



New Zealand Jewish Council

Rūnanga Hūrai o Āotearoa | המועצה היהודית בניו זילנד
The representative organisation of New Zealand Jewry

P.O. Box 87-513
Meadowbank
Auckland 1742
New Zealand

Email: info@NewZealandJewishCouncil.nz
Website: www.nzjc.org.nz

זב"ה

25 March 2022

Social Cohesion
Ministry of Social Development
social_cohesion@msd.govt.nz

Contact:
Stephen Goodman
President
New Zealand Jewish Council Inc.
Email: Stephen.Goodman@NewZealandJewishCouncil.nz
Phone: 64 (21) 599 549

Contents

1	Background	1
2	Framework	2
3	Safety and security	2
4	Education	3
5	Intervention	4
6	International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)	5
7	Online hate	5
8	Access to education	5
9	Immediate action	6
10	Measurement of Outcomes and Enablers	6
11	Conclusion	6

1 Background

This feedback is provided on behalf of the New Zealand Jewish Council Inc. (NZJC). The NZJC is a registered charity and is the elected body representing the Jewish communities of New Zealand. There are Jewish congregations in Auckland, Waikato, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin. Jews have lived in New Zealand continuously from before 1840 contributing to all areas of society; business, culture, sport, the arts, central government and local government. While many minority ethnic and faith groups, such as Jews, are well integrated within the country we still believe that there is more to be done to change New Zealand into a truly cohesive country encouraging unity not uniformity.



2 Framework

The NZJC believes the proposed Social Cohesion framework fits well with our understanding of what social cohesion is and how it can be strengthened. It reflects the purpose of the Jewish Council which include:

- Unite our communities
- Support Jewish awareness and identity
- Counter racism and antisemitism
- Provide advocacy and representation

The objectives of the Framework are similar those of the NZJC. This framework strengthens the NZJC's mandate to establish relationships with other ethnic and faith communities, as well as Government agencies, to help ensure New Zealand is a place where Jews can ethnically identify as Jewish and practice their religion freely. The Social Cohesion framework reflects the work the NZJC already does bringing together a number of other ethnic and faith communities, including the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand, the Bahá'í Faith of New Zealand, the Islamic Women's Council, the Sikh Council, the Indian Central Association, the Buddhist Council, the Religious Community Leaders Forum, various ethnic and multicultural organisations as well as through interfaith groups aimed at building cooperation, trust and understanding between ethnic and faith communities. It is only by fostering relationships between individuals and communities that we can develop an environment displaying the common understanding and acceptance necessary for cohesion.

Having the Social Cohesion framework as outlined is a first step towards building a multifaceted series of relationships between the ethnic and faith communities themselves, as well as constructing relationships with Government and its agencies. It is only by building up these relationships that a more cohesive model will be developed, and one which can be applied to the whole of New Zealand Society.

The Social Cohesion Framework as given, while a good starting point, needs to be expanded to be effective.

3 Safety and security

Safety is fundamental to all ethnic and faith communities in Aotearoa New Zealand. All communities want to identify ethnically and perform their particular observances without fear of attack, abuse or demonisation. This would include in their home, workplace, public space, places of worship, schools and their community centres. In the past decade there have been attacks against individuals and communities in all of these places: personal assaults, verbal threats, abuse, graffiti and grave desecration. The most recent Police Risk and Threat Situation Report (May 2019) identified the Jewish Community as facing an elevated risk of violent incidents from multiple threat vectors.



For over 20 years the Jewish community has had to provide its own security (volunteers plus paid professional staff, as well as physical and technical security means) around synagogues and other gathering places. The rise in racism towards Jews in recent years has necessitated increased protection. Only since the Mosque attacks of 15 March 2019 has the Government recognised this need and, through the Safer Cities fund, has there been contribution to the Jewish Community's security costs.

Jews are often publicly attacked without any public or Government reaction. An example of this is the recent protest outside Parliament. There were overt public displays of antisemitism directly in front of Parliament. The Jewish community felt isolated and victimised. The Government's almost total inaction indicated that it was not truly dedicated to ensuring the Jewish community's safety. This is hardly the path to a cohesive society. Apart from one letter from Meng Foon, and a mention by the Hon. Michael Wood there was no reaction from government agencies, no formal Ministerial statement of condemnation or any contact made to support or reassure the Jewish community.

It is not all about Jews. Antisemitism is often considered the indicator of more widespread racism. A society that tolerates antisemitism will soon accept other forms of racism. They may target the Jews first but other groups will be next. If society does not act to deal with this affront who will be left when all others have been eliminated? To be cohesive and tolerant, it is important that all racism is dealt with promptly and effectively by the whole of government and all of society.

The NZJC is about to release a comprehensive survey of Antisemitism in New Zealand. This Survey, funded in part by the Ministry of Ethnic Communities, will be a useful tool for the Government's social cohesion work. It shows a significant amount of antisemitism present in New Zealand. While this survey is focused on racist sentiment towards the Jewish community, it is indicative of, and provides a window into, wider xenophobic sentiment in New Zealand. The results of this survey are due to be released on 29th March 2022. The survey is embargoed until 5:00am Wednesday 30th March. Links to the Foreword, Executive Summary, and Full Report can be found at <https://nzjc.org.nz/antisemitism-in-new-zealand-2021-survey>. The survey is supporting documentation and is included as part of this submission.

The Jewish Community Security Group monitors antisemitic incidents. As seen internationally, such incidents are increasing. These incidents are magnified at times of social stress. The COVID pandemic is such a time and it has created a noticeable effect in New Zealand.

