

# Report of the first Community Consultation meeting

Contributed by Lachlan  
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A Brief Report from the Christchurch Consultative Meeting on Poll Tax of 4 May 2002

^ This was held on Saturday, 4 May 2002 at the Canterbury Branch, New Zealand Chinese Association Hall at 22 St Asaph Street, Christchurch at 1.30pm. The meeting was the first of a series of community consultative meetings to be held this month in different centres throughout New Zealand. The main purpose of these meetings is to allow the payers of Poll Tax and their descendants to have their say in what might constitute an appropriate form of reconciliation package. The Prime Minister, Helen Clark announced this in Parliament House on 12 February 2002 when she formally apologised to those Chinese who paid the poll tax and suffered other discrimination imposed by statute. About 130 persons attended the Christchurch meeting. The meeting was very successful. A number of key issues were discussed. Two key sets of objectives were achieved and these were to inform the audience about the Poll Tax and other discrimination imposed by statute on the early Chinese settlers and also to consult the descendants on the appropriate form of a reconciliation package.

^ Main points arising from the consultation process on an appropriate form of reconciliation package were:

1. Many descendants were very happy with the Public Apology announced by the Prime Minister on 12 February this year at Parliament House. They felt that this was more than sufficient and they do not want anything anymore from the Government.
2. Others felt that if the Government is to do something tangible, some of these should receive consideration:
  - (i) Maintain the Cantonese language in New Zealand.
  - (ii) Research and document the history of the Chinese people in New Zealand.
  - (iii) Record this as a part of the New Zealand history in school textbooks and make available to the public.
  - (iv) Celebrate the culture, language and heritage of the Chinese people in New Zealand by promoting public awareness (Chinese Awareness Week, museum exhibitions, archives in libraries, etc).
  - (v) The Government to promote more widely the contributions made by the Chinese people in the past and at present in the economic development of New Zealand.
  - (vi) Reinforce that New Zealand is now a place where people celebrate diversity.
  - (vii) Create scholarships and exchange programmes between New Zealand schools and schools in Chinese sister cities.
  - (viii) Display symbolic Chinese history arts or calligraphy in Parliament Buildings.
  - (ix) Conduct research on Chinese families in New Zealand.
  - (x) Promote greater understanding and goodwill, and strengthen the relationship between the Chinese people and other communities in New Zealand.

The descendants in the meeting felt very grateful to have been given the opportunity to have their say and would like to thank the Prime Minister, the Minister for Ethnic Affairs and the New Zealand Government for giving them the opportunity. Prof Kuan Meng Goh National President New Zealand Chinese Association 6 May 2002