

28.01.21

Talofa lava Education and Workforce Committee,

I support the broad aims of this Amendment Bill and agree that in Primary and Intermediate Schools there should be priority languages.

I encourage the retention, and strengthening around Te Reo Māori and NZ Sign Language as languages that must always be in the priority languages in these education settings in Aotearoa.

The significant missing piece in this Bill is reflecting the unique relationship and constitutional responsibilities Aotearoa has to support the Realm of New Zealand. It diminishes the mana of Parliament, and any Government that has to give effect to it, if it needs to come down to community consultation and Ministerial advice to the Governor General whether the languages and dialects of Niue, the Cook Islands and Tokelau are placed on this priority list; particularly in the case of Tokelau the only dependent territory of Aotearoa. The 'Pacific Reset' policy established by the previous Coalition-Government speaks of the opportunity and need for Aotearoa to remove approaches that are parental, and be in true partnership in the Pacific, where live and be not as foreign affairs, but instead whānau affairs. This choice to elevate the languages of the Realm as permanent priority languages will deepen our collective understanding across Aotearoa that we are a Pacific country, assist us to own and further remedy our Pacific colonial legacies, and also signal and support the current significant constitutional relationships that we have across the Realm. This change to the Bill would also support an essential signalling that there is a deeper need for our Realm relationship implications to be considered, and accessed across all domestic policy.

And so I encourage the committee to write into the Bill that there be three categories of languages:

Category 1	Te Reo Māori	Permanent	Specifically separate Te Reo Māori to make clear Parliament recognises its special status as the indigenous language and its dialects that are unique to Aotearoa.
Category 2	New Zealand Sign Language, Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau	Permanent	Distinct category to highlight that New Zealand must strengthen and honour its responsibility to these constitutionally significant languages. As highlighted above for the Realm, and for NZSL as a language of accessibility, and to ensure the protection of Deaf culture.
Category 3	5 Community Consulted languages	As per regulations already in the Bill	Up to five community consulted languages that subsequently the Governor General on advise of the Minister will make an Order in Council for.

Manuia le aso,



Josiah Tualamali'i