our engagement with the Muslim Community Reference Group was effective and relevant. We were keen to ensure that we were working with the Muslim Community Reference Group and that it felt like a partnership rather than a hierarchy.
- 3 We were learning as we went, which meant taking an agile approach and being willing to change the way we were doing something, even during hui. We hope that our intention to engage in a safe, inclusive and collaborate way was clear, even when we did not get it right.
- 4 We have developed this document and a *Guide for Engaging with Muslim Communities* to provide some insights for Public sector agencies to consider when setting up similar community reference groups or engaging with Muslim communities in the future. We see this publication as adding to the discussion of community engagement practices and approaches. It does not purport to be comprehensive or definitive. Community engagement approaches must be flexible and able to evolve with the context of the communities involved.

Guide for engaging with Muslim communities

Key engagement steps	What could this look like in practice?
1. Identify purpose	You recognise a need for Muslim communities' views to inform your work. You are clear on the purpose of the engagement.
2. Identify who to engage with	<p>Defining the purpose and understanding the potential impact on Muslim communities will enable you to determine who has a potential interest in the issue.</p> <p>You determine what relationships or processes exist within your own agency that you could start with. You talk with other Public sector agencies to avoid duplication that increases the burden on community members and organisations. You check whether communities have previously provided views on the issues you are seeking to engage on so you are not asking them to repeat themselves.</p> <p>You are inclusive and reflect the diversity of Muslim communities by identifying and engaging with a wide range of participants that includes, but is not limited to, representative organisations that may speak for large communities of interest. It should include a balance of gender, youth/elder views, established communities and recent migrant communities and be representative of different religious perspectives and ethnicities. Consider whether the issue affects Muslim communities in a local area, at a regional level or has a national significance that affects all Muslim communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.</p>
3. Determine how to engage	The level of engagement should be determined by the potential impact of those policies on Muslim communities.



Before commencing any engagement, you should work with the community to agree on a set of principles for how you engage with them – see example below*.

Guide for engaging with Muslim communities

Key engagement steps

What could this look like in practice?

4. Plan & prepare

You have determined how you will engage. Now you need to plan the logistics and prepare. This includes choosing an appropriate venue where participants can feel safe and welcome, including providing opportunities for prayer space. You may need to consider culturally appropriate hospitality – make sure that meals are halal. Your agenda allows sufficient time to allow everyone to be involved. You consider how you might deal with gender, youth/elder issues and different languages to ensure inclusive engagement. In the main, ensure you have material available in English, Arabic, Bangla, Dari, Hindi, Pashto, Persian, Somali, Turkish, Bosnian, Albanian and Urdu. You prepare for different levels of English proficiency among your participants including having interpreters as needed.

You inform participants about the work you are doing, the purpose of the engagement and how it might benefit Muslim communities. If required, you send material to participants well in advance so they are able to consider information ahead of the engagement.

If you are holding a face-to-face hui, you have considered the needs of the Muslim communities involved. You cover significant transportation costs where appropriate.

You plan and prepare for differing levels of understanding and knowledge of New Zealand government processes and how you might support your participants to develop the knowledge necessary to genuinely engage.

You engage a facilitator as needed to support the conversation between participants.

5. Engage & listen

You are empathetic and respectful to all participants and seek to create a space that is inclusive for everyone to share their views. You take time to answer questions and explain relevant systems and processes.

You supplement any face-to-face engagement with other channels, for example using email to provide further information and answer participants' questions.

You note down feedback and share the draft notes with participants to ensure you have accurately reflected their views. You take on board comments received and share the final notes.

6. Provide feedback

You recognise the importance of following up and providing feedback to participants about how their feedback has been actioned and any outcomes that may have been achieved. This is crucial if you are building a long-term relationship.

7. Review and evaluate

You review the engagement process you have implemented to identify potential improvements for future engagements. You seek feedback from those you have engaged with to understand how the process worked or did not work for them and advise what improvements you intend to make for your next engagement process.

Guide for engaging with Muslim communities

Other considerations

The following provides a general guide to help understand the social customs which may impact your engagement with Muslim communities in New Zealand. It is important to remember that different groups have different characteristics and there may be variations.

Faith is a major part of daily life and will impact on how Muslim communities may engage.

- Prayers – there are five sets of daily prayers, with a different midday prayer on Fridays. The time for each prayer is set by the sun.
- Festivals – the Islamic calendar is lunar-based. This means that the dates of festivals change each year. Be aware that some groups do not celebrate these events on the same day.
- Fasting – during Ramadan, most Muslim individuals fast between sunrise and sunset. It is important to note that some Muslim individuals or communities will not be able to take part in meal and drink times.
- Dress – there are variations but in general conservative dress (for women, covering shoulders and legs). If attending a masjid, women will need to cover their head also.
- Hospitality – this is extremely important to Muslim communities and the host has responsibilities, including providing food and beverages (alcohol is prohibited). Pork and pork products are strictly forbidden, and Islam requires any meat products to be halal.

Multiple methods of communication may be required to acknowledge the different levels of literacy of English.

- Face-to-face is often the best tool when forming relationships and identifying communication needs.
- Arabic is widely used but Muslim communities have many languages.
- Some people may avoid eye and physical contact with members of the opposite gender.

Engaging with women may need sensitive handling and a tailored approach.

- Some women may not feel comfortable being alone or speaking with a male who is not a family member.
- Some women may be more confident speaking with women only or speaking to strangers through a male family member.

*Example of principles for engagement

The Muslim Community Reference Group worked together with the Royal Commission to develop principles to guide our engagement with each other as set out in the Group's Terms of Reference:

The Muslim Community Reference Group is a group of people who have 'Iman' (faith). Members of the Reference Group come with good intentions 'Niyah' (intention) to contribute to the work of the Royal Commission and with hope that the report can be part of creating a better future for New Zealand. Based on this Niyah, Reference Group members see being part of the group as a form of 'Ibadah' (worship). The contribution of time, energy, experience and 'Hikmah' (wisdom) is seen by the group as 'Sadaqah' (charity).

Glossary

Term	Definition
hui	Te reo Māori (Māori language) term for a meeting or gathering.
marae	Te reo Māori (Māori language) term for a meeting place and the complex of buildings around the meeting place.
masajid	An Arabic term for more than two masjid.
masjidain	An Arabic term for two masjid.
masjid	An Arabic term for a mosque, the Muslim place of worship. In Arabic, masjid literally translates to “place of prostration (in prayer)”.
Masjid an-Nur	An Arabic term for the an-Nur Mosque.
shuhada	An Arabic term for the plural “martyr”. The term shuhada is used in this report to refer to people who died as martyrs as a result of the terrorist attack on 15 March 2019.



