



UNDERSTANDING POLICING DELIVERY



## Embargoed Release

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### World-First Study Reveals Key Fairness & Equity Findings to Reform Policing Highlighting Diverse Community Voices, Police Innovation & Police College Insights

The final compelling findings from a deep dive into '[Understanding Policing Delivery](#)' by three independent research teams looking at fairness and equity in policing will be publicly released today.

A world first, this qualitative and mixed method research was done in conjunction with communities and the Police.

It places the voices of Māori, Pasifika, tangata whaikaha, D/deaf, disabled, takatāpui, and gang whānau at its core with Police which is reflected in the reports.

A wing of Royal New Zealand Police College recruits were shadowed from start to finish which hasn't been done before and real-life frontline policing practices were also tracked across the country.

Together the research provides a constructive base for systemic and organisational change.

It was commissioned by an independent panel working with Police with funding support granted by the Borrin Foundation and the Todd Foundation.

"We hope these insights into current policing practices will accelerate transformation across New Zealand Police, as they're based on deep listening to those impacted by unfair policing, as well as from Police themselves," said Professor Khylee Quince, Chair of the independent panel.

The research teams were diverse, including both disabled and non-disabled bicultural analysts specialising in disabled-led and inclusive disability research, using robust sample sizes and methodology.

Over an 18-month period 18 reports were generated by the entire research team.

Together, they conducted a thorough analysis, dedicating over 1,000 hours to focus groups, interviews with disabled participants, and qualitative interviews with frontline police officers. Additionally, they spent 288 hours observing staff members during their shifts.

All three research teams independently believe their results point to an opportunity to evolve policing in New Zealand, so it is diversity-responsive and humanistic in practice.

They assessed how Police respond to marginalised communities, their decision-making processes regarding stopping, use of force, and charges, the impact on the public, and the critical importance of relationship-building to foster trust within communities.

#### The reports and case studies include:

##### [Mana Pounamu Consulting](#)

- Insights from the whare (Royal New Zealand Police College and three Districts) – He Kitenga nō te Whare



### [Donald Beasley Institute](#)

- Understanding Policing Delivery – Tākata whaikaha, D/deaf and disabled people

### [Ihi Research](#)

- Rainbow/Takatāpui communities
- Gang communities
- Police interactions with people experiencing mental distress
- Wahine Māori experiencing family harm
- User of TASER on individuals and their whānau
- Police innovation case studies that build relationships and communities:
  - Co-response team
  - De-escalation
  - Operational Advisory Group
  - Resilience to organised crime in communities
  - Whāngaia ngā pā harakeke
- End of Project report

The insights highlight what's working and what's unfair in current policing practices, where the Police are innovative, how the Police hierarchy and justification culture stifles learning, and how issues like conduct, resourcing challenges, and compassion fatigue undermine community trust.

It also examines the overemphasis on tactical force versus de-escalation, the importance of whanaungatanga and building key relationships between communities and Police.

**Mana Pounamu Consulting** built so much goodwill conducting research with new recruits, they were invited to stand in their Wing photo upon graduation from the Police College.

“Empathy-driven, well-being focused leadership is needed alongside command-and-control leadership,” said Dr Pounamu Jade Aikman, Director of Mana Pounamu Consulting.

He spoke to many in the Police community “who wanted to serve and make it better. They don't want to go around arresting everyone.”

Yet the constable and sergeant relationship can say a lot about the effectiveness of policing, and the stronger these relationships, the better Police are able to serve their communities.

Futureproofing the next generation of Police especially in terms of cultural responsiveness is not 'by telling' he believes, but 'by showing' what responsiveness to Māori, Pacific and other ethnic communities actually looks like in reality.

How history, equity and Te Tiriti is shown in pragmatic terms to officers is a fundamental.

“There is also an urgent need to address the root causes of crime too, not just respond punitively to symptoms. People in marginalised situations are quickly judged as making poor choices,” Dr Aikman said.

**The Donald Beasley Institute** highlighted examples of both positive and negative policing practice and disability-responsiveness.



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Their research report acknowledges the New Zealand Police Disability Road Map that has been created to achieve positive cultural and structural change with the disability community.

It also identified experiences of harassment, charges being overloaded for disabled participants and force escalation – a concerning theme of ‘criminalising disability’.

“It is essential Police receive education, that is disabled-led, about how to respond in an affirmative, holistic and relational way to marginalised communities – to build an understanding about ableism, inequity, and structural racism,” said Donald Beasley Institute Director Dr Mirfin-Veitch.

All three research teams made the collective point that ‘whanaungatanga, building trusting relationships with communities, works well in policing’.

Both Police and disabled participants agreed there was inequity, which can be reduced through education, relational policing approaches, and policies and practices informed by disabled people.

Research participants highlighted the impacts of de-escalation approaches versus tactical force options when officers encounter people with mental distress, foetal alcohol syndrome, or autism spectrum disorder.

