

Headscarf a simple show of respect for Muslim community, event organisers say

Liz McDonald 20:09, Mar 21 2019



The Radiology Department at Timaru Hospital wear headscarves on Friday to show their support for the Muslim community.

New Zealand women wanting to wear a headscarf on Friday have been told not to worry about doing it wrongly.

Headscarf for Harmony is an event organised by a group of women wanting to show solidarity with the Muslim community after last Friday's mosque shootings in Christchurch.

Asya Mohamed Abeid, who will be giving away scarfs at a stall Westley Community Centre market in Auckland on Friday to support the event, said there was no right or wrong way for New Zealanders to wear them.



AMANDA SAXTON

Asya Abeid says New Zealanders wanting to wear a headscarf, or hijab can show respect for Muslims.

"Inside the mosque you would want to cover your face or head. But outside it doesn't matter as long as you are comfortable," said Abeid, a practicing Muslim who wears a hijab.

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"Different people have different ways of wearing the hijab. For some non-Muslims, this will be their first time trying – it's not difficult and there's no right or wrong.



JOSEPH JOHNSON/STUFF

Female mourners at the funerals of mosque attack victims in Christchurch this week.

"It will show respect, and that is what we are targeting."

Abeid said any type of scarf would do, including "any colours, patterns, flowers or plain". Young girls were also able to wear a headscarf with no age restrictions, she said.

Muslim women of various cultures take different approaches to the hijab, or other forms of head and neck covering. Some use pins or wear a tight cap underneath to prevent hair showing.



Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern wears a headscarf to meet with members of the Muslim community after the mass shooting at the two Christchurch mosques last Friday.

Thaya Ashman, an Auckland general practitioner who is one of the Headscarf for Harmony organisers, said their aim was to support the families of the 50 people killed last Friday, and others affected.

Concerned about possible cultural appropriation, they had contacted local Muslim groups and received only support for the event, Ashman said.

They were using the term headscarf rather than hijab, and wanted to keep the message simple, said Ashman, who is not Muslim but has lived in Muslim communities in Afghanistan and Pakistan.



ALDEN WILLIAMS/STUFF

An armed police officer wears a hijab outside Memorial Park Cemetery in Christchurch during the funerals of mosque attack victims on Thursday afternoon.

"I think as long as it's respectful, we've been assured the gesture will be appreciated."

They had received a positive response to their plans, with some men also intending to wear scarves on their shoulders or heads as was done in some countries, Ashman said.

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