

LANGUAGES IN

# Aotearoa New Zealand

*Te waka reo*



STATEMENT ON LANGUAGE POLICY

## NEW ZEALAND'S LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

The 2006 census figures show that after English, Māori is the most commonly spoken language in New Zealand, followed by Samoan, French, Hindi, Yue and Northern Chinese. The numbers of speakers are:

English	3,673,626
Māori	157,110
Samoan	85,428
French	53,757
Hindi	44,589
Yue	44,154
Northern Chinese	41,391
Other	509,358

Census data also show that the majority of New Zealanders continue to be monolingual, with 76.6% speaking only one language.



2008 - International Year of Languages  
2008 - Te Tau ō Te Reo ā Ao  
2008 - Année internationale des langues  
2008 - Año Internacional de los Idiomas  
2008 - السنة الدولية للغات  
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## FOREWORD

The need for a national languages policy was identified in a landmark report published by the Ministry of Education in 1992. The Aotearoa report by Jeffrey Waite was the product of a National Languages Policy Task Force.

Unfortunately it did not get further political traction at the time. The call for a national languages policy was renewed in the New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights and at the New Zealand Diversity Forum in 2005. By then a number of the language issues raised by Jeffrey Waite had assumed even greater urgency with the increased ethnic diversity in New Zealand, the decline in the use of some community languages and the onward march of globalisation.

The absence of a national languages policy has not prevented some very positive initiatives from occurring in particular areas. The lack of an overall strategic framework however has meant that these initiatives have been piecemeal and that some key issues have been overlooked or insufficiently addressed.

The Statement on Language Policy, developed through the national language policy network of the New Zealand Diversity Action Programme, is intended to provide an elementary framework to prioritise, implement and monitor language policy development in New Zealand pending the development of a more substantial strategy. Hopefully it will stimulate further debate and action.

This booklet contains the Statement, the language priorities from the New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights and details of Te Waka Reo, the national language policy network. It is published as a contribution to the United Nations International Year of Languages.

JORIS DE BRES

RACE RELATIONS COMMISSIONER KAIHAUTŪ WHAKAWHANAUNGA Ā IWĪ

## **STATEMENT ON LANGUAGE POLICY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

New Zealand is a diverse society in a globalised international community. It has an indigenous language, te reo Māori, and a bicultural Māori and Anglo-Celtic foundation. It is located in the Asia Pacific region and many people from the Pacific and Asia have settled here. Languages are a valuable national resource in terms of our cultural identities, cultural diversity and international connectedness. They are vitally important for individuals and communities, bringing educational, social, cultural and economic benefits. They contribute to all three national priorities of national identity, economic transformation and families young and old.

English is the most widely used language in New Zealand and the ability to communicate in English is important for all New Zealanders. Te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language are recognised by law as official languages. The number of speakers of te reo Māori is now increasing but much remains to be done to secure its future as a living language.

A majority of New Zealanders currently speak only one language. There are however significant communities that have a heritage language other than English. New Zealand's Māori, Pacific and Asian communities alone make up nearly a third of the population. The most common community languages other than English are te reo Māori, Chinese languages, Samoan, and Hindi.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

The right to learn and use one's own language is an internationally recognised human right. Human rights treaties and declarations specifically refer to rights and responsibilities in relation to indigenous languages, minority languages, learning and using one's mother tongue, the value of learning international languages, and access to interpretation and translation services. The New Zealand Bill of

Rights Act provides that ‘a person who belongs to an ethnic, religious, or linguistic minority in New Zealand shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of that minority, to enjoy the culture, to profess and practise the religion, or to use the language of that minority’.

New Zealand has a particular responsibility under the Treaty of Waitangi and international law to protect and promote te reo Māori as the indigenous language of New Zealand. It also has a special responsibility to protect and promote other languages that are indigenous to the New Zealand realm: Vagahau Niue, Gagana Tokelau, Cook Island Māori, and New Zealand Sign Language. It has a regional responsibility as a Pacific nation to promote and protect other Pacific languages, particularly where significant proportions of their communities live in New Zealand.

