



# RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN NEW ZEALAND WORKPLACES

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## FOREWORD

In my role as Race Relations Commissioner I have had the pleasure of working with Professor Pio on a number of projects. We share the same goal of fostering harmonious relations amongst diverse communities and people who now call New Zealand home.

As New Zealand's first Professor of Diversity, Dr Pio understands the challenges and opportunities we face as one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world.

This report focusses on the need to acknowledge that we are now also more religiously diverse than ever before and if we are to live up to our reputation as being one the world's most peaceful countries then we need to respect, understand and educate ourselves about all New Zealanders faiths and cultures. Religious diversity is not something to fear but something to celebrate as part of our vibrant multicultural society.

This report will not only inform you but provide practical tools and advice for dealing with different faith cultures especially in the work place environment.

I applaud Edwina and her colleagues for the positive contribution they make towards a more inclusive and diverse Aotearoa New Zealand.

Susan Devoy  
Race Relations Commissioner  
Human Rights Commission, New Zealand

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Work gives routine to daily life, immerses workers in networks of relationships, and provides the means to pay for things significant to self-definition. Regular employment not only provides important confirmation of moral worth, but also creates and sustains identity. Work-life is shaped by a complex web of ethnicity, gender, religion, class and socio-cultural influences. Organisations tend to address issues of gender, sexual orientation, age and disability rather than religion. Religion has many definitions, such as that which inspires awe, reverence, belief in an omnipotent God, the divine spark in every individual as well as faith adherents who are spiritual beings rather than following specific institutionalised aspects of a religion. Discussing religious diversity is considered dangerous as it can quickly be caught up in socio-political controversies and so researchers and managers often avoid delving into the subject of faith at work. This may explain a recent diversity survey by the NZ Work Research institute where respondents placed issues of religion as their lowest priority<sup>1</sup>.

Yet, global predictions indicate 80% of people consider religion an important part of their daily life<sup>2</sup>. Therefore ideas about how to manage religious diversity within the workplace need to be addressed as more employees want to be able to bring their “whole self to work”, and they are no longer happy to leave their religion at the “factory gate” or the “office door”.

This research study sought to investigate organisations as the locus of religious expression. Religious diversity is used as an analytic framework with an emphasis on individuals as actors who influence their workplaces and in so doing may reinforce, challenge and transform organisational norms. The overarching research question was: How do organisations manage minority religions at work?

In particular, this research elucidates the experiences and perceptions of religious minorities at work in New Zealand (NZ). Minority religion, refers to those who are not adherents of a majority religion, such as Christianity in NZ. The religions selected as exemplars include Hindus, Indian Christians, Muslims, Sikhs and Zoroastrians. Each of these communities constitute less than 3% of the total NZ population. While it is acknowledged that within each religion there are a variety of sects such as Muslims who are Shia or Sunni, the generic group level is utilised in the analysis.

Our findings indicated that managers are committed to complying with legislation concerning diversity and discrimination; yet very few had formal policies related to religious diversity. Primary concerns for managers include issues related to scheduling, prayer time and dress code. They perceived value in hiring based on ethnicity and religion as it offered access to new markets. Generally, employees sensed that their religious observances were accommodated in the workplace and many chose to visibly express their religion through clothing or having other symbols on their person or workspace. Their primary concerns included being granted leave for religious festivals and their slow career progression in organisations.

## 2. FIVE DIVERSITY MEGATRENDS

The following five megatrends indicate the need to develop a more sophisticated understanding of religious diversity in the workplace.

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### 1) DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERNS

The global diaspora reached an all-time high in 2015 when there were 244 million migrants. This represented growth of 41% since 2000<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, migration patterns to the developed world are projected to continue growing until 2050, albeit at a declining rate<sup>4</sup>. In part, reasons for this growth over the last two decades, may be attributed to immigration policy changes, the demand for both skilled and unskilled labour, along with the desire by many individuals to pursue a better life for themselves and their families, and refugees from war-torn countries. The 2013 Census identified that a quarter of the population were born overseas. Included in this number are those from minority religions, such as Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in NZ.

Migration improves well-being across a range of dimensions. Nonetheless, many migrants and refugees report poorer well-being when compared with native-born populations. For example, migrants/refugees are able to access and afford basic needs of food and shelter, although they are less likely than those born in NZ to say that their job is ideal.

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### 2) RELIGIOUS GROWTH

Globalisation describes growing interdependence between people in different countries. It is a complex controversial concept, and encompasses a wide variety of economic, political and

social processes, including trade and investment flows. Globalisation is a factor driving the strong presence of multiple religions in developed world economies such as Western Europe, Australia/NZ and Northern America<sup>5</sup>. This diaspora nudges organisations to address religion at work.

In the Western world, the work place has generally been considered a “neutral sphere”, into which it was considered inappropriate to bring in religion. However, with increased globalisation, employees seek “greater integration of [their] religious and work identities”<sup>6</sup>. Thus corporate chaplains and careers related to workplace religion cum spirituality and counselling continue to grow, as do publications linked to religion.

The presence of religiously observant employees may create conflicts with existing workplace policies and practices. Tensions emerge when a particular employee’s religious practices are perceived to impinge on another employee’s work-life. Examples include dress or grooming requirements, religious observances, prayer breaks, ritual washings and religious calendars.

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### 3) CORRIDORS OF COMMERCE

For NZ, the Asia Pacific Rim, the BRICS countries of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa and the halal regions represent billion dollar markets. NZ is one of 21 Pacific Rim countries that have formed a trading alliance termed Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. This alliance includes the world’s largest economies, including China, USA, Australia and South Korea. The BRICS countries comprise some of the fastest growing economies and share around 40% of the world’s population, many of whom are burgeoning consumers.

Halal, an Islamic concept meaning ‘permissible’ follows stringent regulations regarding food production, processing and packaging, including the certification of Islamic slaughter men. Muslims are now the second largest and fastest growing global religion and so represent one of the largest areas of global consumer spending. The halal food industry is worth about \$1.4 trillion USD<sup>7</sup> and represents a strong opportunity for NZ’s meat industry<sup>8</sup> where over the last 15 years, it has established itself as a leader, exporting halal foods to Europe, USA and various parts of Asia. As a culinary haven, NZ has significant potential to attract a large segment of the Muslim tourist market<sup>9</sup>. Yet, the concept of halal extends beyond food to include culture and lifestyle, such as pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. NZ can unlock billions

of dollars by developing its understanding of the needs of Muslim consumers, retailers, investors and policy makers.

