

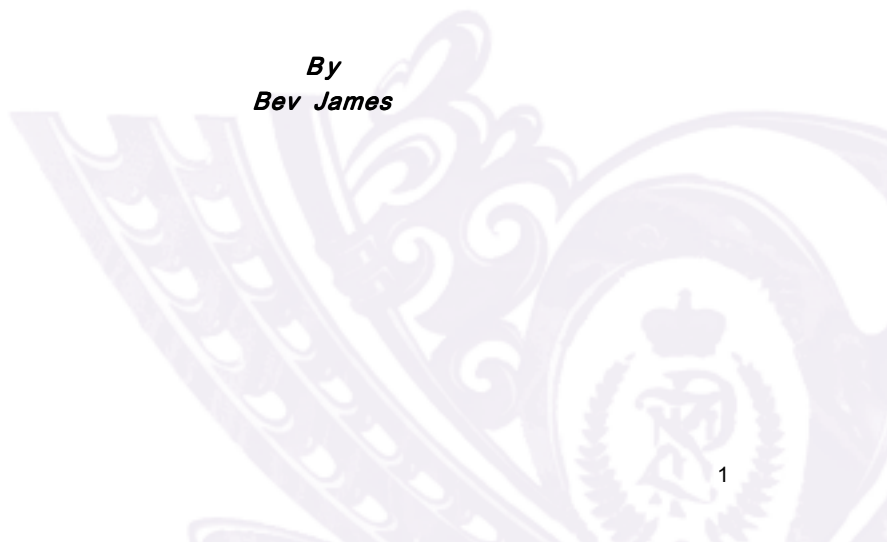
# Challenging Perspectives

**Police and Māori Attitudes Toward One Another**

*April 2000*

*A summary document prepared for  
Te Puni Kōkiri and the New Zealand Police*

*By  
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## Foreword

“E tū ki te kei o te waka kia pākia koe e ngā ngaru o te wā”<sup>1</sup>

“Stand at the kei of the waka so that you may feel the bite of the  
spray upon your face”

This report raises real challenges for both Police and Māori, and it is only with full acknowledgement of the issues contained that we can move forward. And it is with the knowledge that we have the commitment and drive to move forward that we ***can progress towards more positive relationships between the Police and Māori.***

We welcome the findings and challenges that have been presented by this report as a positive step forward for both the NZ Police and Māori. In 1996 we made a commitment to our staff and to Māori that we would identify the underlying reasons that were preventing Police and Māori working together to reduce Māori over-representation as offenders and victims of crime.

This research provides a basis and together with other information gathered has already enabled positive change in police management, structures and practice. These are first steps and part of a much more comprehensive strategy that will contribute to our overall vision of “Safer Communities Together”.

We therefore present the report “*Challenging Perspectives*” as a summary of the research that sought to examine attitudes and perceptions, both of Māori and Police. As this report states, examination of attitudes is a difficult task and we acknowledge the researchers and authors in this respect.

Reading “*Challenging Perspectives*” it is apparent that there are negative and inappropriate attitudes and behaviours amongst Police. Although this is perhaps reflective of our society as a whole, it is not a practice that will be tolerated within Police.

Significant developments have and are taking place within Police that focus on the issues raised by this report. We have some key people in Police and among Māori who have been working hard to cement platforms for continued

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<sup>1</sup> [June 1996]. This whakatauhaki or proverb was provided to us by Mr Apirana Mahuika – Ngāti Pōrou to capture the atmosphere, strategic direction and vision for the future of the Māori/Police relationship.

dialogue and interaction amongst our people on a range of issues.

Continued dialogue between Police and Māori is key to a reduction in the areas of offending and victimisation, but perhaps more pressing is its role in bringing about the necessary attitudinal shifts. Already we have developed some key relationships at the operational and executive levels of Police with significant thinkers and doers amongst Iwi and Hapū.

Some of the more tangible results of these relationships can be read in the report itself, however we must acknowledge there is some way to go and much work to be done to turn back the tide of those who offend or become victims of crime. We are confident that the N Z Police are now well positioned in their object of working progressively with Māori and the community as a whole.



