



Developing a New Māori Language Strategy

Submission to the Minister of Māori Affairs

28 February 2014



For a better working life

New Zealand Public Service Association
Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi

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Introduction

Who we are

The New Zealand Public Service Association *Te Pūkenga Here Tikanga Mahi* (the PSA) is the largest trade union in New Zealand with over 58,000 members. We are a democratic organisation representing members in the public service, and the wider state sector (the district health boards, crown research institutes and other crown entities, state owned enterprises, local government, tertiary education institutions and non-governmental organisations working in the health, social services and community sectors).

In developing this submission we sought the views of...

The PSA has over 5,700 Māori members and in developing this submission we have sought the views of our members in the affected agencies and of Te Rūnanga o Nga Toa Āwhina, the Māori arm of the PSA. However, while the survival of te reo Māori is of particular interest to those members, the PSA recognises that it should be an issue for all New Zealanders, including our wider membership and this submission reflects that wider interest.

Our interest

In our rules the PSA affirms Te Tiriti o Waitanga/the Treaty of Waitangi as the founding document of Aotearoa/New Zealand and commits to advancing the Treaty principles in our activities pursuant to the purpose and objects of the union. As the largest public sector union our interest in the strategy is about the role of government in promoting the language, the relevance of workplaces in the strategy and the appropriate form of public sector management for the delivery of government policy on te reo Māori.

PSA submissions

We welcome the review

General comments

The PSA welcomes the review of the Māori Language Strategy. We recognise its importance in helping to maintain and grow the use of te Reo in Aotearoa/New Zealand.

We endorse the result areas

We endorse the four result areas proposed in the strategy:

- a) *Te Ako i te Reo*: increasing the number of whānau Māori (and other New Zealanders) who can speak Māori;
- b) *Te Mana o te Reo*: increasing the status of the Māori language among whānau Māori and other New Zealanders and globally;

- c) *Te Kounga o te Reo*: increasing the quality of Māori language use and supporting a focus on iwi dialect maintenance and transmission;
- d) *Te Kōrerotanga o te Reo*: increasing the use of the Māori language among whānau Māori (and other New Zealanders) in a range of domains, with a particular focus on intergenerational language transmission in the home.

We support the Principles

We are also supportive of the 3 principles that are proposed to underpin the strategy:

- *Whakamana Whānau, Whakapiki Hapū Iwi: strengthening our focus on whānau Māori, hapū and iwi.* This reflects the importance of intergenerational language transmission and the key roles of whānau Māori, hapū and iwi.
- *Kia tū rangatira ai te ao Māori: strengthening Māori leadership.* This principle is about (a) strengthening the ability of iwi and Māori to lead the revitalisation of the Māori language; (b) building the capability and capacity of iwi and Māori (including whānau and hapū) organisations in this sector; (c) strengthening Crown-iwi and Māori relationships in the Māori language sector and (d) encouraging alignment of iwi and Māori initiatives with the Māori Language Strategy.
- *Mahi Tōtika: supporting effective, efficient and coordinated government that increases access to Māori language programmes and services for whānau Māori (and other New Zealanders).* In keeping with our overall focus on better public services, it is important to ensure that Māori language programmes and services are effective, efficient and coordinated, and readily accessible.

But we have some concerns

However, we are concerned about aspects of the strategy:

- We have some questions about the way in which targets will be used
- The emphasis on whānau is appropriate but there is little or no emphasis on workplaces
- The changes to the governance and accountability arrangements for Māori language entities create uncertainty about the status of Te Taura Whiri i te Reo and Te Māngai Pāho and could undermine effective accountability

We have some questions about targets

Targets

The discussion document states that it will be important to develop some targets to enable the measurement of progress and to assess the effectiveness of various programmes and services. We agree that there needs to be a meaningful way to measure progress but care needs to be taken to ensure that the strategy is weighted down by some specific targets that end up creating perverse incentives. We are aware that use of targets in such sectors as the district health boards has encouraged the DHBs to focus on particular areas at the expense of others, such as mental health. There will be a need for comprehensive evaluation of programmes, rather than just relying on progress against a few targets.

