

Draft National Statement on Religious Diversity

Individual Feedback Form

Please return to nzdiversity@hrc.co.nz or to Race Relations Commissioner,
Human Rights Commission, PO Box 121411, Thorndon, Wellington

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1. *Does the statement address the key issues of religious freedom and religious tolerance in your community?*

Yes, but these are already addressed by the Bill of Rights Act and the Human Rights Act.

2. *If not, what guidelines need to be added or deleted?*

See my comments on individual guidelines.

3. *Do you have any suggestions as to the wording of the introduction and the guidelines?*

Introduction:

The introduction doesn't make any mention of people with no religion even though they make up over a third of the population.

If faith communities really did have harmonious interaction with each other, with government and with other groups in society, then there would be no need for this statement.

Guideline 1:

This guideline is good. It would be nice if it were true.

Guideline 2:

While everyone has the right to their own personal beliefs, it is also important to make it clear that you are only allowed to act upon those beliefs in accordance with the Law.

Guideline 3:

This statement doesn't say anything about the safety of those not in faith communities. It should be changed to 'Everyone has a right to safety and security regardless of their religious or ethical beliefs'.

Guideline 4:

What is considered to be responsible and informed is often impossible to agree upon so the wording may be seen as eroding the right to freedom of expression. Changing the mandatory shall to the recommending should avoids this.

Guideline 5:

While the sentiment may be good, the interpretation of what are reasonable steps makes this guideline provide little or no worth. It is important that any steps taken to recognise and accommodate religious beliefs and practices do not alienate or disadvantage others.

Guideline 6:

This begs the questions of what exactly is meant by 'understanding of the diversity', where does this fit in the curriculum, and how will this be taught in an impartial manner?

Guideline 7:

Well stated.

Guideline 8:

This guideline definitely should not be present. People and groups have both the right to chose who they associate with, and the right to freedom of expression which allows them to voice difference of opinions.

4. How can you give effect to this statement in your community?

I first need to be convinced that the statement is worthy of support. Currently I don't see the need for the statement or what it is meant to achieve. At the Auckland City consultation meeting it appeared that even those pushing the statement didn't seem to know where it is headed.

I think that a simple statement to the effect that New Zealand is a multicultural country where everyone is free to choose their own beliefs and that this freedom is backed up by the Bill of Rights Act and Human Rights Act legislation would be far more appropriate.

5. Would you like to receive updates on the draft statement and other interfaith issues through the New Zealand Diversity Action Programme e-newsletter, Te Korowai Whakapono?

Yes