

Ministry of Ethnic Affairs Draft Strategy

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Submitter Details

1. Nelson Marlborough District Health Board (NMDHB) (NMH) is a key organisation involved in the health and wellbeing of the people within Te Tau Ihu. NMH has a duty to reduce adverse environmental effects on the health of people and communities and to improve, promote and protect their health pursuant under the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 and the Health Act 1956. NMH welcomes the opportunity to comment from a public health perspective on the Ministry for Ethnic Communities' Draft Strategy.

Specific Comments:

2. NMH commends the Ministry for the creation of a draft Strategy to promote the wellbeing of ethnic communities. NMH supports the four strategy priorities to
 - a. Take action to promote the value of diversity and improve inclusion of ethnic communities within wider society
 - b. Ensure equitable provisions of, and access to, government services for ethnic communities
 - c. Develop and support initiatives to improve economic outcomes for ethnic communities, including barriers to employment
 - d. Work to connect and empower ethnic community groups.

Diversity must be embraced and all ethnic communities living in New Zealand should have a sense of belonging and their cultural values recognised. Racism is increasingly recognised as a determinant of health and driver of inequalities. It can create tensions and divisions in communities and affect the quality of care offered to different groups. Actual violence or fear of violence stemming from racism can cause social isolation and misery for individuals and communities. Experience of, or fear of discrimination may lead individuals and families to avoid mainstream cultural institutions, including health care systems, in which discrimination may occur¹. There is evidence that exposure to racism is significantly associated with poor mental health and lower physical functioning, smoking and cardiovascular disease.²

¹ Burgess DJ, Ding Y, Hargreaves M, van Ryn M, Phelan S. 2008. The association between perceived discrimination and underutilization of needed medical and mental health care in a multi-ethnic community sample. *Journal of Healthcare for the Poor and Underserved* 19, 814- 911.

² Harris R, Tobias M, Jeffreys M, Waldegrave K, Karlsen S, Nazroo J. 2006. Racism and health: the Relationship between experience of racial discrimination and health in New Zealand. *Social Science and Medicine* 63 (6): 1428-41.

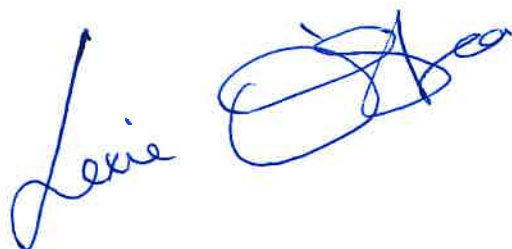
3. Nelson Marlborough Health endorses the proposed action plans which look at reducing racism and discrimination, and support community initiatives that promote diversity and inclusion. A key success indicator of connecting and empowering ethnic community groups should be a demonstrated equitable and fair integration into New Zealand society for all ages, genders and backgrounds. The different needs within each group (e.g., women, seniors, migrants or former refugees) should be identified. At the same time, the integration policies of key agencies should also be reviewed to gauge if they are effective and could be put into community-based strategies and action plans.
4. NMH supports increasing cultural competency within the public sector and ensuring that the voice of ethnic communities is reflected in central and local government policies. NMH notes that Christchurch City Council's multi-cultural strategy has the following statement which could be incorporated here;
 - a. Promote a culture of diversity and inclusion in position descriptions and staff development programmes.
5. NMH supports the implementation of the Employment Action Plan that prioritises recent migrants, former refugees, and ethnic community members who face multiple barriers to enter and succeed in the labour market, including women. Further educational support could also be given to people whose first language is not English.
6. NMH supports community-led initiatives to improve employment outcomes for ethnic communities. It is important to connect with existing community groups or organisations that have been well-established before setting up any new initiatives. For instance, in our region, we have organisations such as Multicultural Nelson Tasman, Victory Community Centre, Red Cross Refugee Services, and English Language Partners. They have been supporting migrants and former refugees to resettle and integrate into the community in the past decades.
7. NMH supports the Ministry to commission work to understand the barriers to the recognition of overseas qualifications and experience. NMH values overseas qualifications among our employees who have strengthened our organisation by their professional skills and cultural knowledge. It is important that the government sector sets a good example by increasing employment opportunities among ethnic communities. Inequality in job opportunities and pay gaps need to be addressed to achieve a fair, transparent and inclusive society.
8. NMH supports the development of resources for workplace cultural competency for use across public and private sectors, and for ethnic communities
9. NMH supports the establishment of an Ethnic Leaders forum, and making funding and other opportunities for capability development (e.g. governance training)

more easily accessible for smaller and emerging ethnic communities, and for marginalised groups

Conclusion

10. NMH thanks Ministry for Ethnic Communities for the opportunity to comment on their Draft Strategy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of the name 'Lexie' followed by a stylized, cursive surname that appears to be 'O'Shea'.

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