



Annual conference of the Islamic Women's Council of New Zealand. Sunday, 25 August 2019

[Auckland Speech by Jacqui Caine](#), Member, Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019 (Abridged).

Ko waiiau? Who am I? My name is Jacqui Caine, the second Member of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Attack on Christchurch Mosques on 15 March 2019. I grew up in the small close-knit communities of Stewart Island and Bluff. I studied law and accounting at Otago University in Dunedin and moved to Wellington to join the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade where I served as a diplomat for 23 years, most recently as New Zealand's Ambassador to Chile. Having served and worked overseas for most of the last 20 years our family decided to come home to reconnect with and work for my iwi or Maori tribe – Ngāi Tahu –so we moved to Christchurch in December last year. I was honoured to be appointed to the Royal Commission –and feel a huge responsibility both to the Muslim community and to all the people of Aotearoa New Zealand to undertake this role to the very best of my abilities. Before I go on, I would like first to acknowledge and remember the 51 shuhada who are firmly at the heart of the work of the Royal Commission. All of us at the Royal Commission recognise the grieving that family, friends and communities are working through. We feel your sorrow.

Thank you for inviting me to speak today, it's a privilege to be a part of your annual conference. I have enjoyed being able to meet so many inspirational and remarkable women. I understand you've been holding this conference each year since 1990 –a superb achievement and a credit to the Islamic Women's Council and the excellent work you do. This conference is such a wonderful opportunity to bring Muslim women together from across Aotearoa to forge friendships and connections, hear from a diverse range of speakers, and discuss issues of real and pressing significance. This year, your conference is held in the shadow of the atrocity in March. It is a poignant tribute to that day that this conference, is dedicated to the women and youth of Christchurch's Muslim communities. The horror of the afternoon of 15 March will forever be etched in the minds of New Zealanders, and needless to say, for your communities particularly. Having recently moved to Christchurch, it was unthinkable that a city that had suffered so much with the 2011 earthquake should be struck by devastating tragedy and heartbreak once more. On 15 March we lost 51 people from our community. The city has, again, been forever changed – but this time the tragedy was man-made, shockingly deliberate and brutal. Many of us in Christchurch have friends, colleagues, family members or neighbours who were at, or who knew someone who was at, Al-Noor Masjid or the Linwood Islamic Centre that day. We, and of course many other New Zealanders, are acutely aware of the trauma those that were there suffered that day, and the ongoing grief being borne by the families and communities as a result of the attack. I was overcome by the extraordinary grace, bravery, resilience and strength showed by Muslim

communities in the face of such horror. The way in which you rallied to support each other was phenomenal, and an amazing example to the rest of Aotearoa. Your enduring support, care and advocacy for each other is moving to see. I hope one of the lasting impacts of the attacks will be the building of a kinder, more inclusive nation. We have seen people across the country taking a long, hard look at themselves and their conscious and unconscious prejudices.

There have been a number of recent instances of New Zealanders publicly standing up for each other in the face of racism and xenophobia. While we still have a very long way to go, a promising start has been made, and all New Zealanders have a role in building the kind of society we can be proud of. So what is a Royal Commission? What is the point of having an Inquiry into the attacks, and how can you engage in and contribute to its work? The Royal Commission of Inquiry into the attack on Christchurch Mosques was established in April of this year, and is chaired by Supreme Court judge Sir William Young. I am the other member or Commissioner. A Royal Commission of Inquiry is the most serious response to an issue available to the New Zealand Government. A Royal Commission investigates matters of great public significance. Importantly, it is independent from the Government and reports to the Governor-General. The way the inquiry will work is decided by the Commissioners. So while the Government sets the terms of reference, it cannot interfere in the direction taken by an inquiry, or influence the findings in any way. The Royal Commission is able to use the wide-ranging powers outlined in the Inquiries Act, meaning that we can make people answer our questions, including government officials. The purpose of this Royal Commission of Inquiry is, put simply, to investigate whether government agencies are doing all they can to protect the people of Aotearoa from terrorist attacks-or whether more should be done. To do this, our terms of reference ask us to inquire into the events leading up to the 15 March attack and the performance of government agencies in relation to those events. The terms of reference also specify what we can't inquire into. We are not able to look into what government agencies did once the attack started on 15 March 2019, because we're directed to find out how the attack happened. So we are not looking at the response. We also cannot suggest amendments to firearms legislation, because the Government is already taking action in that space. And we can only make findings about the actions of government agencies, not other entities, like social media platforms. Lastly, we cannot make any findings on who is guilty or who is liable for the attack. So while one part of our focus is inquiring into the events leading up to 15 March, we need to make recommendations for the future. So we are interested in seeking views on a wide range of questions, including:

- What worries you most about the safety and security of your community?
- How could government agencies make you feel safer?
- What do you think government agencies should do to stop terrorist attacks in Aotearoa?
- What should government do to promote acceptance and inclusion of Muslim communities here?

