

## SUBMISSION ON THE GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSED MĀORI LANGUAGE STRATEGY

Ko Te Tapuae o Uenuku te mauka  
Ko Waiau Toa te Awa  
Ko te Tai o Marokura te Moana  
Ko Takahanga te Marae  
Ko Kāti Kurī te hapū  
Ko Ngāi Tahu me Rangitane ngā iwi  
Ko Katharina Ruckstuhl tōku ingoa.

Nāia he mihi ki a koutou ngā kaiarataki o tēnei kaupapa whakahirahira mo ngā uri e whai ake nei. Tēnā koutou katoa.

1. He kairangahau ahau nō te Whare Wānanga o Ōtākou. Ko tōku rangahau e pā ana i ngā mea Māori, hoki i te tātāritanga tautauranga o te reo. E whai ake ōku whakaaro.
2. This submission focuses primarily on the target of increasing the number of Māori speakers, 'Te Ako i te Reo'. It is based on research, undertaken by myself and a research partner, on how various strategies – education, inter-generational language transmission, language status, government intervention – affect and promote the growth of te reo. This research is still developmental<sup>1</sup> although we expect to publish our first results this year.
3. According to the 2013 census, there are 125,000 Māori speakers speaking Māori. This is a decline since the 2006 census but an improvement numerically on the 75,000 Māori speakers of Māori in 1996<sup>2</sup>. While the 'common-sense' socio-linguistic response to this decline is to increase the focus on a) Māori and b) Māori in the home, our research shows that this must not lead to a decreased investment in areas such as education and methods that maintain the language in the community, such as television, radio and other media.
4. The proposed Strategy gives the impression that Māori language is now a 'Māori-only' domain. Focusing on whānau 'in the home' obscures the demographic fact that the only way to 'grow' the numbers of speakers of our language, is to keep the language circulating in the community and to 'convert' other non-Māori language speakers.
5. The stark demographic fact is that the number of Māori speakers of te reo *is too low to make any real difference to increasing the overall numbers into the future*. Hence, the

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<sup>1</sup> See here: <http://www.maramatanga.co.nz/publication/international-indigenous-development-research-conference-2012-proceedings>

<sup>2</sup> See Grin & Vaillancourt, 1998, p. 191.

proposed Strategy might be seen as downplaying the importance of ‘other New Zealanders’ – by positioning them as an apparent ‘afterthought’ in brackets - and on the significant role that they play in increasing numbers of speakers.

6. The *best conversion system we have at present is the education system*. While intergenerational transmission is the ideal, our modelling shows it will not be quick enough or robust enough without other equally important mechanisms. Rather, it is the conversion of speakers, and in particular non-Māori, through education that our model shows keeps the language in perpetuity even in the face of small numbers of Māori who speak te reo.
7. Additionally, our modelling indicates that any initiatives whether in the home or the education system have to be supported by a language-friendly community environment. Most of the current positive environmental factors have been as a result of previous government interventions in areas such as Māori broadcasting. The importance of this, as our model shows, is that it keeps Māori language circulating in the *whole* community, accessible to non-Māori as well as Māori.
8. Apart from the way that such interventions promote less tangible outcomes such as ‘language status’, from a numerical perspective they *mitigate against language randomness*. That is, they improve the chances of a person being exposed to some Māori language rather than having to rely on randomly meeting someone who speaks Māori. Decreasing randomness has to be a key objective in order to grow the numbers of people who speak te reo. For this reason it is pleasing to see ICT as an additional community mechanism and the maintenance of bilingual signage as a strategy.
9. There might be concern if the resourcing for such community strategies were moved away from maintaining language broadly in the community. If, as the rest of the document implies, increasing the focus on whanau, hapū, iwi shifts resource from the wider community, this will have the effect of *increasing language randomness* which paradoxically will *disadvantage* those very groups who have been targeted. That is, it will make it harder to sustain language because the chances of engaging in language situations will be more limited. However, if it means that resources for hapū and iwi collectives are additive to other broad community language exposure strategies, then that will have the effect of decreasing language randomness, and hence will advantage te reo speakers. This aspect should be made explicit in any funding considerations.
10. Finally, a comment on targets (p.6). Our research cautions against too ambitious initial targets. For example, a target of 80% Māori speaking te reo by 2050 has been mooted, both by the Minister for Māori Affairs and by Te Paepae Motuhake. If such a target is retained, then our modelling shows that there would need to be far higher levels of

compulsion built into the entire system to force people to speak te reo, and even then the target would be very difficult to achieve. This is purely a function of the current low-base of speakers.

11. Hence, whatever outcome and progression targets are developed should be drawn from a realistic analysis of the available data, rather than a 'wish and hope' aspirational approach. Socio-linguistic approaches, upon which the proposed Strategy appears to be based (p.6), must be supplemented by realistic future-oriented scenarios, both for accountability reasons and for encouragement. Such an analysis was undertaken by Grin and Vaillancourt in 1998 for the New Zealand Treasury, prior to the instigation of the first Strategy. Something similar would be beneficial.
12. Therefore, the following are recommended for consideration in order to promote increased numbers of te reo speakers:
  - i. remove the brackets around the words 'other New Zealanders' wherever it occurs. From a numbers perspective, non-Māori will be important to increasing numbers.
  - ii. add education providers – particularly education providers such Kohanga Reo, Kura Kaupapa, iwi kura/kohungahunga etc – to the list of priority foci under "Whakamana whānau, whakapiki hapū, iwi" and to the first priorities under "Ngā Mahi" i.e. 'Ngā Kaupapa Matua o te Wā' and 'Whakapakari'. This will make it explicit that education is a key aspect of increasing numbers.
  - iii. maintain a broad focus on Māori interventions in the community such as through Māori Television and iwi broadcasting in order to keep Māori language accessible and circulating in the entire community.
  - iv. Ensure hapū and iwi activities are also available to broader communities.
  - v. Undertake a comprehensive data analysis, incorporating the use of scenario planning, in order to set and monitor realistic Māori language targets.
13. Finally, I would be willing to speak to this submission should there be an opportunity to do so.

Nāhaku noa nā

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