

## CHAPTER 6

### Inclusion

This chapter helps mods create safer, more respectful online environments, especially for Māori, Pacific, Rainbow, migrant, disabled, and other marginalised communities.

It's about building spaces where people feel they truly belong, not just tolerated.

#### What inclusion means in an online community

Inclusion isn't only about who's allowed in, it's about who feels safe to speak, be seen, and stay.

#### Inclusive communities:

- Acknowledge and welcome diverse identities across race, gender, culture, ability, and class
- Clearly name their kaupapa or founding purpose
- Have rules that explicitly protect marginalised people
- Hold space for lived experience, even when it's uncomfortable or challenges the majority view

In Aotearoa, inclusion can mean recognising Māori as tangata whenua and supporting kaupapa Māori values in how communities are built and moderated.

It means ensuring Māori members aren't expected to "teach" or defend their identity, and creating space for te reo Māori and tikanga in online interactions.

It also means valuing Aotearoa New Zealand's wider cultural and social diversity, including Pacific peoples, migrant and refugee communities, disabled and neurodiverse people, and others whose experiences are often underrepresented. Moderators (mods) should consider language access, literacy levels, digital accessibility, and cultural cues that shape how people participate online.

#### Inclusion is active, not passive

You can't moderate your way to inclusion by being neutral.

#### Inclusive moderation means:

- Taking action when culturally, linguistically, racially, religiously, or disability-diverse people are silenced or excluded
- Naming discriminatory harms like racism, ableism, transphobia, or classism directly
- Encouraging posts and perspectives that reflect multiple voices, not just dominant ones
- Making space for community-specific language, lived experience, and trauma to be expressed safely.
- Considering accessibility in content — using alt text, plain language, high contrast, and clear visuals where possible.

Inclusive spaces often need proactive moderation because neutrality alone may not prevent harm.

**SIGNS YOUR GROUP MAY NOT FEEL SAFE FOR EVERYONE**

Red Flags	Examples
Same voices dominate	Specific member demographics overrepresented in threads.
Rainbow members disengage	Disappearing after anti-gay or anti-trans or “de-bate” threads.
Māori, Pasifika or other ethnicities’ comments ignored or argued with	Especially when expressing seriously emotional distress.
Mods always “both sidesing” harm	Responding to racism with “everyone calm down.”
Marginalised people leave quietly	No exit comment, just silence.

**WHAT INCLUSIVE MODERATION LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE**

Situation	Inclusive Mod Action
A member shares cultural harm they’ve experienced	Validate. Don’t rush to “fix” tone.
A racist post is made “politely”	Remove and explain why it was harmful.
Someone posts in te reo Māori	Don’t demand translation. Celebrate it.
A migrant member posts in broken English	Focus on meaning, not grammar.
Debate becomes identity-erasing	Step in: “We don’t debate lived identity here.”

## Building group rules for inclusion

Include rules that:

- Name protected identities (e.g., Māori, Pacific, trans, disabled)
- Ban identity-based harm clearly, not just “no hate speech”
- Make space for discomfort that isn’t abuse
- Set tone expectations for dominant-group members

### Example rule snippet:

“We prioritise the safety and belonging of Māori, Pacific, Rainbow, and disabled members. We will remove content that undermines these communities, even if phrased politely.”

## Language, tone & reclamation

- Allow reclaimed slurs (e.g., queer) only when used in self-identification
- Block or remove if used against others
- Accept te reo, slang, and codeswitching between different languages and styles- don’t require “proper” English
- Watch for tone-policing: asking people to say things “nicer” or spell correctly while ignoring the harm they’re responding to

## Listening to those most affected

When unsure, centre the voices of those impacted.

## Being aware of your own cultural position

As a moderator, reflect on your own background and what lens you bring.

- What values shape how you view conflict?
- Are you giving all voices space — or only those that sound like yours?
- Are you checking bias in how you enforce rules?

Invite feedback from others and be open to learning.



### What is trauma-aware moderation?

Trauma-aware moderation means understanding that people might carry pain or past harm, and being gentle, not triggering, in how we manage situations.

**It means:**

- Offering content warnings (CW) on heavy or sensitive topics
- Using soft, non-blaming language
- Avoiding public shaming
- Giving people space to step away
- Ensure community members are protecting themselves

You are not expected to fix trauma. Just hold the space safely.

### LANGUAGE TIPS FOR EMPATHY AND CARE

Instead of	Try
This post is upsetting people.	This kōrero might be heavy for some. Can we soften the tone a little?
That’s not allowed.	That post might breach our group’s guidelines. Can we find another way to share it?
You need to calm down.	We know this topic can bring strong feelings. Let’s all take a breath and come back with care.



## Restoring balance after harm

When harm happens, the goal isn't punishment, it's restoration.

### Use steps like:

- Acknowledging the hurt
- Removing harmful content
- Offering support to those affected
- Inviting people to rejoin the group positively if they're willing

Sometimes the best thing is time apart. Other times, it's a kōrero guided with care.

### Ask yourself:

- Who is being made unsafe or silenced right now?
- Who's carrying the emotional load in this thread?
- Have we listened, or just reacted?

Inclusion often means stepping back, making room, and showing care before clarity.



## How to use content warnings (CW)

Content warnings are respectful alerts, not censorship. They help people decide how and when to engage, but they don't make harmful material safe.

They give a heads up, so people can opt out, scroll past, or prepare for what they are about to read or see.

They are generally advisory and used for posts about trauma, violence, abuse, grief, suicide or any emotionally heavy experience.

### Before posting or approving:

- Consider if the content is suitable for the group's audience and purpose.
- If unsure, ask another moderator for input.
- Avoid language, images, or links that are graphic, sensational, or likely to cause distress.

**How to write it:** Keep it simple and neutral: Content Warning or (CW): discussion of family violence. Avoid large fonts, emojis, or dramatic phrasing that draws attention. Place the warning before the content.

Remind members gently:

“If your post includes heavy topics like grief or violence, please pop a ‘Content Warning’ at the start, so everyone can look after their wellbeing.”