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#### 4) HUMAN RIGHTS

Religion in the workplace assumed significance because of the growth of ‘new religions’ within societies that were traditionally Christian. For example, dress codes reflected the majority religion and so wearing different forms of attire would seldom arise. Similarly, the organisation’s calendar was structured around Christian holidays; requests for leave to celebrate Eid were unlikely. Furthermore, policies of separation between church and state meant that requests for prayer during worktime was rarely considered. However, for religions where compartmentalisation of faith is not the norm, such a stance is untenable. This has left many organisations having to reasonably accommodate employees’ religious requests so as to be good employers and to comply with the changing laws.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has adopted three legally-binding instruments for the protection of migrant workers<sup>10</sup>: these convention concern Migration for Employment (No. 97), Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers (No. 143), and Decent Work for Domestic Workers (No. 189, Article 2). Since inception, 87 countries have ratified at least one of these instruments. New Zealand has adopted convention No. 97.

In the USA, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act (1964) applies to federal, state and local governments. This Act protects employees from discrimination and empowers them to engage in religious activity within the workplace. Specifically, it is unlawful for an employer to fail to hire or discharge an individual, or to discriminate against them because of their race, colour, religion, sex, or national origin. The only exception to the directives concerning religious accommodation in Title VII are instances where doing so would cause undue ‘hardship’ to the business. In 1997, President Clinton issued the White House Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace. These accommodated aspects such as shift scheduling to accommodate religious festivals. Additionally, numerous States have passed religious accommodation legislation. The Assembly Bill (2013) became law in California and forbids employers preventing any employee from wearing religious artefacts, including front-line staff.

The European Union prevents direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimisation on the basis of age, sexuality, disability, race, gender and religion. However, contrasting this is the growing debate concerning the place of religion in France. In 2004, the French Parliament's Upper House clarified that its laws excluded wearing any religion symbols or clothing in the civil service or public institutions including educational facilities. This prohibits wearing headscarves, turbans, skullcaps, large crosses and other distinctive artefacts in a conspicuous manner. Such legislation challenges the proposition that religious freedom in the workplace or any public sphere is a human right. Rather it contends that religion should remain a private matter.

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## 5) WHOLE SELF AT WORK

Many humans perceive themselves as spiritual beings in a quest for personal meaning and transcendence and seek to integrate their religion and work. This holistic approach involves bringing the whole of one's authentic self to work, the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual energies of a person. Yet unless practices associated with workplace spirituality can be justified on the basis of bottom-line performance, then questions related to fiduciary responsibilities of directors and senior management arise<sup>11</sup>.

Building a business case for religious diversity may prove difficult. However, despite these challenges, workplace spirituality is associated with desirable organisational outcomes and religion has a positive impact on employees' mental and physical health and their sense of job satisfaction<sup>12</sup>. It is associated with increased loyalty, low levels of employee churn and increased levels of organisational citizenship expressed by positive behaviour<sup>13</sup>. Additionally, religious diversity can improve concrete performance and may result in increased measures of innovation and creativity, which leads to creative problem solving<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, in a society where hours are increasingly spent at work, away from family and recreation, individuals may suffer isolation and insecurity; therefore workplace spirituality offers potential to influence stress management techniques for employees and employers<sup>15</sup>. Overall, when an organisation is seen to be proactively managing religious diversity an employee's perception and reaction to the business is overwhelmingly positive<sup>16</sup>.





### 3. THE NEW ZEALAND CONTEXT

NZ's growth of minority religions is due to an influx of migrants from countries such as Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific who responded to the 1986 immigration policy changes. By 2013, a quarter of the population was born overseas. While it is claimed by some that NZ is a secular society<sup>17</sup>, more accurately it is multi-religious. In the 2013 census 58% indicated adherence to a faith. Just under 49% of NZers identified as Christian. In addition, Table 1 depicts religious affiliation for the five minority religions in NZ that are the focus of this research study. Table 2 presents the 2013 participation of five minority religions in NZ's labour force.

Religion	2013	2006
Hindus	2.10% (89,919)	1.60% (64,560)
Indian Christians	0.50% (24,585)	0.43% (17,268)
Muslims	1.09% (46,149)	0.90% (36,153)
Sikhs	0.40% (19,191)	0.24% (9,507)
Zoroastrians	0.02% (975)	0.03% (1071)

**Table 1: NZ Population of selected minority religions (Source NZ Census 2006, 2013)**

Labour force status	Hindu	Indian Christian	Muslim	Sikh	Zoroastrian	Overall NZ labour force status
Full-time	39,384 (74.47%)	10,674 (74.51%)	13,047 (65.54%)	8,328 (74.13%)	489 (77.25%)	1,541,061 (71.54%)
Part-time	9,243 (17.48%)	2,463 (17.19%)	3,876 (19.47%)	2,133 (18.99%)	117 (18.48%)	459,945 (21.35%)
Un-employed	4,257 (8.05%)	1,185 (8.27%)	2,985 (14.99%)	777 (6.92%)	30 (4.74%)	153,210 (7.11%)

**Table 2: NZ labour force participation for selected minority religions (Census, 2013)**

Table 3 presents 2013 categories of occupation for five minority religions.

Occupation	Hindu	Indian Christian	Muslim	Sikh	Zoroastrian
Managers	16.13%	11.62%	12.14%	20.14%	14.93%
Professionals	21.75%	31.97%	21.13%	9.84%	27.86%
Technicians & Trades	10.95%	8.86%	12.25%	6.68%	7.46%
Community & Service	7.11%	10.41%	7.84%	6.00%	4.48%
Clerical	10.51%	11.72%	9.25%	5.94%	19.90%
Sales	14.22%	11.08%	11.66%	15.43%	15.42%
Machinery & Drivers	4.89%	3.52%	7.57%	8.78%	3.48%
Labourers	8.51%	6.60%	10.35%	19.39%	2.49%

**Table 1: Occupational classification for selected minority religious groups in NZ (Census 2013)**

NZ's Bill of Rights (1990) follows similar approaches to the USA and the United Kingdom with respect to legislation associated with religious diversity at work. The respective approaches are guided by Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Including: the right to freedom of thought, conscience, belief and expression. Additionally, NZ's laws concerning religious diversity are covered in the Human Rights Act (1993), which forbids discrimination related to sexual orientation, marital status, religious belief, colour, race, ethnic or national origin, disability or impairment. Section 28.3 of the Act requires employers to accommodate religious or ethical observances so long as the practice does not unreasonably interfere with the business. Furthermore, the Human Rights Commission released a 'Statement on Religious Diversity' in NZ (2007). This provided protection and recognition for the changing nature of NZer's religious beliefs which have become increasingly pluralistic.





