

1 June 2016

Members  
Māori Affairs Select Committee  
Youth Parliament 2016

## **Inquiry into whether te reo Māori should be made compulsory in primary and secondary schools**

The Māori Affairs Select Committee has been asked to conduct an inquiry into: “Whether te reo Māori should be made compulsory in primary and secondary schools” on 19 July 2016. This paper has been prepared to assist the Committee with its examination. Issues are identified and possible lines of inquiry are provided for the Committee to consider. The Committee may wish to raise these issues with witnesses who have been asked to appear to give evidence on this inquiry.

### **Introduction**

“Languages, with their complex implications for identity, communication, social integration, education and development, are of strategic importance for people and planet. Yet, due to globalization processes, they are increasingly under threat, or disappearing altogether. When languages fade, so does the world’s rich tapestry of cultural diversity. Opportunities, traditions, memory, unique modes of thinking and expression — valuable resources for ensuring a better future — are also lost.”

*United Nations, International Mother Language Day:*  
<http://www.un.org/en/events/motherlanguageday/background.shtml>

Like all languages, te reo Māori is a gateway to understanding the culture of its speakers.<sup>1</sup> From the national haka composed by Te Rauparaha (Ka Mate) to common place names, understanding te reo Māori provides a window into the world-view of Māori people and New Zealand’s heritage.

The last census recorded that only 3.7 percent of New Zealanders, and 21.3 percent of Māori, could hold a conversation about everyday objects and activities in te reo Māori. This is down from 25 percent of Māori speakers in 1996, and comes in spite of a number of attempts to revitalise te reo, including the confirmation of te reo Māori as an official language in 1987.

Making te reo Māori a compulsory learning standard in schools may support the revitalisation effort by supporting a whole generation of New Zealanders to have a basic grasp of the native language. However, there are a number of pros and cons

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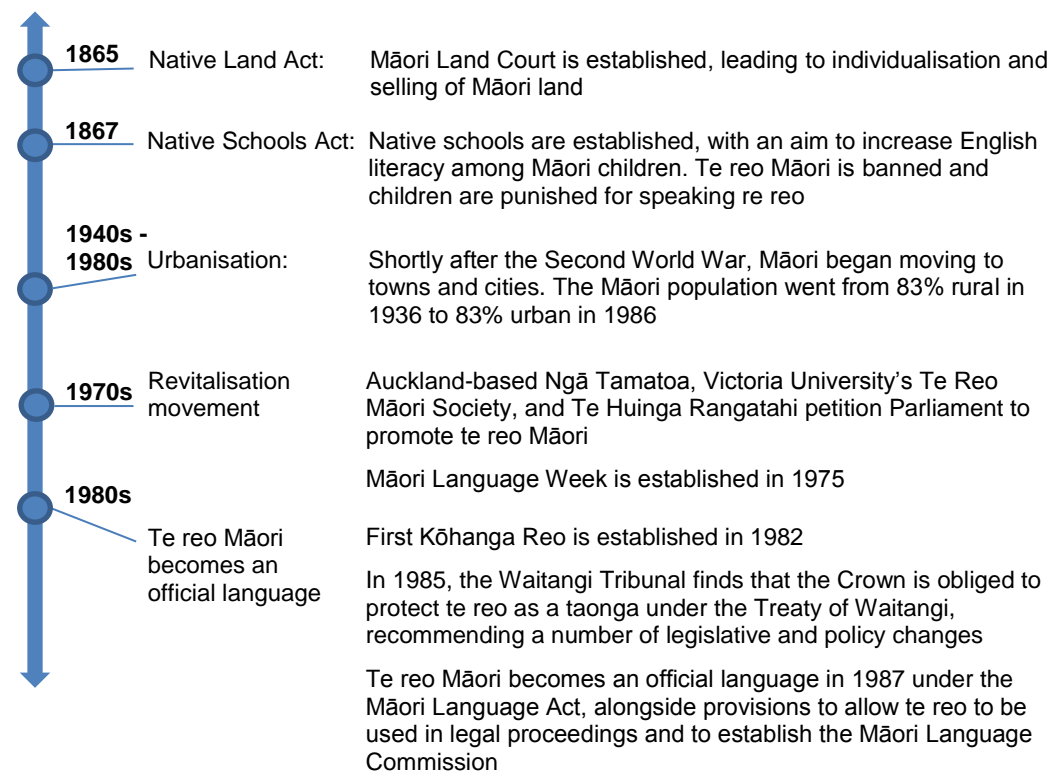
<sup>1</sup> Arihia Waikari, A way forward for te reo Māori in English medium education (University of Waikato, 2011).  
<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10289/5591/thesis.pdf?sequence=3>

