



Te Kawa Mataaho

Public Service Commission

29 August 2023

Grace Haden

fyi-request-23804-63b3cbc3@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear Grace

Official Information Request

Our Ref: OIA 2023-0169

I refer to your official information request received on 12 August 2023 where you have asked:

“By way of OIA please advise

1. the policy with regards the use of Te Reo Maori in documents which are intended for non maori speakers ie the general propulation of New Zealanders , to what degree can te reo be used , and is it relevant when the majority of the population do not speak the language ie it is not concise,clear or appropriate for the intended audience

2. Is there an official dictionary where non maori speakers can research the words to obtain the same meaning as intended in documentation ... what I am looking for is there an equivalent "oxford dictonary" for Maori which all users of the language use /can refere to to get the same meaning

3. The vast majority which is near 100% of the population speak english and the use of english will prevent miscommunications unless it is a place name or an article identified only as Maori, please advise why htere is a need to use Maori for such things as family, work days of the week etc wors whihc have perfectly well known and acceptable meaning of all New Zealanders

4. and why have the Government departments been given names which are not a direct translation but an assigned Maori name , why are these names not recognised officially and referred to in statute

5 is there a rule for using te Reo when there is a concise accurate and well understood English word which can be interpreted by the majority of the intended readers

6. the requirement to use foot notes or cross refences to indicated the intended interpretation of the maori words used”

Our Response

In response to parts one, three, five and six of your request, Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission does not have any policies relating to the use of te reo in documents which are intended for non Māori speakers or on rules for using te reo Māori when there is an accurate English word and there is no requirement to use foot notes or cross references to indicate the intended interpretation of Māori words used. We are therefore refusing these parts of your request under section 18(e) of the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA) on the grounds the information does not exist.

Māori dictionary

There is not an official Māori dictionary, however, there are a range of different Māori dictionaries that serve different functions, such as the Williams dictionary of the Māori Language and the He Pātaka Kupu, which is a Māori to Māori dictionary. The same words can have multiple meanings - this is true for both te reo Maori and English.

The Māori Language Act 2016 (the Act) which is administered by Te Puni Kōkiri, has created a new way of approaching language revitalisation. Section 3(2)(a) of the Act affirms the status of the Māori language as:

- the indigenous language of New Zealand; and
- a taonga of iwi and Māori; and
- a language valued by the nation; and
- an official language of New Zealand

In line with the Act, and following extensive consultation, Cabinet approved Maihi Karauna, the Crown's Strategy for Māori Language Revitalisation 2019–2023. The Public Service is identified as one of three priority groups under Maihi Karauna because the public sector has far reaching interactions with Māori and other New Zealanders. Cabinet directed that all departments of the Public Service develop a Māori Language Plan.

The role of the Public Service, defined by the [Public Service Act 2020](#), includes supporting the Crown in its relationships with Māori under Te Tiriti o Waitangi | The Treaty of Waitangi. This includes increased responsibilities on Public Service leaders and their agencies to develop and maintain the capability of the Public Service to understand Māori perspectives and engage with Māori.

Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission (the Commission) recognises the aims and aspirations of Māori and the need for greater involvement of Māori in the Public Service. The Commission has made commitments under Te Angitū (our Māori capability strategy) to build competency in te reo Māori as part of our Māori language plan. These are reflected in our style guide and published material and supported through translation processes.

We continue to support agencies to build and maintain the capability of the Public Service to engage with Māori and understand Māori perspectives in a range of ways including:

- Actively encouraging all agencies and leaders to grow Māori Crown capability through the implementation of Whāinga Amorangi: Transforming Leadership
- Actively supporting the implementation of the Maihi Karauna Crown strategy for revitalisation of te reo Māori, led by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori | Māori Language Commission and Te Puni Kōkiri
- Collecting data and information to support MCR capability development. This was collected as part of [Te Taunaki Public Service Census 2021](#). The Census data sets a baseline for the Public Service to build on.

Government department names

Departments are able to use trading names other than their legal name, whether for particular business units or for all of the organisation. After Parliament agreed in the Māori Language Act 1987 to recognise te reo Māori as an official language of Aotearoa New Zealand, most departments and other agencies acquired a Māori name to use alongside their English name. The use of te reo in the names of government departments, either alone or alongside English naming, is an important step in the Crown's recognitions of its partnership obligations to Māori. Whether to have a Māori name or a te reo Māori translation and how to use it has been a matter for individual agencies.

You may find the information available on Te Puni Kokiri Ministry of Māori Development's website on [Māori-English Bilingual Signage guide](#) helpful. The guide suggests equality of languages, or placing the indigenous language first if the nature of the sign or logo means the wording has to be stacked. The guide also notes that languages are easier to read, from a design perspective, if they are differentiated, which is why the reo Māori is bolded in a number of logo marks.

Te reo Māori is one of our two official languages in Aotearoa New Zealand, (English is our defacto official language) and Government is actively committed to working in partnership with Iwi and Māori to continue to protect and promote the language. Government agencies aim to promote te reo Māori in an inclusive way and not impose any barriers to participate. The use of te reo Māori in resources and signs is part of the strategy to help New Zealanders revitalise the language.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please feel free to contact Ministerial.Services@publicservice.govt.nz.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that we intend to publish this letter (with your personal details removed) on the Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission's website.

Yours sincerely



Nicky Dirks

**Manager – Ministerial and Executive Services
Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission**