

# Faith Communities Against Family Violence

## A National Statement

Family violence in our communities is one of the most significant moral, spiritual and social challenges that we currently face as a country. As communities of faith in Aotearoa New Zealand, we believe it is our responsibility to take a stand and address this challenge.

Family violence is completely unacceptable and is never justified. Often the most vulnerable victims of violence are children, and it is here that we are taking a stand. Our children deserve the best we can offer them.

Accordingly, we have come together, as communities of faith, to declare the following:

- *We recognise that children are our future and as such are a significant and precious gift to society today.*
- *We understand that our beliefs, values and traditions will live on through our children*
- *We accept that the wellbeing of children is our responsibility.*
- *We acknowledge that children deserve our compassion, kindness, love and care.*
- *We believe we can make a difference in the lives of children and families.*

In light of these declarations we commit our communities to:

- *Accept our responsibility to stand up for our children, women and families.  
Refuse to tolerate violence within our families or communities or turn a blind eye to it.*
- *Strive to provide places of safety and nurture for the children and families of our community.*
- *Encourage our communities to report family violence, hold perpetrators accountable and provide support for victims.*
- *Ensure that our staff are trained to respond safely to family violence and are well supported with appropriate policies and resources.*
- *Partner with community organisations to ensure that families experiencing violence are referred appropriately and we will advocate with government for policies and resources to address family violence.*

10 December 2012

## Signatories

|                                                           |                                                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Archbishop John Dew                                       | <i>The New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference</i>                              |
| Bhante Jinalankra                                         | <i>Dhamma Gavesi Meditation Centre</i>                                          |
| Beth Lew, National Secretary                              | <i>National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand</i>                |
| Bishop Barry Jones                                        | <i>Catholic Bishop of Christchurch</i>                                          |
| Bishop Brian Tamaki                                       | <i>Destiny Church</i>                                                           |
| Bishop Charles Drennan                                    | <i>Catholic Bishop of Palmerston North</i>                                      |
| Bishop Colin Campbell                                     | <i>Catholic Bishop of Dunedin</i>                                               |
| Bishop Denis Browne                                       | <i>Catholic Bishop of Hamilton</i>                                              |
| Bishop Patrick Dunn                                       | <i>Catholic Bishop of Auckland</i>                                              |
| Commissioner Don Bell, Territorial Commander              | <i>The Salvation Army</i>                                                       |
| Dr. Anwar Ghani, President                                | <i>Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand</i>                        |
| Elizabeth Duke & Elizabeth Thompson                       | <i>The Religious Society of Friends</i>                                         |
| Geoffrey Fyers                                            | <i>Family Federation for World Peace and Unification</i>                        |
| Haihn Dinh Njuyen, Chairman                               | <i>Vietnam/Buddhist Then Thai Monastery</i>                                     |
| Jimi Wallace, General Director                            | <i>Soka Gakki International of New Zealand</i>                                  |
| Pastor Don McDonell                                       | <i>Inspire Church Albany</i>                                                    |
| Pastor Edward Tupai                                       | <i>North New Zealand Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church</i>         |
| Pastor Iliafi Esera, General Superintendent               | <i>Assembly of God</i>                                                          |
| Pastor Jerry Matthews, President                          | <i>New Zealand Pacific Union Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church</i> |
| Pastor John Steele, National Leader                       | <i>New Life Churches International</i>                                          |
| Pastor Lloyd J Rankin, National Director                  | <i>Vineyard Churches Aotearoa New Zealand</i>                                   |
| Pastor Mark Whitfield, President                          | <i>Lutheran Church of New Zealand</i>                                           |
| Pastor Mike Griffiths, National Leader                    | <i>Elim Church of New Zealand</i>                                               |
| Prithipal Singh                                           | <i>Sikh</i>                                                                     |
| Rabbi Mendy Goldstein                                     | <i>Jewish (non-denominational)</i>                                              |
| Rabbi Samuel Altschul                                     | <i>Auckland Hebrew Congregation</i>                                             |
| Rabbi Yitzchak Mizrahi                                    | <i>Wellington Hebrew Congregation</i>                                           |
| Reverend John Roberts, President                          | <i>Methodist Church of New Zealand</i>                                          |
| Olive Tanielu, Vice-President                             | <i>Methodist Church of New Zealand</i>                                          |
| Reverend Lucky Slade (Faifeau Toeaina)                    | <i>Ekalesia Faapotopotoga Kerisiano Samoa</i>                                   |
| Reverend Ray Coster                                       | <i>The Congregational Church of Samoa</i>                                       |
| Moderator at the General Assembly                         | <i>Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand</i>                              |
| Reverend Rex Nathan JP                                    | <i>Methodist Church of New Zealand</i>                                          |
| Reverend Dr Richard Waugh QSM,<br>National Superintendent | <i>Wesleyan Methodist Church of New Zealand</i>                                 |
| Reverend Te Ahorangi Wayne Manaaki<br>Rihari Te Kaawa     | <i>Te Aka Puho – Ohope Marae</i>                                                |
| Robert Newson, Chairman                                   | <i>Te Runanga o te Hahi Katorika ki Aotearoa</i>                                |
| Rukman Wagachchi                                          | <i>New Zealand Sri Lanka Buddhist Trust</i>                                     |
| Sensei Amala Wrightson, Chairperson                       | <i>New Zealand Buddhist Council</i>                                             |
| The Most Reverend D J Moxon                               | <i>Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand and Polynesia</i>                    |
| The Most Reverend W B Turei                               | <i>Maori Anglician Church in Aotearoa New Zealand</i>                           |
| Venerable Abbess Manshin                                  | <i>Fo Guang Shan New Zealand</i>                                                |

