



Australian Government
Refugee Review Tribunal

Country Advice

New Zealand

New Zealand – NZL35790 – Black Power –
Mongrel Mob gang – Criminal gangs –
Maoris – Police
14 December 2009

1. Please provide information about Black Power and the Mongrel Mob, in New Zealand and Australia. Where are they located and how many members do they have?

Black Power (BP) and the Mongrel Mob (MM) in New Zealand:

Black Power (BP) and the Mongrel Mob (MM) are the most prominent gangs in New Zealand. The larger of the two, Mongrel Mob, formed in the mid-1960s in Hastings; Black Power in Wellington around 1970. They are referred to as ethnically based gangs on account of their predominantly Maori and Polynesian membership. Members display distinctive dress, gestures, facial and bodily tattoos. Mongrel Mob members have the bulldog as their emblem, while Black Power associates commonly wear blue and salute one another with their emblem, a clenched fist. Those who wish to join either gang are often required to perform specific acts of initiation.¹

Whilst belonging to a gang is not in itself an offence in New Zealand, MM and BP remain controversial principally for the nature and extent of their links to criminal activity and violence. Sources indicate that gang violence is rarely random or directed at the general public and nearly always involves rival gang members. Violence between MM and BP is commonly reported in the media, with much of the intra-gang conflict stemming from territorial disputes over drug distribution.² The New Zealand Police state that the gangs are involved “in serious violence, selling and distributing drugs, possessing firearms and offensive weapons, and using intimidation and threatening tactics in pursuit of their criminal activities”.³ According to some gang researchers it would however be wrong to view gangs as primarily criminal organisations. Criminologist Greg Newbold from Canterbury University believes that the “prime business of a gang is never crime but brotherhood. There is a genuine social reason for their existence. Some gang members may be involved in crime. But others will have nothing to do with it. They will be absolutely clean”. The gangs create tolerant environments “for the criminally inclined. And they have the social networks which are useful for spotting and exploiting criminal opportunities”.⁴

¹ Callinan, R. 2007, ‘Tribal Trouble’, *Time Magazine*, 5 July – Attachment 1; ‘Gang Land’ 2008, *Salient*, 14 July <http://www.salient.org.nz/features/gang-land> - Accessed 3 December 2009 – Attachment 2.

² ‘Young People and Gangs in New Zealand’ 2009, Research Paper, New Zealand Parliament website, 3 April, ‘Gangs in New Zealand’ http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/ParlSupport/ResearchPapers/b/c/7/00PLSocRP09021-Young-people-and-gangs-in-New-Zealand.htm#footnote_16 - Accessed 3 December 2009 – Attachment 3;

Callinan, R. 2007, ‘Tribal Trouble’, *Time Magazine*, 5 July – Attachment 1; ‘Our underbelly’ 2008, *The Press*, 28 March <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/lifestyle/mainlander/336193> - Accessed 3 December 2009 – Attachment 4.

³ ‘New Zealand Gangs’ 2006, New Zealand Police Government website, 9 April – Attachment 5.

⁴ Quoted in: ‘Our underbelly’ 2008, *The Press*, 28 March <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/lifestyle/mainlander/336193> - Accessed 3 December 2009 – Attachment 4.

Location of BP and MM in New Zealand:

Precise details on the location of the two gangs in New Zealand were not found. Both gangs are structured into “chapters”, centered on “pads or clubhouses. An estimated 145 chapters existed in the country in 2007.⁵ Black Power (BP) and the Mongrel Mob (MM) gangs have traditionally been stronger in the North Island of New Zealand. Black Power “strongholds” in the North Island include Mt Wellington and Pukekohe in Auckland.⁶ According to a gang researcher from Canterbury University in 2007, MM and BP presence in the South Island was traditionally weak except for Christchurch and Dunedin. Current reports point however to a growing presence in the South Island. Several authors believe in fact that BP and MM now have chapters and/or splinters groups across the whole of New Zealand, with the recent spread linked to methamphetamine distribution networks.⁷ Cameron Hazelhurst, in one of the few recent detailed studies on gangs in New Zealand, writes that:

