



Social Service
Providers
Aotearoa

Submission to the Ministry of Social Development on social cohesion and making New Zealand safer and more inclusive

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Introduction & Background

1. Social Service Providers Aotearoa (SSPA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of a unique Aotearoa perspective on what social cohesion means in our country, the steps we need to take as a nation to build stronger communities and to develop a draft strategic framework and monitoring and evaluation regime.¹ SSPA believes that this kaupapa is of significance for all people and communities in our country, including children, young people, families and whānau. It is important for the people of Aotearoa New Zealand both now, and intergenerationally into the future.
2. SSPA welcomes the Government's commitment to making progress on the recommendations detailed in The Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch Masjidain on 15 March 2019 (RCOI report), and the progress achieved to date to deliver the social cohesion recommendations as detailed in Government Response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Terrorist Attack on Christchurch Masjidain – First Report Back².
3. We welcome the work of Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment responsible for coordinating a whole-of-government approach to strengthening social cohesion, as outlined in the Cabinet paper: Approach to Improving Social Cohesion and Public Engagement³. We also note the work done over many years by Te Kāhui Tika Tangata the New Zealand Human Rights Commission on the kaupapa of social cohesion, anti-discrimination and building a culture of belonging and inclusion of all peoples in Aotearoa.⁴
4. Our submission contributes to the engagement process facilitated by the Ministry of Social Development by highlighting the importance of this kaupapa for children, young people and their families and whānau. We also take the opportunity in this submission to highlight the crucial role of NGO social services to support thriving communities. We wish to draw attention to the need to deepen mahi to bring government and non-government responses and efforts to grow social cohesion together in a joined-up approach.
5. SSPA's written submission to the engagement process sits alongside and complementary to the input of SSPA already shared with the Ministry of Social Development at a hui on 22 July 2021 in Te Whanganui-a-Tara, and any written submissions/other input that individual SSPA members make through the engagement process.

¹ <https://social-cohesion.citizenspace.com/social-cohesion/public-consultation/consultation/>

² <https://dpmc.govt.nz/sites/default/files/2021-04/rcoi-first-report-back.pdf>

³ <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/information-releases/cabinet-papers/2021/paper-approach-to-improving-social-cohesion-and-public-engagement-including-appendices-1-4-.pdf>

⁴ See, e.g. <https://www.hrc.co.nz/news/social-cohesion-requires-all-society-approach/>

About Social Service Providers Aotearoa

6. SSPA is a national membership-based organisation, representing some 200 non-profit organisations from around Aotearoa, based in regional and urban locations.⁵
7. SSPA members are funded by government to deliver social services in our communities every day, with a predominant focus on children, rangatahi, families and whānau. Our affiliate members are organisations that deliver social services for these people, and organisations and individuals who work in areas aligned to the interests of children, young people, whānau or communities.
8. SSPA's vision is that Aotearoa's NGO social services are sustainable, making a positive impact every day in our communities, supporting children, young people and whānau to thrive now and into the future. SSPA works to strengthen Aotearoa's social sector through advocacy and engagement, learning and development, relationships and sector leadership.

SSPA's views on achieving social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand

9. SSPA supports the view that work to improve social cohesion must recognise Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural foundations and be based on Te Tiriti o Waitangi and its principles, and be grounded in Te Ao Māori approaches. We broadly agree with the definition of social cohesion as outlined in the RCOI Report and with the six key ways to help make Aotearoa New Zealand more socially cohesive.
10. SSPA believes that the development of a social cohesion framework and actions should lead to the growth and normalisation of a national culture of inclusion, safety, wellbeing and thriving communities, and we see that this is achievable in our country. However, much like the approach New Zealand has taken to eliminating COVID-19 from our motu, it will take all of us. Social cohesion needs to be a collective effort, with collective ownership. This needs to start in communities, Iwi, hapū, whānau and families, and be enabled and supported by Government, NGOs, private businesses and organisations.
11. It is positive that a national dialogue about social cohesion is taking place on what it means, the benefits, how it relates to upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi and how it might be used to underpin policy development and service delivery. It is vital that the input of communities is heard and incorporated in any approach, to ensure the success of the development of policies and programmes of work.
12. Working together with and as communities in a collective, community-driven approach is, in SSPA's view, essential to making significant progress on social cohesion in Aotearoa, now and into the future. Through a national focus on social cohesion, the opportunity exists to make some systemic shifts that result in tangible positive differences in the lives of children, young people, families and whānau. An overarching aim should be for our communities to be characterised by inclusivity, a valuing of difference, the vibrancy of our multicultural society, grounded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi,

⁵ Find out more about SSPA at www.sspa.org.nz Our Strategic Plan 2021-23 can be found at https://www.sspa.org.nz/images/SSPA_Strategic_Plan_2021-23_Final_version_for_web.pdf

and where children and young people feel a true sense of belonging, no matter their identity. SSPA is ready to support and contribute to these shifts to support and strengthen thriving families and whānau in communities throughout the motu.