related to making te reo compulsory in schools, and there may be other ways to revitalise te reo Māori without making it a compulsory learning standard.

*The decline of te reo Māori*

Since the 1860s, there has been a dramatic decrease in the proportion of Māori who are able to speak te reo Māori, associated with a number of key historical events.

**Figure 1: Timeline of key events**



In April 2016, the new and amended Māori Language Act passed its third reading in Parliament and will soon be enacted into law. This legislation, and its impact, is discussed further in the paper.

**Benefits of learning te reo Māori**

The whakataukī (proverb) below reflects the importance of te reo Māori, opening this section on the benefits of language acquisition and retention.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Ki te kore tātou e kōrero Māori, ka ngaro te reo<br/>                 Ka ngaro te reo, ka ngaro ngā tikanga<br/>                 Ka ngaro ngā tikanga, ka ngaro tātou ki te Ao<br/>                 Ko te reo te kaipupuri i te Māoritanga</p> | <p>Te reo Māori is the cornerstone of all that is Māori. Te reo Māori is the medium through which Māori explain the world. The survival of the people as Māori and the uniqueness of Māori as a race will be enhanced through the maintenance of te reo Māori.</p> |
|---|--|

There are many benefits to learning another language. The Ministry of Education has categorised six main types of benefits of learning te reo Māori as outlined in the *Curriculum Guidelines for Teaching te reo Māori in English-medium Schools*:

1. **Cultural benefits:** where learning te reo gives students access to te ao Māori (Māori world) and to Māori world-views.
2. **Social benefits:** giving students other ways to express themselves, and they can learn about the impact of the culture on people's values, beliefs and ways of thinking.
3. **Cognitive benefits:** for students where learning te reo Māori helps students to grow as learners. They discover more ways of learning, more ways of knowing, and more about their own capabilities.
4. **Linguistic benefits:** are possible because having more than one language gives students an awareness of language and how it works, which improves their understanding of their language and their ability to use it.
5. **Economic and career benefits:** are possible because students who combine their reo Māori studies with other subjects such as business, law, trade, or teaching increase their career opportunities.
6. **Increased sense of belonging and pride:** is present for students learning te reo. They are able to communicate and participate more effectively as citizens of a multicultural society and it also gives pleasure and leads to personal satisfaction.

### **Current policy settings for te reo in schools**

New Zealand's education system currently provides a number of avenues for learning te reo. In primary and secondary schools, students have the choice of learning te reo through:

- **Māori-medium education:** students are taught in either total or near immersion te reo (Māori language immersion Levels 1-2)
- **English-medium education:** (students learn te reo Māori as a (mainstream) language subject), or are taught in te reo and English through bilingual education.

#### *Māori Medium education*

Māori-medium education involves teaching in total immersion (or for at least 51 percent of the time). These schools include:

- Kōhanga Reo (early learning)
- Puna Kōhungahunga (early learning)
- Kura kaupapa (primary school)
- Wharekura (secondary school)
- Wānanga (tertiary)

Māori-medium education provides learners with a pathway to achieve educational success and proficiency in te reo and is open to all learners in education, not just Māori.

Generally, Māori learners that are able to stay on the Māori medium pathway from Kōhanga Reo through to Kura and Wharekura, and then on to Wānanga or University are more likely to succeed in their education than their counterparts in mainstream English-medium education.

Learners (particularly Māori) that transition out of Māori medium and into mainstream education often run into learning difficulties as they transition and adjust to different teaching practices and environments.

