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# **SUBMISSION on the Draft Te Reo Māori Strategy**

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Paper 074/14

Prepared on behalf of COMET Auckland, 25 February, 2014

## Whakatauāki

E kore e taea e te whenu kotahi  
ki te raranga i te whāriki  
kia mōhio tātou ki ā tātou.  
Mā te mahi tahi o ngā whenu,  
mā te mahi tahi o ngā kairaranga,  
ka oti tēnei whāriki.  
I te otinga  
me titiro tātou ki ngā mea pai ka puta mai.  
Ā tana wā,  
me titiro hoki  
ki ngā raranga i makere  
nā te mea, he kōrero ano kei reira.

The tapestry of understanding  
cannot be woven by one strand alone.  
Only by the working together of strands  
and the working together of weavers  
will such a tapestry be completed.  
With its completion  
let us look at the good that comes from it  
and, in time  
we should also look  
at those stitches which have been dropped,  
because they also have a message.

- Kūkupa Tirikatene

## About COMET Auckland

COMET Auckland, Te Hononga Akoranga (Community Education Trust Auckland) is a charitable trust and Council Controlled Organisation (CCO) of Auckland Council. COMET Auckland was formed in July 2012 from the former City of Manukau Education Trust, to enable support and coordination of education and skills across Auckland. The Trust aims to advance education for Auckland through linking knowledge, needs, advocacy and initiatives, especially in areas of high education need.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Te Reo Māori Strategy. We would welcome the opportunity to speak to this submission, if this can be done in Auckland.

## **Over-arching comments**

We welcome the government's initiative to support Te Reo Māori revitalisation through the draft strategy. We agree that Te Reo Māori revitalisation is an urgent priority for our nation, in recognition of the Crown's obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi; the need for languages to be actively provided for and promoted under the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights; and because of the social, cultural and economic benefits that could flow from a strong and vibrant Reo.

For the Māori community, Te Reo is a crucial part of identity and culture, supporting tikanga and Māori world views. It also uniquely expresses concepts and indigenous knowledge that cannot be expressed clearly in any other language, which means any loss of the language would risk loss of this precious knowledge.

The current decline in the number of speakers of Te Reo Māori is a serious concern and shows that current strategies are not sufficient to maintain and revitalise the language. With the loss of earlier generations of fluent speakers, it is important that language support reaches all age groups, so there are young people coming through as fluent speakers, who can later support their own children's learning; and also so older whānau and hapu leaders can develop enough fluency to confidently fulfil their role within their iwi.

Support for languages supports wellbeing and also shows respect and care for the value and autonomy of all people. In addition, Te Reo supports learning for children and adults, through strong identity and through the cognitive gains that bilingualism brings. There are also strong benefits to other New Zealanders of ensuring that Te Reo Māori remains a strong living language, as this supports identity for all those who live in Aotearoa, and brings added benefits through tourism and the arts.

## **Support for Māori ownership**

We support the strategy's recognition that control and ownership of Te Reo Māori revitalisation needs to sit with Māori. However, **we seek assurances that the changeover and ongoing work of Te Reo Māori revitalisation will be adequately supported through both funding and policy.**

The change-over in ownership and governance will need to be specifically funded, and iwi/hapu will also need ongoing funding for the governance role, as well as for the language support work itself. If this process is not funded sufficiently, and supported with policy to remove the current barriers<sup>1</sup> to language support, there is a risk that iwi will be left with an impossible task.

We see support for languages (including Te Reo revitalisation, support for bilingualism, translation services, opportunities for migrants to learn English, support for languages in education, use of multiple languages in the community, in broadcasting, in the home...) as a joint responsibility between national government, local government, civil society, families and individuals. All these groups (including government) need to take urgent leadership if Te Reo Māori is to reverse its current decline.

This is particularly important for Tamaki Makaurau, because 24% of all Māori live in Tamaki Makaurau, with particularly large numbers from iwi outside the region, and significant numbers who are no longer affiliated with any particular iwi. To be successful in Tamaki Makaurau the Te Reo Māori Strategy cannot be solely dependent on iwi; rather, **there needs to be proactive leadership and resourcing from government, especially through the education system**, to reach residents who do not have any iwi affiliation, and whose whanau members do not speak Te Reo Māori.

## **Te Reo Māori for all New Zealanders**

We believe that Te Reo Māori is a priority language for all New Zealanders, a tāonga of Aotearoa/New Zealand, and that if the language is to survive and flourish, it needs to be valued, and used across the wider community. While the draft strategy allows for non-Māori to learn the language, there is no proactive strategy or promotion of Te Reo for Pākehā and non-Māori.

However international evidence shows that a critical mass of speakers is required for language revitalisation. This can only happen if the population as a whole takes responsibility for language preservation. In Wales, for example, language revitalisation was only possible when a large proportion of the population was able to learn Welsh. It is now possible to use the language in all settings in Wales, including learning across the curriculum

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<sup>1</sup> For example, in education, there is very little targeted professional development available to teachers in bilingual and immersion settings, and assessments and teaching resources are scarce and often have to be made from scratch by teachers, because there is no clear policy support for bilingual or immersion education. Similarly there is no curriculum or support for year 1 to 6 teachers wanting to teach Te Reo, because the Languages in the NZ Curriculum policy only covers years 7 to 13.

through the medium of the Welsh language, at all levels of education (including tertiary). When a language is used pervasively across society it becomes a further incentive for more citizens to learn and use it regularly, which is what is needed for a living language to thrive.