Older gangs, resilient and adaptive, have evolved modes of governance that provide for stable leadership and enable regional and nationwide cooperation. Black Power’s national confederated structure has proved viable over three decades, notwithstanding several factional defections, notably the Nomads who rejected the “soft” engagement in government work schemes. The assertive independence of Mongrel Mob chapters has not precluded coordinated action.⁸

Growth in the south of New Zealand, including into small rural towns, is being led by the MM gang.⁹ For example in February 2009, the *Otago Daily Times* reported on arrests of gang members following a drive-by shooting in South Dunedin and attacks on properties. It also referred to a growth in recruitment and presence of MM and BP, a growth linked to the cannabis market in Dunedin.¹⁰

Gang Membership numbers in New Zealand:

Estimates of gang membership vary and remain unreliable as no accurate method of assessing numbers is in place. MM and BP membership was estimated to be around 2,600 across all chapters in 2007.¹¹ However a figure put forward by the New Zealand Police Minister in June 2008 of *total* gang membership of 3,500 was widely criticised as inaccurate.¹² The New Zealand Deputy Commissioner of Police indicated to a Parliamentary Law and Order Select Committee in 2008 that there were between 2,500 and 3000 total gang members in New

⁵ Callinan, R. 2007, ‘Tribal Trouble’, *Time Magazine*, 5 July – Attachment 1.

⁶ Hopkins, S. 2009, ‘Black Power lose their patch’, Stuff website, source: *Sunday News*, 22 March <http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-news/2282343/Black-Power-lose-their-patch> – Accessed 3 December 2009 – Attachment 6.

⁷ Scanlon, S. 2007, ‘Gangs move in on small-town South Island’, *Sunday Star-Times*, 4 November – Attachment 7; ‘Our underbelly’ 2008, *The Press*, 28 March <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/lifestyle/mainlander/336193> - Accessed 3 December 2009 – Attachment 4; ‘Gang Land’ 2008, *Salient*, 14 July <http://www.salient.org.nz/features/gang-land> - Accessed 3 December 2009 – Attachment 2.

⁸ Hazelhurst, C. 2007, ‘Observing New Zealand “Gangs”, 1950-2000: learning from a small country,’ in: John M Hagedorn (ed.), *Gangs and the Global City: Exploring Alternatives to Traditional Criminology*, University of Illinois Press, United States, p.142 – Attachment 8.

⁹ Scanlon, S. 2007, ‘Gangs move in on small-town South Island’, *Sunday Star-Times*, 4 November – Attachment 7.

¹⁰ ‘Gang rise ‘affecting whole city’’ 2009, *Otago Daily Times*, 19 February <http://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/44050/gang-rise-039affecting-whole-city039> – Accessed 4 December 2009 – Attachment 9.

¹¹ Callinan, R. 2007, ‘Tribal Trouble’, *Time Magazine*, 5 July – Attachment 1.

¹² Binning, E. 2008, ‘Working out gang numbers not an exact science’, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 June http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10519079&pnum=0 - Accessed 7 December 2009 – Attachment 10.

Zealand. A further 2,500-3000 were in prison. Estimates of gang members and associates as high as 60,000 have been put forward by the Police Association.¹³

Black Power (BP) and the Mongrel Mob (MM) in Australia:

No information was found indicating that either Black Power or the Mongrel Mob are currently active in Australia. Between eight and twenty Mongrel Mob members did attempt to establish a chapter in Perth, Western Australia, in late 1989. This was resisted by local motorbike gangs through violence and intimidation, which resulted in police making several arrests. It was reported at the time that “more than 100 members of New Zealand bikie gangs are reported to be intending to join the war in WA”.¹⁴

2. Are the Police in New Zealand able to control criminal gangs such as BP and MM?

New Zealand’s police force currently maintains significant levels of control over the criminal activities of gang members, including of BP and MM. Whilst not eliminating their criminal activity altogether, in recent years the police and authorities have arrested significant numbers of gang members, introduced a national organised crime strategy, and passed legislation increasing police powers to reduce criminal gang activities. In relation to these measures, the New Zealand government stated as recently as September 2009 that they “will enable them [the police] to effect their role in bringing the growing gang problems and membership under control.”¹⁵

