

## **Lack of Government Research into Racial Bias in Criminal Justice System**

A Shadow Report by the Robson Hanan Trust to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), has criticised the lack of NZ research into whether the over-representation of Māori in the criminal justice system could be due to racial bias.

Director of the Robson Hanan Trust, and the Rethinking Crime and Punishment Project, Kim Workman, reported to the Committee that the government has not carried through on departmental reports that confirmed ethnic bias as being one of the factors which has contributed to Māori overrepresentation.

“In 2007, CERD recommended that New Zealand research the extent to which the over-representation of Māori could be due to racial bias in arrests, prosecutions and sentences. In the same year, Department of Corrections research confirmed the existence of bias in Police apprehensions and to a lesser degree, in other parts of the criminal justice system. That was following in 2009 by a Ministry of Justice report, which concluded that a comprehensive policy approach should take into account ethnic disproportionality, including the negative impact of laws, structures, processes and decision making criteria on particular ethnic-minority groups.”

“In the last five years, government agencies have researched the adverse early-life social and environmental factors which result in Māori over-representation, and developed culturally appropriate programmes and services for Māori. What they have avoided, is doing anything about the evidence which shows clearly that personal racism and structural discrimination within the criminal justice system exists, and needs to be reduced.”

The Robson Trust has recommended to CERD that it ask the New Zealand government to direct the Justice Sector Leadership Board to research the extent to which the over-representation of Māori in the criminal justice system is due to racial bias in arrests, prosecutions and sentences and structural discrimination, and develop a strategy to address the issue.

The Hon Judith Collins will present the Government’s latest report on New Zealand’s progress in tackling racial discrimination and inequality to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Committee will be webcast live at <http://www.treatybodywebcast.org> - the session start times are 3pm, Thursday, 21 February (NZ time: 3am, Friday, 22 February) and 10am, Friday, 22 February (NZ time: 10pm, Friday 22 February).

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