



New Zealand Federation of Ethnic Councils Inc.

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PRESS RELEASE

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Federation endorses the 90 day employment trial period

Delegates who attended the Federation's national council meeting over the weekend are concerned that migrants and refugees could be badly affected as the current economic recession takes hold in New Zealand. This possibility was considered serious given the increasing level of discrimination as reported in the Race Relations Commissioner's annual report released at the same meeting. (only the Discrimination section of this report was released at this meeting). How new settlers can contribute to improve the current situation was discussed at the national conference of the Federation held in Northcote at the Awataha Marae over the weekend.

The Federation endorsed the governments Employment Relations Amendment Bill 2008 that will give New Zealanders greater employment opportunities. The 90-day trial will provide businesses the confidence to take on employees in uncertain economic times and will promote labour productivity over the long-term. The Federation believes that both businesses and workers will benefit from the employment opportunities created by this amendment. It strongly believes that during these difficult economic times the 90-day trial period would encourage small business owners to take on new staff and staff of different ethnicities.

At this national Hui, Joris de Bres of Human Rights Commission launched the Race Relations Report 2008 on Discrimination. While the year saw a slight decline in the number of complaints received by the Human Rights Commission on race related grounds, the media has highlighted some disturbing reports of racial discrimination throughout the year. The Federation raises concern and is worried with persisting discrimination in government agencies. The Race Relations Commissioner reports that 42% of all discrimination related complaints were associated with Government agencies. It is also unacceptable that the Asians remain the most discriminated groups. The Federation is proposing to hold joint meetings and forums with Human Rights Commission and senior officials of key agencies to discuss how to minimize discrimination in workplace and society.

The Federation believes that better understanding and education to all New Zealanders is the key solution to reducing such alarming statistics. To this end, the Federation is engaging with government agencies and Maori educators to build their members capacity in their ability to understand and contribute to a peaceful and just society.

The meeting was also attended by senior officials from MSD, Police, Human Rights Commission, and Office of Ethnic Affairs.

At the evening program, chief guest Governor General, His Excellency Anand Satayanand and the Minister for Ethnic Affairs Hon Pansy Wong both congratulated the work of the Federation and its 20 years of service to the ethnic and migrant communities.

The Federation is the only truly pan ethnic and a truly multicultural national volunteer organization with networks nationwide with a potential reach to nearly 700 000 New Zealanders.

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