



Human Rights  
Commission  
*Te Kāhui Tika Tangata*

# Religious Diversity in the New Zealand Workplace

## Questions & Concerns



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## Introduction

The last twenty five years have seen great changes in religious and cultural diversity in New Zealand. Historically, New Zealanders predominantly subscribed to forms of transplanted Christianity and our calendar, national holidays and much else derives from this European Christian heritage. Increased religious diversity has highlighted the issue of religious diversity in the New Zealand workplace. More than five per cent of our fellow workers are religious but not Christian, the majority may well be Christian but a growing sector are not religiously affiliated and are among the 33 per cent who describe themselves as having 'no religion' (Census, 2006). New Zealand now has significant communities of Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Jews playing an ever more significant role in our economy.

Each group has its own traditions, sacred calendars, religiously sanctioned customs and practices, including food, dress and behavioural codes. People do not leave their religious identities, values and sensibilities at the door when they arrive each day at work. In workplaces where religious and cultural differences are acknowledged and religious differences are accommodated, workforces are more satisfied, stable and productive.<sup>1</sup> In an environment of respect for cultural differences and where work practices and timetables accommodate religious beliefs and activities, there can be discernible benefits for employers and employees.<sup>2</sup>

Coupled to this religious diversity is our increasingly '24/7 culture'. When the work week for the majority ended on Friday afternoon and began again on Monday morning a number of religious differences became private choices over the weekend. Now that retail and some service industries operate seven days a week, issues are created for a number of religious groups, for example, with the weekly days of rest and times of communal prayers. There have been a steady stream of enquiries and complaints to the Human Rights Commission and other bodies concerned with religious diversity in the New Zealand workplace and

tribunal and court cases on these issues.<sup>3</sup> There is a need for guidance for the management of religious diversity at work for employees, union officials, employers, human resource personnel and religious communities. There is a need for awareness about the advantages of the disclosure of religious affiliation and its implications for the workplace. Many of the complaints, cases and concerns could have been avoided if religious issues had been clarified at the time of hiring. This document is a first step to fulfilling the need for guidance and awareness on this topic.

## Purpose

It is important to be clear about the intention of these guidelines. The law is straightforward about the requirement for 'good faith' and the legal obligations of employers and employees around the provision of holiday and other leave entitlements under the Holidays Act (2003). Unfortunately beyond this too many cases involving religious issues at work end up in complaints, mediation and the courts. The aim here is to provide examples of best practice and possible actions that can assist in the discussion of particular cases that have arisen, and will arise, that may help resolve workplace issues for both employees and employers. It is important to note that the focus here is not primarily on legal entitlement but on the application of the concept of reasonable accommodation of religious issues based on accurate and reliable information. It is hoped the provision of this information will help to pre-empt problems and will assist employees and employers to find workable solutions for their workplaces before issues escalate to formal complaints, mediation and tribunals.

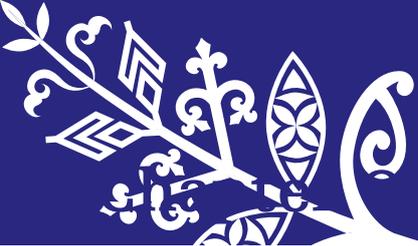
## Context

These guidelines have been developed with reference to legislative, moral and ethical principles. New Zealand legislation makes it unlawful to discriminate on religious grounds and gives people the right to express themselves religiously. New Zealand is a signatory to international human rights declarations and conventions, including the

1 Spiller, C., Erakovic, L., Henare, M., & Pio, E. (2010), 'Relational well being and wealth: Māori businesses and an ethic of care', *Journal of Business Ethics*, published online 4 July 2010; Fry, L., & Slocum, J. (2008); 'Maximizing the triple bottom line through spiritual leadership', *Organizational Dynamics*, 37 (1), 86-96; Cash, K. & Gray, G., (2000) 'A framework for accommodating religion and spirituality in the workplace', *Academy of Management Executive*, 14 (3), 124-134.

2 Religion and Corporate Culture: Accommodating Religious Diversity in the Workplace (Report by Society for Human Resource Management, Alexandria, VA, (2008); Warner, F. (2011), 'Professionals Tap a Higher Power in the Workplace', *Workforce Management*, April, 20-25; Henneman, T., (2004), 'A New Approach to Faith at Work' *Workforce Management*, October, 76-77; Elswick, J. (2003), 'Firms urged to provide benefits for religious diversity', *Employee Benefit News*, 17 (13), 58.