**Rob Robinson**  
Acting Commissioner  
NZ Police



**Dr Ngātata Love**  
Chief Executive  
Te Puni Kōkiri



# Challenging Perspectives:

## Police and Māori Attitudes towards One Another

### 1. Introduction

In 1997 the NZ Police and Te Puni Kōkiri commissioned research from Victoria Link on Perceptions of Māori and Police. This research comprised two complementary but separate components:

- i. *Māori Perceptions of the Police*, by Pania Te Whaiti and Michel Roguski from He Pārekereke, which sought information on Māori attitudes towards the police; and
- ii. *Police Perceptions of Māori*, by Gabrielle Maxwell and Catherine Smith from the Institute of Criminology, which examined police views about their behaviour and attitudes toward Māori.

This summary document provides an overview of the two research reports. However, the document is not intended to be a substitute for reading the two reports. This document is necessarily brief and selective in the information it presents, and consequently a full understanding of the issues can only be obtained by reference to the research reports themselves.

This document outlines who was involved in the research, how it was done, and the main findings. Section 2 explains the background to the research, and section 3 provides a general introduction to the two studies. This is followed by more detailed discussion of each study in sections 4 and 5. The final section focuses on the policy implications of the research.

### 2. Why the research was done

It was intended that information gained from both studies would help the NZ Police make organisational changes that would contribute to improving their interactions with Māori and feed into the development of a responsiveness strategy planned as part of Policing 2000. In particular, the NZ Police wished to:

- Improve the perception of Māori towards the police;
- Increase police officers' understanding and acceptance of the significance and role of the Treaty of Waitangi in their work;

- Develop more effective consultation between police and Māori, particularly to identify, design and implement strategies to reduce the number of Māori offenders and victims, and
- Bring the voice of Māori into decision making.

The research was also intended to assist Te Puni Kōkiri to provide policy advice that would enhance police relationships with Māori.

The NZ Police and Te Puni Kōkiri commissioned this research because police relationships with Māori individuals and communities are seen to be poor<sup>2</sup>. Both agencies were aware of Māori dissatisfaction with police attitudes towards Māori, and with policing practices and how they were impacting on Māori. There was also concern about reported instances of discrimination by police against Māori. Within New Zealand, there is a lack of empirical research on police attitudes and perceptions of Māori. However overseas research frequently points to negative attitudes, discriminatory behaviour and racist abuse within the police towards ethnic minorities and indigenous peoples.

A broader context to the research was a concern about high rates of offending and victimisation amongst Māori. Although the research did not specifically focus on how those rates might be reduced, it was believed that information from the research would contribute to understanding the dynamics underlying offending, and therefore help in developing more effective police responses in dealing with offenders and assisting victims.

### 3. About the two Reports

Both research reports provide a wealth of powerful and at times disturbing information. In each group, Māori and Police, the process of undertaking the research led to debate and highlighted emotions. Some police officers felt that the research approach was too simplistic and that the findings were likely to damage the public image of the police. Māori participants found the research raised for them many painful experiences of abuse by the police. Some expressed concern that their accounts would not be believed or acted on.

The approaches of the two studies are very different. Although both studies are concerned with attitudes, they each have a different starting point, and explore the relationship between Māori and the police from different stances.

<sup>2</sup> MRL Research Group (1993) & (1995) **Public Attitudes Towards Policing** New Zealand National Police Headquarters Wellington

They also use different methodologies. The police research used a survey questionnaire as the main information gathering tool. The research with Māori used focus groups to obtain an in-depth understanding of issues of concern to Māori. The researchers considered this methodology to be the most compatible with Māori tikanga.

At this point something needs to be said about researching attitudes. Attitudes are not easy to examine, particularly if they are complex and involve many facets, as do attitudes about different ethnic groups or different communities. One concern people have about attitudes, is whether they are based on fact. However, the value of looking at attitudes is not to assess whether a particular attitude is 'right' or 'wrong', but to understand how the attitude can affect the way people relate to one another. If individuals believe they will be treated in a certain way, or that others hold particular views about them, then that belief will affect the way those individuals act, regardless of how accurate the belief is. Attitudes and beliefs have a powerful impact on the ability of the police to develop and maintain effective relationships with Māori.