*The Hindu Council of New Zealand (Hindu Dharma) endorses this initiative. The Hindu Council have chosen to write their own statement, which includes the declarations made in the National Statement, but also contain reference to Hindu philosophy and scriptures. The two statements sit alongside one another.*



## HINDU COUNCIL OF NEW ZEALAND Incorporated

(Registered with Charities Commission Regd No: CC31281; Donee organisation status from IRD)

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### **DHARMA COMMUNITIES AGAINST VIOLENCE**

*The Hindu Council of New Zealand statement based on Hindu Dharma, in support of the Faith Communities Against Family Violence National Statement and as part of the same initiative*

Violence in New Zealand society is a significant moral and social challenge that we currently face. Hindu Council of New Zealand (HCNZ), a group of dedicated volunteers from the Hindu community of New Zealand, believes it is our responsibility to take a stand and address this.

Violence has been eschewed by Hindu Dharma in the most ancient yet most modern writings of Hindu philosophy and scriptures, as is evidenced in the part of a *shloka* that appears in many Sanskrit works, including the Mahabharata.

**“Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah”**

This phrase was the guiding principle for the Hindu leader Mahatma Gandhi in the non-violent (Ahimsa) struggle for freedom against British colonisers in India. Within Aotearoa Maori society, a strikingly similar stand on non-violence was taken by Te Whiti O Rongomai of Taranaki fifty years before Mahatma Gandhi.

The stand Hindu Dharma has on opposition to violence is not just a mere matter of faith or religion, indeed religion and faith have often been one of the worst offenders in numerous brutal wars in human history, and the silent sufferers in those wars have primarily been women and children.

Hindu Dharma's stand on non-violence or Ahimsa is a well thought out and reasoned principle, and hence a Dharmic principle, since violence threatens a family and society in a way that brings suffering not only to an individual but for generations.

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  - We accept that the wellbeing of children is our responsibility.
  - We acknowledge that children deserve our compassion, kindness, love and care.
  - We believe we can make a difference in the lives of children and families.

In light of these declarations we commit our communities to:

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- Refuse to tolerate violence within our families or communities or turn a blind eye to it.
- Strive to provide places of safety and nurture for the children and families of our community.
- Encourage our communities to report family violence, hold perpetrators accountable and provide support for victims.
- Ensure that our staff are trained to respond safely to family violence and are well supported with appropriate policies and resources.
- Partner with community organisations to ensure that families experiencing violence are referred appropriately
- We will partner with community organisations to ensure that families experiencing violence are referred appropriately and provided with counselling, anger management, prayers, yoga & meditation. We will advocate with government for policies and resources to address family violence.

We will strive to educate the families with values of Ahimsa (non-violence in thought, word and deed).

## **Executive Committee**

Hindu Council of New Zealand Inc

10 December 2012

### **Explanatory note**

1. Translation of the Sanskrit word Dharma into either faith or religion is inaccurate, it is more accurate to use the phrase Dharma when indicating Hindu community and culture, and many other communities from the "East". Hence we have suggested the use of knowledge and techniques available in Dharmic literature to promote non-violence as the main principle for a Dharmic way of life.

### **2. Quick Statistics about Culture and Identity – 2006 Census**

The adherents of Hindu Dharma form the second largest community in NZ (64,392 - 2006 Census). Hindu Dharma followers (up from 39,798 to 64,392) increased by 61.8 per cent in the 2006 Census. Just over 2 million people, or 55.6 per cent of those answering the religious affiliation question, affiliated with a form of Christian religion (including Māori Christian). In contrast with the small decrease in people affiliating with Christian religions between 2001 and 2006, there was an increase in people identifying as non-Christians.

The number of people indicating an affiliation with

- The Sikh Panth (9,507 )
- Buddhism (37,590 people)
- Islam (36,072)

The increases in people identifying as non-Christians is mainly attributed to migrants, particularly from Asia. Almost 8 in 10 people (78.8 %) affiliated with the Hindu Dharma were born overseas, particularly in Southern Asia and the Pacific Islands. A similar proportion of people affiliating with Islam (77.0 %) were born overseas, mainly in Southern Asia, but also in the Middle East.