#### *Te reo in English-medium (mainstream) education*

Te reo is offered in English-medium education as a language subject, or taught as a curriculum subject in the Māori language, for up to 50 percent of the time (Māori language Immersion Levels 3-5). This includes Māori immersion and bilingual units in English mainstream schools. The number of children learning te reo at school through this approach has been growing, with an 11 percent increase between 2010 and 2014 from 133,000 to 147,000 learners.<sup>2</sup>

The New Zealand Curriculum allows for English-medium schools to be able to teach a second language with te reo Māori being one of these options. In deciding whether or not to add te reo to their school curriculum, there are curriculum guidelines. *Te Aho Arataki Marau mō te Ako I Te Reo Māori / Curriculum Guidelines for Teaching and Learning Te Reo Māori* is available to schools that wish to teach te reo. This is not compulsory and schools are not required to deliver te reo in their curriculum.<sup>3</sup>

Reasons why schools may want to teach te reo include cultural diversity in the school, insight into Māori culture, high Māori demographics or recognition of Treaty obligations. On the other hand, reasons why schools may decide not to offer te reo may include low demand and/or only a small number of Māori learners, and lack of teaching capability or capacity.

#### **International Examples: Wales and Ireland**

Wales is a good example of a country where language revitalisation is working, partly through the status of Welsh as a core and compulsory subject within the national curriculum.<sup>4</sup> In 2011 the proportion of people speaking Welsh dropped to just 19 percent. Through government intervention, the Welsh have been able to revive their language to a point where, in 2014, almost a quarter of all primary school children in Wales were taught mostly in Welsh.<sup>5</sup>

Irish PhD student, Aoife Finn, has spent the last 6 years studying te reo Māori. She discovered it whilst studying for a linguistic assignment in the Trinity College Library in Dublin. Despite having never visited New Zealand she says “I just think it’s a really interesting language, its great”. Finn participates in Māori language week, regularly watches Māori Television online and is making an effort to engage and connect with Māori in New Zealand through social media. After she finishes her doctorate, Finn hopes to finally visit New Zealand. She states “The language is going to be my gateway into the culture”.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Hekia Parata: “Te Reo no longer silenced” (5 February 2015).

[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=11396682](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11396682)

<sup>3</sup> *Te Aho Arataki Marau mō te Ako I te reo Māori, Curriculum guidelines*. Ministry of Education website.

<http://tereomaori.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-guidelines/Introduction>

<sup>4</sup> *The Welsh language in Education in the United Kingdom* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2014). [http://www.mercator-research.eu/fileadmin/mercator/dossiers\\_pdf/Welsh\\_in\\_the\\_UK\\_2nd.pdf](http://www.mercator-research.eu/fileadmin/mercator/dossiers_pdf/Welsh_in_the_UK_2nd.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> “The Welsh language, Dragonian measures”, (9 August 2014), The Economist website:

<http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21611099-government-meddling-has-created-new-welsh-dialect-dragonian-measures>

<sup>6</sup> Meet Aoife Finn: An Irishwoman who has never been to NZ but is mad about te reo, Stuff.co.nz, (9 May 2016).

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/life-style/life/79301638/meet-aoife-finn-an-irishwoman-who-has-never-been-to-nz-but-is-mad-about-te-reo>

### *Impact on teachers*

If the increase in parents and whānau wanting to learn te reo Māori continues, then there may be an increase in the demand for Māori teachers, and staff who are able to teach in te reo Māori – an area where there is already a shortage of teachers.<sup>7</sup>

There is high demand for teachers that speak te reo at all levels of our education system.<sup>8</sup> A teacher headcount by ethnicity in state and state-integrated schools as at April 2015 shows that 9.8 percent of total teachers in these schools were Māori (although noting that many te reo teachers are non-Maori).<sup>9</sup> Making te reo compulsory would have significant workforce development implications, where teachers would have to be trained to speak and teach te reo.