These are critical questions that will help give us a fuller picture as we undertake our inquiry. Receiving your comments and thoughts on these questions will also help us reflect your voices in our work and in our report. This is incredibly important to us. It is essential that the Royal Commission follows every line of inquiry and carefully considers all the evidence available to deliver our final report. To do that, we are asking for information and views from a wide range of sources including New Zealand's Muslim communities, government agencies, academics, former and current government officials and members of the public. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you we are asking hard and probing questions of government agencies. We are determined to get answers. This is an iterative process, involving a lot of back-and-forth with the agencies asking questions, follow-up questions, and so on. It takes time, and requires a methodical and meticulous approach. But this approach will allow us to ensure all lines of inquiry are pursued appropriately. It also means, however, that much of our work has to happen behind closed doors, at least for the time being, if we are to truly piece together what happened, or what did not happen that should have, in the lead-up to the attacks. As I said at the outset, as we go about our work, we are very mindful to keep at the heart of everything we do the 51 shuhada—the 51 people – who lost their lives; and the relatives, friends and fellow Muslims who grieve them. We are very conscious of the grief and pain felt within Muslim communities, including survivors of the attack, and it is our sincere wish not to worsen that pain. So, the Royal Commission team is working hard to engage with Muslim communities while being careful to respect the families who are still grieving, the privacy of individuals, as well as Muslim events and practices like the iddah grieving period, Ramadan and hajj. We are also conscious of the range of perspectives among people of Muslim faith from many different backgrounds and ethnicities. We acknowledge that these complexities must be treated sensitively and with respect.

We began our community engagement very early in our establishment in mid-May with meetings in Christchurch with Muslim religious leaders, leaders of Muslim NGOs, Ngāi Tahu leaders and the Mayor of Christchurch City. Since those early meetings, our engagement with Muslim communities has continued and recently intensified. We genuinely want to understand the issues and concerns you have, and your aspirations for the future. We also want to do this in a way that feels right for you. By mid-July we had employed a full team of community engagement experts with diverse backgrounds, skills and experiences, including an understanding of Muslim communities, refugees, race relations, social exclusion, and dealing with trauma and grief. This has meant we have been able to strengthen our efforts and broaden our reach further over the past month or so. We welcome your advice and ideas too on how we can best engage with your communities. Please don't hesitate to contact us to discuss this. As you'll be aware, in July the first meeting of our Muslim Community Reference Group was held. The Reference Group will provide advice and insight throughout the duration of the inquiry, and will help ensure the Royal Commission process builds in appropriate and accessible opportunities for Muslim communities to participate. While the Reference Group is not meant to be a representative group, we have been careful to ensure its membership reflects the many diverse Muslim communities in Aotearoa. When establishing the group, we kept front of mind the need to ensure the group had

the right mix of gender, ethnicity, age, religious perspective, and that members were drawn from across Aotearoa, while acknowledging the attacks took place in Christchurch. When considering membership nominations and applications, the Royal Commission also considered an individual's potential to uniquely contribute to the inquiry, including the organisations or groups that members represent, are involved with or have connections to. We are delighted to have a number of members of the IWC bringing their insights and experience to the Reference Group. At the first Reference Group hui in July, we were humbled and honoured by the dignity and courage of all the members, and the honest and brave conversations we had together. We know it is up to us to build trust, and we are working hard to earn that trust. Members of the Reference Group are already offering the Royal Commission valuable and constructive advice, new connections and opportunities for us to meet and hear more. We are also hearing good ideas on how to engage with other members of the Muslim communities.

While the Reference Group is one of the ways that we are engaging with New Zealand's Muslim communities, there are many other avenues we are pursuing. We continue to meet personally with Muslim communities in various ways and we're grateful for those that have connected with us to date. It's a privilege to work with them. We have also begun to connect more widely with New Zealand's diverse communities—including other religious and ethnic groups. These groups have useful insights to provide and we look forward to their contribution to our inquiry. In order for us to get full and frank answers to questions, and to protect the privacy of individuals coming to us with information, much of the Royal Commission's work has been in private. This is to ensure information can be gathered quickly, and without any restrictions. We're also very aware of the fact that some people may feel more comfortable speaking to us if they know their privacy is protected. Generally, our reason for not sharing certain information is about protecting people—their privacy, confidentiality, natural justice and national security. This is really important to us. We appreciate this can lead to a lack of visibility of our work, which is why we've worked hard to provide regular public updates. Our updates provide summaries of our work to date, who we've met with, and so on. These updates are on our website, and I encourage you to read them. One of the other ways we've tried to engage New Zealanders in our inquiry is through our public submission process. We are currently inviting interested members of the public, groups and organisations to make submissions relevant to our terms of reference. Submissions opened on 1 July, and we have recently extended the closing date to 27 September, to allow more time for people to provide their thoughts, comments and suggestions. We've received many public submissions so far, from people and organisations throughout Aotearoa and overseas, covering a wide range of interesting matters and information. You can make a submission to us through a letter, an email or a form on our website. Our online submission form is easy to use, and we have fact sheets on the submissions process in a variety of languages to try and encourage as many people as possible to contribute. It is important we hear from you and your communities, and urge you to provide us with any information, story, or comment you think might be useful to us.

