

The focus on the actual content of Te Tiriti o Waitangi

In April 2018, NWO published an updated poster which includes a new expression in English of the text of the Treaty in Te Reo. Our description of this being an ‘expression’ rather than a ‘translation’ is deliberate and important. Most Te Reo words cannot be simply translated into an English word or two; often there is just no English equivalent. When a single Te Reo word is swapped for a single English word (if one exists), the depth and cultural significance of the Maori word are missed and inappropriate ones brought in.

The poster also illuminates the differences between the text in Te Reo and the English version and references the November 2014 conclusion of the Waitangi Tribunal in relation to the Nga Puhī Claim (WAI 1040) part one.

The Primacy of the text in Te Reo

NWO is clear that the text of the Treaty in Te Reo takes precedence – as set out in the NWO Treaty poster referred to above. In addition we note:

Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori The Māori Language Act 2016, section 12, Interpretation of Act - this generally records that “(2) The Māori and English versions of this Act are of equal authority, but in the event of a conflict in meaning between the 2 versions, the Māori version prevails”. To our knowledge, this is a first – and a precedent.

The Coalition Government’s commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi In her Speech from the Throne, 8 November 2017, the Prime Minister clearly outlined the Government’s commitment to the Treaty:

“It is time to start considering what the Treaty relationship might look like after historical grievances are settled and to consider how we, as a nation, can move forward in ways that honour the original Treaty promise. A promise of a nation in which Maori values – diverse as they are – stand in their rightful place alongside those of European New Zealanders and other more recent arrivals. A nation in which manaakitanga and kaitiakitanga and whanaungatanga inform our decision-making. A nation in which fairness and equality of opportunity are not just aspirations but facts. And a nation in which all communities are empowered”.

Announcement of a 2019 Wellbeing Budget

The Coalition Government presented the country’s first Wellbeing Budget in May 2019.

When the Minister of Finance announced this he explained:

“The economy is not an end to itself, it is the means to the end of allowing our people to live good and fulfilling lives... We have long held the view that GDP is an inadequate measure not only of the quality of our economic growth, but the value of the other things that affect how we live our lives...”

Initial priorities set are - Taking mental health seriously; Improving child wellbeing; Supporting Maori and Pasifika aspirations; Building a productive nation; Transforming the economy; Investing in NZ.

Establishment of the Office for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti

Minister for Māori Crown Relations said,

“This will help facilitate the next step in the Treaty relationship – moving beyond the settlement of Treaty grievances into what it means to work together in partnerships. The name reflects feedback from the hui, that Māori should appear first in the relationship. Te Arawhiti, refers to the transition phase we are in, that is ‘the bridge’ between Māori and the Crown”.

Relational Approaches

The Prime Minister’s recent involvement at Ihumatao has demonstrated importance that is placed on relationships. In her speech from the Throne she commented that:

“Now we as a government, we know what we have to do, we know all of the failings that we have as a nation, but we won’t always know exactly how to change it. For that we will come to you, we will ask you to help us, we will form partnerships together because we cannot do it alone”.

Focus on He Wakaputanga 1835 Declaration of Independence

The Minister of Justice at Waitangi on 6 February 2020 stated:

“There is another agreement [than the Treaty] we cannot ignore. It is very important to Maori of the north. It is He Wakaputanga. Neither He Wakaputanga nor Te Tiriti stand on their own. We have talked much about Te Tiriti. We must talk about He Wakaputanga. There are many thoughts about it. But we must talk about it. We must understand”.

Important new directions in Government

This year we have noted two important new directions in Government which we believe to be truly congruent with te Tiriti. The Cabinet office Circular of October 2019 on *Te Tiriti o Waitangi / The Treaty of Waitangi in Policy Development*, which sets out guidance for Government policy-makers, includes recognition of the importance of a holistic approach:

“The Treaty must be considered ‘on the whole’. No article of the Treaty stands apart from the others. Consideration of how the Treaty applies in any situation will require consideration of all the articles and the relationship each has to the other”.

Also, the Cabinet Manual states the Treaty of Waitangi is to be regarded as a founding document of government in New Zealand and that it “*may indicate limits on majority decision-making*”.

Hope for the future

A Treaty-based future that is being called for by Tangata Whenua means developing understanding around contemporary identity for those who are not Tangata Whenua but who identify with a Treaty-based future in this land – we refer to them as Tangata Tiriti. The challenge is not to focus just on ethnicity but rather on taking responsibility for future decision-making by and for all of us living in this country to participate in a multicultural Treaty-based future where the indigenous status of Tangata Whenua is understood.

NWO wants to work with you to imagine, discuss, think and act in alignment with place-based, collective values that underpin a new, markedly different, economics and its associated relational politics.

*This resource was produced by Network Waitangi Otautahi (NWO) www.nwo.org.nz
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