



Te Kaunihera o Te Awakairangi- Hutt City Council Submission on He Tohu Huarahi Māori bilingual traffic signs programme

Introduction

I write to express our strong support for a bilingual signage policy. Hutt City Council is currently progressing a number of programmes with the intent to incorporate Te Reo Māori and te ao Māori more strongly in our activities. We support the programme and have some suggestions about the implementation of the programme.

Programmes and initiatives

Kaupapa Here Tapanga I Naming Policy 2021-2031

In 2022 Council adopted a revised Kaupapa Here Tapanga Naming Policy which stated that Te Reo Māori is to be given prominence in the naming of roads, open spaces, Council facilities, suburbs, localities and sub-divisions/developments. This is given effect to through using Te Tohu Reorua, developed by Te Puni Kōkiri. The Naming Policy outlines an engagement process that needs to occur with Mana Whenua to understand the significance of an area prior to new naming. The result of this is that new Māori names for Council facilities recognise the whakapapa (history) and whenua (land) that they sit on.

District Plan and urban development/placemaking

A core role of local authorities is to enable development through the District Plan and support urban development and placemaking activities. A key focus for Council is to identify, protect and celebrate sites of significance to Māori. We note that Te Reo Maori is a language filled with metaphor and storytelling, making names available to the public more readily enables the community to understand the historical and geographic context of the place they are in. Any work Waka Kotahi undertakes on progressing bilingual signage must take into account the views of Mana Whenua as part of the implementation process.

Tākai Here partnership agreements with Mana Whenua

Council has developed strong partnerships with Mana Whenua to support a city that thrives. As such, we are able to work with our partners to collaborate on matters of shared importance to our city, this includes the matters of bilingual signage. At our June meeting with Council's Mana Whenua partners, we received collective support for creating this submission. We encourage the team at Waka Kotahi to work to create strong relationships in order to appropriately acknowledge these important and valuable narratives.



Implementation challenges

Council urges Waka Kotahi to consider carefully the challenges associated with delivering the proposed programme, particularly around funding Mana Whenua participation and councils themselves to implement the initiatives.

Submission

The use of signs presents a good opportunity to achieve the goal of incorporating more Te Reo Maori into Aotearoa New Zealand's transport network. Council agrees that colours differentiating the two languages ensures that there is clarity in the signage. This is supported by the evidence in the Welsh example in which no evidence was found to show that bilingual signs increased road safety harm.

We have two pieces of feedback on the designs of the signs:

1. In the case of signs where there are images, such as Shared Zone signs, the image clearly depicts the message. Squeezing two languages in the same sized sign is not necessary. We support either making the signs bigger or just having the image and Te Reo Māori.
2. Council prefers consistency across the rural threshold signs (e.g. Haere mai ki Ponēke Welcome to Wellington) rather than one sign on each side of the road in a different language. We believe that such consistency ensures drivers see all the information they need to in one place. This is particularly the case when the sign is at a point where speed is to be reduced.

Conclusion

Council agrees that the dual sign option is a suitable way to display both Te Reo Māori and English messaging on Aotearoa New Zealand's transport network. This is because the programme recognises both languages equally and allows all people, locals and tourists, to get a good sense of the context of the places they travel through.

Naku noa, Nā