So, if you haven't yet made a submission, I strongly encourage you to. This is a really effective way for you to engage in and contribute to our process. We want to hear your voices and stories.

Submissions don't have to be formal or long, or cover every aspect of our terms of reference. As I mentioned earlier, we would particularly welcome your input on these sorts of questions:

- What worries you most about the safety and security of your community?
- How could government agencies make you feel safer?
- What should government do to promote acceptance and inclusion of Muslim communities?
- What do you think government agencies should do to stop terrorist attacks in NZ?

Hearing your thoughts and comments on these questions is crucial for us as we look at the kind of recommendations we will make to the Governor-General. If you have questions, need help with writing your submission, or would rather provide us with a verbal submission, we would welcome that too! We have an 0800 number anyone can call during business hours. So please, contact us and make a submission, and encourage your friends and family to do the same if they have not already. The Human Rights Commission is also offering support in how to write a submission. The key things to remember are that:

- You can write in any language you wish -just let us know which language! We can have your submissions translated.
- Think about what you want to say and work out the most important parts you want the Royal Commission to know.
- Write these points down –short sentences are best. Your submission does not need to be long.
- Tell us what recommendations you want the Royal Commission to make and why these are important to you.

We will not be publicly releasing submissions or the personal details of submitters. The Royal Commission will instead release a summary of themes identified within submissions. We want you to speak up, to get involved and to have your say!

Once we've collected and analysed the evidence and submissions, what then? Our report is due to the Governor-General on 10 December. The report will make findings on issues set out in the Terms of Reference, and make recommendations on two issues of significance:

- whether there is any improvement to information gathering, sharing, and analysis practices by relevant Government agencies that could have prevented the attack, or could prevent such attacks in the future
- what changes should be implemented to improve relevant Government agency systems, or operational practices, to ensure the prevention of such attacks in the future.

Once the report has been submitted to the Governor-General, she will then refer it to the Government to consider. The Government's consideration could take some time, depending on what our findings and recommendations are. The Government will decide whether to release any

part of the report, and when. We are striving for a report that is robust, answers the hard questions, and makes findings and recommendations that will help guide Aotearoa as it heals from this terrible event. We are leaving no stone unturned as we look to find answers. We will be very clear in the report about what our findings are and what we consider needs to change to help ensure something like this never again happens to our people. As Ngāi Tahu I look at the world through a lens of our tribal whakatauki or tribal saying "Mō tātou, ā, mō kā uri ā muri ake nei. For us and our children after us." This whakatauki can also guide us to think about what kind of society we are building for us, and for our children after us. We want our report to reflect what exists now and to recommend what we hope for in the future. We want our report to strengthen our country's resolve to be an open, inclusive society where the protection of our people is paramount. Before I conclude, I know from our engagement many people have asked us about how they can ensure the government acts on any recommendations we make. Obviously, as an independent Royal Commission of Inquiry, it is not our role to comment on the Government's response to any recommendations we may make. Our work is done once our report is handed to the Governor-General.

But it is clear from our engagement with New Zealanders, such as yourselves, that Aotearoa is on a journey of discovery about what the threats are to our nation. This journey also includes conversations about how we can build social cohesion and social inclusion. Our report will form part of the journey –but it is not the end point. We hope that our report will help the Government consider how to continue this all-important work, and potentially take decisions and actions that will help make Aotearoa a safer place to be. Communities have a key role in helping ensure Aotearoa is safe. And you have a key role in ensuring that the Government and Government agencies do their job. I encourage you to keep engaging with Government agencies, and leverage your connections to continue advocating for your communities. Your Council leadership is strong and influential, and I have no doubt will play a significant and public role once the Government has considered the Royal Commission's findings and recommendations. Thank you once again for inviting me to speak today. It has been a pleasure to meet with you and talk to you about the important work of the Royal Commission. Once more, I do encourage you to make sure your voice is heard during our process –please contact us by phone, email, or letter if you'd like to make a submission, and encourage people in your community and networks to do the same. I look forward to engaging with you throughout the inquiry process. Kia kaha, noho ora mai. Be strong, and best wishes. Kia ora.

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