



21 March 2022

S22.06

Submission to the Ministry of Social Development on Strengthening Social Cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand

Introduction

1. The National Council of Women of New Zealand, Te Kaunihera Wāhine o Aotearoa (NCWNZ) is an umbrella group representing over 200 organisations affiliated at either national level or to one of our 14 branches. In addition, about 450 people are individual members. Collectively our reach is over 450,000 with many of our membership organisations representing all genders. NCWNZ's vision is a gender equal New Zealand and research shows we will be better off socially and economically if we are gender equal. Through research, discussion and action, NCWNZ in partnership with others, seeks to realise its vision of gender equality because it is a basic human right.
2. This submission has been prepared by the NCWNZ by the Safety, Health, and Well-being Action Hub.
3. NCWNZ welcomes the Ministry of Social Development's work programme aimed at strengthening social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand and building a safer, more tolerant and inclusive society. This submission additionally draws on the NCWNZ submission dated 29 October 2021 on social cohesion¹, on NCWNZ policy^{2,3}, and past submissions⁴. It is clear that NCWNZ members strongly believe that Aotearoa New

¹ NCWNZ. 2021. Submission to the Ministry of Social Development on Social Cohesion for Everyone in New Zealand. S21.25.

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/ncwnz/pages/1026/attachments/original/1637540799/S21.25_Social_cohesion.pdf?1637540799.

² NCWNZ. 2012. 115 years of resolution. https://bit.ly/ncwnz_resolutions_1896-2010.

³ NCWNZ. 2021. Appendix "D": Resolutions of National Meetings 2011-2020

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/ncwnz/pages/1025/attachments/original/1622428501/Appendix_D_Resolutions_2011-2020.pdf?1622428501.

⁴ NCWNZ. 2021. Submissions [2000-2021]. <https://www.ncwnz.org.nz/submissions>.

Zealand's diversity makes our society stronger and brings huge potential for social and economic benefits.

Summary

The Social Cohesion Framework

4. NCWNZ welcomes the Social Cohesion Framework and the fact it is grounded in the Te Tiriti o Waitangi and a te ao Māori approach.
5. More work and further consultation is needed on the environmental sustainability and climate change elements of the framework.
6. The framework should acknowledge the groups who are more marginalised and take an intersectional approach i.e., acknowledging the multiple disadvantages experienced by many women.
7. The framework should be specific about economic and social inequities and how they impact on social cohesion and specific actions to address this. In particular, the Framework should acknowledge the impact of COVID-19 in exacerbating existing inequalities, but also opportunities to build on the collective experience and sense of togetherness.
8. The framework needs to be clear on how success is to be measured, communicated and built on.
9. The discussion document makes no references to the history of Aotearoa New Zealand and the intergenerational and ongoing impact of colonisation on social cohesion. The social cohesion programme must be transformational and recognise and address decolonisation.

Enablers

10. There should be a distinction between communities based on identity, particularly Māori as tāngata whenua, and broader community organisations.
11. The framework should acknowledge the importance of a strong civil society in building social cohesion and the need to better resource non-governmental organisations and community organisations.

Tangible Government actions

12. The theme "*recognising Māori and tino rangatiratanga*" needs to be strengthened. The Framework should acknowledge Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial history and the ongoing impacts of colonisation and injustices against tāngata whenua.
13. The theme "*addressing welfare issues and inequities*" needs clear intentional strategies and action plans, emphasising non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community leadership with sufficient resources.

14. “*Environment sustainability*” must be prioritised, as the climate crisis is an acknowledged emergency with severe impacts on inequalities and social cohesion.
15. Tangible Government actions that are missing from the document include fundamental reform of the justice system, and the commitment for all legislation and Government programmes to have gender equity analysis.

Section 1 – Social Cohesion Framework

What do you like about the social cohesion framework?

16. NCWNZ members like that this framework and its vision are grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi and a te ao Māori approach. It's important that the Social Cohesion team has members who are Māori or Te Tiriti o Waitangi experts and consults regularly with Māori organisations.
17. NCWNZ is very pleased that this framework acknowledges the need to "*protect our society and environment for future generations*" as a way to foster social cohesion. NCWNZ members recognise that the climate crisis is having a disproportionately negative impact on women and girls around the world, therefore climate justice must also have a gendered approach. This section of the framework should be subject to a separate consultation process as it may involve collaborating with different groups and will likely result in different actions and outcomes.

