I TE RŌPŪ
WHAKAMANA I TE TIRITI

Wai 3327
Wai 2831

KEI RARO I TE MANA O te ture o te Tiriti o Waitangi 1975

Ā

I TE TAKE O te ruku tātari ohotata te reo Māori i te Kāwanatanga, (Wai 3327)

Ā

I TE TAKE O he kerēme mō Te Rūnanga Nui o Te Aupōuri Trust (Wai 2831)

KŌRERO TAUNAKI O ERU KAPA-KINGI

I tēnei rā, i te 13 o Haratua 2024

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WELLINGTON

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KIA WHAKAAE MAI TE RŌPŪ WHAKAMANA I TE TIRITI:

Introduction

1. My name is Eru Kapa-Kingi.

2. I am a member on the board of Te Rūnanga Nui o Te Aupōuri Trust ("Te Aupōuri") and have experience in tikanga, reo, law and governance in public and iwi organisations.

3. This brief of evidence is made in opposition to the Coalition Government's policies and practices which limit and devalue the use of te reo Māori within the public sector and covers:

   (a) the importance of Te Reo Māori;

   (b) the Crown's policies and actions to discourage and devalue te reo Māori; and

   (c) the impact of Crown's policies and actions to discourage and devalue te reo Māori.

The importance of Te Reo Māori

4. Te Aupōuri are deeply concerned by the Coalition Government's policies to discourage the use of te reo Māori within the public sector and the context in which it is doing so.

5. When our tupuna signed te Tiriti o Waitangi in 1840 ("te Tiriti"), they did so to give a limited right to Pākehā to govern themselves. They did not agree to give away their right as rangatira to make unilateral decisions over their language and culture.

6. Despite the agreements reached in te Tiriti, tāngata whenua have been victims of colonial oppression for the greater part of the last 184 years. This has resulted in our people suffering intergenerationally and disproportionately, with our language having faced near extinction and our culture being treated as inferior.

7. Having the ability to speak and promote te reo Māori is an exercise of tino rangatiratanga. The fundamental idea of self-determining, self-managing and exercising our rangatiratanga over our reo aligns with, and gives life to, what was envisioned in He Whakaputanga and te Tiriti.

8. Te reo Māori fosters a sense of identity and connects us to our culture. Te reo Māori cannot be isolated from us. It is a conduit for transmission and revitalisation of te ao Māori in contemporary society "ko te reo te mauri o te mana Māori".

9. The Coalition Government's policies and actions are not solely related to inclusion or seclusion of te reo Māori within the public sector or lifting the profile of te reo, they are about our rights as tāngata whenua. The suppression of te reo is a suppression of tino rangatiratanga.

The Crown's policies and actions to discourage and devalue te reo Māori

10. If I was to boil the issue down to what it really is, I would say the Crown's policies in respect of te reo are an extension of its policies to assimilate Māori. They are another attempt to marginalise and undermine the mana of our reo – placing te reo Māori into a category where it is othered. For years, Māori have been sidelined and taught that our culture and way of living is less than. We have been forced to deprioritise our cultural values and language in order to survive in the Western world.

11. The Coalition Government's policies requiring public service agencies to have their English names first and have their kaimahi communicate primarily in English are based on the premise that there should be no special treatment or separatism in the delivery of public services. This makes no sense and is completely contradictory. The Crown's policies do exactly what they set out to remedy – they allow for special treatment, but the special treatment is for Pākehā and the Pākehā way of living.

12. For the Crown to say that we should all be treated as one, means that we should all be treated like Pākehā. It is Māori who lose out. This rhetoric perpetuates white supremacy – it is history repeating itself.

13. The Government's Coalition Agreements are full of commitments that are directed at devaluing the mana of Māoridom. Māori are impacted on all fronts – our language and culture, our health (Te Aka Whai Ora), our tamariki and mokopuna (removal of section 7AA from the Oranga Tamariki Act), reinterpreting te Tiriti (Treaty Principles Bill), Māori representation within local government (Māori wards) – the list goes on.

14. The Coalition Government continues to expedite legislation and policy that directly conflicts with their obligations under te Tiriti. It is impossible to honour Te Tiriti when the Coalition Government continues to make unilateral decisions without engaging Māori. The lack of engagement is completely disrespectful when Māori are the primary group most drastically impacted by the Coalition Government's decisions.