Another concern about research on attitudes is that inevitably, attitudes vary, depending on many factors. Do the attitudes that have been identified represent a prevalent view? Māori perceive negative attitudes among the police to be widespread, but the research on the police suggested that not all police hold such attitudes. In the research with Māori participants, strong common views about the police were apparent. However, the researchers also acknowledge that participants expressed diverse perceptions, which were location, hapū or iwi specific, and also specific to individuals. Although the focus group methodology used in this research is not intended to result in findings that are generalisable to the total Māori population, the findings do suggest the concerns expressed are far from being limited only to those participating in the focus groups.

Taking into account the complex nature of attitudes and the difficulties in researching them, it can nevertheless be said that both reports raise similar issues, and common themes can be identified. They are as follows:

- negative stereotypes of Māori are widespread among the police;
- discriminatory language and behaviour are part of the occupational culture of the police;
- in general, Māori hold negative views of the police; and

- increasing understanding of Māori issues among the police is needed.

These, and other related issues are examined in detail below.

#### **4. The *Māori Perceptions of the Police* Report**

The objectives of the research on Māori perceptions of the police were to:

- describe Māori attitudes towards the police;
- identify variables which might influence these attitudes; and
- examine the relationship between these variables and attitudes of Māori toward the police.

The research was conducted through 10 focus groups, each with 8 to 10 participants. The focus groups were held in Wellington, Stokes Valley, Auckland, Dannevirke and Dunedin. All participants were self identified Māori. They were selected according to their knowledge of different aspects of police work and experience of different types of contacts with police. The researchers tried to include a range of Māori people with differing perspectives of the police based on individual or whānau interactions in a range of capacities. Participants included victims of domestic violence, sex workers, mental health service consumers, suspects, Māori youth and Māori support workers. There was a spread of ages, incomes and educational levels, although women outnumbered men. Not all participants had had direct contact with police, but were included because other members of their whānau had, and it was the impact of this contact on other individuals in the whānau that the researchers were interested in exploring.

Although the researchers emphasised that there is no one, unified set of Māori attitudes towards the police, there are nevertheless common perceptions and experiences of the police. These common perceptions and experiences can be summarised as falling into three categories:

- the police as an institution is inimical to Māori;
- police hold negative perceptions of Māori; and
- Māori distrust police.

### *An institution inimical to Māori*

Focus group participants believed that the police as an institution perpetuates a self-validating, insular culture which new recruits are socialised to accept. The institution maintains a separation from Māori communities, which results in the dislocation of Māori officers from their own communities. This separation was seen to reinforce racist views of Māori, and also to relieve police of any accountability to the community:

*They have a culture which actually identifies people who are different and either modifies them to become like them or gets rid of them. And I think it's a very powerful thing within themselves to keep modifying their own people so that they conform to these kind of things. There isn't room for critical thinking in their culture.*

Participants saw the insular nature of the police as requiring Māori recruits to internalise and uphold the norms of the police culture if they wish to succeed in their careers. Although some participants believed that more Māori officers would make a difference to the responsiveness of the police to Māori concerns, others claimed that the worst treatment they had experienced was at the hands of Māori officers. They saw the main reasons for this as lying in the racist nature of the police culture, the socialisation of Māori police into that culture, and the need or desire for Māori officers to prove they were 'real' police.

Participants identified lack of involvement with Māori communities as another aspect of the exclusive nature of the police. They noted that police attempts to work with Māori communities, organisations, hapu and iwi groups were poor. In part the participants considered that this is due to inadequate consultation, and communication that is not undertaken in ways meaningful to Māori. They believed that police responses should be developed in partnership with Māori.

### *Negative police perceptions of Māori*

Participants were unanimous in their perception of the police as having strong anti-Māori attitudes and practices. These views were held by both men and women, by all age groups, and across all income and education levels and regions. Participants believed that the police viewed Māori as essentially 'criminal'. That is to say, Māori perceived simply 'being Māori' as sufficient cause for police suspicion. Participants provided a number of examples of what they described as racist practices, including:

- the stopping and searching of Māori on suspicion that a crime has been committed;
- harassment;
- verbal and sometimes physical abuse;
- the use of strip searches;
- the failure of police to offer protection to women;
- disrespect for tikanga Māori; and
- the minimalisation by the police of racist attacks on Māori.