#### 4. RESEARCH DESIGN

The two layered design of this research, was approved by Auckland University of Technology's Ethics Committee in 2013, and included a total of more than 200 persons. Participants were accessed through a variety of sources including community and business organisations, personal networks of the research team and by utilizing snowball sampling.

The first layer of research consisted of thirteen focus groups. 34 females and 34 males attended focus groups that were held in the North and South Islands of NZ. Participants source countries were: Egypt, Fiji, India, NZ, Pakistan, Singapore, Somalia and Sri Lanka. Focus group questions included:

1. Do you express your religion in the workplace? Why/Why not and how?
2. How does the organisation respond to your expression of religion at work?
3. How do you respond to the expression of religion at work by adherents of religions other than your own?
4. What suggestions do you have for organisations with reference to religious diversity in the workplace?
5. Has there been any change in your expression of religion at work in NZ, compared to your source country? How satisfied are you with this change?
6. Use three words to describe how you think organisations are with reference to current management of religion at work.
7. Use three words to express how you would like to see organisations in the future manage religion at work.

A second layer of data collection involved around 20 high-level managers who were interviewed through a semi-structured approach. This group of participants included a balance of male and females holding differing religious beliefs. The majority were of European extraction and were either General Managers, Vice Presidents, Directors or Branch Managers of formal organisations. Questions included gaining an understanding from participants of the religious diversity in their organisation, what the organisation needed to continue/stop doing with respect to religious diversity and policies/practices which might need to change.

Informal conversations concerning religious diversity were also held with over 100 individuals who came from a wide variety of source countries but were now living within the North/South Island of NZ. All participants were over 20 years of age, legally resident and had at least two years' work experience within NZ. In addition to the contribution of participants, NZ census data were also extracted with the assistance of personnel at Statistics NZ. A variety of databases, journals and books were also consulted. Thematic content analysis was carried out by four colleagues who were both NZ European and ethnic individuals. They each coded interview transcripts separately, before the lead researcher undertook final coding.

The principle objectives of the research were to:

1. Investigate the enactment, processes, relations and mechanisms of individuals at work in organisations so as to provide new and insightful analysis of organisations engaging with adherents of minority religions.
2. Inform current and future organisations of relevant managerial practices in co-holding the secular and sacred, with special reference to minority religions.







## 5. FINDINGS: WORSHIP AT WORK

Understanding how religion impacts behaviour has the potential to shed light on a range of issues in organisational power, politics, leadership and decision making<sup>18</sup>. Therefore, what follows is an introduction to the worldviews and work trajectories of participants from the five minority religions of this research in NZ. The order is structured alphabetically.

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### 1) HINDUS

Hinduism is one of NZ's fastest growing religions. In 1996 it represented 0.74% of the population but by the 2013 census, this figure had climbed to 2.1% or 89,919 persons and includes people from India, UK, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Fiji, Singapore and South Africa.

Hinduism is the name given to a wide variety of beliefs and practices that reflect the history of the many regional and local traditions of India. Many Hindus are vegetarians, worship in *Mandirs* or temples and have a small shrine at home with their favourite Gods and Goddesses. The Hindu calendar, which is lunar, includes Diwali (the festival of lights). *Dharma* (righteous duty) is important to Hindus, as is *karma*, (destiny), and *ahimsa* (non-violence). The cow is considered sacred. Yoga is one of the paths to reaching *nirvana*.

The first recorded Indian to arrive in NZ was a Bengali man who was said to have jumped ship in 1810 to marry a Māori woman. Hindus arrived in NZ as *sepoys* (Indian soldiers) in the 19th century and early immigrants in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were primarily from India's Gujarat and Punjab provinces. They worked in hospitality, dairies, domestics, oiling railway tracks and sorting mail. Indians were prepared to pay more than Europeans for fruit and vegetable stands on Wellington streets where they had acetylene lights and carpets on the footpaths, creating competition with European vendors. Yet, in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Indians had difficulty securing employment as public perceptions included that Indians were dirty and had disease<sup>19</sup>. However, perceiving themselves as sojourners, early Hindus restricted contact with European society. Despite caste differences, they expressed solidarity with each other. Their ambitions were to be self-sufficient and good citizens, while also maintaining their culture.

Data from the 2013 census indicates, the top five industries in which Hindus work are retail, healthcare, manufacturing, hospitality and professional services. Of these, 22% are

professionals and 16% are managers. 81% of Hindus are employed full-time and 19.01% are employed part-time.

Hindu participants in this research study, felt that *“compared to the younger population, the older age group of NZers seem to be aware of different cultures, but the youngsters are quite ignorant.”* They felt that NZ is actively trying to recognize various religions and support celebrations of important events, *“such as Diwali, ... and this has created a much higher awareness among the general public, including managers in organisations”*. They also perceived that many organisations *“make it a point to ask me whether I am vegetarian”* when workplace events are held. Hindus expressed the view that *“we are there not to practice religion, but to work...in my organisation, there are no restrictions on how we express our religion, but it is not a subject that should be over expressed either.”*

A number of Hindus said that their concept of religion was more philosophical and so they had little need to express it visibly, *“it is a faith that is inside.”* Many individuals said that they recite mantras in silence and that this *“provides calmness under pressure.”* They also stated that: *“organisations are very accepting, we do extra work over Christmas, so that we can have our own religious holidays”*. With respect to religious diversity, some Hindus said that *“everything is fine. It if it ain’t broken don’t fix it...I think what we have is already quite good.”*

However, many Hindus also felt that *“the acceptance levels to our physical appearance, our traditional dressing, bindis/tikas or the dot on our foreheads, is still very low.”* Some Hindus had negative experiences when they displayed images of their Gods in their office space. Thus for example, *“I had a very unpleasant experience in my workplace where some of my religious symbols such as my gods Ganesha and Krishna, were put in a garbage bin when I was not in the office. I felt violated”*. Some felt the *“chances of getting jobs are more if one went to church instead of a temple...that’s the sort of discrimination in employment.”* Some Hindus were nervous about taking leave for a religious festival and instead felt that *“for festivals it is better telling them I feel sick today; I can’t come in.”* Hindus were also concerned about employers making time for *“leave and respect for grieving procedures and burial, based on our customs”*.