We believe it should be an issue of citizenship to have access to and be able to use both English and Te Reo in our everyday lives. We would therefore like to see a **separately-funded section in the Te Reo Māori Language strategy, promoting Te Reo for all New Zealanders.**

“Aotearoa, korero hia te Reo I nga wa katoa, ki nga wahi katoa.”

"New Zealanders, speak the language at all times, at all places"

## **Importance of the education system**

We would also like to see a **greater emphasis in the strategy on the role of the education system** to support Te Reo Māori revitalization for both Māori and non-Māori. Given the low percentages of parents who are able to speak Te Reo Māori fluently, most children will not have the opportunity to learn it at home; rather, they will need to learn at ECE or school. Even for those whose parents speak Te Reo Māori, children still need opportunities to learn the more conceptual academic vocabulary that comes from using a language as a medium of learning across the curriculum.

There is also potential **to use the education system as a way to reach adults.** Parents who might lack confidence or motivation to learn Te Reo Māori for their own purposes can often be motivated to learn in order to support their children's learning. If ECEs and schools offered Te Reo Māori learning for children, and opportunities for parents to learn the basics in order to support their children's learning, many parents would take up the offer and some would be motivated to continue learning, reaching two generations in one programme.

Providing more support for language learning through the education system would also have wider benefits for educational achievement. There is a wealth of research into the positive impact that speaking more than one language can have on cognitive learning abilities.

One key reason for the under-achievement of so many Māori and Pasifika learners is the fact that our education system largely ignores the potential of students' heritage language to support identity and cultural wellbeing, and to provide a platform for learning within their own language and in English.

Māori and Pasifika children come to their learning with cultural and often language skills that could be strengthened and built on as a platform for success. Evidence shows that early bilingualism brings significant gains in cognitive and meta-cognitive skills, meta-linguistic skills and flexibility of thinking<sup>2</sup>. It also shows that quality bilingual or immersion instruction in children's first or heritage language brings measurable gains in literacy achievement in the target language and also in English<sup>3</sup>. Clearly there is potential to capitalise on these benefits at all levels of the education system in order to redress the widespread underachievement of Māori and Pacific students, and to maximise Māori and Pacific success.

Auckland's Independent Māori Statutory Board has called for **all students in Auckland schools to learn Te Reo Māori, as a compulsory part of the curriculum**. We endorse this recommendation, and suggest that it should extend to New Zealand as a whole. We are aware that there are currently too few teachers who are fluent in Te Reo Māori and who know how to teach the language, so we suggest that the policy be enacted in a staged way, starting with very basic instruction using existing learning resources, in parallel with teacher training and development of more comprehensive resources so that within five years, all students could work towards conversational fluency in Te Reo Māori by the time they reach year 10.

We recommend that **policy be developed to build towards compulsory teaching of Te Reo Māori for all New Zealand school students as part of the required curriculum**. We also recommend that **funding (including establishment funding) for all forms of pre-compulsory and compulsory education in Te Reo Māori be set at a level that is at least equivalent to the funding for fully state-funded English immersion education, with an additional provision to recognise the extra training and resources required**.

We recommend that **for the next 10 years priority be given to creating a strong system so that all Māori students can learn Te Reo & Tikanga Māori**. There are 35,000 Māori students in schools across Auckland and we need to have a solid language pathway that enables tamariki to build te Reo Māori in mainstream as well as immersion and bilingual settings.

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<sup>2</sup> Skerrett, M. & Gunn, A., 2011. *Quality in Immersion-bilingual Early Years Education for Language Acquisition*. Canterbury University: Christchurch

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of Education (2008). *Teaching and learning for bilingual Pasifika students in New Zealand*.

## **The need for a national languages policy**

A major barrier to more effectively building on children's language strengths is the absence of a national languages policy. The result is that educators who want to support children's first language and capitalise on the proven benefits of bilingual instruction<sup>4</sup> are forced to create their own learning resources, assessments and professional development. This can lead to difficulty in attracting and retaining high-quality teachers to bilingual classes because of the additional burden it places on teachers. It can also lead to less-effective education in immersion and bilingual settings due to lower access to learning resources and other support.

More coherent policy would enable more speakers of Te Reo to be actively attracted into teaching, and would enable learning resources, assessments and targeted professional development to be provided so that educators can make the most of the potential of bilingual learning to support Māori success. This does not need to be a major investment; rather, it is a re-targeting of existing resources (eg professional development funding) to support the specific skills needed to teach effectively in a bilingual setting.

**We recommend that a national languages policy be developed and implemented.**

This submission has been assembled by COMET Auckland based on our own knowledge and experience, and on extensive discussions with education stakeholders.

### **Contact for communications:**

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<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Education (2008). *Teaching and learning for bilingual Pasifika students in New Zealand*.