

## CHAPTER 4

### When Moderators Disagree on Viewpoints

In diverse online communities, especially across Aotearoa New Zealand's cultural and political spectrum, moderators (mods) won't always agree, and that's ok.

You may have different personal takes on:

1. Politics and protest movements
2. Treaty rights and co-governance
3. Gender and identity discourse
4. Vaccine info, academic freedoms or science trust
5. Harm vs. opinion vs. satire

What matters is the rules you have set for your online community, consistency and integrity, not total agreement.

#### **What to do when you disagree with another mod's call:**

- Pause - don't argue in public or in the heat of the moment
- Ask - in your mod chat: "Hey, I wasn't sure about the call on that post. Can we talk it through?"
- Check against group rules and kaupapa Are we upholding shared values, or individual beliefs? Anything in our rules need clarifying or changing?
- Focus on process, not person "How shall we clarify our process next time?" vs. "You're too soft/too harsh"

#### **When values clash**

If the group includes a wide mod team (e.g. progressive + conservative, religious + secular), you'll need clear rules to manage differences. Agree ahead of time what is considered harm vs. genuine disagreement. Consider a "consensus threshold" system e.g.

- If 2 out of 3 mods agree it's harm, we act
- Log unresolved issues in a shared doc for escalation or future training

#### **When you personally disagree with a post**

You're a moderator, but you're also a person, with values, politics, culture, and history. So, what happens when a post goes up that you personally disagree with, but it doesn't break the rules? E.g.

- A post defending a controversial figure you are offended by?
- A comment that minimises something you deeply care about?

#### **Your role is to hold the line, not the belief**

If it doesn't break the rules or cause harm, it likely stays up. That doesn't mean you approve, it means you're upholding space for opinion, diverse viewpoints and welcoming of tough conversations.

## Ask yourself:

- Is this opinion or harm?
- Is this disagreement or discrimination?
- Is this a debate or a comment with a hidden/double meaning? (dogwhistle)

***“Some of the administrators in our group handled comments in quite different ways which was problematic for me. While everyone said they wanted to be nice to others in their moderation, it seemed that at times they took the opportunity to express their own views which included nasty or offensive comments.”***  
- anon, NZ mod

## WHAT YOU CAN DO

Situation	Response
You strongly disagree, but no rule is broken	Stay neutral in mod role. Use personal profile (outside group) to express disagreement if needed.
It feels bad but you're not sure why	Check with another mod: “Is this close to the line or just uncomfortable?”
The post is valid but tone is harsh	Consider adding a tone-reset comment (e.g. “Let’s keep this thread respectful.”)
It keeps happening and affects your wellbeing	Step back from moderating for that thread. Tap out temporarily.
You disagree with most of the group’s tone or direction	Raise it in the mod chat or meeting. Long-term misalignment may mean it’s time to shift roles.

## Discomfort ≠ harm

You don’t need to agree with every post.

If you’re constantly reacting to posts on a personal level, ask:

- Am I in the right headspace to mod today?
- Is this group aligned with my values and boundaries?
- Am I holding this tension alone?