

Briefing to the Incoming Minister

From the Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group

November 2017

To:

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern, Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage

Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education

Hon Nanaia Mahuta, Minister of Māori Development

Hon Jenny Salesa, Minister of Ethnic Communities and Associate Minister of Education, Health and Housing and Urban Development

Hon Aupito William Si'o, Minister of Pacific Peoples and Associate Minister of Justice and of Courts

Copy to:

Hon Winston Peters, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hon Kelvin Davis, Minister of Crown-Māori Relations and of Corrections, Associate Minister of Education

Hon Grant Robertson, Associate Minister of Arts, Culture and Heritage

Hon Phil Twyford, Minister of Housing and Urban Development

Hon Andrew Little, Minister of Justice and Minister of Courts

Hon Carmel Sepuloni, Minister of Social Development and Associate Minister of Pacific Peoples and of Arts, Culture and Heritage

Hon Dr David Clark, Minister of Health

Hon David Parker, Minister of Economic Development

Hon Iain Lees-Galloway, Minister of Immigration

Hon Clare Curran, Minister of Broadcasting, Communications and Digital Media

Hon Tracey Martin, Minister of Internal Affairs and Associate Minister of Education

Hon Shane Jones, Minister of Regional Economic Development

Hon Kris Fa'afoi, Associate Minister of Immigration

Hon Peeni Henare, Associate Minister of Social Development

Hon Willie Jackson, Minister of Employment and Associate Minister of Māori Development

Hon Meka Whaitiri, Associate Minister of Crown-Māori Relations

Hon Julie Ann Gentner, Minister of Women and Associate Minister of Health

Hon Michael Wood, Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Minister for Ethnic Communities

Hon Fletcher Tabuteau, Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs

Hon Jan Logie, Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Minister of Justice

Introduction

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.

In this briefing we have summarized key data on our increasing language diversity; the value language diversity can bring to social and economic development; current issues affecting languages in Aotearoa New Zealand; and recommendations for action. We have also identified several quick-win actions that could bring significant gains without major policy change. In addition we have outlined the steps required to develop a national languages policy, to bring evidence-informed coherence to support for languages across settings and agencies.

Considerable work was done towards a national languages policy under the Fourth Labour Government, culminating in *Aotearoa: Speaking for Ourselves*¹. However by the time the report was published in 1992 the government had changed and only piecemeal actions were taken.

The new government has an opportunity to take up the mantle by supporting a consultation as a first step towards developing a national languages policy.

We believe that such a policy would need to be supported across the portfolios of Ethnic Communities; Arts, Culture and Heritage; Māori Development; Pacific Peoples; and Education. We have therefore directed this briefing to you jointly, with copies to the other ministers whose portfolios relate to various aspects of language policy. We are also encouraging language communities across Aotearoa New Zealand to make their own specific submissions.

Request for meeting

We would be keen to meet with you, either individually or together, to explore how we might support you with further information and/or connections towards action on any of the issues raised in this briefing. Our Auckland Languages Strategy Group convener, Susan Warren, can arrange a meeting at your convenience. Her contact details are:

Susan Warren, COMET Auckland, 09 3072101, susan.warren@cometauckland.org.nz

¹ Jeffery Waite, 1992

Language diversity in Aotearoa New Zealand

There is potential for Aotearoa New Zealand to become a truly multilingual nation. We already have three official languages (Te Reo Māori, NZ Sign Language and English), three additional Realm NZ languages (Te Reo Kuki Airani, vagahau Niue and gagana Tokelau) and over 160 other languages that have been brought to our nation by migrants. With proper support and leverage, all these languages could become a resource to drive trade, tourism, innovation and social cohesion.

Most-spoken languages in Aotearoa New Zealand (from the 2013 census):

Language	Number of speakers
English	3,819,972
Māori	148,395
Samoan	86,406
Hindi	66,312
North Chinese	52,263
French	49,125
Yue	44,625
Sinitic	42,753

While our linguistic diversity is increasing, several languages are in decline and some, including the Realm languages, are at risk of extinction.

In the 12 years between the 2001 and 2013 censuses, the number of Te Reo Māori speakers in NZ has reduced from 160,527 to 148,395, a loss of nearly 12,000 speakers. Less than 4% of the national population now speaks Te Reo well enough to hold a conversation. This decline is especially worrying because it happened despite the revitalisation efforts of both government and the community, showing that much more intensive, strategic effort is needed if Te Reo Māori is to flourish.