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## 2) INDIAN CHRISTIANS

Indian Christian is a combination of Indian ethnicity and Christian religious affiliation, which occurs across many denominations including Catholics, Pentecostals, Anglicans, Methodists, Baptists and Orthodox. Between 2006 and 2013, Indian Christians rose from 0.4% to 0.58% of the population. Their predominant places of birth are India, NZ, Fiji, South Africa and Malaysia.

The first recorded Indian Christian in NZ is probably Edward Peter known as Black Peter, who was responsible for finding gold Otago in 1858. During the early days of Indians in NZ, there were very few Indian women; yet census records indicate a number of mixed-blood children, some of whom were categorized as Christian. Between 1907 and 1938, 130 youth of mixed heritage from British owned tea plantations in India, were sent from Kalimpong in India to NZ by Dr. Graham, a Scottish Presbyterian missionary. The first two boys arrived in 1907. From 1912 onwards groups of ten to sixteen youth were sent. They were met at NZ ports by their employers. The boys worked on farms and the girls caring for children and performing domestic duties for families.

The 2013 census data, records the top five industries in which Indian Christians work as education, professional services, retail, healthcare and hospitality. The majority of Indian Christians (89.77%) work between 40 and 49 hours per week as paid employees and the total number studying are 3,636 or 19.23% of the Indian Christian population.

NZ's Indian Christians acknowledge benefits derived from having westernized names, a western dress sense, having a *“less heavy accent than other Indians”*, an ability to understand English colloquialisms and also that they celebrate traditional NZ religious festivals. The Indian Christians felt that they were freely able to express their religious beliefs and *“tend to fit in much more easily than other migrants from India”*. They believed it was important for organisations to have a documented religious diversity policy, because *“while we fit in, there are others who may want to wear a turban or headscarf”*. Indian Christians believed that their employers appreciated their *“sense of hard work and their English capabilities – both written and spoken”*, and that NZ organisations invest resources to work with people from various backgrounds. However, a repeated source of irritation for Indian Christians is that they are often asked *“when did you learn to speak English”*, or, *“did you change your name after you came to NZ”*.

Some Indian Christians, who work in organisations with hot desking or open office policies keep religious symbols on their desk only when they are in the office. One Indian Christian said that when she had worn a cross as a pendant and her colleagues were surprised as they thought she was a Hindu. Those who wore religious symbols felt that *“throughout the day it was a strong comforting force.”* A number of Indian Christians said that their religion requires them to be the best that they can in each of their roles – as a citizen, a manager, a colleague and at home. They felt organisations were accepting, and when they sometimes had to leave early to go to church, the manager understood.

Indian Christians were dismayed that *“most NZers are unaware that there are Christians in India”*. They suggested an urgent need to frame policies that showed respect for all religions, *“particularly the non-Christian religions...as the immigrant population is increasing”*. Some Indian Christians felt *“the need for more ethics in the organisations”*. They were keen to share thoughts on virtues such as humility, hope and service. However, they said this was frowned upon by some Human Resource departments that felt presentations on virtues might mean proselytisation. Indian Christians perceived a need for *“cultural sensitisation of managers and workshops on diversity”*. Moreover, all Indian Christian participants believed *“there is a need for discussing religion”* to *“show more understanding”* of all people at work. They also said *“the challenge we face is not so much from other religions but it’s between Catholic and other Christian denominations”*. Many said that they *“do not talk religion, unless people ask about it, because people do not like to talk about religion at work”*.

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### 3) MUSLIMS

In 2013, NZ Muslims totalled just over 1% of the population. Originating from over fifty countries, they are ethnically diverse. The top five birth places for NZ Muslims are: NZ, Fiji, North Africa & Middle East, India and Pakistan. They are a heterogeneous community representing a wide range of source countries, sects, socio-economic status, skills and education.

The etymology of Islam is from the Arabic *salaam/salema*, which means submission or peace. Islam has two major festivals, Id-ul-Fitr which comes at the end of the month of Ramadan, and Id-ul-Adha which means festival of sacrifice, when meat is shared between family, friends, and the poor. Dress codes and modesty laws are contested. The tradition of

covering the head and the entire body apart from the hands and feet is an interpretation of sura 24:31 and different cultures interpret sura differently. Certain foods are forbidden such as pork. Muslims eat only halal food, or animals slaughtered in a specific manner by a Muslim. There is also a prohibition on alcohol. Sunnis and Shias form the two main sects of Islam, though there are numerous smaller sects.

The first NZ Muslims were Chinese gold prospectors during the 1870s. Between the 1890s and World War One, there were few Muslim immigrants. Those who came were mainly Indians from Gujarat; however there were some from Fiji and Turkey who arrived in 1905. The census of 1945 recorded 67 Muslims in NZ. Since then a boatload of post-war European refugees brought around 50 Muslim men from Albania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia and in 1960 many Muslim Asian students arrived in NZ. Today almost 8 in 10 people who identify as NZ Muslim were born overseas, mainly in South Asia, but also the Middle East.

Events such as 9/11, the London bombings, the Danish cartoons, ISIS and debates about wearing head scarves have impacted NZ Muslims. Despite controversy, Prime Minister Key contends that women wearing a *burqa* or veil should not be discriminated against as NZ is “a multi-cultural society and we should respect other's cultural beliefs”<sup>20</sup>. Many NZ Muslim women state they face no discrimination at work, irrespective of whether they are veiled. However they also felt that organisations are nervous about employing them.

2013 census data records that the top five industries where Muslims work are retail, healthcare, manufacturing, hospitality and professional services. Of the 16,923 employed Muslims, 13,047 work full time and 3,876 work part-time.