3 The Human Rights Commission received 194 complaints and enquiries from 2002 until early May 2009. The number has increased per annum over this period but the average of 26 per year gives an idea of the scale of the issue.



Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948, Article 18)<sup>4</sup>; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966, Article 18)<sup>5</sup> and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR, 1966, Article 13).

The right to religion is also found in New Zealand legislation, including the Bill of Rights Act (BORA, 1990); the Human Rights Act (HRA, 1993); and, the Employment Relations Act (ERA, 2000). These give the right to express ourselves religiously, and to be protected from discrimination on the grounds of religion. More specifically, the Bill of Rights Act (BORA, 1990) which affirms the right: to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief (s. 13); to express religion and belief in worship, observance, practice, or teaching (s. 15); and, of minorities to be free from discrimination (s. 20). Secondly, the Human Rights Act (HRA, 1993) prohibits discrimination based on religious and ethical belief in employment, in partnerships, in access to places, vehicles and facilities, in the provision of goods and services and in the provision of land, housing and accommodation.<sup>6</sup> In the area of employment the Act creates a clear obligation in relation to meeting the particular practices of an employee's religious or ethical belief. An employer is obliged to reasonably accommodate an employee's religious beliefs provided that does not unreasonably disrupt the employer's activities. Section 28 (3) states:

Where a religious or ethical belief requires its adherents to follow a particular practice, an employer must accommodate the practice so long as any adjustment of the employer's activities required to accommodate the practice does not unreasonably disrupt the employer's activities

Other legislation to be considered includes the Holidays Act (2003), and the Employment Relations Act (ERA, 2000, Section 4.), where there is a legal requirement for workers' requests, for example for time off for religious holidays,

to be considered in 'good faith' by all parties. The basis of employment relations in New Zealand is understood in New Zealand employment law to be the maintenance of 'good faith' relationships between employer and employee; that is, dealing with each other with respect and in an open and honest fashion and this should include employers having good processes and procedures for dealing with issues and ways of ensuring that employees are aware of them.

Also of relevance is the Statement on Religious Diversity in New Zealand (2007, 2009)<sup>7</sup> now endorsed by major religious groups and others around the country, which recommends that: 'Reasonable steps should be taken in educational and work environments and in the delivery of public services to recognise and accommodate diverse religious beliefs and practices'. That is, employees' requests for religious 'practices' at work while the responsibility of both employees and employers should be reasonably accommodated. In almost all cases, these different calendars, dress, personal styles, dietary rules, and moral codes can be reasonably easily accommodated with information, awareness, forward planning, and goodwill.

The basis of good work practices accommodating religious and cultural differences is the 'good faith' of both employer and employee and the fundamental human rights principle that an individual's right to freedom of religion and freedom from religious discrimination is tied to, and dependent on, respecting the rights of others to have different beliefs and practices. This extends, of course, to respecting the right of others not to have religious beliefs at all.

## Process

Since 2007 the Human Rights Commission and Professor Paul Morris of the Religious Studies Programme at Victoria University of Wellington have been reviewing and developing each of the articles of the Statement on Religious Diversity in New Zealand (2007, 2009) at the annual New

4 UDHR, 18: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change their religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest their religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

5 ICCPR, 1966, Article 18:1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of their choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest their religion or belief in worship, observance, practice and teaching. 2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair their freedom to have or to adopt a religion or belief of their choice. 3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others. 4. The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions.

6 The Act does allow for religious exceptions, e.g. in the employment of principals or teachers in integrated or private schools, or of social workers by particular faith based organisations (s. 28(2)). It also permits educational establishments to be maintained wholly or principally for students of one religious belief (s. 58(1)).

7 Statement on Religious Diversity in New Zealand (Wellington: Human Right Commission, 2007, 2009).



Zealand Diversity Forum. Education was the focus in 2007; safety and security in 2008; and in 2010 the religion and media issue was further explored. The 2009 Diversity Forum included a panel<sup>8</sup> which discussed religious diversity in the New Zealand Workplace. The panel recommended that a working party<sup>9</sup> be established and a reference group<sup>10</sup> be set up and terms of reference set for both.

There was a progress report at the New Zealand Diversity Forum August, 2010.