Our other national language, NZ Sign Language, is also in decline, with a 16% reduction in speakers across NZ between 2006 and 2013.

Importance of language to social cohesion and economic development

As our nation becomes more diverse, the ability to communicate with people from different language and cultural backgrounds becomes increasingly important for social cohesion, civic engagement and integration of migrants and refugees.

Language, culture and identity are also crucial for our increasingly diverse children and young people, in enabling them to becoming confident employed contributors to their own future, families and society.

Diversity is also a critical economic tool for successful and prosperous economies, especially in facilitating trade and tourism. Even when a client or business partner speaks English well, communicating in their first language reaches them more deeply and also shows respect. 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.

Multilingualism and widespread language learning and maintenance are the norm internationally. Most English-dominant countries today require their young people to have another language; all of Aotearoa New Zealand's associates in ASEAN require students to learn a second language. The vast majority of New Zealanders (93 per cent) agree it is valuable to learn another language².

In the past, it has been possible to “get by” in English only. To thrive in the future, New Zealanders will need to be able to function across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Harnessing the economic and social benefits of languages in Aotearoa New Zealand would result in:

- Improved student achievement at school
- Reduced barriers to trade and economic development
- Greater integration and inclusion of migrants and refugees
- Enhanced social cohesion and harmony
- Support and protection for our languages and cultures
- Better career and employment prospects for our young people

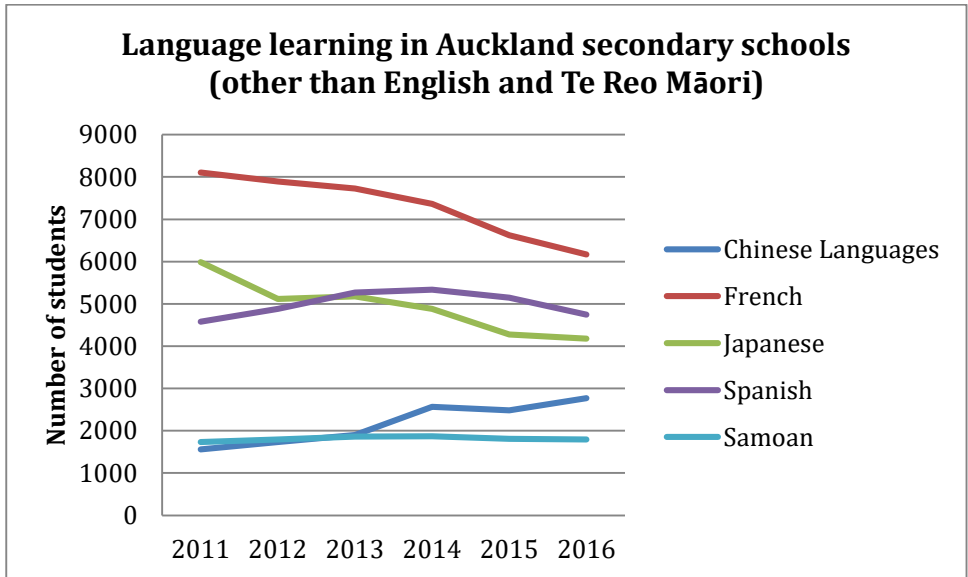
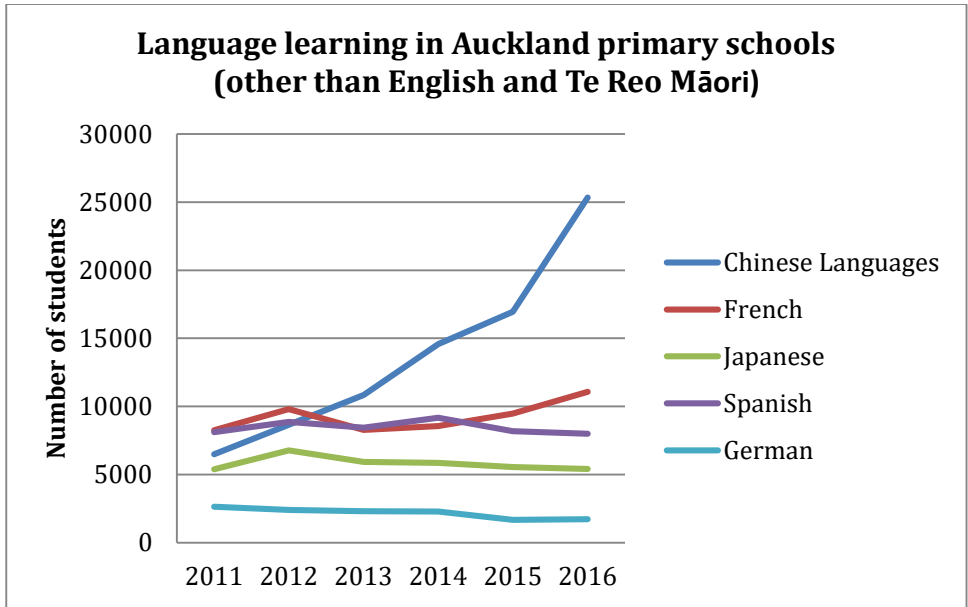
Issues limiting the value of our language diversity