While some experts believe gang-related violence in the country peaked in the period from the 1970s to the 1990s,¹⁶ government response to criminal gangs has increased in the last two years in response to a perceived growth in gang activity and to the accidental shooting death of a two-old child in 2007 as result of BP and MM violence.¹⁷ In early 2008 the government announced a national Organised Crime Strategy. A whole-of-government approach to reducing crime networks, gangs and groups, the strategy extends legislative powers available to police, and enhances intelligence gathering and community-based approaches.¹⁸ In July 2008 the Organised and Financial Crime Agency New Zealand (OFCANZ) was established as the lead agency in coordination and intelligence gathering; and in October 2009, a National

¹³ Binning, E. 2008, ‘Working out gang numbers not an exact science’, *New Zealand Herald*, 30 June http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10519079&pnum=0 - Accessed 7 December 2009 – Attachment 10.

¹⁴ Doogue, E. 1989, ‘Bikies In Bomb, Shooting War’, The Tattoo Shop website, source: *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 November <http://www.tattooshop.com.au/tattoo-shop-articles/1989/11/28/bikies-in-bomb-shooting-war> - Accessed 7 December 2009 – Attachment 11; Newbold, G. 1997, ‘Organized Crime in New Zealand’, in: *Kanagawa Hogaku*, vol.31, 3, KANAGAWA University Repository website, pp.285-312 <http://klibredb.lib.kanagawa-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10487/2395/1/kana-4-31-3-0016.pdf> - Accessed 11 December 2009 – Attachment 12.

¹⁵ New Zealand, House of Representatives 2009, *Debates*, vol. 657, p.6283, New Zealand Parliament website, 10 September http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/f/4/b/49HansD_20090910_00000734-Gangs-and-Organised-Crime-Bill-Second-Reading.htm - Accessed 3 December 2009 – Attachment 13.

¹⁶ This is the view of sociologist Jarrod Gilbert: Callilan, R. 2007, ‘Tribal Trouble’, *Time Magazine*, 5 July – Attachment 1.

¹⁷ Callilan, R. 2007, ‘Tribal Trouble’, *Time Magazine*, 5 July – Attachment 1.

¹⁸ New Zealand Ministry of Justice 2009, ‘Organised Crime Strategy 2008-2009: Developing a whole of government approach to combat organised crime, March 2008 - June 2009’, <http://www.justice.govt.nz/policy-and-consultation/crime/organised-crime/organised-crime-strategy-2008-2009> - Accessed 8 December 2009 – Attachment 21.

Intelligence Centre became operational, collating information from all Police districts and areas allowing police to target organised crime nationally rather than district by district.¹⁹

On 1 December 2009 new laws came into effect to reduce the influence of gangs in organised crime. *The Crimes Amendment Act*, the *Local Government Amendment Act*, and the *Sentencing Amendment Act (No 2)* all emerged from the previous Gangs and Organised Crime Bill. The following significant changes were introduced in the Acts:

- The maximum penalty for participation in an organised criminal group doubled from five to 10 years' imprisonment.
- Police surveillance powers expanded to enable them to apply for an interception warrant to investigate participation in an organised criminal group, and for a wider range of serious violent offences.
- Participation in an organised criminal group is now an aggravating factor at sentencing.
- Police and territorial authorities can seek a removal order against gang structures that are intimidating in nature.²⁰

Other legislation targeting crime and gangs recently in force or before the New Zealand Parliament are: the Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Act, the Anti-Money Laundering and Countering Financing of Terrorism Bill, and the Search and Surveillance Bill.²¹