### **Different views on whether te reo Māori should be compulsory in schools**

The New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) does not agree with te reo being compulsory and is calling for greater support for the education system. Mara Hune of NZEI says, “we don’t want to force the Māori language on individuals.” The NZEI believe resources need to be strengthened to better support whānau, community and schools to take up and use te reo.<sup>10</sup>

The Minister of Education Hekia Parata has expressed that te reo should not be made compulsory in schools; that te reo needs to be driven by a desire from the student and their whānau to want to learn, and that forcing te reo on people would not bring the intended desired effect. This view was outlined in a recent article on te reo becoming more accepted in everyday New Zealand, in which she noted: “We’re seeing parents from all backgrounds expressing a desire for their children to have more exposure to the Māori language”<sup>11</sup>

By contrast, Race Relations Commissioner Dame Susan Devoy believes te reo should be mandatory in schools. She notes that there are advantages to young Kiwi’s speaking te reo, including an improvement in race relations in New Zealand: “I think that being bilingual would be a real added advantage to our young people”.<sup>12</sup> Devoy went on to say that there is some reluctance from society to accept te reo being compulsory, citing her own experience trying to learn te reo and the difficulties around aspects such as the pronunciation of Māori words.

Prominent businessman Gareth Morgan thinks te reo Māori should be compulsory in schools, noting that this sits in line with Government’s obligations under the Treaty of Waitangi: “I want to lay down the challenge to Pākehā New Zealand to do right by the Treaty. Māori is more than the Haka for the All Blacks and [Treaty] claims. It is interwoven into our being and we should be proud of it.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/5851/75954/mori-language-in-education>

<sup>8</sup> *Thinking of teaching?*, Teach NZ website. <https://www.teachnz.govt.nz/thinking-of-teaching/maori-and-education/>

<sup>9</sup> *Teaching staff*, Ministry of Education website.

[https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/teaching\\_staff](https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/teaching_staff)

<sup>10</sup> “Debate continues on te reo Māori being compulsory in schools” (26 January 2015).

<http://www.maoritelevision.com/news/regional/debate-continues-te-reo-maori-being-compulsory-schools>

<sup>11</sup> Hekia Parata “Te Reo No Longer Silenced”, New Zealand Herald (5 February 2015)

<sup>12</sup> “Should Te Reo be Compulsory in schools?”, New Zealand Herald, (21 March 2015).

[http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=11421013](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11421013)

<sup>13</sup> “Plea to ‘make good’ with Māori”, Bay of Plenty Times, (22 January 2015). <http://www.knowledge-basket.co.nz/databases/newztext/view/?sid=1456978&d41=nzh02/text/2015/01/22/BTG-Morgan.html>

Te reo as a minority language is sometimes portrayed as less valuable to other languages such as English which are seen to have wider currency, be more 'modern' and better for individual and national progress.<sup>14</sup> In other words, that there is little value in enforcing te reo as it has no relevance or currency outside of New Zealand. A 2014 Southland Times article by Nobby Clark argues that: "Within 20 years, the predominating cultural group in New Zealand will be Pacifica and Asian. Auckland already has 40 per cent of its population in these two wide cultural groups. How many Pacifica or Asian children will elect te reo classes...where are the other countries that will bond with te reo outside New Zealand?"<sup>15</sup>

### ***Te Pire Reo Māori (Maori Language Bill)***

On 14 April 2016, *Te Pire mō te Reo Māori* (Māori Language Bill) passed its third reading in Parliament and will soon be enacted into law. This Bill is an update of the existing Māori Language Act 1987. It has a primary focus on revitalising te reo Māori at iwi, Māori and community levels and has five new key features:

1. a partnership approach where the Crown and Māori have distinct but complementary roles for the revitalising te reo Māori
2. dual language legislation with Māori prevailing in case of a conflict of meaning
3. an acknowledgment by the Crown of its contribution to the decline in te reo
4. establishment of 'Te Matawai' to lead revitalisation of Māori language on behalf of iwi and Māori, and
5. two Māori language strategies.

The Minister for Māori Development, Te Ururoa Flavell, noted that "this [Bill] is a milestone in our country's history and reflects the aspirations for te reo Māori to be a living language in all spheres and lives, including the legal system"<sup>16</sup>.

The Act acknowledges Māori as kaitiaki (guardians) of te reo by establishing *Te Mātāwai*, a new entity that will lead te reo Māori revitalisation efforts on behalf of iwi and Māori. Iwi representation will be grouped into seven iwi clusters from around Aotearoa with one representative selected by each iwi cluster. Two members will be appointed by the Minister for Māori Development and four members selected to represent various sector interests.