Muslims in this research study perceived that organisations are slowly working towards accommodating and accepting their religious beliefs. They felt that many managers understand their need for time off for prayers and were aware of food restrictions. They have found “*the atmosphere is quite tolerant in NZ organisations*”. Some organisations provide Muslim prayer rooms. However, managers stated their concern when not being told about special dress requirements at the time of interview, and later discovering these requirements after the contract has been signed.



Some Muslims said that they do not display visible expressions of their religion at work as it was a private matter. One stated *"I don't really advertise my religion, but I am not scared or afraid of telling people that I am a Muslim"*. Others said they might wear a ring or pendant with the name 'Allah' on it, *"particularly on days that they have to deal with difficult issues"*. Some Muslim women said that they do not wear the hijab or head scarf. For some, *"praying five times a day was not problematic."* *"I just walk up to my manager and say I am taking five minutes off for prayer."* A number of Muslims said they would like a holiday for Eid and that it should be a holiday for the organisation, like Christmas, and resented *"the dominance of Christianity"*. Some said, if you go to church, you meet other people and such networks could increase your job prospects.

In general tensions exist in employing Muslims. Women with head coverings are viewed with curiosity or avoided and *"it is also difficult for men with beards"*. A female Muslim gave an example of not wearing a burqa when she was initially employed, but when she decided to wear it to work, she first went to inform her manager. She said *"that was the courteous and polite thing to do...if you are happy with me wearing this fine, if you are not, I have no problem leaving, if you think it is going to cause problems. My manager said that he would check with his boss, and he came back to me before my next shift and said it is fine"*. Many Muslims spoke about *"organisational flexibility to allow employees to work varying hours to facilitate their fasting times."*

A number of Muslims reported racial comments, linking them to terror attacks. They were also *"fed-up with the media saying Muslims have done this...Muslims have done that...nothing good...a negative impact from the media"*. Some argued that *"in Islam we are required to respect other religions. It is in the Quran and in the teaching of our Prophet"*.

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#### 4) SIKHS

Sikhs generally originate from Punjab in the Indian subcontinent. In the 2013 census they numbered 19,191 (0.45%). Their top five places of birth are India, NZ, Fiji, Malaysia and England.

The word Sikh means disciple and Sikhism seeks to worship one God. Sikhs were the first minority community to have built a place of worship in NZ. There are now thirteen gurdwaras (the Sikh place of worship) in NZ. Sikh generosity is evidenced in their *langar* (communal

kitchens) where they feed many people. They also fought for the British Empire and celebrate ANZAC Day along with NZers.

Traditional clothing and artefacts promote Sikh social cohesion and identity, but also differentiate them from other NZers and can cause concern. For example, wearing the *kirpan* (dagger) has been an issue at schools, stadiums and on flights. In 2008 a Sikh policeman in Nelson became the first to include a turban as part of his uniform.

Based on the 2013 census, the top five industries in NZ where Sikhs work are in retail, agriculture, hospitality, manufacturing and transport. Sikhs believe that NZers are interested in learning about other religions and cultures. However, some of them recalled that after 9/11 *“there was lot of hype running around. NZ was no exception and when I joined the factory I had to struggle in order to settle down as people were referring to me as Osama...Initially I felt upset and then I had a talk with my team...It took a while but later everything went very smoothly.”* Sikhs perceived diversity awareness had improved over the last ten years. For example, *“many schools had realized that this is the need of ours and let the students know their heritage, where they come from, what is their background and their history...and they invited Sikhs to the school assembly to talk about Sikhism. This sharing is something that organisations too must start to implement”*.

Some Sikhs stated that *“colleagues are very interested in knowing more about religions, hence organisations need to provide a platform for employees to express themselves”*. They suggested there *“should be lectures and training on different religions in every organisation”*.

Some Sikh women were comfortable wearing their ethnic dress to work and believed their status as Sikh women gave them more opportunities. However, Sikhs also emphasized that *“one has to understand the employer’s point of view as well”*. Additionally, Sikhs said, *“We respect all religions and are curious to know about other religions...we are a very multicultural society...we celebrate, we enjoy, we respect the dignity of each other and work together”*.

However, many Sikhs felt that their appearance, such as a turban or beard, made it difficult for them to get work. They repeatedly referred to their children by saying *“when my son*

*used to go to school...he had to face lot of hardships because of his long hair and he was called muffin head". Sikhs expressed the view that "diversity awareness is a must, especially for immediate managers. Senior leadership teams need to undergo training about cultural sensitivity, cultural competence and diversity". Moreover, as "the migrant population is increasing in NZ, it is very important for organisations to have policies related to religious diversity and inclusion. Sikhs also felt that promotions were not easy, particularly if you were from "another religion". Many said "we are serving customers and customers are from a diverse background, so recruit people from diverse backgrounds".*

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## 5) ZOROASTRIANS

NZ Zoroastrians numbered 972 (0.02%) in the 2013 census. Their top source countries of birth are India, NZ, North Africa and the Middle East.

Zoroastrianism was once the state religion of the Persian Empire from around the sixth century BCE at the time of Cyrus the Great. In the seventh century CE, Arab Muslims conquered the Sasanian Empire and persecuted Zoroastrians. Faced with choice to convert to Islam or death, a few Zoroastrians fled to the Khorasan mountains, where they remained for over a century. They then moved to Hormuz and reached India in the eight century. Having derived their name from the Persian province in India of Pars, Zoroastrians are most commonly known as Parsis. Religious symbols of Zoroastrians include a picture of Zoroaster, Ashura Mazda, red bangles, ceremonial vessels and the sacred fire.

Through the centuries, Zoroastrians' have strived to make a positive contribution to the economic, social and political fields of societies where they have settled. Therefore, since arriving in NZ, the community has integrated well. In part, this may be attributed to the well-educated and professional members of their community who have fluency in speaking English and because the religion is renowned for its work ethic. The founder of the multinational corporation, the Tata Group, Jamsetji Nusserwanji Tata was Zoroastrian and this organisation currently has eight offices across NZ.

Based on the 2013 census, the industries in NZ where Zoroastrians are employed include financial services, retail and professional services. The majority of Zoroastrians are employed as professionals or clerical workers, and most Zoroastrians work between 40 and 49 hours per week. Zoroastrian participants believed that due to their fair-skin and English

fluency, they have been accepted by NZers, with many colleagues at their workplaces showing interest in their religion.

