

Story: Anti-racism and Treaty of Waitangi activism

Page 5. Government and community anti-racism organisations

The variety of ethnicities represented in New Zealand increased sharply from the 1960s as people emigrated from the Pacific Islands to fill gaps in the labour market. A [new wave of migrants arrived from the 1990s](#), when immigrants from Asia were encouraged to bring their capital and skills to New Zealand. Refugees and migrants from several African countries, and from elsewhere, have contributed to a much more culturally diverse society. By 2038 it is expected that [Pākehā](#) will comprise 66% of the population, while Māori will be 20%, Asians 21%, and Pacific peoples 11% (some people identify with more than one ethnic group).

New challenges to cultural and ethnic diversity, and new forms of ethnic intolerance, have emerged. Both [community and government organisations](#) have been formed to combat discrimination and to support ethnic, migrant and refugee communities.

Earning international respect

In 1996 New Zealand Prime Minister Jim Bolger officially apologised to the people of South Africa for the 1981 Springbok rugby tour of New Zealand. Later that year, at the suggestion of former HART activist Trevor Richards, Labour leader Helen Clark moved that Parliament ‘acknowledges the importance of the contribution made by New Zealand citizens and organisations over the period 1948 to 1990 to national and international campaigns against apartheid; [and] recognises that their contribution ... was also responsible for earning New Zealand enduring international

Human Rights Commission

The Office of the Race Relations Conciliator was established in 1971 to promote positive race relations in New Zealand, and to settle complaints of racial discrimination, racial harassment and incitement of racial disharmony. In 1977 the [Human Rights Commission](#), Te Kāhui Tika Tangata, was formed to promote a wider range of human rights issues than the race relations conciliator did. In 2001 the Office of the Race Relations Conciliator merged with the Human Rights Commission and a new race relations commissioner was established to investigate complaints of unlawful discrimination in public life, including in employment; access to public places, vehicles and facilities; provision of goods and services; accommodation and education.

Treaty of Waitangi

From the 1980s the Treaty of Waitangi came to assume far greater importance in New Zealand life. The authority of the Waitangi Tribunal was extended in 1985 to [consider claims for any breach of the treaty](#) since 1840. In 1987 the Court of Appeal ruled that the treaty embodied specific principles applying to the present day, and these were

respect'.¹ The motion was carried unanimously.

subsequently included in more than 30 pieces of legislation. Constitutional arrangements, economic development, land, language, science, health, education, justice, intellectual property, and fishing and resource management and ownership were all affected. This in turn created responsibilities for government departments and the need for further treaty education.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is entrenched in New Zealand's political structure and is integral to the social and economic development of the country. Public debate about the future of the treaty relationship in a multi-cultural society will continue, as the population continues to change.

Footnotes:

1. Trevor Richards, *Dancing on our bones: New Zealand, South Africa, rugby and racism*. Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1999, p. 252–3.

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