

**Umere Submission to the:
Māori Language Strategy Consultation 2014
Te Puni Kōkiri: PO Box 3943, Wellington 6011.
(Due 28 February 2014)**

Tēnā rā koe Dr Pita Sharples

I submit that the consultation period for this renewed Māori Language Strategy (the Strategy) is too limited; the documents are difficult to find and/or access, and the period between the announcement on 3 February 2014 regarding the consultation and the hui themselves is too short;

I have not had enough time to think over the documents and discuss the implications with my whānau/hapū. I therefore request that the consultation period for the Strategy be extended.

In 1994, Privy Council Lords found that "if, as is the case with the Māori language at the present time, a taonga is in a vulnerable state, this has to be taken into account by the Crown in deciding the action it should take to fulfill its obligations and may well require the Crown to take especially vigorous action for its protection" [\[1\]](#). Because the language is still in decline I submit that:

The Crown must address the vulnerability of the language, including its low status among the wider population of New Zealand citizens, and must embark herewith on "vigorous action" for the protection of te reo Māori

The Strategy must therefore state an ultimate goal, for example: *to promote the development of Aotearoa NZ as a bilingual, Māori-English, bicultural (BEMB) nation by 2050.*

As legislation and its implementation in practice were responsible for the massive language shift away from te reo Māori (a trend that continues), it is logical and necessary that the reversal of language shift must be bolstered by legislation.

The Strategy must provide clarity as to how the Crown intends to meet its ultimate te reo Māori goal by providing in the Strategy, a comprehensive list of actions and a timeline by which time the Crown intends to implement each actions towards the ultimate goal. These actions should include:

The introduction of laws that set in motion incremental use of te reo Māori in all public and private arenas, including:

1. Signage: all Government and local government department signage to be bilingual; followed by all public signage (e.g. road signs, schools); followed by initial private sector signage (e.g. shop frontage); followed by all public sector and commercial sector signage and correspondence in
2. All initial teacher education programmes to have entry criteria that includes a Maori language proficiency level which is equivalent to the current English language proficiency level required of immigrant teachers registering as teachers in Aotearoa NZ; followed by: all ECE centres to employ at least one teacher with the aforementioned Maori language proficiency; followed by: all schools to employ at least one teacher with the aforementioned Maori Language proficiency.

There is ample evidence that the demand for Maori language education from preschool level through to tertiary level well outstrips supply. The Strategy must allow for the identification of gaps in Māori language education and subsequent moves to fill those gaps. E.g., (1) In areas where Māori-medium education is hard to access, provide government support for locals to set up Kura Māori; (2) make te reo Māori and bilingual theory a requirement of initial teacher education and teacher professional development.

A jobs and careers component for young people fluent in te reo Māori. Our efforts and taxpayers' money are being wasted if there are no jobs to keep our young Māori speakers in our communities in Aotearoa.

Recognition that, in order to raise the status of te reo Māori in Aotearoa, it needs to be supported from the top. The Prime Minister, Members of Paliament, community leaders and broadcasters must commit to supporting te reo, beginning with correct pronunciation, and then by learning te reo.

Recognition that a language cannot be revitalised in a vacuum. The Strategy must therefore have links to, for example, the economic, health, education and justice needs of Māori.

Recognition that, in order to thrive, te reo Māori needs to flourish in the hearts and minds of all our people. For this to occur, the Strategy must reflect that wider issues that need to be addressed by the Government. These

wider issues include: a living wage for all, and making government agencies (such as police, health, education and WINZ) Māori and Māori language friendly.

He mihi nui ki a koe, ki a koutou, otira ki a tatou katoa.

For and on behalf of Rapaki Maori Women's Welfare League

President: Elizabeth Cunningham

Secretary: Lynere Wilson

[\[1\]](#) (New Zealand Māori Council v Attorney-General [1994] 1 NZLR 513 (PC) at 517. [Broadcasting Assets cases] cited in Ahu, T. (2012) Te Reo Māori as a language of New Zealand Law. Unpublished LLM Thesis. Victoria University