Zoroastrians felt that *“other religions and communities could learn from how NZ treats its minorities and how it behaves towards non-traditional religions. However, they stated that “this openness must continue and more managers and organisations must learn about religious diversity”, especially in the South Island where people “seem to be more racist”. One employee said: “This training can be done as part of induction or team building...they should have information about other religions. Sometimes people make fun of other’s culture but it hurts others.”*

Zoroastrians felt that typically NZers *“do not talk about other parts of the world... their world is very limited”*. For example, some Zoroastrians said that because of their names, it is assumed by colleagues that they are from Iran and are Muslim. Furthermore, they expressed sadness that Muslims are sometimes equated with terrorism. Zoroastrians said *“even we pray five times a day... like Muslims...but we pray within ourselves.”* Another participant said *“when I had to take two days leave for Parsee New Year that was no problem.... but it was employee initiated...it is quite hard for organisations to keep track of various religious festivals”*. Overall Zoroastrians believed that while there was a strong acceptance of them within organisations, it was very difficult to climb the corporate ladder, and *“when it comes to top level managerial positions, they won’t let you grow”*. One employee stated *“Whatever you may say, there is a glass ceiling for any high-level promotions”*.

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## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

All employees in this research study clearly stated that there was more that could be done in organisations, yet they were clear that they preferred living in NZ than in their source countries, and the majority were quite pleased with their organisations. However, a large minority perceived a lack of inclusiveness which resulted in frustration, anger, lowered self-efficacy and negative thinking. Muslims seemed to be the most aggrieved and perceived that they were generally stereotyped and stigmatized by media.





## 6. DISCUSSION: ORGANISATIONAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES

A firm's pattern of strategic choices underpins the policies and practices in an organisation. Policies and practices are the act of pursuing the dream while constructing the path to the dream. Additionally, in many organisations, there is a move from control to empowerment, from a short-term structure on cash flow to a long-term focus on vision, planning and growth. Vertical hierarchical structures are being replaced by more horizontal, networked and organic structures that facilitate work engagement. Work engagement includes social support from colleagues and managers, mentoring and training programs and non-defensive responses to employee concerns. Managers can increase engagement through creating psychological safety which involves employees feeling safe about their self-image, status and career, so that energy can be expended on work related tasks. Adequate resources and mindful monitoring ensure that engaged employees do not reach the stage of burnout, conflict, or distraction from work tasks.

Policies and practices are enhanced through expressions of civility, which encompasses respect, courtesy and compassion. Acting civilly may involve being aware of others and expressing caring for them through restraint, accommodation and consideration. Civility engenders positive feelings in individuals and organisations which can lead to efficacy, superior performance and flourishing organisations.

In this research study, on minority religions, some organisations had written policies on diversity which included aspects such as fairness, good faith and respect. Most of the organisations were aware of diversity issues, in particular with reference to gender, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender issues, as well as the disabled. However, very few organisations had any written or unwritten policies about religious diversity. That said, high-level managers were curious but found it to be “*very hard*” and were “*unsure how to handle religious diversity*”.

Five themes are presented next, along with questions and recommendations to facilitate the journey of embedding religious diversity into workplace policies and practices.



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## 1) CRAFTING POLICIES

Many high-level managers said religious diversity was in “*the too hard basket*” and that “*not everyone wants to address it*”. Various managers expressed fear and doubt about their ability to handle the changing face of NZ. Some organisations had an awareness of religious diversity, but most of the high-level managers felt they had other priorities and that “*religion was a private matter*”. One manager said “*employees are pushing their luck if they expect the employer to adopt the migrant culture and abandon the Kiwi culture*”. Furthermore, some said: “*We are short of jobs, yet have so many migrants*”.

Many employers and employees stated that their contracts explicitly stated a policy of no discrimination, and that organisations sought to accommodate migrants. Therefore, most organisations had general diversity guidelines, though aspects pertaining to religion were informal. Thus one manager said: “*We do not have a diversity policy, we have an EEO policy, and we have a code of conduct*”.

Managers also showed concern that many people wanting to express their religion at work were very rigid in their demands: “*We are a secular society and we are expected to be open to all religions, but there is an unwritten law about what you can do and what you can’t*.” Managers were concerned about the attitude of migrants, therefore one said “*where is the balance between immigrants choosing to live in the country and integration*”. Others asked “*what’s the trade-off for the business in allowing religion into the workplace*”.

Both managers and employees experienced accommodation as being more reactive rather than proactive, but all managers echoed the sentiment of one manager “*we will comply with the laws of the land*”. A general manager said: “*if you look at policies, you may get gender and racial diversity, but NZ has to come to terms with religious diversity*”. Despite this view, there were some outstanding examples of being proactive. Thus, one manager stated: “*there are many positive advantages of allowing for the expression of religion at work – innovation from diversity, where soft practices translate into hard results, to happier employees who work harder and are more loyal to the organisation*”.

**Questions:**

1. Do we have a policy on diversity?
2. How is diversity defined?
3. Does the definition include religion?
4. What aspects of religion make it easier for organisations to flourish?
5. Does the policy include dress code, etiquette, prayer and food?

**Recommendations:**

1. Invite a group from the various religions to share their views on religious diversity.
2. Discuss the positives and negatives of all suggestions for religious diversity.
3. Listen to all perspectives including the employee, employer, customer.
4. Request for specific evidence/data based suggestions.
5. Don't forget the feedback loop after the suggestions have been incorporated.

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## 2) TALENT MANAGEMENT

Talent management encompasses recruitment, selection and career progression. All these were top priorities for employees in this research. However, managers in contrast were focused on the impact of scheduling, prayer time and dress code. When mentioning recruitment, managers were apprehensive as to how to find out about a person's religion. The concern was that they could not ask questions about religious diversity during the interview as this could be perceived as discrimination, which may then escalate to being taken up with the Human Rights Commission. Yet, in contrast to European managers, those from minority religions said: *"finding out about a person's religion is very easy; just look at the person's name"*. For example, *Mohammed is likely to be a Muslim and Patel is likely to be a Hindu*. In particular managers expressed concerns about full-face covering by women. One said he had *"no problem in welcoming someone with a veil, but generally the preference would be to see the face of the person"*.