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

A significant and growing proportion of New Zealand’s trade is with Asia and learning the languages of our key trading partners is an economic imperative.

## **LANGUAGES**

#### **ENGLISH**

All New Zealanders should have the opportunity and support to achieve oral competence and literacy in English through school, adult literacy programmes and ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) programmes.

#### **TE REO MĀORI**

All New Zealanders should have the opportunity and support to learn te reo Māori and use it in the home, in education and in the community. The importance of maintaining te reo Māori as a unique indigenous living New Zealand language should be publicly promoted as part of our national heritage and identity.

## **NEW ZEALAND SIGN LANGUAGE**

All Deaf people should have the opportunity and support to learn and use New Zealand Sign Language in the home, in education and in the community and have access to interpreters. Other New Zealanders should also have the opportunity and support to learn and use NZSL.

## **PACIFIC LANGUAGES**

All Cook Island Māori, Niuean and Tokelauan people living in New Zealand should have the opportunity and support to learn and use their heritage language. Other Pacific peoples in New Zealand should have the opportunity and support to learn and use their languages through public and community provision.

## **COMMUNITY AND HERITAGE LANGUAGES**

People whose community or heritage language is other than English, Māori or Pacific should have the opportunity and support to learn and use these languages through public and community provision.

## **INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGES**

New Zealanders should be encouraged and given opportunities and support to learn international languages, including those of New Zealand's key trading partners.

## **STRATEGIES**

Within a general languages policy framework specific strategies are needed for both priority language groups and priority sectors. All such strategies should recognise that:

- New Zealand is a country with a small population and limited resources to support language diversity
- Choices have to be made about the relative priority of providing for the various languages, sectors and objectives based on the degree of endangerment, human rights, government responsibilities, economic benefits and the population base

- Strategies and programmes for these languages and sectors must be coordinated to make the most effective use of available resources.

### **LANGUAGE STRATEGIES**

There should be specific national strategies for English literacy and ESOL, te reo Māori, New Zealand Sign Language, Pacific languages, community and heritage languages and international languages. Such strategies should address the dual goals of language maintenance and development within minority communities and wider public acceptance of language diversity.

### **SECTOR STRATEGIES**

There should be sector strategies for languages in the home, the community, education (early childhood centres, schools, tertiary), public services (including translation and interpretation services), business and broadcasting.

### **PRIORITIES**

Priorities in the implementation of a national languages policy are to:

- Establish an appropriate coordinating and monitoring mechanism for language policy and identify lead organisations for specific language and sector strategies
- Develop and maintain strategies for the identified languages and sectors
- Promote cooperation and sharing between agencies and communities in the development of strategies, resources and services
- Promote positive public attitudes to language diversity and increase the number of people learning languages
- Train and support more teachers of languages
- Develop resources to support language learning and use.

## **TE WAKA REO**

### **NATIONAL LANGUAGE POLICY NETWORK**

Te Waka Reo is a national language policy network facilitated by the Human Rights Commission as part of the New Zealand Diversity Action Programme.

Its purpose is to:

- Connect people and organisations with an interest or practical involvement in language issues
- Keep them informed of initiatives and activities concerning languages
- Provide forums to advance discussion and action on language policy
- Promote the implementation of the language policy goals of the NZ Action Plan for Human Rights
- Encourage the registration of language related organisations and projects with the NZ Diversity Action Programme.

### **LANGUAGE NEWS**

People on the network receive a monthly electronic newsletter, Te Waka Reo, with news and information about languages and language policy.

### **ANNUAL FORUM**

A language policy forum is held as part of the New Zealand Diversity Forum every August. Topics have ranged from the need for a national language policy (2005) to community languages (2006), developments in national language policy (2007) and languages in schools (2008). The focus is on practical action. The 2007 forum resulted in the development of the Statement on Language Policy.

## **ANNUAL REVIEW OF LANGUAGE DIVERSITY**

The Human Rights Commission publishes an annual review of developments in language diversity as part of its annual review of race relations. The review is published in March. Previous reviews are available on the Commission's website ([www.hrc.co.nz](http://www.hrc.co.nz)).