What do you not like about the social cohesion framework?

18. The framework does not acknowledge that there are groups in Aotearoa New Zealand who are more marginalised than others. What they see as social cohesion and ways to achieve it may look different depending on the demographic. This framework and its associated actions must be intersectional, and acknowledge that women, in particular women of colour, Māori women, disabled women, lesbians, trans women, and non-binary and intersex people, experience more discrimination than others. The NCWNZ Gender Attitudes Survey 2021⁵ is proof that society still has plenty of work to do regarding attitudes toward women and gender norms.
19. Therefore, NCWNZ members believe the graphic of the hearts and hands holding with different coloured skin is very simplistic and underestimates the demanding challenges of a social cohesion programme.

What is missing from the social cohesion framework?

20. Reducing inequities is critical to achieving social cohesion at all levels. As Jess Berentson-Shaw, public narrative researcher, advisor and co-director of The Workshop, says, "*it's important not to over-complicate things. Government should start with the basics: designing and delivering social, health and economic programmes with equity at their*

⁵ NCWNZ. 2021. Gender Attitudes Survey August 2021. https://genderequal.nz/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Report_NCWNZ_Gender-Attitudes-Survey-2021-FINAL_01-03-22.pdf

heart"⁶. It's important that we are specific about these inequities so they can be purposefully targeted and receive dedicated action plans. These inequities include (but are not limited to):

- a. Housing and transport access and affordability
- b. Gender and cultural pay disparities, unfair and unliveable wages
- c. Lack of access to technology and the Internet
- d. Lack of access to educational opportunities
- e. Healthcare access and affordability
- f. The justice system

21. Many of these inequities may lead to ill health for individuals, such as poverty, poor housing, and access to healthcare, making it more difficult for them to engage in society and contribute to social cohesion.
22. The Social Cohesion framework must also explicitly recognise that addressing inequities requires tackling the institutional racism across social, health and educational systems, and that solutions must be developed in genuine partnership between iwi, NGOs, and communities.
23. Additionally, it is important to consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on this framework and its actions. The social cohesion programme was launched before the Omicron outbreak in Aotearoa New Zealand which highlighted and deepened social and economic inequities. The divides that existed in society before have only widened since. The social cohesion framework needs to acknowledge the impact of COVID-19 and the protests around the country and that Aotearoa New Zealand has to recover and rebuild from the inequities and divides exacerbated by COVID-19 . At the same time, compliance with lockdowns, recognition of health and front-line workers, huge support for welfare organisations and many instances of neighbourly kindness, demonstrated a sense of collective care and responsibility.
24. The statement that one of the ways of achieving social cohesion – "*supporting people to participate at all levels and influence change*" – could be more powerful and intentional if it were reworded as "*enabling people to participate at all levels and influence change*". Places, sectors, and systems must be supported to change so that people are enabled to make the choice to engage.
25. When defining social cohesion and establishing the outcomes, we recommend drawing on knowledge from existing work. It's not clear if this has already been done, and it would be reasonable to reference these reputable treaties and frameworks in the programme, such as:

⁶ Walters L. 2022. Parliament grounds have been cleared but deep-seated issues remain. <https://www.stuff.co.nz/dominion-post/news/wellington/127945205/parliament-grounds-have-been-cleared-but-deepseated-issues-remain>

- a. United Nations Sustainable Development Goals⁷
- b. Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)⁸
- c. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
- d. International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)⁹
- e. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families¹⁰
- f. Treasury Living Standards Framework¹¹

26. The suggested measurements of success don't seem to include any indication of how these factors could be measured in an ethical, transparent, and accessible way. It would also be useful to describe how strategies and actions that are proving to make a difference will be shared, celebrated, and built upon.

27. This discussion document makes no references to the history of Aotearoa and the intergenerational and ongoing impact of colonisation on social cohesion. NCWNZ has recently begun its own journey to becoming a Te Tiriti-honouring organisation, and this social cohesion programme must be transformational and recognise and address decolonisation.

Section 2 – Enablers

Do you agree with the identified key groups and sectors, and the contributions they could make? Is there anyone missing?