Arrests by police have also contributed to significant limits and controls to the criminal activities of gangs, including Black Power. In 2005 the head of the Auckland-based BP Sindi chapter was convicted, and in September 2008 the BP New Zealand President Mark Pitman was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison. His considerable assets were also later seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act.²² In 2007, official figures showed that police arrested 6,200 gang members and affiliates, made 26,000 related prosecutions, and a total of 1471 prisoners were identified as gang affiliated, principally from the MM (523) and BP (426) gangs.²³ More recent official figures for arrests were not found in consulted sources, the police and the courts continue to take action against gangs. The New Zealand Gangscene website provides a timeline of approximately thirty gang incidents reported in local media between January and October 2009, nearly all of which saw MM and BP members either arrested, charged or sentenced by the police or courts.²⁴ The New Zealand also seek to control BP and MM violence through mediation with gang leaders, The NZ Police's *2008/09 Annual*

¹⁹ See the OFCANZ website <http://www.ofcanz.govt.nz/>. For the National Intelligence Centre, see 'Tackling Gangs' 2009, New Zealand Police website, 16 October <https://admin.police.govt.nz/news/release/21291.html> – Accessed 2 December 2009 – Attachment 14.

²⁰ 'Gangs laws comes into effect today' 2009, New Zealand Government website, 1 December <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/gangs+laws+comes+effect+today> - Accessed 8 December 2009 – Attachment 15; 'Gang bills spark debate' 2009, *New Zealand Herald*, 29 October http://www.nzherald.co.nz/gangs/news/article.cfm?c_id=217&objectid=10606034&pnum=1 - Accessed 8 December 2009 – Attachment 16.

²¹ New Zealand, House of Representatives 2009, *Debates*, vol. 657, p.6283, New Zealand Parliament website, 10 September http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/f/4/b/49HansD_20090910_00000734-Gangs-and-Organised-Crime-Bill-Second-Reading.htm - Accessed 3 December 2009 – Attachment 13.

²² Callinan, R. 2007, 'Tribal Trouble', *Time Magazine*, 5 July – Attachment 1; Hopkins, S. 2009, 'Black Power lose their patch', Stuff website, source: *Sunday News*, 22 March <http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-news/2282343/Black-Power-lose-their-patch> – Accessed 3 December 2009 – Attachment 6.

²³ 'Thousands of gang members arrested last year' 2008, *Radio New Zealand International*, 2 July – Attachment 17; 'Young People and Gangs in New Zealand' 2009, Research Paper, New Zealand Parliament website, 3 April, 'Gangs in New Zealand' http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/ParlSupport/ResearchPapers/b/c/7/00PLSocRP09021-Young-people-and-gangs-in-New-Zealand.htm#footnote_16 - Accessed 3 December 2009 – Attachment 3.

²⁴ 'Timeline: New Zealand gang incidents January – October 2009' 2009, Gangscene website <http://www.gangscene.co.nz/timeline.html> - Accessed 10 December 2009 – Attachment 18.

Report states that a “significant impact” in reducing the number of gang confrontations and clashes occurred as a result of continued high-level meetings between the Police Maori Pacific and Ethnic Services (MPES) and key Maori gang leaders. Mediation has in some instances avoided potentially high levels of violence.²⁵

3. What is the percentage of Maoris in the NZ and Australian Police Forces?

New Zealand Police Force statistics show that at June 2009, 11.1% of the New Zealand Police Force was Maori. An identical percentage was recorded for the previous year. This compared to 14.6% for the entire population based on 2006 census figures. In 2008/09 the NZ police also commenced a new phase in recruitment marketing of Maoris, among other groups.²⁶ Figures on the percentage of Maoris in the Australian Police Forces were not found in consulted sources. The New South Wales Police Force figures on the EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) composition of its workforce are limited to those persons whose first language is not English. This category comprised 6% of the NSW police in 2009.²⁷

