



Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee

Minute of Decision


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Final Proposals to Amend the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006

Portfolio **Disability Issues**

On 29 March 2023, the Cabinet Social Wellbeing Committee (SWC):

- 1 **noted** that in August 2022, SWC agreed that consultation with the Deaf community on suggested amendments to the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 (the Act) be undertaken, and invited the Minister for Disability Issues to report back with final proposals in December 2022 [SWC-22-MIN-0158];
- 2 **noted** that public consultation ran from 9 September 2022 to 11 November 2022, and that there is support from some of the Deaf community for the intent of the suggested amendments to strengthen Deaf people’s leadership on matters relating to New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), recognise Turi Māori identity and leadership, and monitor government agencies actions that support the promotion, maintenance, and acquisition of NZSL;
- 3 **noted** that, during public consultation, many issues were raised by the Deaf community that were outside the scope of this review but will inform future work of the NZSL Board and that the Minister for Disability Issues will look for opportunities to progress those concerns;
- 4 **agreed** to amend the Act so that:
 - 4.1 the New Zealand Sign Language Board becomes a statutory Ministerial advisory group with additional functions and powers to provide strategic leadership on matters relating to NZSL, and independent advice to the Minister for Disability Issues;
 - 4.2 it sets out the purpose and core functions of the statutory Ministerial advisory group, which could include gathering information from government agencies about their actions relating to NZSL, along with principles to guide appointments to the statutory Ministerial advisory group;
 - 4.3 it recognises and supports Turi Māori identity and leadership;
- 5 **agreed** that the purpose of the Act is amended to reflect the creation of the NZSL statutory Ministerial advisory group and the language learning priority of acquisition;
- 6 **agreed** that the Act is amended to include a provision for a review to commence five years after it comes into force;
- 7 **noted** that some key agencies are not captured by the definition of government agency (e.g. Whaikaha – the Ministry for Disabled People (Whaikaha)) in the Act;

- 8 **agreed** that the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 is amended to expand the government agencies who are expected to be guided by the principles to better support the Deaf community;
- 9 **noted** the Minister for Disability Issues will approve a Terms of Reference for the NZSL statutory Ministerial advisory group, after seeking agreement from the Cabinet Appointments and Honours Committee (APH);
- 10 **noted** the Minister for Disability Issues will consult with APH before making appointments to the NZSL statutory Ministerial advisory group;
- 11 **noted** the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 is administered by the Ministry of Social Development, and that the intention is to transfer administration of the Act to Whaikaha when the amended Act comes into force;
- 12 s 9(2)(f)(iv) 
- 13 **noted** that a category 4 priority has been sought for the NZSL Amendment Bill on the 2023 Legislation Programme (to be provided to select committee in 2023);
- 14 **invited** the Minister for Disability Issues to issue drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office to give effect to the above decisions;
- 15 **authorised** the Minister for Disability Issues to approve minor and technical elements within the policy parameters during the development of the NZSL Amendment Bill.

Rachel Clarke
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon Carmel Sepuloni (Chair)
Hon Grant Robertson
Hon Dr Megan Woods
Hon Dr Ayesha Verrall
Hon Willie Jackson
Hon Kiri Allan
Hon Peeni Henare
Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan
Hon Barbara Edmonds
Hon Meka Whaitiri
Hon Willow-Jean Prime
Hon Rino Tirikatene

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Office of the Chair
Officials' Committee for SWC