A key feature to the Māori Language Bill is that it will make way for two separate strategies, one from the Government (*Maihi Karauna*) and one from Māori (*Maihi Māori*). *Maihi Karauna* will see a Māori language strategy at a government and national level. It will also see the development of a shared vision with *Te Matawai* who will be responsible for the development of *Maihi Māori* with a focus on matters for iwi, hapu, whānau and Māori at a community level.

The picture overleaf is an example of *Te Whare o te reo Māori* (the house of the Māori language) and shows both strategies represented on the whare through the carved *Maihi* (carved barge poles).

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<sup>14</sup> *A way forward for te reo Māori in English medium education*, p. 11. 2011.

<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10289/5591/thesis.pdf?sequence=3>

<sup>15</sup> "Why force te reo?", The Southland Times, (28 July 2014). <http://www.knowledge-basket.co.nz/databases/newztext/view/?sid=1456905&d20=fairfax/text/2014/07/28/0006188821401-BI.html>

<sup>16</sup> *Kua Whakaaetia te ture reo Māori (Parliament passes historic Māori law)* (14 April 2016).

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/kua-whakaaetia-te-ture-reo-m%C4%81ori-parliament-passes-historic-reo-m%C4%81ori-law>



1. *Te Mahi Karauna* (Crown Māori Strategy)
2. *Te Maihi Māori* (Māori Strategy)

The two top figures in the centre (tekoteko and kōruru) both signify the Māori Language Act as the guardian for te reo Māori and the overarching vision for the te reo Māori strategy.

### **Report to the house**

The Committee is required to report its findings on this inquiry to the House. The purpose of your report is first to inform the House and stimulate debate. In doing so your report should reflect both the oral and written evidence the Committee received, the issues the Committee considered in-depth, and the views of the members. From these the Committee should develop conclusions and recommendations to the Government.

Toma Mason  
Te Puni Kokiri/Ministry of Māori Affairs  
Report Writer  
Youth Parliament 2016



**Members may wish to ask:**

1. Why is the use of te reo Māori declining?
2. What is the Government's role in revitalising te reo Māori?
3. How could the education system support the revitalisation of te reo Māori?
4. Are the advantages of making te reo Māori compulsory in schools compelling? What are the alternatives?
5. What trade-offs would be made if there was compulsion, ie. what subjects would have less time spent on them if te reo Māori was made compulsory?
6. What does success look like for the revitalisation of te reo Māori?

**Glossary of Māori terms**

|                                      |  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Kaitiaki</i>                      | guardian                                     |
| <i>Kōhanga Reo</i>                   | Māori language immersion childhood centres   |
| <i>Koruru</i>                        | carved head at apex of Māori meeting house   |
| <i>Kura</i>                          | Māori language immersion schools             |
| <i>Maihi Karauna</i>                 | Crown Māori Language Strategy                |
| <i>Maihi Māori</i>                   | Māori language strategy                      |
| <i>Puna Kohungahunga</i>             | Māori Medium early Childcare centre          |
| <i>Te Huinga Rangatahi</i>           | The New Zealand Māori Students' Association  |
| <i>Tekoteko</i>                      | carved figure at apex of Māori meeting house |
| <i>Te Pire mō te reo Māori</i>       | Maori Language Bill                          |
| <i>Tamaki Makaurau</i>               | Auckland                                     |
| <i>Taonga</i>                        | Treasure                                     |
| <i>Te Taura Whiri I te reo Māori</i> | Māori Language Commission                    |
| <i>Wānanga</i>                       | Māori Tertiary Education Provider            |
| <i>Whakatauki</i>                    | proverb                                      |
| <i>Wharekura</i>                     | Māori language immersion secondary school    |
| <i>Whare</i>                         | Māori meeting house                          |



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### **Further Reading**

As well as considering this background paper, Youth MPs are welcome to undertake their own research on their committee topic (or on the Bill or any other aspect of Youth Parliament 2016). The Parliamentary Library has agreed to accept one question per Youth MP which they will endeavour to answer to inform your work. If you have not already done so, please contact [jill.taylor@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:jill.taylor@parliament.govt.nz) to take advantage of this opportunity.