Currently, many people in Aotearoa New Zealand miss out on the cognitive, social and economic advantages of multilingualism. Despite efforts over the past few decades, the numbers of speakers of Te Reo Māori is declining. Similarly most Pacific languages are struggling and several are at serious risk of extinction. The survival of these languages internationally depends to a large extent on their survival in New Zealand.

If we are to compete on the world stage we need sufficient young people becoming fluent in at least one international language, but currently relatively few young people learn a language at school and even fewer learn for long enough to reach a communicative level. Of the eight learning areas in the NZ curriculum, only Learning Languages is not required at years 1 to 10. This lack of status allows schools to ignore languages if they choose. Evidence shows that the most effective method to reach fluency through education is to combine explicit instruction with the use of the language as a medium for instruction. However there is very little support for such bilingual methodologies in our current system.

While language learning in primary schools has increased recently, mainly due to short-term funding for specific Asian languages, the languages available do not support most children's first language, and in most cases the intensity is too low to develop fluency for children learning the language for the first time. Meanwhile language learning in secondary schools is declining rapidly.

² Asia New Zealand, <http://asianz.org.nz/newsroom/media-releases/2014/perceptions-asia-2013>



Language loss is occurring at alarming rates for many languages of the Realm (Te Reo Māori, Te Reo Kuki Airani, Vagahau Niue and Gagana Tokelau). Migrant families often struggle to pass on their language to their children, leading to language loss within two generations on average. Evidence shows that migrant communities cannot maintain their languages without recognition and support from government, including in education, but this support is currently not available for many community languages. For example although Hindi is the fourth most-spoken language nationally, there is currently no curriculum guideline and no NCEA credits to enable young New Zealanders from Hindi-speaking backgrounds to maintain and strengthen their language skills.

Migrants, especially older migrants, need better support for their aspirations to learn communicative English. Meanwhile, limited access to language translation and interpreting services, especially in health, social services, justice, education and civic

participation, are causing issues for many of Aotearoa New Zealand's diverse communities.

Quick-win actions

The most important step towards ensuring Aotearoa New Zealand gains maximum benefit from its language diversity would be to establish a national languages policy. A great deal of work has already been done that could form the basis of such a policy, and we have summarized this in the sections below.

Meanwhile, several key changes could be put in place relatively quickly to better support language diversity, while a broader languages policy was being developed.

- Implementing the Pacific Languages Framework with urgency, including recognizing the five main Pacific languages as official community languages, as proposed by the NZ Labour Party policy
- Setting a timeframe and process towards Te Reo Māori becoming core curriculum in all schools from year 1, in keeping with our obligations under *Te Tiriti o Waitangi*. We suggest the recommendations in the NZCER report referred to below under Recent Developments could provide a framework for this.
- Recommend to Pacific Realm countries adoption of the proposed Pacific Languages Framework indicating the importance of maintaining indigenous languages as similarly recommended for Te Reo Māori (see bullet-point above)
- Creating a Community Languages Framework, as recommended recently in a communication from Joris de Bres
- Developing a Hindi language curriculum, as proposed in a recent submission from the Hindi Language and Culture Trust.

