

# An enquiry "would not be out of place"

*Early this year the Waitangi Tribunal released its Finding on Te Reo Maori in response to a claim (from Huirangi Waikerepuru and Nga Kaiwhakapumau) that the Maori language should be given official recognition.*

*The tribunal members were Edward Durie, Graham Latimer and Paul Temm. Their Finding contained strong criticism of the education system and a clear indication of dissatisfaction with the performance of New Zealand's broadcasting system.*

*Here are two excerpts:*



Huirangi Wakerepuru, at the heart of Nga Kaiwhakapumau's activity.

Pakeha New Zealanders have outnumbered Maori New Zealanders since the middle of the last century and this predominance has had effect in many ways.

As we show in our Finding this proportion has changed during the 20th century, and it may be that in the next 100 years the number of people of Maori descent living in New Zealand may grow to equal or even be greater than those of Pakeha ancestry.

Because there have been so many English speaking people and so comparatively few Maori speaking people, the use of English has predominated to the detriment of the Maori language.

The claimants have said to us that the Crown has failed to protect the Maori language and that this is a breach of the promise made in the Treaty of Waitangi.

Some New Zealanders may say that the loss of Maori language is unimportant. The claimants in reply have reminded us that the Maori culture is a part of the heritage of New Zealand and that the Maori language is at the heart of that culture.

If the language dies the culture will die, and something quite unique will have been lost to the world.

Our task has been to decide whether the Treaty has been broken in this respect, and if it has, what should be done about it.

The evidence and argument has made it clear to us that by the Treaty the Crown did promise to recognise and protect the language and that the

promise has not been kept.

The "guarantee" in the Treaty requires affirmative action to protect and sustain the language, not a passive obligation to tolerate its existence and certainly not a right to deny its use in any place.

It is, after all, the first language of the country, the language of the original inhabitants and the language in which the first signed copy of the Treaty was written.

But educational policy over many years and the effect of the media in using almost nothing but English has swamped the Maori language and done it great harm.

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We are quite clear in our view that Article II of the Treaty guarantees protection to the Maori language . . . and that the predominance of English in the media has had an adverse effect upon it.

We might very easily further conclude that we should make recommendations of a positive kind as to how this harm could be reduced or eliminated but to do so we would necessarily be discussing what part radio and television stations should be required to play in achieving that result.

For example, it might be said, as the claimants urged us to recommend, that particular radio stations ought to be converted entirely to Maori language transmissions, or that one or other of the television channels ought to broadcast a minimum number of hours each day or

each week devoted solely to Maori language and cultural interests.

To make these kinds of recommendations of variants of them (because many variations are possible) would inevitably impinge upon the functions of the Royal Commission and the Broadcasting Tribunal.

We have decided therefore to wait until these bodies have made their decisions and if, after giving those findings the careful consideration that they deserve, our Tribunal decides to make additional recommendations we can convene again for the purpose and deliver a supplementary finding on the matter if it becomes necessary or desirable.

. . . It is consistent with the principles of the Treaty that the language and matters of Maori interest should have a secure place in broadcasting.

If there is any impediment in the statute that governs the Broadcasting Corporation, then it is the statute itself that must be called into question.

. . . We are prepared to say that, on the fact of it, like the education system, there may be some breakdown between the topmost levels of policy making and the ultimate administration at the middle and lower levels of the broadcasting system.

This leads us to suggest by way of assistance to the Corporation that an enquiry into the complaints raised before us would not be out of place.

We leave the Corporation to govern its own affairs.