

Major themes in the Draft Pacific Languages Strategy Feedback

There was high level support for the Strategy

93%

support the vision

89%

support the key actions

72%

support the 10 year timeframe

84%

support the language categories



However, many people felt it must more clearly demonstrate how critical education is to language revitalisation and maintenance

- The call for Pacific bilingual and immersion pathways was one of the strongest themes across all the feedback received.
- There is a desire to see the benefits of being bilingual and biliterate (by investing in bilingual and immersion provision) on education, employment and wellbeing outcomes highlighted in the Strategy.
- Alongside this, many workforce issues were raised, and ideas shared for increasing the number of fluent Pacific teachers at all levels.
- Other education-related feedback included the call for growing the options for learning Pacific languages as a second language, investing in Pacific language resources, educating all teachers and leaders on the value of bilingualism so they pass that on to families and the need to work with MOE to remove policy barriers.

"The single most important thing that the education system can do to support thriving Pacific languages is to expand and properly support Pasifika Bilingual Education"

The updated Strategy will:

- have a much stronger focus on the role of education and on the importance of being able to learn in Pacific languages across the education pathway.
- We have already agreed to work on this with the Pacific policy team at the Ministry of Education.

We heard that the Strategy must go further to align with Te Tiriti and describing the relationships of Pacific peoples with tangata whenua...

- What's our relationship with Māori? How do we articulate that? How does our shared whakapapa impact Pacific as tauiwi?
- Our languages are from the same branch and our rangatahi are all tagata-o-le-moana.
- Honouring the Māori language movement is one way to honour Te Tiriti and the journey of tino rangatiratanga throughout the Strategy.
- Look at how Te Tiriti talks about embracing all cultures.

"In Aotearoa we have separated out Māori and Pacific but tagata whenua are also connected as tagata o le moana - indigenous peoples of the Pacific"

The updated Strategy will:

- Describe the relationship between Pacific peoples and tagata whenua in the context of shared whakapapa, whilst acknowledging differences; and
- More consistently reference and align with Te Tiriti and the significance of it for tagata-o-le-moana. We are seeking to discuss this with Māori stakeholders.

... And the importance of raising the perceived value and level of critical awareness that shape language decisions.

- Valuing the language is the cornerstone of everything – if you don't value it, you won't learn it or use it or pass it on.
- The Strategy needs to correct negative misconceptions about the value of Pacific languages – show how central languages are to social and economic prosperity.
- The education system plays a key role in signalling value – it needs to address a history of devaluing Pacific languages.
- Lack of critical awareness about language has driven parents and grandparents to prioritise learning and speaking English.

"I am the generation where my parents had been discriminated against due to their lack of English – thus they opted to not pass on their language"

The updated Strategy will articulate:

- the urgency of the need to halt language loss;
- how colonisation has led to certain decisions about language;
- the benefits of thriving Pacific languages for individuals, families, communities and wider society – including cognitive benefits, quality employment pathways, participation in family/cultural obligations, financial wellbeing and a strong identity.

And that the home and community is where the heart of the language lies but more support is needed to ensure it is healthy.

- The importance of the home was repeatedly emphasised, but this is being compromised because of the misconceptions around the value of Pacific languages.
- In the context of economic hardship, many families can't afford to prioritise learning languages when they are working multiple jobs.
- There is significant trauma associated with decisions not to pass on the language, even given the difficult circumstances in which decisions were made
- Action Plan must consider family language policies and funding research in this area.
- At the community level, there is a need to build capability and create safe spaces for community-led language revitalisation initiatives. Some also identify the lack of physical community hubs (not churches) as a barrier to action.

"We don't as a standard practice, sit at the feet of our elders in the same communal way that we would in the Islands."

This feedback does not require specific changes to the Strategy but will be important to consider in the development of supporting Action Plans.