Safety, in all its forms, needs to be added to the framework.

4 Education

Changing the whole of New Zealand society into one that embraces diversity and accepts different practices is a major undertaking. This tolerance of others is not just a general acceptance of diversity but is based on knowledge of other faiths and ethnicities. Education is fundamental to driving through these changes.



We see a need for Holocaust Education in particular. This is not just a Jewish issue. Holocaust education provides lessons for all humanity. The Holocaust was the extreme of racism and xenophobia. On one hand it shows how a large portion of a population can be led to ignore atrocious crimes being committed in their name. On the other, it highlights the valour and courage of those individuals who stood up against the power of the Nazi regime. The Holocaust authenticated the statement that all it takes for evil to succeed is for good men to do nothing.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern has said the Holocaust teaches us that we must reject bigotry and hatred. “There is a unifying power of interfaith and intercultural understanding, which we saw after March 15. We know the danger of seeing people based on what they look like, and what religion they are. We must look at one another with humanity and kindness. We must counter acts of brutality and violence with compassion and empathy.”

Holocaust education not only provides a significant buffer against the rise of antisemitism, it also helps protect societies from other forms of racism and extremism. Holocaust education is a safeguard for civil society.

A 2019 report on freedom of religion or belief released by UN Special Rapporteur Ahmed Shaheed “stresses that antisemitism, if left unchecked by governments, poses risks not only to Jews, but also to members of other minority communities”.

Other educational needs include such topics as religion and ethnicity, not to instil spirituality or promote any particular faith, but as an understanding of what motivates people. This must not just be a theoretical exercise but should involve contact with people from different communities. It is only by knowing people and their history that we can expect New Zealanders to embrace a cohesive environment.

While much of this education might thought to be aimed at the school system it should not stop there. Education is a whole of life activity and there must also be emphasis placed on educating at post-secondary school levels.

Education needs to be added to the Framework.

5 Intervention

There needs to be more focus on early intervention and the importance of changing intolerance and racist ideas at the earliest point. This would include programmes aimed at school age children, young adults and older adults in vulnerable situations.

Programmes for early intervention should be included in the Framework.



6 International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

The NZJC believes one of the most important actions Central Government can take to improve social cohesion in New Zealand is to join the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). IHRA is an inter-governmental organisation committed to combatting the rise of antisemitism through Holocaust education and equipping policymakers to address rising hate in their communities at a national level. The NZJC believes joining IHRA is a crucial and invaluable tool to improve social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand.

New Zealand should seek IHRA membership.

7 Online hate

References to online hate, referred to as “enhanced digital inclusion – include education on risks and staying safe” need to be strengthened in the framework. The need to teach critical thinking towards online racial hatred and misinformation needs to be more clearly identified and explained. This, at least initially with individual offenders, is likely to be below a level that justifies prosecution. Dealing with the individual at the first sign of fermenting online hate will, hopefully, avert them ever progressing to a level where they choose to act out their hate. Intervening with offenders before they pose the danger of committing actual harm to others should be the objective rather than the desire to prosecute hate crimes.

It is also necessary to balance hate speech and free speech. The NZJC is not in favour of lowering the currently high bar for prosecution. Laying criminal charges should only be a last resort. It is better to call in or challenge statements than to outlaw them. Threats of being charged will only serve to drive offenders underground, and make martyrs of those who are prosecuted for speech. It is preferable that they remain visible rather than be hidden and challenged rather than allowed to claim victimhood and have their conspiracy theories fed.

The NZJC is also wary of ‘hate speech’ laws because of their inherently subjective nature and the possibility that future governments may abuse them to unfairly target groups in society. Throughout history Jews have faced such abuses of power.

Dealing with online hate speech without censorious laws needs to be added to the Framework.

8 Access to education

The framework addresses equity and welfare issues which may prevent access to education. This requires further investigation.

Equity issues need to be added to the Framework.



9 Immediate action

The NZJC believes the Government's short-term goals need to include calling out racial hatred. This is something that should start immediately. As outlined above, the Jewish community was disappointed that no Government Minister or Ministry made any public comment about the numerous incidents of antisemitism at the recent Parliament protest. While high level remarks were made about the protesters' actions, there was no specific reference to the Holocaust distortion, conspiracy theories and racial hatred directed towards the Jewish community.

Government needs to act, and publicly be seen to act, immediately to deal with issues threatening social cohesion.

10 Measurement of Outcomes and Enablers

The NZJC would like to see a decrease in antisemitic incidents considered as a measurement of the success of the proposed Social Cohesion framework. This can be measured by the Government through the number of incidents reported in the Jewish Community Security Group's monthly reports. The NZJC recommends regular repeats of the antisemitism survey to monitor attitudinal changes across New Zealand.

The NZJC agrees with the key groups and sectors identified as enabler but believes there should be a specific section within the Central Government category for education. One of the most effective ways to increase social cohesion is through education. This is backed by the OECD who state: "Education can play a significant role in promoting well-being and social progress. Moreover, it can be considered a cost-effective approach".

Quantifiable measurement criteria need to be established.

11 Conclusion

Social cohesion is integral to all the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain on 15 March 2019 (RCOI). To achieve the optimal outcomes requires a whole of society commitment. As a first stage it must be at least a whole of government involvement recognising that not one Ministry alone can facilitate a response to any of the recommendations of the RCOI.

NZJC would appreciate the opportunity to discuss all aspects of Social Cohesion with you.

Stephen Goodman
President
New Zealand Jewish Council Inc.