A draft document was drawn up by Professor Morris and revised by the Working Group. The Reference Group were invited to raise issues of religion in the workplace and discussed the revised document. Following the comments and responses from the Reference Group the document was again revised. This version was available on the Human Rights Commission and a number of other relevant websites, including the New Zealand Religious Diversity Network, for public submissions during August and September 2010 and generated considerable community feedback. In the light of these recommendations, suggestions and comments, the document was revised again and presented to a joint meeting of the Working Group and Reference Group in November 2010. The final version was approved by the Human Rights Commission in June 2011.

## High days and holidays

Although many of our national holidays are based on the traditional Christian year in particular Christmas and Easter, an increasing number of New Zealand workers subscribe to other sacred calendars with different religious holy days and holidays, and the issue can arise of accommodating these.

**Q: As a Muslim I would like to take a day off work for Eid Al-Fitr, the end of the month of Ramadan. Should I expect my employer to let me do this?**

**A: First it is important to recognise that Eid Al-Fitr is not a public holiday listed in the Holidays Act so that a request for time off for this religious day will need to be a request for leave. Your employer must respond to your request in good faith and anything you can do**

**to facilitate knowledge about Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr could be an important factor in the response. However, to ensure that employees are able to participate in religious services and ceremonies leave requests should be made well in advance, ideally annually, to allow adequate preparation for planning and cover.**

Employees should negotiate in good faith and have a reasonable expectation that these timely requests will be granted as part of paid leave or in exceptional circumstances as unpaid leave.

There are many good examples in New Zealand of the rescheduling of work days to allow holy days to be taken off and where forward planning and good will on the part of both employers and employees have resulted in the different holy day calendars being factored in to work schedules. Some employment agreements have provision for cultural or religious leave.

Since 1 April 2011, employees and employers can agree in writing to the transfer of public holidays to another working day. Requests for such transfer must be made in good faith and cannot reduce the total number of public holidays that an employee is entitled to; avoid the payment of public holiday penal rates; or, an employee's entitlement to alternative holidays for working on public holidays (Holidays Amendment Act, 2010).

## Compassionate bereavement leave

Different religions have different requirements of compassionate bereavement leave. Although current law allows for up to three days some religious traditions have longer periods of formal mourning which exclude work.

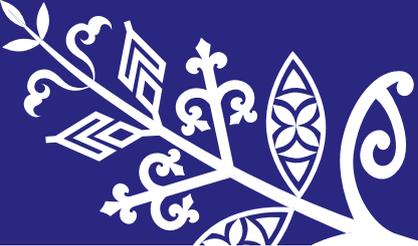
**Q: I am an Orthodox Jew and Judaism requires immediate family (mourners for parents, siblings or children) to sit Shiva, that is, seven days of mourning, and this means I cannot work during this time. Can I reasonably expect being permitted to be off work for this period?**

**A: It would certainly help if your employer was aware of the details of your bereavement requirements. Your**

8 The New Zealand Diversity Forum, Wellington, August, 2009 – Panel: Paul Morris, Andrew Little, Edwina Pio, and Paul MacKay ([www.hrc.co.nz/hrc\\_new/hrc/cms/files/documents/16-Sep-2009\\_13-42-50\\_RDF\\_Paul\\_Morris.doc](http://www.hrc.co.nz/hrc_new/hrc/cms/files/documents/16-Sep-2009_13-42-50_RDF_Paul_Morris.doc)).

9 The Working Group (Eileen Brown, Justine Cannon, Paul MacKay, Paul Morris, and Edwina Pio, facilitated by Rohan Jaduram) met in June, August and November 2010 (joint meeting with Reference Group).

10 The Reference Group (Glyn Carpenter, Rajiv Chaturvedi, Andrew Geard, Anwar Ghani, Stephen Goodman, Paul Morris, Paddy Payne, Verpal Singh, and Amala Wrightson, facilitated by Rohan Jaduram) met in June, August and November (joint meeting with the Working Group).



request (under HRA, 1993, s.28 (3)) will depend upon the details of your employment agreement concerning bereavement leave provision, or whether you need to apply for annual leave or leave without pay. The minimum provision for bereavement is 1-3 days paid leave (depending on the closeness of association between the employee and the deceased, Holidays Act, 2003, 69-70). You may be able to substitute this for an alternative holiday. You will need to secure your employer's agreement to use holidays or unpaid leave. Forward notice is often very difficult in these circumstances but prior discussion of this possibility would be helpful preparation.

## Prayer times and facilities

A number of religions have regular daily and weekly prayer times and these can occur during normal working hours. The reasonable accommodation of prayer times will be dependent upon the nature of the business and in some cases it may not be possible to accommodate prayer times.