Need for a national languages policy

A national languages policy would provide a coherent platform to support language learning, maintenance, celebration and use, in order to harness the benefits of a multilingual Aotearoa New Zealand³.

An effective national languages policy would be much wider than just education. It would specifically address and be underpinned by Te Reo Māori, and 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), 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.

Recent developments

There is already a groundswell of interest and support for a national languages policy and significant work has been done that could provide a platform for a future policy. For example:

³ http://www.superdiversity.org/pdf/Superdiversity_Stocktake%20-%20Full%20Document.pdf

- The Royal Society of New Zealand published a paper, *Languages in Aotearoa* in March 2013, which succinctly summarises the issues facing language practices in New Zealand and makes the case for a national languages policy.
- Partly in response to the Royal Society paper, a group was formed to develop a strategy for languages in Auckland. After wide consultation, *Ngā Reo o Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland Languages Strategy*⁴ was launched in November 2015 and continues to provide a forum for collaborative work to support languages in our nation’s most diverse city.
- A recent paper by NZCER, *Te Ahu o te Reo: Te reo Māori in homes and communities*⁵ identifies progress, barriers and opportunities to the regeneration of te reo Māori. The paper includes a set of research-based recommendations, including a 17-year process to work towards Te Reo Māori being core curriculum in compulsory education (pages xx to xxii).
- The Asia NZ Foundation has just published a report, *Starting Strong: Nurturing the Potential of our Asian under-fives*⁶ (November 2017) which notes the language loss experienced by Asian children when they start school and calls for a national languages policy which would assist in growing a ‘language culture’ within New Zealand.
- The Royal Society and the Auckland Languages Strategy Group hosted a visit in August 2017 by the architect of Australia’s national languages strategy, Professor Joseph Lo Bianco. Professor Lo Bianco spoke at three well-attended public meetings and met with a group of senior officials from a range of government departments to outline the value a national languages policy could bring to Aotearoa New Zealand, advise on what such a policy should contain and on the steps needed for policy development. His first recommendation was to conduct an independent consultation on the issues a language policy would need to address.
- Following on from Professor Lo Bianco’s visit, a small group of officials from the Office of Ethnic Communities, Human Rights Commission and Ministry of Pacific Peoples has met twice to explore ways to progress a national consultation on language policy. They requested and received a proposal from the Auckland Languages Strategy Group on how such a consultation could be conducted. A copy of this proposal is available on request.

Next steps

The next step would be for the government to set a timeframe and funding for an independent nationwide consultation. Such a consultation would identify how to harness the benefits of a multilingual New Zealand and best utilise the gift that multilingual New Zealanders offer the nation, including improved school achievement, better career and job prospects for young New Zealanders, reduced barriers to trade and economic development, and enhanced social cohesion and integration of migrants and refugees.

⁴http://www.cometauckland.org.nz/webfiles/CometNZ/webpages/images/43744/Image_Ng%C3%A2_Reo_o_T%C3%A2maki_Makaurau_Auckland_Languages_Strategy_Report_Layout_TRANSLATED_DRAFT_3-88189.pdf

⁵ <http://www.nzcer.org.nz/research/publications/te-ahu-o-te-reo-overview-report>

⁶ <http://www.asianz.org.nz/reports/report/starting-strong-nurturing-the-potential-of-our-asian-under-fives/starting-strong-nurturing-the-potential-of-our-asian-under-fives/>

Contact for more information

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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 and includes members from a wide range of language-related organisations.

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. We continue to meet regularly to connect the various language-related actions across the city.

People from the following organisations and institutions participated in or contributed to the development of the strategy, demonstrating the broad agreement achieved across multiple language interests: Alliance Française, Asia New Zealand Foundation, Auckland Council, AUT University, BEST Pacific Academy, COMET Auckland, Community Languages Association of NZ, Deaf Aotearoa, English Language Partners, Esperanto Association, Human Rights Commission, Pasifika Education Centre, Pacificwin, Vagahau Niue Trust, Ngāti Tamaoho, Multicultural New Zealand, Pacific Bilingual Leo Coalition, Pasifika Migrant Services, Quality Education Services, University of Auckland, Victoria University of Wellington.