One Māori man described his experience of being stopped and questioned, and several others had similar stories:

*If you're Māori you are a suspect from the very beginning. I recall a time I came down in 1975 and um, I had a brand new car. I must have got stopped [by the police] within the first three days I was here. Every one of them asked me if I had stolen the car. Well I think at the time, for myself as a Māori, it looked like I was a bit of a novelty because I walked down town and people sort of turn around and look at you. I don't know whether that was a reflection of the environment that we're in, or whether it's just police suspicion.*

The police do have wide discretionary powers, and there is evidence not only in this research report, but also in the *Police Perceptions of Māori* report, that police use their powers to more frequently target Māori.

However, participants noted some exceptions to police targeting Māori simply because they are Māori. Participants contrasted young officers, whom they saw as the most 'offensive and dangerous', with older officers, Youth Aid officers, and those police who were willing to work alongside Māori in the community. Age was seen to be closely associated with life experience and more understanding of the situations Māori experience. The majority of participants suggested that police need to improve their communication skills, and assess the situation according to its characteristics, rather than assume a stereotyped response. As one woman put it:

*It's when they make the right approaches. When they turn around and they change it around from being "I'm in charge here" to "How can we work [together]?"*

### *Māori distrust of police*

Participants expressed strong distrust in police. Participants stated that their distrust could be traced to a loss of faith, and their experiences of police inaction or in some cases abuse. These experiences were widely reported across all locations, and both men and women expressed distrust. While trust of police amongst the general population has been shown to increase with age, in this research, Māori of all ages expressed distrust. One parent spoke of his loss of trust in and respect for the police, because of the way his child had been treated:

*I just know with my young fella, 'cause I'm from a cop background, social worker background, and when he came back and complained about this harassment and all that sort of thing I said, "you must be doing something wrong" and I never listened. I suppose to my shame now. I found out he never did a lot of those things but now he's really in trouble and we're doing a backward step to maybe right the wrong that maybe as a parent I started with the help of those fellas [the police].*

Distrust of police gives rise to a number of consequences:

- hesitation in going to the police for assistance;
- reluctance to offer assistance to police;
- preference for using Māori services to deal with crime and provide support; and
- lack of confidence in the Police Complaints Authority to fairly and objectively deal with complaints brought by Māori.

When distrust is so widespread, it is understandable that Māori will rely on whānau as a means of support and seek to establish Māori services to address crime and provide the support they perceive as lacking in police services:

*If we're going to get anywhere, it should be resolved by ourselves. Our own restorative justice, all the small cases that are going to court, they don't necessarily have to go through that line. If we could deal to the small cases ourselves, that's involving whakawhanaungatanga.*

### *Factors influencing Māori attitudes towards the police*

The *Māori Perceptions of the Police* report also sought to identify variables that might influence Māori attitudes towards the police. These variables fell into three broad areas:

- interaction between the police and Māori;
- preconceived ideas or attitudes; and
- police attitudes towards Māori.

These variables were closely related, with individual attitudes towards the police being derived from all three areas.

Previous personal or whānau experience with the police was perhaps the strongest determinant of Māori attitudes towards the police. These experiences related to all areas of policing, from police response to crimes committed against individuals, to police dealing with suspects.

What was notable from the research, was a common negative experience, regardless of different ages, occupational or class backgrounds. Perhaps not surprisingly, young people, beneficiaries, those associated with gang members and those in the sex work industry all believed that they were seen by the police as not deserving of respect. They believed that in consequence, they did not receive services, or were subject to harassment. Some participants considered that even though they were in professional occupations, this did not positively influence the way police treated them.