**Q: I am a Seventh Day Adventist. In respect of my Sabbath day, can I insist on not working on Saturdays?**

**A: It would depend on the nature of the business but this needs to be raised at the time of hiring and would need to be specifically agreed in your employment agreement.**

There have been concerns about prayer times during the work day. For Muslims, for example, normally there is a requirement for two, sometimes three daily sessions, which take less than ten minutes each. Generally employees can choose to pray during their rest and meal break times. Some employees wish to attend public prayers on Fridays or leave early on Fridays before the commencement of their Sabbath. An employer can reasonably expect employees to ensure that adequate notice is given and any time taken off is made up.

Employers have been requested by employees to make rooms or spaces available for daily prayers. There are excellent precedents in New Zealand for such provision. An employee should be able to expect that the practicable provision of facilities to allow such activities to take place will be considered in good faith.

## Dress codes and appearance

There have been disputes, debates and discussions about clothing and appearance at work. A number of religions have widely and daily worn communal dress and appearance codes that can raise issues in the New Zealand workplace. They can, for example, potentially conflict with dress codes or company uniforms. A number of religions require headgear, such as turbans or skullcaps for men, or headscarves for women, or that men have beards. Other traditions have guidelines about women not wearing trousers or usual men's attire.

**Q: I am a Sikh. Can I wear my turban at work?**

**A: You can reasonably expect that the request to wear the turban will be considered in good faith. This will require the agreement of your employer. Optimally, clothing and personal styles which are worn in accordance with normal, communal religious practice can be reasonably accommodated.**

**Q: Can my employer refuse to allow me to wear a headscarf as part of a company uniform?**

**A: You can reasonably expect that the request to wear the headscarf with the company uniform will be considered in good faith.**

Ideally this will be discussed and an agreement reached at the time when the terms of employment are negotiated. Where health and safety requirements specify protective clothing or equipment be used and this creates a difficulty, as can other circumstances, such as the wearing of certain types of jewellery, the issue should be considered with the reasonable expectation of finding a practical and acceptable resolution. Employment agreements often include dress codes or workplace policies.

## Public religious displays at work

There have been a number of concerns about public displays of religion in the workplace. Issues have arisen about the wearing of conspicuous religious insignia, the decoration of work spaces with religious items or statuettes, or the decoration of walls with posters depicting religious topics.



**Q: Can I put up an anti-abortion poster on my office or workspace wall?<sup>11</sup>**

**A:** While some employers have specific policies in place about workspace decor many do not. If in doubt discuss this with your employer before displaying potentially unwelcome and controversial material.

**Q: I have a necklace with a cross. Can I wear this at work?**

**A:** If there are guidelines set by your employer covering this, then these should be followed. Otherwise you should be able to wear the necklace dependent upon safety concerns and prominence.

Although the law does not prescribe employers' and employees' mutual rights and obligations, in these matters they may be set out in specific workplace policies. If in doubt about your workplace policy, discuss this with your employer. Where there are no specific policies in place the discreet wearing of religious insignia, or the discreet decoration of work spaces with religious items or artefacts should be considered acceptable as long as it does not interfere with work practices or the safety of fellow workers. Respect of others is essential in the workplace and you need to be aware that your actions may offend others.

## Religiously problematic or forbidden activities

Rules about permissible and forbidden food and drink are a feature of many religious traditions. A number of different faith groups do not drink alcohol. Religious traditions hold particular activities and products to be morally unacceptable to them on religious grounds. Ideally these concerns should be discussed in good faith by both employee and employer and an agreement reached at the time when the terms of employment are negotiated.

**Q: I am a Buddhist and do not eat meat on religious grounds. Can I expect vegetarian food in the staff canteen?<sup>12</sup>**

**A:** In staff canteens and catering facilities employers

should try to provide alternative food and drink, such as vegetarian and/or vegan options, so that employees can follow their religious or ethical norms.<sup>13</sup>

Many New Zealand workplaces include vegetarian options for employees.

**Q: There are often social functions at my work, for example, on Friday afternoons people get together during work time and alcoholic drinks are served. Can I refuse to attend?**

**A:** While it is difficult to refuse to attend a function during normal working hours, you could suggest to your employer that non-alcoholic beverages are available at work functions.

Alcohol is less evident in some societies than in New Zealand and in others it is absent altogether. When and where it is practicable employers should try to ensure that alternatives to alcohol are available. Many employers already make this provision.