List of Attachments

1. Callinan, R. 2007, ‘Tribal Trouble’, *Time Magazine*, 5 July. (Cisnet New Zealand – CX183779)
2. ‘Gang Land’ 2008, *Salient*, 14 July <http://www.salient.org.nz/features/gang-land> – Accessed 3 December 2009.
3. ‘Young People and Gangs in New Zealand’ 2009, Research Paper, New Zealand Parliament website, 3 April http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/ParlSupport/ResearchPapers/b/c/7/00PLSocRP09021-Young-people-and-gangs-in-New-Zealand.htm#footnote_16 – Accessed 3 December 2009.
4. ‘Our underbelly’ 2008, *The Press*, 28 March <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/lifestyle/mainlander/336193> – Accessed 3 December 2009.
5. ‘New Zealand Gangs’ 2006, New Zealand Police Government website, 9 April. (Cisnet New Zealand – CX183930)
6. Hopkins, S. 2009, ‘Black Power lose their patch’, Stuff website, source: *Sunday News*, 22 March <http://www.stuff.co.nz/sunday-news/2282343/Black-Power-lose-their-patch> – Accessed 3 December 2009.
7. Scanlon, S. 2007, ‘Gangs move in on small-town South Island’, *Sunday Star-Times*, 4 November. (FACTIVA)

²⁵ New Zealand Police 2009, *2008/09 Annual Report*, October, p.17 http://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/resources/2009-Annual-Report-Full-Version_e-version1.1.pdf – Accessed 2 December 2009 – Attachment 19.

²⁶ New Zealand Police 2009, *2008/09 Annual Report*, October, pp. 78 & 81 http://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/resources/2009-Annual-Report-Full-Version_e-version1.1.pdf – Accessed 2 December 2009 – Attachment 19.

²⁷ NSW Police Force 2009, *2008-09 NSW Police Force Annual Report: People*, 31 October, p.43 http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/165231/Annual_Report_-_People.pdf - Accessed 10 December 2009 – Attachment 20.

8. Hazelhurst, C. 2007, 'Observing New Zealand "Gangs", 1950-2000: learning from a small country,' in: John M Hagedorn (ed.), *Gangs and the Global City: Exploring Alternatives to Traditional Criminology*, University of Illinois Press, United States.
9. 'Gang rise 'affecting whole city'' 2009, *Otago Daily Times*, 19 February <http://www.odt.co.nz/news/dunedin/44050/gang-rise-039affecting-whole-city039> – Accessed 4 December 2009.
10. Binning, E. 2008, 'Working out gang numbers not an exact science', *New Zealand Herald*, 30 June http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10519079&pnum=0 – Accessed 7 December 2009.
11. Doogue, E. 1989, 'Bikies in Bomb, Shooting War', The Tattoo Shop website, source: *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 November <http://www.tattooshop.com.au/tattoo-shop-articles/1989/11/28/bikies-in-bomb-shooting-war> – Accessed 7 December 2009.
12. Newbold, G. 1997, 'Organized Crime in New Zealand', in: *Kanagawa Hogaku*, vol.31, 3, KANAGAWA University Repository website, pp.285-312 <http://klibredb.lib.kanagawa-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/10487/2395/1/kana-4-31-3-0016.pdf> – Accessed 11 December 2009.
13. New Zealand, House of Representatives 2009, *Debates*, vol. 657, p.6283, New Zealand Parliament website, 10 September http://www.parliament.nz/en-NZ/PB/Debates/Debates/f/4/b/49HansD_20090910_00000734-Gangs-and-Organised-Crime-Bill-Second-Reading.htm – Accessed 3 December 2009.
14. 'Tackling Gangs' 2009, New Zealand Police website, 16 October <https://admin.police.govt.nz/news/release/21291.html> – Accessed 2 December 2009.
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17. 'Thousands of gang members arrested last year' 2008, *Radio New Zealand International*, 2 July. (Cisnet New Zealand – CX203857).
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19. New Zealand Police 2009, *2008/09 Annual Report*, October http://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/resources/2009-Annual-Report-Full-Version_e-version1.1.pdf – Accessed 2 December 2009.
20. NSW Police Force 2009, *2008-09 NSW Police Force Annual Report: People*, 31 October http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/165231/Annual_Report_-_People.pdf – Accessed 10 December 2009.

21. New Zealand Ministry of Justice 2009, 'Organised Crime Strategy 2008-2009: Developing a whole of government approach to combat organised crime, March 2008 – June 2009', <http://www.justice.govt.nz/policy-and-consultation/crime/organised-crime/organised-crime-strategy-2008-2009> – Accessed 8 December 2009.