

Submission

on the

Ministry of Pacific Peoples Pacific Languages Strategy – draft for targeted consultation

from the

Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group (ALSWG)

November 2021

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Introduction

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft Pacific Languages Strategy.

This submission has been assembled based on the collective knowledge and experience of the members of the Auckland Languages Working Group, who span all sectors of education, plus research and community, across a wide range of languages and areas of language expertise. More detail on the group, our membership, key messages and achievements to date, is included in Appendix One.

The ALSWG is excited to see this draft strategy because it is one of the first government documents to fully recognise the importance of Pacific languages to Aotearoa and the role of government in supporting those languages.

In addition to making our own submission, we wish to also express our support for the following submissions and representations on the strategy:

- Pasifika Education Centre
- COMET
- Vaka Leo Voices Consortium

Strengths of the strategy

- The vision, which is positive and powerful
- The ten-year scope, recognising some of the changes proposed in the strategy cannot happen immediately, but that action towards them needs to start now.
- The recognition that while community has an important role to play, government's role in language maintenance and revitalisation is crucial
- Grouping the languages according to their needs. We agree with the grouping in the strategy. We suggest that there is potential for learning across these language groups as the more established languages have often blazed the trail and the languages that have smaller populations in Aotearoa bring knowledge from their different situations.

Suggestions to improve or add to the strategy

There needs to be greater recognition in the strategy that government's responsibility goes beyond actions from MPP. All government agencies have an obligation to support Pacific languages because of the legal relationships between Aotearoa and the Realm nations, government's obligation to the welfare and prosperity of its own citizens who are of Pacific descent, and our international human rights obligations. Deliberate planning for bilingual pathways and sustaining home/heritage languages must be a significant part of the Government's obligation-via UNCRC (ratified 1993).

We would like to see the role of the Ministry of Education much more prominent in the strategy, and in particular, the importance of Pasifika Bilingual Education to support language maintenance, academic success, school attendance and engagement, identity and wellbeing for Pacific learners. Some actions towards this could include:

- Expand and properly support Pasifika Bilingual Education - a shift from teaching languages as subjects to using children's first or heritage languages as mediums of instruction. There is very strong local and international evidence that Bilingual Education not only delivery bilingual students but also supports increased academic achievement, attendance and engagement in school.

- Change the Education Act to recognise languages other than just English and te reo Māori as mediums of instruction, in order to facilitate more consistent and robust support for Pasifika Bilingual Education.
- Urgently address teacher supply for Pasifika Bilingual Education at all levels of the education system. Some actions to improve teacher supply include:
 - Re-establish dedicated Pacific teacher training pathways
 - Actively attract fluent speakers of Pacific language into the teaching profession
 - Change the English language requirement for aspiring teachers (often referred to as the IELTS requirements) by recognising teachers for the language skills they bring in their Pacific language, reducing the requirement to a less academic level, and testing after teacher training rather than before
- More deliberate planning for language pathways from early learning through primary and intermediate to secondary schools within geographic areas, recognising that Pasifika Bilingual Education is most effective if students spend at least 6 to 8 years learning bilingually, but the lack of local language pathways often prevents students from staying in bilingual education for that full time. The first step towards this planning would be to map the services currently available at each level and identify the gaps in order to prioritise new provision at the specific levels needed to provide coherent pathways for each Pacific language in areas of high population of that language group.
- Provide more effective support for existing and new Pasifika Bilingual Education settings, including:
 - Professional development for teachers that is specifically tailored to the needs of Pasifika Bilingual Education
 - More learning resources in Pacific languages across all curriculum subjects
 - Information and support for parents on the benefits of bilingual education and on how to support their children's learning at home
- Increasing the use of CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) so students who are learning a Pacific language as a subject can also use that language as a medium of instruction in one or more of their other subject. This has been shown to increase achievement in language learning because students have an authentic reason to learn and regularly use the language.

We would also like to see a stronger role for TEC, strengthening Pacific language provision in formal tertiary environments and through Adult and Community Education. This needs to include:

- High-level pathways for studying Pacific languages at university level, to provide opportunities for people to be strong in their language and to provide skilled people to move into teaching, research, translation, interpreting, the civil service and other roles where Pacific languages are needed.
- Better resourcing for community language classes, including professional development and accreditation for community language teachers and funding for services, to enable them to delivery quality adult learning.
- Enabling community language schools to offer and be funded for classes for children. This could be from ACE funding, or from Ministry of Education as a means of

providing language learning in Pacific languages that are not able to be offered in the school. The learning that children undertake would then be recognized by schools and seen as a part of the school's language programme.