Workplaces

As public sector union we are particularly concerned about the importance of promoting the use of te Reo in public sector workplaces. We have managed to negotiate some provisions in collective agreements to recognise the use of te Reo through allowances and other forms of remuneration.

However, workplaces generally present both an opportunity and significant challenge. Private sector workplaces do not have the same onus on them to promote te Reo and the fact that the language is not used there is a real barrier to speakers maintaining or developing their fluency. Improving the use of the language in the workplace would make a major contribution to the survival of te Reo.

Workplaces are not represented in the strategy

We cannot see where the workplace features in the strategy. We presume that it would be covered by community based language initiatives but this is not clear, and the amount of money being transferred from Vote Education to Vote Māori Affairs (\$2.3m) is very small.

Members have also expressed a concern that the focus on whānau provision of services to support te Reo Māori learning may mean that workers who want to learn te Reo Māori for workplace purposes could be expected to go to whānau providers, rather than providers who understand the workplace. This could mean that te Reo Māori will be de-valued as a valid workplace learning pathway and employers will opt out of supporting/paying for te Reo learning packages.

We support improving the performance of government agencies

Impact on Government agencies

The PSA strongly supports the third principle, Mahi Tōtika. Government agencies across the board need to be focused on delivering efficient, effective, co-ordinated and accessible Māori language services. There is a lack of consistency currently, with some agencies highly responsive to requests for information in Māori, while with others there is a significant delay. These delays can be contrasted with the responsiveness of some agencies to providing information in community languages.

But funding is an issue

However we are concerned that the strategy does not address funding issues adequately. On page 18 the discussion document talks about changes to the Māori Language Act 1987 to bring the treatment of te Reo into line with sign language. The document then states that this “will also provide government departments with sufficient flexibility to manage these principles within their existing operational models and budgets.”

While we support this change we are not convinced that amending the legislation in this way will lead to the intended outcome without an increase in resources.

We have long been interested in public management issues

Governance and Accountability Arrangements for Māori Language Entities

As the largest public sector union and the union for workers in the public service, the PSA has long had an interest in our system of public management and the machinery of government. For example: we were instrumental in getting the Review of the Centre established in 2001; have been involved with the Better Public Services Advisory Group; had extensive involvement in restructurings such as the merger of Archives NZ and the National Library with the Department of Internal Affairs; and we have presented comprehensive submissions on such matters as last year's amendments to the State Sector, Crown Entities and Public Finance Acts.

There are questions about accountability and the status of the entities

The strategy proposes changes to the governance and accountability arrangements for Māori language entities, which challenge the accepted models of public sector management. It effectively hands ownership and governance of Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Māori and Te Māngai Pāho to non-governmental authorities and this raises questions about the accountability of the agencies and responsibility of Ministers for their actions which the strategy does not adequately answer. Neither does the strategy really spell out what the status of the organisations would be in the future – they cease to be crown entities but what would they become?

Te Taura Whiri i Te Reo Māori and Te Māngai Pāho are both crown entities with responsibilities for delivering services on behalf of government. In the case of Te Taura Whiri this includes advice to government, and in the case of Te Māngai Pāho it includes dispensing government money to the national network of Māori radio stations and for the production of Māori language television and radio programmes. Maintaining their role as crown entities is an important way of maintaining their accountability for those services and for the government money they administer.

The roles of these agencies will remain the same under this proposal but by moving out from being government organisations the mechanism for delivering these services, and managing the relationship with the government, becomes contractual. The services are now to be 'purchased' from the two agencies. This not only weakens their accountability it means that at some future point these services may become contestable. This would not be appropriate for such core services. Further, it also allows the Minister of Māori Affairs to distance him/herself from the responsibility for the activities of the two agencies.

Our members in the affected agencies share these concerns and are worried about what these changes might mean for their future.

We oppose the changes to governance and accountability

Taking all these factors into account the PSA feels that, even though we support the strengthening of iwi leadership, we are not sure that this is the best way to achieve it. Accordingly we oppose the changes to the governance and accountability arrangements for Māori language entities.

For further information about this submission contact

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