Women who had experienced police responses to domestic violence did not provide any positive comments about police. They perceived that the police do not have adequate knowledge and experience to support Māori women in violent relationships:

*When I have called the cops y'know it's like ummm calling wolf or something. Like you don't even matter sort of thing. Like you've called many times and y'know they just want to go back to the station or something.*

Women who were victims of violence from gang associates reported lack of police understanding of their situation. They considered they had few choices of where they could go to for help:

*Those women are not up against one abuser, they are up against a network of abusers who have their own regime, own protocols, own rules and that for any woman to speak out is always at huge risk to herself ... but that seems to me to fall on deaf ears when you talk to the cops about it.*

In the whānau, police actions, both good and bad, are noted and remembered by young and old. Some older adults commented that their perceptions of the police had changed from being generally positive, to distrust, due to police treatment of their tamariki and mokopuna:

*Most of my experience with the police has been through family and friends and it's not to do with any crimes, my experiences are to do with harassment and young people being searched and badly handled, and handled in a racist way. But I'm not talking about once or twice, I'm talking about every time they went out the gate.*

Participants also reported that Māori hold preconceived ideas or attitudes about the police. These attitudes are in part determined by Māori knowledge and understanding of New Zealand's history of policing as it has impacted on iwi. Māori also have a perceived understanding of the role of police within the criminal justice system, which affects their attitudes. Furthermore, there is a prevailing negative attitude towards the police within Māori communities, which has partly developed as a result of a high police presence in Māori communities:

*Society perceives, well the society that perhaps I come from, perceives that police are bad. It's that collective values thing again. It's what the family, what the collective perceives.*

Participants considered that the attitudes police held about Māori were very strong determinants of their own attitudes. They believed that the following variables influence police behaviour towards Māori, and in consequence affected their own attitudes:

- police perceptions of the participants' ethnicity, physical appearance, gender, class, associates, and whānau name;
- the situation in which the police have cause to interact with Māori;
- prevailing attitudes about Māori within the police institution;

- prevailing attitudes about Māori within the community;
- percentage of Māori within the community population;
- a belief on the part of the police in their own status as crime fighters;
- lack of understanding of Māori;
- lack of understanding of Māori tikanga and beliefs;
- ignorance of the history of policing of Māori communities; and
- ignorance of the police role as party to the Treaty of Waitangi.

Participants also reported that they were influenced in their attitudes by the characteristics of individual officers. They perceived that officers over 30 years of age were more approachable. The ethnicity and gender of an officer also had a bearing on their perception of the officer.

### **5. The *Police Perceptions of Māori* Report**

The objectives of this research were to examine police views about their behaviour and attitudes toward Māori, to look at factors associated with different attitudes among police officers and to identify likely responses to proposed changes for building responsiveness to Māori planned as part of Policing 2000.

Survey questionnaires were mailed to around 1000 police officers. They were chosen to cover different ranks and regions, and to include men and women, and different ethnic groups. The sample was randomly chosen and thought to be broadly representative of the behaviour and attitudes of police officers throughout NZ. About 75% (737) responded of those potentially able to respond. A number were unavailable because they had left the police or were on leave without pay. Eight percent refused to participate in the survey.

The 737 respondents largely comprised those with at least 5 years service who were currently or had recently engaged in frontline duties. The sample, although not representative of the New Zealand population as a whole with respect to sex or ethnicity, appears to be representative of the New Zealand Police ranked at senior sergeant or below in these respects. Only 8% of the sample identified as Māori although another 6% identified as having some Māori ancestry. Eighteen percent were women.

The questionnaire was primarily designed to find out how police currently respond to Māori and their views about Māori and future police policy in relation to Māori. The main findings that are presented here concern:

- attitudes towards and treatment of Māori;
- views on Māori political aspirations;
- relationships between Māori police officers and other police officers; and
- responses to proposed policies and strategies aimed at building responsiveness to Māori.

### *Attitudes towards and treatment of Māori*

In going about their work, police officers reported that, for the most part, they treated Māori and non-Māori similarly. Many respondents commented that policing behaviour was more related to factors such as context and attitudes than to ethnicity:

*You look for something out of place, like a beat up car in Remuera or a flash car in a poor area.*

*This is not a matter of race. The police will treat **offenders**, not suspects, roughly if the offender treats them poorly.*

*Responses are made depending on the attitude of the person, not their ethnicity.*

However, about a third of the respondents acknowledged that there was a greater tendency to suspect Māori of an offence. Nearly half reported that police officers generally were more likely to query vehicle registration when a Māori was seen driving a 'flash' car. About a fifth of respondents reported that police officers were more likely to ask Māori what they were doing in the early hours of the morning.