**Ihi Research** studied both issues and innovation in policing practice.

“The culture of conformity and rank structures within Police can stifle critical dialogue about bias and unfair treatment,” said Dr Catherine Leonard, Director of Ihi Research.

The research identified patterns of bias, unfair treatment and inequitable policing delivery alongside evidence of innovative, empathic, humanistic and whānau-centred Police practices.

Interviews with communities who reported unfair treatment including, women in family harm situations, people who experienced mental distress, those who had been tasered and rainbow/takatāpui identified the importance of building relational trust with Police.

Police innovation case studies demonstrated the work Police have been doing in partnership with communities to improve outcomes for these communities.

The impact of Police use of force in searches and arrests were examined.

Police cultural responsiveness was reviewed through an equity lens, highlighting the vital role that Māori, Pacific, and Ethnic Services (MPES) staff play in connecting with diverse communities.

Research by Mana Pounamu further highlights the fact that these staff aren’t acknowledged enough and seen as more as ‘cultural performers rather than cultural advisors’.

Valuing Te Pae Oranga, [an award-winning](#) alternative restorative justice community process for keeping people, both Māori and non-Māori out of court was another shared research finding because its uptake by the Police varies.



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“Our final report really speaks to the different levels of bias and equity and fairness that it exists in our whole system,” Dr Leonard said.

“It exists in our welfare system, our education system, our justice system, that impacts on police, and it impacts on people that are exposed to police intervention in their lives,” she said.

“Policing is a complex issue. To do their job fairly and equitably Police need the trust and support of all our communities, but they also need the right resourcing and support.”

Mana Pounamu, The Donald Beasley Institute and Ihi Research will be presenting highlights from their reports at an exclusive briefing from 10.30am-11.30am today at BGI, 3 MacDonald Crescent, Wellington CBD.

ENDS

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### **Background on Phase Two Researchers:**

#### **Ihi Research and Development**

- Ihi Research and Development (Ihi Research) bring expertise in Māori-centred evaluation and research methodologies, and research to support social innovation and organisational learning.
- Recently, Ihi Research were commissioned to undertake research into Māori involvement in State Care 1950-1999 for the Royal Commission into State Care Abuse and worked on research into Māori and Pacific Led Whānau-Centred Primary Health Care for Te Puni Kōkiri that was released by Minister Henare.
- Ihi Research have a focus on an organisational learning approach that could potentially transform the systems and structures that perpetuate inequity/equity in the organisation. The intention of this research is to work with Police to analyse data collected by Police that can be used to drive organisational learning and systemic change. This will ensure that long after the research concludes the mechanisms of ‘learning from feedback’ are embedded within the system.
- Ihi Research are analysing praise, dissatisfaction, complaints, and use of force data to identify themes from different communities in interactions with Police. This will inform the themes for engagement with five communities of interest and five Police sites of innovation.

#### **Mana Pounamu Consulting**

- Mana Pounamu Consulting is a small team of researchers with Māori, Pasifika, and policing research expertise. They recently completed an equity-focussed evaluation of the Ministry of Education’s *Ka Ora, Ka Ako | Healthy School Lunches Programme*, which explored the programme’s impact upon tamariki and mokopuna wellbeing, as well as the involvement of iwi and hapū in those spaces.
- Mana Pounamu Consulting are identifying and exploring the mechanisms, processes, and instruments that reproduce, facilitate, or passively contribute to systemic and institutional bias and inequitable outcomes for Māori and Pasifika, within the institution of policing in Aotearoa New Zealand. To do so, they are adopting a kaupapa Māori and Pacific-based methodological approach, in exploring the first two focus areas.
- They are using a case study approach for several sites (selected through collaboration with the Independent Panel, Operational Advisory Group and Leads Group) that includes participant observation and interviews. Their project is geared towards enhancing relations between the Police, and Māori and Pasifika, in identifying tangible ways Police can modify policy and practice, to deliver services in an



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equitable manner in future. In this, they have a specific focus on the wellbeing of frontline officers, to support staff working at the interface with communities across Aotearoa.

### **Donald Beasley Institute**

- The Donald Beasley Institute is recognised nationally and internationally as a leader in the field of disability research, with particular expertise in disabled-led and inclusive disability research.
- The DBI team have a strong history of research in the area of disabled people's access to justice. They were also centrally involved in ensuring that disabled people's experiences of abuse in care were presented as evidence within the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in Care 1950-1999.
- The Institute will explore the experiences of Police-experienced tāngata whaikaha, D/deaf and disabled people, and Police officers, in order to generate evidence and data that can be used to inform, transform, and strengthen relationships between Police and disabled people. They will do this by:
  - a. Identifying critical barriers to equity and fairness in Police decision-making from the perspectives of tāngata whaikaha, D/deaf and disabled people in relation to responding to complaints, using force, charging decisions, and upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
  - b. From a Police perspective, identifying critical barriers to equity and fairness towards tāngata whaikaha, D/deaf and disabled people in Police decision-making around engagement, responding to complaints, using force, and laying charges.