Managers were also aware that for some roles, it was necessary to hire based on ethnicity and religion, as for example migrant banking. One manager stated *"We have an ethnic manager and her role is to develop business with the ethnic community."* Furthermore, there was an awareness of implementing *"ethnic practices to attract customers...for example during Diwali celebrations many banks and post shops have Diwali décor"*.

While all employees in this research were delighted to live in NZ and thankful to have jobs, many spoke about how difficult it was to progress within the organisation, as *“when it comes to top level managerial positions they won’t let you grow...there is hidden discrimination”*.

**Questions:**

1. How do we plan for job enrichment and career enhancement for employees?
2. What is the composition of recruitment panels?
3. Who are the role models for employees?
4. How can we recruit for diversity?
5. How might we develop mentoring/sponsoring relationships?

**Recommendations:**

1. Identify and fast-track a range of individuals.
2. Support and challenge to increase skills and motivation in the organisation.
3. Encourage individuals to have a sense of personal agency for their careers.
4. Reward individuals who recruit for the organisation.
5. Clearly state the rules of the game and plan for internal, cultural and strategic fit.

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### 3) ENGAGING VOICE

Engaging voice includes dress code, etiquette, symbols, talking about religions informally, prayer and scheduling. The majority of employees in this research visibly expressed their religion through for example; wearing a cross, headscarf, necklace, bangles or Zoroastrian angel. One manager said: *“We would allow the headscarf, but it would have to be a stipulated colour, based on the uniform in our organisation”*. The majority of managers held concerns about the health and safety aspect of dress as well as how it would be perceived by organisational stakeholders. One manager said: *“We have had customers who have refused to be served by a woman with a head scarf, though her face was exposed”*.

While many employees had personal objects, such as an image of Ganesh or of Zarathustra in their office space, some organisations *“prefer a clear desk policy”*. One manager said: *“If someone puts up a poster in their personal space and if there is someone who finds that offensive, there are processes to follow”*. Handshakes or *“touch by members of the opposite sex”* was raised by participants. One ethnic woman said: *“I complained to my manager that I*

*had been discriminated against, as when my CEO visited our department, he shook hands with everyone except me...He said that he thought that he was following the correct etiquette with an ethnic woman".* In contrast, a Muslim man said *"I had to tell my CEO why a woman was not to shake hands with me, as according to my religion this was inappropriate".*

Numerous employees expressed concerns regarding lack of religious sensitivity as staff often made jokes or inappropriate comments. For example: *"they talk laughingly about how if a person belongs to a certain religion, one has to be careful as he might have bombs".* Managers were insistent that *"I would not allow proselytizing; one man's food is another person's poison".* Yet, while not proselytizing, most employees were happy to talk about their religion. One employee said *"If I am wearing a certain religious symbol, I talk to people about it when they inquire as to its meaning".*

Some organisations had a prayer room for Muslims, with appropriate washrooms nearby. Nevertheless, many NZ organisations are small, with slim resources, therefore this provision may not be possible. Chaplains were in place within some organisations and in some workplaces daily religious services were held during lunch breaks. A few individuals were very particular that their requests for prayers be accepted by organisations. Yet the majority said *"prayers in my heart rather than out loud".*

Organising a roster for granting leave associated with religious festivals is a major issue which organisations have to address. Since many organisations did not have written policies for religious diversity, it was often left to a manager to decide on the legitimacy of requests. One chief executive said *"our managers will ask employees if they want to take leave for any festivals and then we can proactively plan".* Another opined *"we need to be proactive...we probably don't celebrate the Muslim festival so much but it is not hard".* However, some employees said: *"we do not have the confidence that when we make a request, our manager will say yes...so we often do not ask, but just take a sickie".*

While there was evidence of much positive religious accommodation by employers, several employees felt that *"many more managers need to be educated about our needs".*

**Questions:**

1. What conversations do we need to have concerning dress code?
2. What is the organisational stance towards religious artefacts on desk space/factory walls?
3. How does response to 'voice' help us better understand markets and customers?
4. How do we manage religious expression with the organisations operations?
5. What food and drink do we provide for organisational celebrations?

**Recommendations:**

1. Celebrate one major religious festival every year besides Christmas.
2. Encourage employees to wear ethnic garments on religious festival days.
3. Ensure vegetarian options at all organisational celebrations
4. Ensure vegetarian options are available on in-house café' menus.
5. Seek advice from the Human Rights Commission, Office of Ethnic Communities, Immigration & Inclusion Research Group, Diversity Works NZ.

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#### 4) LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Learning and development consists of induction, mentoring, specific interventions and programs. Structured institutionalized processes help individuals to learn the ropes within the organisation. For learning and development, communication, education, knowledge, understanding and awareness are necessary for all employees, in particular for the top management as they set the organisational tone and texture. Thus, a number of managers said: *"It is crucial to heighten respect, tolerance, appreciation for views and outlooks of other people, and [to know] if they understand the implications of NZ's changing demography"*.

Negotiations play an essential role in the process of solving issues and maintaining the everyday routines of an organisation so that larger strategic issues can be focused on with energy and verve. When situations compel attention, they need to be reframed, reinterpreted and responded to with accommodation on both sides. Such mindful negotiation enables the recognition and integration of interests and priorities to achieve better financial and relational outcomes including individual and organisational wellbeing. Learning and

development which incorporates mindful negotiation can be a step in the right direction for greater understanding of religious diversity at work.

Some participants argued that *“people do make an effort to fit into this country, and some changes must be made”*; however others spoke strongly that people in their own communities were not prepared to change and expected New Zealanders to make all the changes. One migrant said *“we should educate people of our community to adapt to this country and not to misuse its generosity”*. Another stated that *“In New Zealand, if people expect sympathetic understanding, they have got to reach out, try and connect and have a conversation...they must try and understand the local culture”*.

A number of organisations had free English classes for wage earning employees. Some organisations socialize employees towards mutual respect and civility through various training programs which all employees attend. However, organisations also need to pay attention to religious adherents at middle levels of management for whom programs and understanding beyond basic English would be expected.

A few organisations held a session on religious diversity as part of their induction program, or had information in their induction booklet: *“We are non-discriminatory as an organisation and it is a matter of raising awareness about different religions if they are not aware”*. Employees were keen to contribute information about their religion. For example, *“we can each have a topic for the session; if we are four individuals then each one can have five minutes on that topic from their own religious point of view”*.