13. The views of children, rangatahi, families and whānau must be central to this mahi and the approach to growing social cohesion in Aotearoa. They will benefit from social cohesion and its desired outcomes, and therefore their views must be taken into account in the development of a national approach in this regard. SSPA is pleased that Cabinet has agreed to build on existing interventions and we note that those with a strong focus on children and young people could have a significant impact towards building a socially cohesive Aotearoa into the future, with children and young people having shared social norms of empathy, understanding and equity.
14. Children and rangatahi themselves have already been clear that belonging and inclusion, and living in a society free of discrimination and racism is essential to their ability to experience lives where they can enjoy their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to experience holistic wellbeing and hauora.⁶ Children are taonga and whānau-centred policy and delivery is the way forward for progress in Aotearoa⁷.
15. SSPA observes that the outcomes of social cohesion work also have wider relevance to a range of government priorities. It would be mutually reinforcing if this work aligns more explicitly with existing strategies, priorities, strategic planning and funding decisions across government agencies. SSPA agrees with the position that this work aligns with The Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy⁸ and should also align with further existing national approaches to addressing underlying drivers of racism, violence, inequality, family poverty and discrimination.
16. SSPA further emphasises the essential role that NGO and iwi social service organisations play around Aotearoa every day to build more socially cohesive communities and a more inclusive society at-large. There is innovative and transformative work happening within communities by social service providers working alongside families and whānau, and with children and young people who are unable to be with their family or whānau for a time and therefore have to enter the state care system, and with children and rangatahi who lack a sense of belonging in their family, whānau, or community.
17. However, to harness the full effectiveness and potential of NGO social service providers to contribute to social cohesion in Aotearoa working with children and

⁶ E.g. see: Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy <https://childyouthwellbeing.govt.nz/resources/child-and-youth-wellbeing-strategy>, What Makes a Good Life? Children and young people's views on wellbeing <https://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/What-makes-a-good-life-report-OCC-OT-2019-WEB2.pdf> and Education Matters to Me <https://www.occ.org.nz/assets/Uploads/OCC-STA-Education-Matters-to-Me-Key-Insights-24Jan2018.pdf>

⁷ View the SSPA Agenda for Change which sets out the transformational change SSPA is advocating for in relation to Aotearoa's social service sector and for children, rangatahi, families and whānau outcomes: https://www.sspa.org.nz/images/A3_Big_Ideas_final_July_2020.pdf

⁸ <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/information-releases/cabinet-papers/2021/paper-approach-to-improving-social-cohesion-and-public-engagement-including-appendices-1-4-.pdf>

whānau, the long-standing challenges for the NGO and iwi social service sector must be addressed. This includes addressing the approximately \$630 million annual funding gap between what government funds NGO social service providers to provide, and the actual costs of delivery⁹. Although there have been some positive changes to funding levels and contracting approaches since 2019 these have not been systematised and the significant funding gap still exists. Other issues that must be addressed to achieve the full potential of the contribution of NGO social services to social cohesion are addressing pay equity for NGO social service kaimahi, addressing silo-ing of funding and the lack of a joined-up approach from government.

18. In this regard, SSPA notes that there is currently progressive work underway being led by the Ministry of Social Development Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora to improve the commissioning of social services across Aotearoa.¹⁰ This work, which has been commissioned by the Minister for Social Development and Employment is seeking to address current concerns about things such as funding, procurement, monitoring and evaluation. SSPA is a member of the Project Board for this mahi and we see linkages between the progressive approach being developed, and the potential role for NGO social services to be better enabled to contribute to social cohesion in Aotearoa through mahi with children, rangatahi, families and whānau.
19. Finally, we note that one aim of bringing government and community-based responses increasingly together should be directed towards delivering outcomes that are genuinely responsive to family and whānau need, and which enable solutions that are locally-grounded and encourage collaboration between service providers. People and whānau are best supported by integrated community services grounded in local communities and which are informed by the aspirations and needs of the whānau, hapū, iwi, families, children and young people that they serve.

⁹ [https://www.sspa.org.nz/images/Social_Service_System - The Funding Gap and How to Bridge It - FULL REPORT FINAL.pdf](https://www.sspa.org.nz/images/Social_Service_System_-_The_Funding_Gap_and_How_to_Bridge_It_-_FULL_REPORT_FINAL.pdf)

¹⁰ <https://www.msd.govt.nz/documents/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/planning-strategy/social-sector-commissioning/msd-social-sector-commissioning.pdf>