

## *The Treasury*

### *Emerging Diversity and Inclusion*

Government departments serve the whole community, and that means they must understand the many different cultures that make up the New Zealand population. The Treasury is taking a direct approach to improve its understanding of Pacific New Zealanders, a community that has not been as well understood by the Treasury in the past as other communities.

The Treasury has 570 staff, and acts as the lead economic and financial adviser to the Government. The work of the Treasury has an immense impact on the way that New Zealand is run, and so the department is working hard to make sure it addresses any deficiencies in its understanding of New Zealanders.



As part of this work, Treasury is implementing a Pacific Strategy “Le tofa mamao ma le fa’autautaga” (which means “the wisdom to visualise the future and the ability to take us there”), which will be reviewed in 2020.

The initiative focuses on improving three key capabilities through a series of workshops which are delivered to teams within the organisation. Ten teams have completed the workshops since their inception in 2016.

The first workshop aims to build internal organisational knowledge and capability of Pacific dynamics and to expand understanding of Pacific values. This awareness sets the context for the second workshop, which covers Pacific models of research and analysis. The third and final workshop deepens knowledge of Pacific population demographic, and staff are taught to apply their knowledge of the Pacific operating model to the Living Standards Framework, the Treasury’s framework for understanding the living standards for New Zealanders.

These workshops were developed through looking at Pacific best-practice strategies across the Government, and reviews of academic literature and research into how an understanding of Pacific culture can benefit an organisation such as the Treasury. The workshops continue to be refined as staff provide feedback and more research is done.

Teams working on housing, education and living standards were prioritised for the first workshops, and managers were consulted to adjust the mechanisms of the workshops to reflect each team’s outputs.

The Executive Leadership Team of the Treasury participated in the workshops prior to their implementation across the organisation, and Kaiurungi (the Treasury’s operational leadership directorate) also attended two of the three workshops. To ensure that the strategy is being highlighted, the Treasury has put a deliberate focus on it in internal communications and staff news systems.

A discussion paper on the ideas that have come out of the workshops, supplemented by advice from senior Pacific officials across the public sector, is currently being prepared and will contribute to the Treasury’s thinking on wellbeing and the indicators which are relevant to Pacific New Zealanders.

Principal Advisor for Pacific Island Capability for the Treasury Su'a Thomsen says, "The strategy adds value to our advice to Ministers, and provides insights that have not been previously available for our work".

Staff have been really engaged by the workshops, and one participant says that "being aware that people have different values show that we can't have a cookie cutter approach to our work."

"The really important thing is that Pacific people can see themselves in the advice that the Treasury provides to the Government."

One participant, who describes herself as someone for whom cultural awareness is a big part of who she is, says she was surprised about how much she didn't know about Pacific culture. "I learnt an enormous amount by unlocking my assumptions about Pacific culture."



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