**Questions:**

1. What can we do to support learning about religious diversity?
2. How can religious diversity be incorporated into organisational learning?
3. How can we maintain a learning environment encompassing religious diversity?
4. What aspects of religious diversity can be included in the Induction program?
5. What is our process to ensure religious diversity is regularly addressed?

**Recommendations:**

1. Absorb uncertainty by picking up difficult issues sooner rather than later.
2. Conduct sessions on mindful negotiation.
3. Discuss when, why and how New Year is celebrated by various religious groups.
4. Visit different religious shrines as an experiential immersion experience.
5. Encourage different religions to present a session at various training programs.

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## 5) AUGMENTING MEDIA

Communication within the organisation is a potent force to weave together perceptions of individuals and organisational activities. Positive communication seeks to be inclusive, respectful and supportive. It creates dialogue, builds social capital and provides knowledge. One of the main purposes of communication is organisational intelligence which seeks to enable individuals to have sensitive, accurate and contemporary understandings of what is happening in the organisation and what the future augurs for both them and the organisation. Thus media serves the purpose of information sharing, creating group memory and generating engagement.

Some employees said: *“We have a weekly magazine...our boss can put a few words there about the festivals and who celebrates them”*. Similarly, a manager said: *“When we have our newsletter going out, we have a whole explanation about Diwali, or ANZAC, or Eid”*. Another manager commented that *“we put things on Facebook regarding various cultures, religions and ethic celebrations, maybe even independence days”*.

Some employees were concerned that they were stereotyped. A number said: *“Not all Muslims are Osama”* or that a *“lack of knowledge leads to misconceptions”*. Many

employees expressed concern about external media such as newspapers and magazines. One participant stated “*the media abuses and manipulates to sensationalise*”.

**Questions:**

1. How do we share information about religious diversity?
2. Do we have a newsletter/magazine for all employees?
3. What messages are communicated about the world we operate in?
4. How do we respond to religious diversity?
5. How are we informed about religious diversity?

**Recommendations:**

1. Invite volunteers to share their views on religious diversity.
2. Request a “small” write-up for internal publications on how a religious group celebrates a particular festival.
3. Celebrate a particular religious festival and include photographs in internal media.
4. Explain the meaning and significance of different religious symbols.
5. Ensure no offense is caused to any group through all communication channels.





کر و ارنیکا

اندیشه نیکا

گهزار نیکا



## 7. CONCLUSION: HOPE FOR DIVERSE FUTURES

Hope is the degree to which a person or organisation can find alternate paths to a goal, despite challenges and how individuals/organisations remain resolute in their objectives<sup>21</sup>. High hope organisational cultures are flexible, resilient, and confident. They may gain competitive advantage by turning threats into economic, caring opportunities<sup>22</sup>. Employees who are adherents of minority religions, shared a general feeling of gratitude and happiness to live in NZ and to have the freedom to express themselves while also being aware of the necessity to integrate. Yet these feelings were laced with apprehension about expressing religion at work and the effect such expressions might have among colleagues and managers as well as for career progression. Therefore, one employee said *“faith comes from inside and it is not for you to show people... I do not have to express it on my desk...I have pictures on my phone...so I just look at them when I want to pray”*. Another stated *“every workplace has facilities for washing and this is enough for many Muslims”*.

On the part of employers, while many organisations had diversity policies, there was a general lack of knowledge about how to manage migrant/refugee employees and policies rarely acknowledged religious diversity. Despite this, all the managers interviewed were aware of the growing importance of global mobility and of the changing corridors of commerce. One manager stated *“Christianity is the historically dominant religion, it is not openly discussed...it is implied and there is legislation around it... many white English Christians have had difficulties in accepting other religions.”* Another manager offered that *“there is a huge tradition here for using food as a non-threatening and non-confrontational way and it is an opportunity to create communication and education for diversity”*.

Yet many employers were shy of employing persons from minority religions due to limited and sometimes ossified knowledge such as thinking that women from these religions believe in total acquiescence to their all-powerful men. Rather, individuals from minority religions range from sophisticated professionals who are fluent in three languages including English, to those with rural backgrounds who only speak their village dialect. Many organisations fail to reap the rich experiences within minority religious diasporas, despite the fact that these same organisations seek to expand their business into the source countries of these minority diasporas. Organisations often suffer amnesia or ignorance for the flourishing



business, scientific and literary traditions of non-Christian empires. There is need for employers to disinvest themselves of mental models of the 'infidel' and ancient hangovers from the crusades and colonisation<sup>23</sup>. In a bicultural country with a multicultural fabric, employment must be blind to discriminators hinged on bone structure, skin colour and dress, but sensitive to organisational potential. Not only would such practice keep individuals off the benefit, it would serve as exemplars for societal harmony and for reaping diversity dividends.

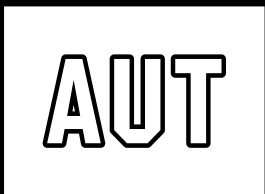
There is need for a new lexicon to establish principles of respect and dignity. Organisations have been used to uniformity based on an Anglo-American culture. Yet, we increasingly live in cultures that are different to us, not only when we travel, but also in our organisations. Within these culture are religions, that provide their adherents with horizons of meaning. These religions have generally articulated the sense of the good and what is to be admired. Even if there are some aspects of these religions which people in NZ might not agree with, it would be arrogant to reject the entire religion.

While there are some studies which focus on minority religions, the large body of scholarship on religion at work has largely ignored these individuals in published scholarship, despite their growing importance in organisations world-wide. This research extends organisational understanding of religious expression in organisations by illuminating how individuals co-hold sacred and secular realities as they negotiate the normative and institutional landscape of their work. It has sought to facilitate deeper understandings of the religious encounter, including its piquancy and pungency, through unfolding the dissonance that exists in organisations with reference to minority religions and in their workforces. The various complexities, paradoxes and challenges in managing minority religions in organisations in NZ have been unfolded. Through this unfolding, the hope is to provide some pointers which employees, managers and policy makers can explore to further enhance their own inner disarmament, as well as the management of religion in the workplace. The hope is that in playing outside of defined dimensions, diversity is relished and carefully calibrated with grace and gratitude.

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