

Te Puni Kōkiri's feedback on the NZ Productivity Commission's immigration inquiry report: *Immigration – Fit for the Future*

Overall Comment

1. We commend the NZ Productivity Commission (the Commission) for the sound analysis and thinking underpinning its findings and recommendations. We are pleased that the report acknowledges the importance of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Te Tiriti) and the need for it to be recognised in Aotearoa's Immigration Policy.
2. We consider that the report could provide more in-depth analysis on the impacts of immigration on Māori (and Pacific peoples), particularly in relation to the links between immigration policy and welfare, education, training, and employment (EET) policies. The absence of this analysis could lead to an immigration policy that further entrenches the marginalisation of Māori (and Pacific Peoples) in low-skilled and poor communities, such as South and West Auckland. Māori and Pacific communities are also experiencing problems of inadequate infrastructure, e.g., access to affordable and "fit-for-purpose" housing, and equitable EET outcomes and their access to the services in the EET system.
3. Further, the report would benefit from a fuller analysis of the impacts of COVID on specific population groups, including Māori (and Pacific Peoples), in terms of their participation in the EET system and how immigration policy can facilitate or negatively affect this.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

4. We support the wording of the key action on the Tiriti interest set out on page 2 of this report. As noted in paragraphs 2 and 3 (of this comment), more in-depth analysis of the Tiriti interest and impacts for Māori of any immigration policy would be useful. We suggest that the starting point for this discussion is to set out the application of Te Tiriti in terms of immigration policy on Māori both as tangata whenua¹ (article 2, rangatiratanga of iwi, hapū and whānau) and citizens (article 3, issues of equity in education, training, and employment).

Finding 11 - Recommendation 2, page 49

5. We support the recommendation that the Immigration Act should be amended so that an immigration Government Policy Statement (GPS) must include: how it recognises the Tiriti interest in immigration.
6. We propose an additional bullet to this recommendation that the GPS must include: how it impacts on Māori (as tangata whenua and citizens). This then ensures that any changes to immigration policy not only considers the effects on the wider EET system, but also how it impacts on New

¹ i.e. the first peoples of Aotearoa.

Zealanders, and specifically on the unique status of Māori as both tangata whenua and citizens of Aotearoa.

Finding 12 – page 51

7. It is noted that there are a range of views about immigration within Māoridom. We suggest the report summarises these views, so the reader has a sense of what these are. The report should go further in exploring the options that flow from these views and their pros and cons. This then gives some idea on what could be proposed in how the Tiriti interest could best be reflected in new immigration policy and institutions.
8. For example, it could be argued that the immigration system would benefit from a Human Resources strategy where recruitment of staff that have competencies in te ao Māori and te reo Māori is a high priority. It could also include the requirement that all staff need to understand Te Tiriti and the principles underpinning it, and why it is important that Aotearoa needs immigrants who acknowledge the mana of Māori as tangata whenua.

Finding 13 - Question 6 Recognising efforts to learn te reo

9. We appreciate the proposal that efforts by migrants to learn te reo Māori be recognised. It is important, however, that this is not used as a criterion for declining entry/re-entry or permanent residence for migrants in Aotearoa. This would be unfair, particularly as all New Zealanders however long they and their ascendants have lived in Aotearoa, have not been required to speak or learn te reo Māori. Rather, it should be seen as a (positive) factor, along with others, for becoming a “good citizen” of Aotearoa.

The role of Immigration Policy - page 21

10. We support the two-fold role of what immigration policy should achieve:
 - raise the long-term levels and diversity of human capabilities in Aotearoa
 - promote well-being by supporting the achievement of other social and economic policy objectives.
11. We also support the connections of immigration policy to the Treasury’s *He Ara Waiora* framework.

Interface between Immigration Policy and the education, training, and employment (EET) system and policies

12. As the report notes, Aotearoa has an aging population, mostly amongst Pākehā, and a Māori youthful population with high birth rates that is mostly disconnected from wider society and the EET system. The report does not discuss the entrenched marginalisation of Māori over time due to the lack of proactive EET policies to improve outcomes for Māori and balance this with effective immigration policy that contributes to positive outcomes for Māori. For example, bringing in international students provides income for our

education institutions, but where are the initiatives to ensure Māori get into tertiary education that leads to higher qualifications and well-paid jobs?

13. The lack of feedback mechanisms to link skills shortages in the immigration system to potential responses in the EET system needs to be discussed in more detail. For example, investing in upskilling domestic talent for the IT sector, particularly amongst Māori (and Pacifica) peoples, should be signalled as a priority given the focus in the technology Industry Transformation Plan.

Impacts for Pacifica Peoples

14. The report is silent on the heritage and the significance of the Pacific to Aotearoa, which gives Aotearoa its unique identity which we consider needs to be recognised. Whenever Māori and Pacifica peoples meet, they know and always acknowledge their whakapapa including Māori originally coming from Polynesia. Hence, why, and how the ties between Māori and Pacific peoples are important.
15. The report notes the importance of the Pacific Agreement between Aotearoa and the Pacific. We were not clear whether this was the Trans-Pacific Agreement between some Pacific nations and Aotearoa or other arrangements? This needs to be explained and what it means in the context of immigration settings between our country and the Pacific nations.
16. There needs to be deeper analysis into the immigration policy settings, implications and impacts for Pacifica Peoples and the relationships to the EET system and policies. That is, why couldn't immigration policy be directly connected to educating and training Pacifica Peoples in higher skills and higher paying jobs that would lift their socio-economic status in Aotearoa as well as those back in their homelands. Currently, EET policies do not focus on proactive skills development of Pacific Peoples.
17. We were concerned to hear on Sunday 19 December 2021 that there are potentially between 10,000 - 14,000 overstayers from Pacific countries whose pathways to permanent residence in Aotearoa is closed – see link: <https://www.1news.co.nz/2021/12/19/research-shows-devastating-effects-overstayers-face/>

We are not familiar with current immigration policy settings, but it is critical to avoid a return to the structural racism that underpinned the Muldoon Government's 1970s immigration policy that led to the "Dawn Raids."

18. Currently, many Pacific Peoples are recruited into seasonal work and/or low paid work, such as the horticultural industry. It is critical for government to explore its role in providing pathways to upskill Pacifica workers so they can enter higher paying jobs. Further, the impacts of Covid on these workers needs to be explored more in the report to consider how to help whānau/aiga who feel they must hide/protect their members, to avoid making them think they will be penalised for circumstances outside their control.