## **ACTION ON LANGUAGE DIVERSITY**

Organisations are encouraged to register language programmes, initiatives, projects and events with the New Zealand Diversity Action Programme. The Programme is facilitated by the Human Rights Commission and promotes practical action on race relations and cultural diversity. Registration is free and provides promotion and acknowledgment of projects, sharing of good practice, forums to meet other participants and networks of organisations engaged in similar areas of activity. Projects registered in 2008 include Māori Language Week, International Languages Week, the International Year of Languages, Pacific languages programmes, conferences, workshops, media programmes and the development of new resources.

## **LANGUAGES AND HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **THE NEW ZEALAND ACTION PLAN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

The New Zealand Action Plan for Human Rights identifies language as one of the key priorities for human rights and race relations in New Zealand. The Action Plan was developed by the New Zealand Human Rights Commission pursuant to a specific requirement of the Human Rights Act and after extensive public consultation. It was published in 2005.

### **THE OUTCOME FOR LANGUAGE IS AS FOLLOWS:**

*By the bicentenary of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 2040 New Zealand is well established as a bilingual nation and communities are supported in the use of other languages.*

**THE ACTION PLAN PROVIDES THE FOLLOWING RATIONALE AND PRIORITIES FOR ACTION:**

Language is a critical issue for race relations, both in affirming identity and in fostering understanding of different cultures. New Zealand has a particular responsibility to ensure the protection and use of te reo Māori as an indigenous language and also to ensure the survival of a number of Pacific languages because of the special relationship with some Pacific Island countries and the high proportion of their populations that now live here. English language acquisition is also vital to the successful settlement and integration of migrants and refugees.

**PRIORITIES FOR ACTION:**

- Progressively provide opportunities for all New Zealanders to develop knowledge of tikanga Māori and the ability to communicate competently in both English and te reo Māori
- Include te reo and tikanga Māori in teacher education and professional development to ensure their effective use in teaching
- Ensure the continued survival and use of the Cook Island Māori, Niuean and Tokelauan languages in New Zealand and foster the retention and use of other Pacific languages
- Develop a languages policy that encourages the learning of a range of languages and supports community efforts to teach their heritage languages
- Ensure that all new migrants and refugees have access to appropriate English language tuition
- Extend the availability of the Language Line interpreter service to all public agencies.

## **CURRENT STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES**

There are existing strategies for English literacy, Adult ESOL and te reo Māori. The te reo Māori Strategy is being updated in 2008-09. There are no comprehensive strategies for any of the other languages or sectors identified but there have been a variety of initiatives within these areas. New Zealand Sign Language was declared an official language in 2006. The New Zealand Curriculum adopted in 2007 includes languages as a learning area for all students and a languages in schooling strategy is under development. The Ministry of Education has recently completed curricula for a number of Pacific languages and the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs has piloted a Mind Your Language programme for the Niuean, Tokelauan and Cook Island communities. There are a variety of supports for Māori, Pacific and other community language broadcasting.

Key government agencies with responsibility for aspects of language policy include the Ministry of Education, the Tertiary Education Commission, Te Puni Kōkiri, the Māori Language Commission, the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, the Office of Ethnic Affairs, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, the Ministry of Social Development, and the Department of Labour. The Human Rights Commission facilitates a language policy network, Te Waka Reo, and the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO is the lead agency for the United Nations International Year of Languages.

**THE DIVERSITY FERN** is the logo of the New Zealand Diversity Action Programme. It was originally designed for Race Relations Day 2005 by Malaysian-born New Zealand designer Jean Voon. The fern represents the growing cultural diversity of New Zealand.

*Baby fronds symbolising new growth*

*Middle Eastern (Iranian motif)*

*Vietnamese motif from fabric*

*Indian paisley design*

*Traditional Chinese  
character found on  
silk cloth*

*Samoan tapa cloth pattern*

*European Fleur de Lys, from the doors  
of St Patrick's Cathedral, Auckland*

*Traditional Māori kōwhaiwhai pattern from a painted panel  
in Manutuke church (1849, Rongowhakaata)*