28. The 'communities' category is too wide, making no distinction between communities that people automatically belong to due to their identities, and communities that people choose to join. Whānau, hapū, and iwi as tāngata whenua, Pasifika, other ethnic communities, disabled communities, and rainbow communities must not be treated as essentially the same as civic and voluntary organisations such as schools, churches, trade unions, and non-profits.

29. The Framework fails to acknowledge the importance of a strong civil society in building social cohesion. Community organisations and NGOs should be connected so they can

⁷ United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Sustainable Development. 2015. The 17 Goals. <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

⁸ United Nations. 1979. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women New York, 18 December 1979. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CEDAW.aspx>

⁹ United Nations. 2006. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>

¹⁰ United Nations. 1990. International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-convention-protection-rights-all-migrant-workers>

¹¹ New Zealand. Treasury. 2021. Our Living Standards Framework. <https://www.treasury.govt.nz/information-and-services/nz-economy/higher-living-standards/our-living-standards-framework>

share resources and information, and provided with structured frameworks and systems of inclusion to work within.

30. Membership and subscription-based community organisations such as NCWNZ can engage their members and deliver solutions that have been tailored for the local community's specific needs and goals. There should be opportunities for bottom-up processes of engagement that are not just consultations and discussion forums.

Do you think the most critical barriers that stop different groups and sectors contributing to social cohesion have been identified? Why or why not? Are there any missing?

31. Resourcing must be highlighted as a key barrier. Applying for grants and funding is labour intensive and overly complex. The concept of high-trust funding processes would be hugely beneficial for community organisations and NGOs to overcome this barrier.
32. The supports/enablers for the knowledge/capability barrier do not get to the root of the issue surrounding volunteers. Many community organisations and NGOs are completely dependent on volunteers to operate and serve their communities. NGOs have long advocated, with minimal success, for sustained funding for the operational expenses that enable them to pay staff, support volunteers to deliver community services and projects.
33. Additionally, volunteers are already extremely capable and skilled, which means they are also overworked, time poor, and energy poor because they are spread so thinly. This barrier may fit more accurately under resourcing. The pressures of family life and earning an adequate income make it difficult for many younger people to volunteer and creative ways of addressing this need to be developed.

Section 3 – Tangible Government Actions

What do you think of the suggested themes and actions?

34. The theme "*recognising Māori and tino rangatiratanga*" needs to be strengthened. Though there have been advances, including the work of the Waitangi Tribunal, more must be done. NCWNZ supports that the social cohesion programmes includes Government efforts to acknowledge injustices against tāngata whenua which may include apologies, the return of land to iwi and hapū, and responses to community-driven movements. A theme which addresses Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial history, and the ongoing impacts of colonisation must be prioritised. This would be consistent with the new New Zealand History Curriculum¹².
35. The theme "*addressing welfare issues and inequities*" sounds non-committal, especially given our view on their fundamental importance (see para 20 above). Welfare issues and inequities need intentional strategies and action plans. Community groups and NGOs

¹² New Zealand. Ministry of Education. 2022. Aotearoa New Zealand's histories curriculum released. <https://ssol.tki.org.nz/Aotearoa-New-Zealand-s-histories-curriculum-released>

can lead this work, as they have been for many decades, if the Government can provide funding and resources.

36. "*Environment sustainability*" must be prioritised, as the climate crisis is an acknowledged emergency with severe impacts on inequalities and social cohesion.

What is missing?

37. The justice system desperately needs reform. Our justice system does not provide those affected with the tools and systems they need to be rehabilitated and reintegrated with society. The high incarceration rates of Māori are symptoms of colonisation, and educational, social, and economic inequality. Due to systemic racism, Māori are more likely to be apprehended, charged, and given custodial sentences.
38. Every piece of legislation must be critiqued for equity factors, such as applying a gender lens, a disability lens, and a Māori lens

Conclusions

39. This investigation and public consultation into strengthening social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand is incredibly important. NCWNZ is pleased that the Ministry of Social Development is developing this strategy. Our comments and recommendations in this submission reflect the views and valuable perspectives of our diverse membership, who have been advocating for a more gender equal and socially cohesive Aotearoa New Zealand for over 125 years.



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