**Q1: My religious ethics do not condone particular lifestyle publications, and I consider the use of certain 'emergency contraceptives' to be immoral. As a driver can I refuse to deliver these?**

**Q2: My religion forbids the eating or handling of products derived from the pig, such as pork or bacon. Can I refuse to do so at work?<sup>14</sup>**

**A:** Ideally these issues should have been communicated at the time of hiring. However, if such issues only became clear at a later date you should discuss them with your employer

## The promotion of religion in the workplace

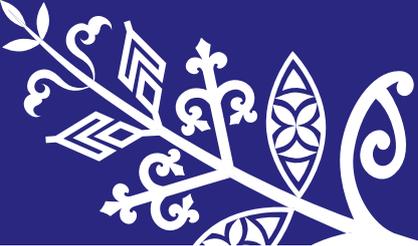
Staff should be protected from unwanted, significant or repeated religious advances at work. Explicit religious literature should not be disseminated at work. Work notice boards should not be used for religious purposes or messages. Some companies have policies on the use of notice boards. The right to have a religious belief and not to hold religious beliefs are equally protected under the law (HRA, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> This could of course be due to religious or moral issue.

<sup>12</sup> Again, vegetarian or vegan practices can be based on religious or moral issues.

<sup>13</sup> It is increasingly becoming the case in New Zealand that restaurants, cafes, and workplace canteens and functions offer non-meat alternatives and it is reasonable to expect that this option is offered.

<sup>14</sup> If a significant part of a job involved such activities it raises the issue of a person being qualified for the position (HRA, 1993, s. 22).



**Q:** One of my co-workers keeps giving me religious tracts and pamphlets, asking me about my religious life and inviting me to attend her religious group. Is this acceptable?

**A:** If you find this offensive you should raise this with your co-worker or employer.

**Q:** In the attempt to reduce stress levels there is a yoga session at my place of employment. Can I refuse to attend as I understand this to be a religious activity?

**A:** Such activities should not be compulsory. However, if you feel pressure to attend then you should raise this with your employer.

**Q:** The company where I work has a prayer session before work each morning. Can I refuse to take part?

**A:** Yes, such prayer cannot be compulsory and you can refuse to participate without any negative consequences.

A number of firms have public prayers at work, but these can only be on a voluntary basis.

**Q:** My work starts sessions with a karakia, can I object to this on religious grounds?

**A:** While recognising that it is sometimes not easy to withdraw from group activities at work, such karakia should not be compulsory and you should discuss this with your employer. However, you should be aware that karakia can be secular or religious. A number of New Zealand workplaces have introduced elements of tikanga Māori under the rubric of responsibilities for biculturalism under the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi, and a number have now introduced karakia policies. Employers should be aware that for some employees karakia and waiata at work can raise religious concerns, and that opportunities to discuss this are needed.

## Complaints, concerns and issues

In the first instance discuss the issue with your manager or employer or union official. If the matter is not resolved and most are, please contact:

**the Human Rights Commission on 0800 496 877**  
or the **Department of Labour contact centre on 0800 209 020**

It might be helpful for both employers and employees to work through the checklists below. Further enquiries should be address to the Human Rights Commission or the Department of Labour (details above).

# Religious diversity in the New Zealand workplace - Employer's checklist

## 1 Information and data

Does your company keep data on diversity so as to cater for diverse needs at work?

Does this include details of the religious diversity of your employees?

Do you have employees of different faiths?

## 2 Policies

Does your company have a policy, or policies, on diversity at work?

Does your company's diversity policy include religious diversity?

If you do have a policy are employees aware of it?

How do you ensure this?

## 3 Holidays/Time Off

Do you have a calendar with different religious holidays to help with planning?

Does your company have a policy regarding religious holiday leave, paid or unpaid?

Is this policy clearly explained to employees?

Do you have arrangements in place to discuss any potential conflicts resulting from religious needs for time off and/or to cover or switch shifts?

Do you factor in different religious holidays when planning meetings, training, and workshops?

## 4 Religious Practice

Does your company allow religious prayer or meditation in the workplace?

Do you provide space or facilities for such practices?

Do you have karakia or waiata at work?

Is there a policy on this?

## 5 Dress

Does your company have a uniform or dress code?

If an employee's religious practice conflicts with the dress code, do you have policies that allow for alternatives?

Do you have in place a process for communicating religious dress concerns?

## 6 Food

Does your company provide food for employees?

Do these meals accommodate your employees' religious and ethical beliefs about diet?

Do you offer vegetarian food?

Does your company hold get togethers that include food and drink?