Another important role of government is to support the communities and organisations on the ground who know their community's strengths and needs, have connections and expertise, but need resourcing to enable them to work in ways that are customised to their local language community.

The need for a National Languages Policy

This strategy, and the strategy for languages in education that is currently being developed by the Ministry of Education, should be seen as contributing to, rather than replacing, the proposed National Languages Policy.

Aotearoa New Zealand's increasing language diversity is a potential strength for social cohesion, identity, trade, tourism, education achievement and intercultural understanding. However, lack of central government recognition and support has led to underutilization of this valuable resource.

A National Languages Policy would provide a coherent platform to support language learning, maintenance, celebration and use across government agencies and sectors, in order to harness the benefits of a multilingual Aotearoa New Zealand.

It would specifically address and be underpinned by Te Reo Māori as our nation's indigenous language, and also encompass official recognition and support for Realm languages (Te Reo Kuki Airani, Vagahau Niue and Gagana Tokelau) and for the other major Pacific languages spoken in our nation (Gagana Samoa and Lea Faka-Tonga, Te Gana Tuvalu, Vosa Vakaviti, Fäeag Rotūam and Te taetae ni Kiribati).

It would also provide for greater access to English as a second language teaching, interpreting and translation services, language diversity in government communications and broadcasting, and maintaining heritage languages within families and communities.

Recommendation: Based on advice from Professor Lo Bianco and others, the first step towards a national languages policy would be to conduct an independent consultation on the issues a languages policy would need to address. He has previously indicated that he is available to assist Government on this matter.

Appendix One: Background: Auckland Languages Strategy Group

The Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland Languages Strategy Group is an unaffiliated working group drawing on expertise and interest in the status and use of languages in New Zealand, and in Auckland in particular. The group is convened by COMET Auckland (an education and skills trust linked to Auckland Council) and includes members from a wide range of language-related organisations.

Vision

A multilingual Auckland that benefits socially, culturally and economically from an increasing number of Aucklanders knowing, respecting and speaking more than one language.

Core Messages

- Te reo Māori first – Aotearoa’s indigenous language
- NZSL – our other national language
- Importance of easy access to English
- Pasifika languages especially the Realm languages
- Value of all languages especially community and family languages
- Importance of language and culture – social cohesion, identity, cognitive, trade/tourism (our language, our culture, our identity)
- Support means more than education – recognition in the Civic domain, public celebration, translation/interpreting, maintenance, access to information and services, opportunities to use...

We are calling for:

- Every child to learn Te Reo Māori - core curriculum from year 1
- Also English and their heritage language or community language of their choice
- A plan to make those possible over time
- Support recognition of Pasifika languages
- Develop a National Languages Policy
- Start with a consultation

Achievements to date:

- **Developing *Ngā Reo o Tāmaki Makaurau: Auckland Languages Strategy***, which was launched in November 2015, with the goal that by 2040 Tāmaki Makaurau enjoys the full economic, social and cultural benefits of our many living languages.
- **Co-hosting a visit in August 2017 by Professor Joseph Lo Bianco**, University of Melbourne, principal author of the Australian National Languages Policy. The NZ visit was in partnership with the Royal Society, AUT and Victoria University of Wellington. Professor Lo Bianco spoke at three public meetings and met with senior officials from a range of government departments to outline the value a national languages policy and to advise on a process towards developing such a policy.
- **Preparing a Briefing to the Incoming Ministers on language issues in Aotearoa**, in November 2017. The briefing was sent to five ministers with responsibilities closely related to language diversity, with copies to a further 20 ministers and to key national organisations working in the language space.

- **Publishing a *Strategy for Languages in Education***, released in August 2018, outlining the need for a planned approach to language provision, including teacher workforce development, in order to enable all children in Aotearoa to learn te reo Māori from year 1 as of right, and to be supported to maintain and use their own heritage language, and/or to learn another language of their choice.
- **Submissions and representations** on the Education (Strengthening Second Language Learning in Primary and Intermediate Schools) Amendment Bill and the Māori Language (Te Reo Māori) Bill 2014; and support to partner groups for advice to MOE on reviewing and delivering the current Learning Languages Policy and on Pasifika Bilingual Education; and for submissions on the need for more support in education for the Hindi language; and the impact of the IELTS and equivalent requirements for initial teacher education (ITE) on recruitment of community language speakers and experts and educators in ECEs and schools.
- **Surveying language organisations** to demonstrate the depth and breadth of the sector supporting language learning, maintenance, translation, interpreting and use in Aotearoa. The results of the survey will be shared at the CESOL conference in October 2021 and published in early 2022.