

Local Government Policy MASTERCLASS

Brief 15



Using te reo Māori in your papers

A number of agencies asked us for advice on using te reo in policy advice papers. We've put together this Masterclass based on the best practice we've seen, and some expert advice from people in a variety of different agencies. It also contains practical tips and references to help you up your game in te reo.

Te reo Māori became one of the official languages of New Zealand in 1989

But of course, it's been around for centuries.

We're starting to see te reo Māori used more often in policy papers, just as we are on the internet, in print media, and on radio and TV. And we'd expect to see more in future.

Parliament allows the use of te reo in all its dealings e.g. speeches in the House, Parliamentary questions and submissions to Select Committee.

There are other jurisdictions which regularly use multiple languages. For example, in OECD documents summaries are usually published in French if the document is written in English and vice-versa. In Wales, many government publications in English also have a Welsh language version. Or have both English and Welsh in the same document – one language on one page, and then the content repeated on the next page in the other language. Canada is the other obvious example.

Our approach here, as usual, is to advocate for writing for your audience, and to make sure papers are clear and accurate.

We've seen five main uses in your papers

- **Proper nouns** – including names for places, strategies or documents e.g. Hei Korowai Oranga: the Māori Health Strategy, organisations e.g. Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa (NZ Police), plants and birds, and of course people.

- **Greetings** at the beginning of letters, emails, documents, and speech notes. Some special phrases that might be useful for introductions to emails, letters etc. can be found here. <http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/maori-language/for-special-occasions/>.

Of course, there are more formal mihi used at meetings and events. Often councils are asked to provide elected members or senior management with advice on an appropriate mihi. You'll have people in your organisation expert in this – ask them!

- **Mihi or whakataukī** in documents to be published – which are often attachments to advice papers. Again, these will have had input from an expert. Consultation documents or material targeted to Māori are likely to include more te reo.
- **Words in everyday use** – and the list is growing. E.g. iwi, hapū, whānau, kaimoana, whenua, kuia, rangatira, mahi.
- **Headings** – we've seen paper templates with bi-lingual headings.

Agencies dealing specifically with Māori issues, or individual papers on Māori issues tend to have many more of the “words in everyday use”. It depends on the topic and who the paper is going to – the audience.

You may be asked for talking points in te reo if a Councillor is featuring in the Māori media on an issue. No doubt you'll have te reo Māori speakers that can help with this.

A good guide to the basics can be found in this publication on the Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori website (the Māori Language Commission).

<http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Corporate-docs/Orthographic-conventions/Guidelines-for-Maori-Language-Orthography.pdf>

There are, however, some things to watch out for:

Take care to spell correctly

In more recent versions of Microsoft Word, you can update the language to include te reo and well as New Zealand English, so that you can use spell-checker.

In Microsoft Word go to:

File > Options > Language and select Māori¹

If you don't yet have this functionality then use the autocorrect function by adding the correctly spelt words to the autocorrect function:

File > Options > Proofing > AutoCorrect Options

Or use the on-line Māori Dictionary – Te Aka <https://maoridictionary.co.nz/> or Learning Media's tool at www.learningmedia.co.nz/ngata.

There are no plurals

So, don't put an "s" on the end of Māori words. The plural of "marae" is "marae".

There can be different spellings of words

Place names and nouns can be spelt differently by different iwi or hapū e.g. wānanga and wānaka² for a university; or Whakatauākī or Whakataukī for a proverb or saying.

Whatever you choose, make spellings consistent throughout your paper.

If you think people might not understand a spelling that is different from what they usually see – then use a footnote to explain.

Macrons make words sound and mean different things

So, use them. You may have noticed that Stuff has very recently begun to use macrons in all its on-line content.

There is a useful introduction on the Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori website. See <http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/assets/LanguageResources/KIA-ORA-Pronunciation.pdf>

If your system can't add te reo into the spell checker (which will pick up macrons), you can add macrons in Microsoft Word by:

- Highlighting the letter that needs correcting
- Click 'Insert' tab
- Click 'Symbol' icon on far right
- Find the letter you need with the right accent/macron
- Click 'Insert' button.

You may also be able to enable your keyboard for macrons – check with your IT experts.

This is something to watch out for in your QA process.

Check your organisation's style guide

Many councils have style guides. They may well include suggestions and rules for the use of te reo in your council's official communications or references to other helpful material.

Taking the next steps

There are plenty of opportunities to learn te reo Māori. Many people are taking these up.

We've seen frameworks developed and applied to look at policy issues from a Māori perspective or world view. This can be useful as a different language and set of concepts can lead to people thinking about an issue in a different way.

Some notable examples are:

Professor Sir Mason Durie's **Te Whare Tapa Whā** framework for Māori health – this was first used in the 1980s and is still employed.

Here's a link on the Ministry of Health website www.health.govt.nz/our-work/populations/maori-health/maori-health-models/maori-health-models-te-whare-tapa-wha. This framework has been applied, and modified by others many time e.g. the Ministry for Women's work on preventing violence against Māori women <http://women.govt.nz/documents/w%C4%81hine-m%C4%81ori-w%C4%81hine-ora-w%C4%81hine-kaha-preventing-violence-against-m%C4%81ori-women-2015>.

¹ If Māori is not available to be added you may need to get assistance from your IT department.

² E.g. Te Whare Wānaka o Aoraki – for Lincoln University.

Te Puni Kōkiri's work on the Whānau Ora Framework –
<https://www.tpk.govt.nz/docs/tpk-wo-outcomesframework-aug2016.pdf>

From Landcare Research – Garth Halmsworth's
Framework for Cultural Sustainability
<https://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/about/sustainability/voices/matauranga-maori/what-is-matauranga-maori/framework>

Learning the language can help you better understand some of these frameworks and Māori concepts. Not everything is easy to translate directly.

Many organisations have their own Māori strategic plans or frameworks which set the agenda for action and provide a basis for the analysis of relevant policy issues.

Keep at it

There are plenty of other resources and guidance on the Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori website
<http://www.tetaurawhiri.govt.nz/>.

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