Do these include non-alcoholic drinks and foods that cater to the religious and ethical practices of your staff?

## 7 Office Space

Do you have a policy regarding decoration of personal workspace?

Does this policy include religious decoration?

Do you allow decoration of office space for holidays, such as Christmas?

## 8 Process

Do your employees have ways to express their specific religious concerns?

Do you have a specific person with responsibility for diversity issues?

Do you know who to contact for more information?

# Religious diversity in the New Zealand workplace - Employee's checklist

## 1 Information and data

Does your company know about your faith and any implications it has for the workplace?

Does your company keep data on the religious diversity of employees?

Were your religious needs communicated at the time of hiring?

If not, do you know who to inform or how to do this?

## 2 Policies

Does your company have a policy, or policies, on diversity at work?

Does your company's diversity policy include religious diversity?

If there is a policy are you aware of its details?

## 3 Holidays/Time Off

Does your company have a policy regarding religious holiday leave, paid or unpaid?

Has this policy been clearly explained to you?

Do you have arrangements in place to discuss any potential conflicts resulting from religious needs for time off and/or to cover or switch shifts?

Does your work factor in different religious holidays when planning meetings, training, and workshops?

## 4 Religious Practice

Does your company allow religious prayer or meditation in the workplace?

Do they provide space or facilities for such practices?

Do you have karakia or waiata at work?

Is there a policy on this?

## 5 Dress

Does your company have a uniform or dress code?

If your religious practice conflicts with the dress code, does your company have policies that allow for alternatives?

Is there a process in place for communicating religious dress concerns?

## 6 Food

Does your company ever provide food for employees?

Do these meals accommodate your religious and ethical beliefs about diet?

Are you offered a vegetarian food option?

Does your company hold get togethers that include food and drink?

Do these include non-alcoholic drinks and foods that cater to your religious and ethical practices and those of other staff?

## 7 Office Space

Does your company have a policy regarding decoration of personal workspace?

Does this policy include religious decoration?

Does your workplace allow decoration of work and office space for holidays, such as Christmas?

## 8 Process

Do you have ways to express your particular religious concerns?

Do you have a specific person with responsibility for diversity issues?

Do you know who to contact for more information?



## Statement on Religious Diversity

New Zealand is a country of many faiths with a significant minority who profess no religion. Increasing religious diversity is a significant feature of public life.

At the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, Governor Hobson affirmed, in response to a question from Catholic Bishop Pompallier, “the several faiths (beliefs) of England, of the Wesleyans, of Rome, and also Māori custom shall alike be protected”. This foundation creates the opportunity to reaffirm an acknowledgement of the diversity of beliefs in New Zealand.

Christianity has played and continues to play a formative role in the development of New Zealand in terms of the nation’s identity, culture, beliefs, institutions and values.

New settlers have always been religiously diverse, but only recently have the numbers of some of their faith communities grown significantly as a result of migration from Asia, Africa and the Middle East. These communities have a positive role to play in our society. It is in this context that we recognise the right to religion and the responsibilities of religious communities.

International treaties including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights uphold the right to freedom of religion and belief - the right to hold a belief; the right to change one’s religion or belief; the right to express one’s religion or belief; and the right not to hold a belief. These rights are reflected in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act and Human Rights Act. The right to religion entails affording this right to others and not infringing their human rights.

The following statement provides a framework for the recognition of New Zealand’s diverse faith communities and their harmonious interaction with each other, with government and with other groups in society:

### 1. The State and Religion

The State seeks to treat all faith communities and those who profess no religion equally before the law. New Zealand has no official or established religion.

### 2. The Right to Religion

New Zealand upholds the right to freedom of religion and belief and the right to freedom from discrimination on the grounds of religious or other belief.

### 3. The Right to Safety

Faith communities and their members have a right to safety and security.

### 4. The Right to Freedom

The right to freedom of expression and freedom of the media are vital for democracy but should be exercised with responsibility.

### 5. Recognition and Accommodation

Reasonable steps should be taken in educational and work environments and in the delivery of public services to recognise and accommodate diverse religious beliefs and practices.

### 6. Education

Schools should teach an understanding of different religious and spiritual traditions in a manner that reflects the diversity of their national and local community.

### 7. Religious Differences

Debate and disagreement about religious beliefs will occur but must be exercised within the rule of law and without resort to violence.

### 8. Cooperation and Understanding

Government and faith communities have a responsibility to build and maintain positive relationships with each other, and to promote mutual respect and understanding.



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