



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Let's Talk about our National Security:

Summary of hui with Ethnic Communities and Recent Migrants on the National Security Long-term Insights Briefing

March 2023

Background

Four hui were held with ethnic communities and recent migrants to Aotearoa New Zealand. The hui were co-led by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the Ministry for Ethnic Communities (MEC) on the topic of the National Security Long-Term Insights Briefing ('the briefing').

Three in-person sessions were held in Auckland. These were complemented by a virtual online hui that was offered to groups throughout New Zealand on an evening. The hui were held between the 12 – 14 July 2022, with the purpose of sharing early briefing content as it was being developed and refined.

Forty community organisations, including many ethnic, recent migrant and faith-based organisations participated in the hui. We heard a wide range of views on both the topic of the briefing and ideas that could be included as part of the draft briefing.

The importance of public consultation and engagement

Participants across all hui emphasised the importance of engaging the public in conversations about our national security. Efforts to engage with a broad cross-section and range of communities was important. Translating the briefing into non-English languages was seen as a positive step towards supporting communities to engage.

One participant noted that conversations about national security could help foster a more tolerant society. It was acknowledged that “casting a spotlight” on some of the hard issues surrounding national security, such as those included in the briefing, represented an opportunity to raise challenging topics and bring them out into the open.

Engagement with the public throughout all levels of organisations – with officials, particularly those in “front-line” roles being aware of the importance of *how* they engage with people from a range of backgrounds – was also raised as necessary everyday experiences of ‘national security’ by communities.

Participants said that **government agencies needed to be more representative** of the population they serve. Some participants called for greater ethnic diversity at all levels of government to better reflect the growing ethnic diversification of New Zealand. It was noted that some communities rarely saw themselves represented in institutions such as in government or media. Some participants noted this could result in feelings of disengagement with some people “seeking answers” in mis- and dis-information sources.

Communication and connections between government agencies and communities needed to improve and be fully resourced. Many community members who were invited to take part in government consultations had existing commitments (e.g. employment, studies, family responsibilities). This could make attendance difficult and therefore meant attracting a broad range of attendees across all communities was an ongoing challenge.

Communities are seeking collaboration with institutions, not just consultation. Several participants noted that engagement with ethnic communities needed to be ongoing to be meaningful.

More **transparency over mechanisms** through which engagement on national security was undertaken was considered important. Many participants did not know which agencies or who within government to engage with on matters of national security. Attending a hui in the absence of this information was daunting for some.

Other Key Issues Raised

Throughout the hui a wide variety of issues were raised. Participants touched on national security issues related to: media, education, trust in institutions, social cohesion, hate speech, personal security and foreign interference.

A high-level summary of these issues, as raised, is provided below:

1. Participants felt that **media** had an important role to play in communicating on matters of national security, particularly with regard to combating hate speech. Participants were also concerned that unmoderated media had led to an increase in the spread of mis- and disinformation.
2. Some participants suggested there was a need for government-funded media in accessible language suited to ethnic communities, and that this could help decrease the spread of mis- and dis-information. Communities had tended to rely on and consume news information from overseas media outlets, community groups, and social media messages (i.e. WhatsApp) and this often meant they were less engaged with local news media, and could be disconnected and misinformed about events happening here in New Zealand.
3. **Education** was considered an important part of the critical foundation which underpins our national security. Participants discussed the need for more informed discussions and engagement on national security matters, starting within schools. Education was noted as an important tool for encouraging sharing of knowledge, addressing harmful stereotyping and for building empathy and understanding between people from different cultures and communities from a young age.
4. Some participants expressed a concern that mis- and dis- information was becoming an issue for young people and suggested that schools could support development of critical thinking skills to help young people verify the information they are receiving and sharing with others.
5. Many participants expressed **a lack of trust in public institutions**. While it was noted that perceptions could be influenced by negative experiences with similar institutions in countries of origin, eroding trust had developed through experiences of both “front-line” services (e.g. Residency processes) and through having been consulted by government agencies in the past, but not being able to see any meaningful change. Some participants had experienced a lack of responsiveness from public institutions when reporting faith or racially motivated harassment and/or attacks.
6. The number of government agencies involved in national security was confusing for people. There was a need for a clearer explanation of New Zealand’s national security architecture and openness about sector priorities and how these were consulted on with the public.
7. The accessibility of government information and services was raised as an issue for many. For example, information needed to be provided in a variety of languages and formats to reach the diverse range of communities that make up New Zealand. In doing so, we can reduce the possibility of people missing out or misinterpreting government information.

8. Increasing officials' cultural competency was suggested as a priority for government agencies, including the national security sector. Some participants noted there were often multiple groups within ethnic communities in New Zealand. Officials needed to understand the various background cultures of communities better so they could better tailor services to be responsive to cultural needs and backgrounds, and so that public engagement processes can be meaningful.
9. Government officials taking the time to learn about the pathways people may have taken to arrive in New Zealand were also considered important for meaningful engagement. For example, former refugees arriving in New Zealand may have experienced oppression and trauma in their countries of origin, often related to public institutions. It was noted that when people are in the early stages of building their lives in New Zealand, they are focused on "survival" and it can take time for them to be able to share their views and participate in government consultations without support.
10. Many participants expressed a **worry that social cohesion in Aotearoa was declining** and that this was coupled with increasing disengagement among ethnic communities who faced diminishing job opportunities and greater exposure to crime in recent years. Social cohesion was considered fundamental to our national security.
11. **Hate speech** was raised by several participants. There was a concern that threats to national security could be seen as mostly "off-shore or foreign," ignoring the many risks posed by domestic, home-grown sources. Feeling secure meant being able to practice ones' beliefs without having to face hate speech for doing so. Questions were raised regarding government intentions and plans to regulate hate speech. It was noted there was a role for government in creating laws, but also in policing and enforcement.
12. Communities needed to consider **personal safety** first before considering security on a national level. Hui participants who had experienced racially motivated harassment expressed the need to focus on personal protection plans and planning for extra security at events. Some community groups felt they needed more protection than they were currently receiving.
13. **Concerns relating to foreign interference** were repeatedly raised. Some participants noted potential conflicts or issues arising in countries of origin and being transferred and reflected in local interactions between communities in New Zealand. Some communities were being negatively impacted and coerced by groups from overseas seeking to further their own agendas at the expense of community cohesion in New Zealand.
14. Along similar lines, some participants were unsure about the use of experts outside government and think tanks from abroad, suggesting that government should instead consider greater investment in New Zealand community resourcing. Others warned of the need to be vigilant about receiving funds from overseas, citing potential foreign interference.

Feedback has been included in the Final Briefing

As illustrated by this summary, we heard valuable feedback from participants at the various hui on the draft briefing. We are grateful to all participants for taking time to attend and provide their thoughts and feedback. As noted, a range of views were presented regarding the substance of the briefing and the issues on which we ought to focus. While the final briefing cannot encompass the full suite of topics raised by all participants, this summary seeks to capture the key issues raised.

Public feedback has been incorporated into the Final Briefing which will be presented to Parliament, and published in early 2023. Most importantly, the final briefing will support ongoing conversations about our national security and the ways we can engage an increasingly diverse Aotearoa New Zealand on national security risks, challenges and opportunities.