15. The danger for te iwi Māori is that the Coalition Government is promoting an attitude where Māori are, again, seen as inferior. This is manifesting in society as a growth in disruptive and racial rhetoric against Māori. Racists are being given a platform because the most politically powerful people in the country are socialising and legitimising anti-Tiriti, anti-Māori attitudes.

16. A result of this, people in positions of power and influence in the public sector whose values align with those of the Coalition Government, are making decisions which deprioritise te reo prior to receiving formal directives or guidance from their Ministers. We can see examples of this through agencies like Waka Kotahi and Te Whatu Ora placing their English names first as early as December.

17. There can be no mistake that the Crown's policies and actions are having a widespread impact on Māori at political, legislative and societal levels.

18. It would be easier to act, speak and live as Pākehā. That is the essence of assimilation.

The impact of Crown's policies and actions to discourage and devalue te reo Māori.

19. The Coalition Government's decision to discourage te reo takes away decades of progress made towards Tiriti justice for language revitalisation, and it is completely damaging to the Crown/Māori relationship envisioned under te Tiriti.

20. I have invested a lot of my life into learning and teaching te reo Māori. This has had an immense impact on who I am as a person. In recent years I have seen an increase in the uptake of people wanting to learn, normalise and use te reo Māori in day-to-day settings. The Crown's policies and actions are a step backwards and will have serious consequences for this growth.

21. Not to mention the profound psychological impact of seeing our reo put second and being treated as inferior, not only for my generation, but also for future generations. In the language revitalisation efforts that has occurred to date, we have seen issues around language and identity trauma. This trauma impedes on our ability to learn and speak our language, embrace our culture and on our freedom to live authentically as Māori. Pākehā will never be able to understand these impacts because they have never experienced colonisation or racism.

22. It is easy for Pākehā to say the Coalition Government decisions are small and will not have this impact, but it is the culmination of many Crown policies and actions that threaten our language.

23. Having te reo Māori in public service department names and incorporating it into Government templates, documentation and branding is surface level engagement with te reo. The risk is that, if those in roles of influence and power within the public sector express unwillingness to acknowledge the value of te reo through these surface level practices, there is certainly no way they will be able to get their heads around the transformational practices. This includes things like

placing Māori in decision making and leadership roles, learning te reo, embedding te reo and tikanga throughout their department. Those are the next steps towards tino rangatiratanga.

24. The notion of allowing departments who specifically service Māori to retain their Māori names, is irrelevant from a Tiriti perspective. Te Tiriti established the partnership between Māori and the Crown, the entire Government would not exist if it was not for that partnership. All Government departments are required to abide by the Tiriti partnership. Therefore, whether it is Treasury or Te Puni Kōkiri, tino rangatiratanga must be at the centre of any of the public service departments and so must te reo Māori. Having Māori signage on departments signals the value of te reo within Government and sets an example for the wider community.

25. The risk of devaluing te reo Māori in the public sector could have a cascading affect that extends to incorporating te reo Māori and te ao Māori into strategies, plans and practice. Public service departments can only be successful if they do better for Māori, the only way to do this is to build internal capability and incorporate te ao Māori perspectives into their service delivery. Without a proactive strategy, the system is likely to continue to underserve Māori, and result in profound and enduring consequences.

26. The directive from the Minister of Finance to remove te reo Māori allowances will be inconsequential. Kaimahi Māori are routinely asked to perform practices like karakia, karanga, waiata, mihimihi or whakatau for the benefit of the organisation they are working in and these kaimahi go over and beyond the requirements of their job description because they know it is tika – they will likely continue to do this. However, expecting kaimahi to carry out reo Māori/tikanga practices while failing to recognise and compensate their expertise is slave labour.

27. Language, particularly te reo Māori, is an asset in its own right, not just a means of communication. By removing the allowances for te reo

competency, kaimahi Māori working within the public sector are left feeling unsafe and undervalued.

Concluding remarks

28. The Coalition Government does not understand the importance of our reo or its place in the public sector. Its actions undermine the promotion of te reo and the traditional knowledge and beliefs that make us who we are as Māori.

29. The Crown's failure to uphold its Tiriti obligations in respect of te reo Māori will not only impact the status of te reo Māori politically, but also socially. Te reo Māori is the language of rangatiratanga, and just like our rights as tāngata whenua, must be restored to its rangatira place within Aotearoa.

I TĒNEI RĀ, te rā 13 o Haratua 2024

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Eru Kapa-Kingi