



7 November 2016

E.J. Park
Faculty School of Languages and Culture
Victoria University
ej.park@vuw.ac.nz

Dear E.J. Park,

Response to School of Languages and Cultures Change Proposal

On behalf of the Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group, I would like to express our concern at the Change Proposal recently published by the School of Languages and Cultures.

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. In November 2015 we published *Ngā Reo o Tāmaki Makaurau: Auckland Languages Strategy*, with the goal that by 2040 Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland enjoys the full economic, social and cultural benefits of our many living languages.

Reducing expertise in languages in response to current changes in student numbers is short-sighted, because it ignores the economic and social imperatives of our changing nation and world. The selection of languages available for students needs to recognize both the economic value of languages, and also the social and cultural importance.

Auckland is already recognized as one of the most super-diverse cities in the world. Longer term, demographic changes indicate that the rest of Aotearoa will soon be as diverse as Auckland is now. This means that the ability to communicate with people from different language and cultural backgrounds is becoming increasingly important nationally, for social cohesion, civic engagement and integration of migrants and refugees. Given Victoria University's presence in Auckland, maintaining strength in the School of Languages and Cultures would demonstrate the university's commitment both to Auckland's particular context and to increasing diversity across the country.

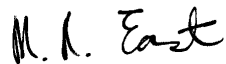
Language also plays a key role in economic development, especially in facilitating trade and tourism. In a globalized economy, New Zealanders need language skills to be able to take advantage of opportunities, not just in Asia but also in Europe and in the growing economies of Latin America. Victoria University has an opportunity to leverage from its existing strengths in these language areas, but only if both staff numbers and levels of academic expertise are maintained.

For these reasons, we ask that the Change Proposal be revised, to maintain a balance of academic strength across languages, and also that the University take steps to actively promote the importance of language learning and cultural awareness for all students.

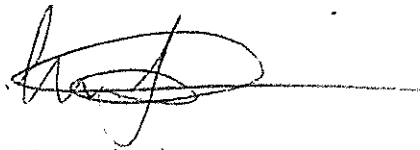
Yours sincerely,



Susan Warren
COMET Auckland Chief Executive
Chairperson, Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group



Martin East,
President, NZ Association of Language Teachers



Maree Jeurissen,
President, Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages Aotearoa NZ
Association