

EDITORIAL

The recommendations of the Waitangi Tribunal are a welcome breath of fresh air.

TU TANGATA wishes to acknowledge its debt to Nga Kaiwhakapumau I Te Reo, its chairman Huirangi Wai-kerepuru, Joe Williams, Piripi Walker, Sid Mead, Maaka Jones, Rawiri Rangitauira, Anaru Robb, and the many supporters both in Wellington and around the country who got behind this take at a time when it was not popular to do so. It needed someone to find out if the Treaty of Waitangi was still the agreement our tupuna made with the pakeha settlers.

Ki a tatou katoa te iwi Maori, tihei mauri ora.

TU TANGATA especially welcomes the establishment of a Maori Language body to supervise and foster the use of te reo maori.

As the means by which many Maori readers and pakeha readers have followed the laying of this maori language claim to the recommendations of the Waitangi Tribunal, TU TANGATA continues to offer its services in a 'watchdog role' for the supervision and fostering of te reo rangatira.

Toi te kupu, toi te mana, toi te whenua.

Cherish your language and uphold your dignity. Thus you will have a place to stand.

So much so that the Tribunal says:

"It seems very clear to us that the survival of the language can no longer depend upon an edict that Maori fathers and Maori mothers should speak the language to their children. Other policies are now necessary if it is to survive and if it is to be more than like Church Latin, to be used on some ceremonial occasions and nothing more."

It then goes on to note the remarkable rise of Te Kohanga Reo, which it notes as being a Maori initiative that is succeeding in bringing back te reo to the young.

Te reo maori in the future

The Tribunal heard the evidence of a Maori demographer, Mr Edward Douglas and studied figures supplied by the Government Statistician regarding projections of the Maori birthrate. Because of the rising Maori rate and declining pakeha rate and other migration factors the Tribunal notes:

"The typical New Zealander of the 21st century may prove to be of Maori descent, brown-eyed, dark haired and well aware of his whakapapa (genealogy) and cultural history in which some European forebear will be a more or less distant relative."

The Tribunal notes that from the time of the Land Wars an attitude of superiority on the part of the pakeha towards the Maori existed but that the exploits of the Maori Battalion in the Second World War had a profound effect on Maori and pakeha, which resulted in the Maori carrying themselves proudly, no longer a conquered people.

It says many pakeha New Zealanders have never regarded their Maori compa-

triot as inferior, that's been the domain of recent arrivals or those who because of geographical location, have never had anything to do with Maori.

It then points out that the feeling of maori-ness, regardless of degree of Maori blood, will be likely to increase as time goes on, and perhaps as Mr Douglas projected, the Maori population may well exceed that of the pakeha section of the community.

The end result of these population projections is that the demand for fluency in the maori language will increase rather than diminish. It points out that if difficulties are put in the way of those that want to attain that fluency, serious social tensions and a feeling of injustice is likely to arise.

It notes that already in the adult generations denied this fluency, there is this sense of injustice which could be explosive if allowed to continue.

The place of Maori culture in the heritage of New Zealand

"As a nation we have always acknowledged Maori culture as part of our heritage. New Zealand's coat of arms features a Maori warrior prominently as one of the two supporters. Our national airline sports a Maori symbol – the koru – on the tail of every one of its aircraft as they fly across the world. Prominent guests of State are accorded a Maori welcome. Even our national rugby team does a haka before it begins to play a test match. There has always been recognition that Maoritanga is part of New Zealand.