*Most police persons would hold the view that in general terms crime is a major problem for Māori which is the basis of why some would hold negative attitudes to Māori.*

*We may have to change our policing but 80% of people we deal with are Māori/Polynesians that have bad attitudes towards us.*

Māori officers were significantly more likely than officers of New Zealand European descent to believe that Māori were more likely to be suspected of an offence and to be treated in a rough or inappropriate manner.

The survey found that discriminatory language, as well as discriminatory behaviour was part of the occupational culture of the police. At least two thirds of the respondents reported that they had heard colleagues using racist language about suspects or offenders. Much of this was in private rather than face to face with offenders and suspects:

*Although most personnel may make racist comments, it is always in private. It is not in front of offenders or those who might be offenders.*

As some respondents commented, there are likely to be adverse effects from any use of racist terms, either privately or publicly.

The data also suggest that, on average, almost one in four police officers have negative attitudes to Māori. A similar proportion of police officers was seen as having negative attitudes to Pacific Islanders and Asians. On the whole, there may have been some decrease in negativity toward Māori over recent years but most respondents thought it had stayed the same. When asked about the reactions of supervisors to negative behaviour toward Māori, about half of those officers reporting negative behaviour said that it passed unprimanded.

The report compared the views of police of Māori descent with those officers who identified as New Zealand European or Pākehā. In general, the two groups did not hold different views on police attitudes, language or behaviour. But on specific aspects of behaviour, officers of Māori descent were more likely to report discriminatory behaviour by police officers in general. They were also more likely to report that the police had negative attitudes to Māori. The report also indicates that some Māori officers share the negative attitudes of other colleagues towards Māori. Perhaps this is not surprising. Other research demonstrates the power of organisational culture in shaping attitudes and behaviour. On the other hand, Māori police officers were much more likely to endorse proposals for policies that would enhance their status and improve attitudes toward them. The differences between Māori and other officers on these proposals were, for the most part, the largest found in the study.

### *Views on Māori political aspirations*

In the questionnaire, two questions were designed to explore police officers' views about current Māori political aspirations. Respondents were asked to state their level of agreement or disagreement with a variety of attitude statements including respecting and preserving Māori customs, settling Treaty of Waitangi claims and a separate justice system for Māori.

Nearly half the statements were endorsed by at least half the respondents. Most agreed with items emphasising the importance of settling Waitangi Treaty claims, honouring Māori language, respecting and preserving Māori customs and improving the social and economic condition of Māori people. There was more disagreement with such items as giving Māori guardianship of native plants, restoring Māori fishing rights and creating a separate justice system for Māori.

The range of comments revealed that ambivalence, and a complexity of views was apparent. These were not simple issues that individuals could support or reject, as the following comments show:

*I believe the Māori way of life/customs should be respected. I do not believe that Māori should receive any preferential treatment over anyone else.*

*The Māori culture should be fostered, respected and taught, but if it goes any further than this New Zealand will, and is already becoming racist: eg, should there be a separate justice system, the treaty claims escalate.*

Collectively, the statements on Māori political aspirations gave a spread of opinion and met other statistical criteria that enabled some of them to be used to derive a score for the respondents on a scale of attitudes to Māori political aspirations. Scores on this scale were used to determine factors affecting perceptions and attitudes. Māori officers, senior sergeants, older officers, and those no longer in the front line were more likely to express favourable attitudes than New Zealand European or Pākehā officers, constables, younger officers and those in the front line. Increased contact with Māori in one's private life, either through social activities or family membership, was also associated with more favourable attitudes.

### ***Relationships between Māori police officers and other police officers***

Respondents were asked about relationships between Māori officers and other police officers. Overall, 80% saw these relationships as being very good but this was a view less likely to be held by officers of Māori descent compared to officers identifying as New Zealand European or Pākehā.

