

**To:**

**Secretariat  
Māori Affairs Select Committee  
Select Committee Services  
Parliament Buildings  
WELLINGTON 6160**

**From: Des Ratima,  
Chair Takitimu District Māori Council**



**Title of Bill: Māori Language (Te Reo Māori) Bill  
Repeal of the Māori Language Act**

**1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This submission is written on behalf of the Takitimu District Māori Council (TDMC), with Māori committees from Ahuriri, Heretaunga, Paharakeke, Tamatea and Tamaki a Rua, formed under the mana of the Māori Community Development Act 1962, and is a District council of the New Zealand Māori Council.

**2.0 Executive Summary**

2.1 The TDMC totally oppose the repeal of the Māori Language Act 1987 and consequently do not support the Te Mātāwai model in its entirety.

2.2 TDMC represents the Tangata Whenua in the Takitimu rohe, and as such has sympathy with those currently working with Māori residing outside of their tribal boundaries.

2.3 Te Reo Māori as stated by the NZ Māori Council is *“... a taonga (treasure) and no minister has the right to delegate it to anyone else.”*

2.4 TDMC would say that more importantly this language belongs to this wonderful nation. It is recognised as the 1<sup>st</sup> official language of New Zealand. It should be Country specific and able to be accessed, embraced and loved by everyone. It should not be Iwi or Hapu specific. Iwi and Hapu will

apply their own tikanga (additions or differences) as they see fit for their purposes, as is already the case, but this is built on the framework of Te Reo – the language.

2.5 Further we would submit that tribes or cultural groupings which retain their tikanga or specifics of their language have not lost any access to the language framework. Examples such as the language of France, taught in many of our schools lets people learn the framework of the French language; likewise with Mandarin and Pacific nation’s languages. The language of a nation dies not only because its own people are not learning and speaking it but more because no one else is learning or speaking it.

*“Open the doors for all to learn in the hope that enough walk through the doors to ensure the survival of the language and its framework.”*

### **3.0 TDMC Opposition**

3.1 The main reasons TDMC oppose this Bill are:

- The underlying intention of the Bill to remove or relegate the roles of Māori language kaitiaki and practitioners.
- The formation and role of Te Mātāwai to oversee Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (Māori language Commission) and Te Māngai Pāho (Māori Broadcasting Funding Agency).
- The disadvantages of introducing yet another bureaucratic layer of governance as a mechanism to improve the advocacy and revitalization of the language.
- The commitment and capacity of iwi to assume a leadership role over our Taonga, Te Reo Māori and its framework because:
  - i) of their underwhelming long term commitment to the language, and
  - ii) of the inherent view that it would be iwi centric not nation centric, it would be seen as being exclusive and restrictive to Iwi or hapu.

3.1 We oppose the need for the Te Mātāwai Board, and challenge how the partnership between Crown and Māori will be maintained by the omission of Māori language practitioners, NZ Māori Council, National Kohanga Reo Trust and Nga Kaiwhakapūmau I Te Reo, all who have been at the forefront of Māori language protection, development and revitalization.

3.2 We support the call to reject the mandate of the Māori Party and its Parliamentary members to advocate for this Bill. The Māori Party MP's have not been given a clear mandate from those who have a vested interest in Māori language.

#### **4.0 Reference to the Waitangi Tribunal**

4.1 It is alarming that the Māori Party has decided to repeal the Māori Language Act without due reference to the recommendations of the Waitangi Tribunal. The Crown has a significant responsibility to ensure the protection of Te Reo Māori and therefore must be held accountable at all times. The Crown has effectively shifted its responsibility to protect the language largely to iwi.

4.2 We believe that the Waitangi Tribunal has been very clear about the role of iwi, Māori organisations and the Crown in respect of protecting the language. At the very core of its recommendations is the assumption that all Māori are to be included in that role and that the Treaty of Waitangi obliges the Crown to recognise and protect the Māori Language.

4.3 We support the call to have the Government and the Crown do more to support the existing Te Reo Māori agencies like Te Māngai Pāho and Te Taura Whiri o te Reo achieve an increase in the number of competent speakers of te reo, regardless of culture or ethnicity.

4.4 We support the retention of the Māori language Commission, particularly given the disparities that exist within and amongst iwi in respect of advocating and revitalizing the language. The Commission has been a universal reference for language quality, revitalization and development. Any new entity will not inherently hold the same mana.

4.5 We question the capacity of the Bill to provide for fairness, due process and equality of opportunity for Māori who have established themselves outside of their tribal boundaries by iwi representatives who will be driven by iwi imperatives

#### **5.0 Te Reo Māori in the Home**

5.1 The latest Māori Language Survey undertaken in 2001 gives a detailed breakdown of Māori language acquisition and usage (including proficiency) amongst our nation's population. Results show that te reo Māori is not commonly spoken in Māori households and that outside of the household, Māori is generally confined to those contexts typically associated with Māori language use. The Health of the Māori Language Survey 2001 confirms that for te reo Māori to flourish, it needs to be a naturalised language, i.e. one that is used in everyday contexts and situations. Accordingly the Māori household is the primary site for naturalising Māori language.

## 6.0 Conclusions

6.1 It is agreed that Te Reo Māori is a taonga and Crown has an obligation to protect Te Reo.

6.2 It must also be agreed that we need to embed the language in a nation's psychic for the language to survive. This means ensuring certainty around the guardians, organisations, Māori and New Zealand. Survival means allowing everyone and anyone to have access to Te reo Māori language framework.

6.3 The current legislation and Māori language organisations like Nga Kaiwhakapūmau I Te Reo, Te Taura Whiri, New Zealand Māori Council, Te Kohanga Reo National Trust, Te Mangai Paho and nga kaitiaki o te reo are doing well. They can be incentivised to extend their mandate to be inclusive of any culture that might like to access the language. Encourage all and everyone to embrace and accept that the Māori language is indeed a taonga.

### Sources

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(Gareth Thomas, National Radio, 2014.)