

# Cultural Celebration Award Entrant:

## New Zealand Police

Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/141145310>

Valuing Diversity a core value for New Zealand Police. New Zealand Police recognise how incorporating and understanding a diverse range of cultures and religions can aid them in providing appropriate services to the community.

Over 100 ethnic groups and Iwi are currently represented within the police workforce itself, thereby increasing the community's trust and confidence in the police, overcoming negative perceptions and ultimately encouraging more people from diverse backgrounds to want to join the organisation.

Over the last ten years, the number of Maori officers has increased by over 20%, the number of Pasifika officers has increased by over 57% and almost 300 Asian staff have joined in that time. The NZ Police recently appointed 12 new Maori Inspectors, four ethnic Inspectors and Pacifica celebrated the appointment of the first woman Pacific District Commander.

Not only does a diverse workforce encourage diverse recruitment, it also makes a big difference to the way the police deliver services to the whole community and the way in which they are perceived by that community.

Diverse language and cultural skills have practically assisted the police with operational issues, such as during the Christchurch earthquake when police were able to deploy staff to successfully assist families from over 20 different ethnic backgrounds.

Officers with the appropriate skills and knowledge can be deployed to address specific issues, such as an officer who used his faith to connect with a female victim and another officer who used her cultural skills to dissuade a person from committing suicide.

"New Zealand Police recognises that a 'one size fits all' recruitment campaign does not successfully lead to diverse people joining the police service," says Inspector Rakesh Naidoo.

"We have been focusing on people 'using who they are' not losing who they are' when they join the police. We need a range of backgrounds and skills to appropriately work with and reflect the diversity of the New Zealand public."

Language skills are pivotal to ensuring effective communication with the public. New Zealand Police currently run seminars to address the needs of specific ethnic groups which allows family groups to attend culturally appropriate venues with officers who speak their language.

A diversity of language is also one of the benefits of the Auckland Safety Patrols, which are made up of 150 volunteer patrollers comprising nearly 30 different ethnicities and speaking 50 different languages between them. These patrols work alongside police and average

between 500-600 preventative patrolling hours a month, greatly adding to the capacity of the police service to deal with the diverse community. It also allows volunteers to see whether a career with the police is for them, with to date over 70 patrollers subsequently joining the police.

It is not only those officers and volunteers from ethnic backgrounds who have an understanding of cultural and religious needs of the community. New Zealand Police has made efforts to ensure all police staff have access to practical advice for engaging in a culturally appropriate manner with the various faiths. 'A Practical Reference to Religious Diversity' was developed in partnership with members of the various faith communities and interfaith representatives, and is a resource openly available on the police website.

Addressing and celebrating religious and cultural needs is also important when catering for a diverse workforce.

"We are proud that New Zealand Police is the first police organisation in Australasia to develop a protocol on incorporating the Turban as part of police uniform," says Inspector Rakesh Naidoo.

"The protocol recognising the Turban and Sikh articles of faith was developed in partnership with the Sikh community. We asked them to analyse police training and its impact on a Sikh officer, as well as assist in designing a Turban appropriate for police uniform. There are now five officers who wear a Turban".

Officers of any faith may have requirements during the working day, such as prescribed prayer. To this end, an Interfaith Prayer Room has been set up at The Royal New Zealand Police College in partnership with the interfaith community.

New Zealand Police also worked with a Muslim officer to open a Mosque in Taihape - previously the closest Mosque was Palmerston North. The officer identified a property across the road from the station and raised funds with the Muslim community whilst police colleagues assisted in renovating the building. The key code to the Mosque is kept at the police station so that any visitors or officers can use the building for daily prayers.

New Zealand Police strive to work effectively with and positively reflect the community, providing opportunities for staff, as well as the wider community, to express their cultural differences in an accepting environment. Their efforts are rewarded by the increased diversification of the workforce, the positive engagement of their staff and reception of the wider community, reinforced by the latest independent citizens' satisfaction survey which scored an enviable 78% in trust and confidence in the police. A great result all round.