Māori police officers were seen by about a fifth to a third of respondents as having an advantage in dealing with Māori victims and offenders. But there was also an indication of difficulties Māori officers may have. About a third of the respondents said that it was more difficult for Māori to deal with racially abusive comments. Police officers of Māori descent were even more likely to say this than those identifying as New Zealand European or Pākehā. Nearly a half of all officers thought it was more difficult for Māori to deal with deaths because Māori were more distressed by having to handle a dead body, especially when they were not certain that appropriate protocols had been followed. On the other hand, some respondents said that Māori had an advantage in dealing with Māori deaths because of their knowledge of the relevant customs.

Comments from some Māori police officers indicate the mixed feelings they have about being in the police. Sometimes they feel they are called on to deal with everything involving Māori. They also find it difficult dealing with racist comments from colleagues, while at the same time being challenged by Māori for being in the Police:

*There have been numerous times when I have been extremely angered by racist comments about Māori from my colleagues which have been made in my presence... it is difficult to tolerate such comments from one's own colleagues. The police organisation needs to acknowledge this. Failure to do so will result in difficulty in attracting and retaining Māori staff and the already delicate relationship we share with the Māori community will be further eroded.*

### ***Responses to proposed responsiveness policies and strategies***

A number of questions explored responses to the NZ Police's proposed policies and strategies aimed at building responsiveness to Māori. These included proposals for developing contact with Māori groups, fostering positive police perceptions of Māori, providing training to police on Māori culture and protocol,

and increasing recruitment of Māori into the police.

Overall, respondents agreed with most of the proposals or were at least neutral towards them. The majority agreed that the police should:

- develop contact with Māori groups and agencies;
- foster positive Māori perceptions of police;
- understand Māori culture and protocol;
- foster positive police perceptions of Māori; and
- make the NZ Police a good environment in which Māori can work.

However, about one third of respondents disagreed with emphasising police commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi. Some comments indicated that the Treaty is regarded as irrelevant to policing. The proposal to provide Māori translation on request drew the most disagreement, with 40% disagreeing.

Proposals to recruit and promote Māori attracted both positive and negative responses. There were some comments favouring increased recruitment of Māori. These emphasised the importance of achieving a more representative service, providing positive Māori role models and improving the knowledge and attitudes of non-Māori police officers about Māori:

*I believe that ingrained [negative] police attitudes to minority ethnic groups will remain until members of these groups occupy supervisory and management positions within the Department.*

*There is a need to understand protocol and family life by non Māori officers.*

But there was also considerable concern about affirmative action policies. Comments indicated that issues of equity were at the heart of much of the disagreement and suggest that affirmative action policies in the recruitment and promotion of Māori police will meet with considerable resistance:

*Police must be careful to avoid reverse racism in dealing with Māori. You cannot promote a person to a higher rank on the grounds that they are a different race.*

*I do not believe that we should lower our recruitment standards merely to encourage more Māori into the police. If we do, all this does is lower*

*the standard of the police.*

While resistance to some proposals is clearly apparent, and a minority of officers will oppose the proposals overall, a number of responses were very positive and suggested ways of achieving change in the police. These comments showed the importance of personal experience in changing attitudes:

*I recently attended a 3 day 'cultural awareness course' presented by Māori. It was of a very high standard and very informative. It was somewhat of a 'jolt' in opening my eyes - not that I ever felt 'racist' but have not really considered the Māori point of view as presented on this course. All police should attend such a course.*

*There are stereotypical attitudes within police 'younger staff' but this flows from anglo upbringing. The attitudes are built on ignorance not hatred. Lack of contact is the biggest factor. Personal experience could change opinions.*

## 6. Policy Implications

The findings of the two research reports provide a basis for addressing the negative attitudes of some police towards Māori, and for improving Māori perceptions of the police.

Even though the *Māori Perceptions of the Police* report showed that participants had very few positive experiences of the police and that attitudes towards police were generally negative, participants did mention positive approaches by police. These were when police had good communication skills, worked closely with the community and had knowledge of tikanga Māori. One Māori woman support worker said:

*I find a lot of police in [location] have got those ideals and those values set in place and they are prepared to come out of their safe little place and their little police stations, and be part of the community.*

Participants emphasised that a more collaborative, less authoritarian approach working alongside Māori organisations was required. There was also a call for Māori ways to be used:

*I think one of the things is recognising tikanga or recognising that we have other ways to deal with things that could be a lot better than the*

*ways they've got.*

The authors of *Māori Perceptions of the Police* suggest that addressing Māori concerns requires getting to the core of police attitudes to Māori; those causes are deep rooted.

The majority of police involved in the research agreed with the need for increased understanding of Māori issues. There is also evidence of strongly and widely held beliefs among the police in equity in treatment regardless of ethnicity and a commitment to professional policing. Many of the policies currently being proposed as ways of improving police responsiveness to Māori will be welcomed by police and can contribute to constructive changes. However, others will require further debate, and there may be resistance to change. There is also some evidence of racism in the NZ Police although a minority holds these views.

Both studies indicate that there are positive responses which can be effective. These include:

- improved selection and training of police officers;
- provision of training in Māori culture and protocol;
- further endorsement of community policing;
- involvement of the Māori community with community policing;
- strict monitoring and sanctioning of police discriminatory attitudes and behaviour; and
- regular hui between Māori and police.

In addition, Māori participants in the research asked for the introduction of a complaints mechanism which can be perceived by them to be independent.

## **7. Police Responsiveness Proposals and Progress**

### ***Background***

In 1996 a Responsiveness to Māori project was initiated by the police largely as a result of Governments strategic focus. The build “Responsiveness to Māori” strategy planning document “Urupare Whītiki” is the basis for the

Responsiveness to Māori project.

Since the inception of this project police have set up structures to enable police and Māori to communicate at both strategic and localised levels and have gathered more specific information about the nature and extent of problems between Māori and Police.<sup>3</sup>

The responsiveness approach has been to focus on bringing the voice of Māori into police policy, planning and decision making areas, with a goal to reduce the incidence and effects of offending and victimisation by and of Māori. An example of where this has occurred has been Māori involvement in the selection and appointment of District Managers and Iwi Liaison officers.

### *Strategies implemented so far*

To date the responsiveness project has:

- Gained executive commitment to responsiveness issues<sup>4</sup>;
- Set up a Cultural Affairs Office in the Office of the Commissioner to oversee the responsiveness project and provide avenues for strategic advice and support.;
- Set up Iwi Liaison Officers/ Māori Responsiveness Co-ordinators in most of the 12 policing districts. The role of Iwi Liaison Officers is pivotal to building responsiveness capability within the police. They are selected by both Iwi and Police and as such are an important link between Māori and Police.; and
- Held consultation hui in most policing districts to find out local issues and solutions. This is ongoing.

Police responsiveness strategies look towards strengthening our district structures to form relationships with providers collaboratively focused on reduction in crime, victimisation and road trauma.

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<sup>3</sup> This research is an example of the more specific information gathered. Consultation Hui held in most of the 12 policing Districts with Māori have also produced information specific to local issues between Māori and police.

<sup>4</sup> The Commissioner's overview in "Ururape Whītiki", is the commissioner's public commitment to building responsiveness capability within the police.

### *Current Work & Proposals*

Many hui and this research itself have highlighted the need for changes in the police recruitment and selection processes and policies, training and education philosophies, content and delivery. A project has recently been approved to start planning how to address issues in this area.

Other work and proposals include:

- More focus on Māori values being integrated into policy and planning processes both at District and National level. Issues about how this will best be done still need to be discussed.
- Documenting a National Responsiveness Strategy that ensures responsiveness capability development continues to be a priority.<sup>5</sup>
- Evaluation of Police performance in relation to responsiveness issues. This will be carried out by Te Puni Kōkiri over the 1999-2000 period.

### **Bibliography**

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<sup>5</sup> Police recognise that strategy development does not occur in a vacuum. Our approach has been to co-ordinate developments in policing districts and areas within those districts despite the absence of a written strategy. The same approach has been occurring at the executive level, where the Cultural Affairs Office co-ordinates strategic advice to the police executive. Issues that have been raised in both forums provide a basis for documenting the responsiveness strategy. There are some obvious cornerstones such as having working partnerships with Māori and also working with Justice Sector agencies in a more co-ordinated way.