

Departmental Disclosure Statement

English Language Bill

The departmental disclosure statement for a government Bill seeks to bring together in one place a range of information to support and enhance the Parliamentary and public scrutiny of that Bill.

It identifies:

- the general policy intent of the Bill and other background policy material;
- some of the key quality assurance products and processes used to develop and test the content of the Bill;
- the presence of certain significant powers or features in the Bill that might be of particular Parliamentary or public interest and warrant an explanation.

This disclosure statement was prepared by the Ministry of Justice.

The Ministry of Justice certifies that, to the best of its knowledge and understanding, the information provided is complete and accurate at the date of finalisation below.

7 August 2025

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Part One: General Policy Statement

General policy statement

This Bill provides for the recognition of the official status of the English language in New Zealand in legislation.

The English language has long been a de facto official language in New Zealand, that is, widely used and accepted as an official language, but its official language status is not set out in legislation. This Bill puts the official status of the English language in legislation.

Legislative recognition of the status of English as an official language will not affect the status or use of te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language as the two other official languages of New Zealand.

As the predominant language of New Zealand, English does not require provision to continue to be used in the courts, Parliament, and government communications.

Part Two: Background Material and Policy Information

Published reviews or evaluations

2.1. Are there any publicly available inquiry, review or evaluation reports that have informed, or are relevant to, the policy to be given effect by this Bill?	NO
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Relevant international treaties

2.2. Does this Bill seek to give effect to New Zealand action in relation to an international treaty?	NO
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Regulatory impact analysis

2.3. Were any regulatory impact statements provided to inform the policy decisions that led to this Bill?	NO
No. The proposal was exempt from Cabinet's regulatory impact analysis requirements on the grounds that it has no or only minor economic, social, or environmental impacts.	

Extent of impact analysis available

2.4. Has further impact analysis become available for any aspects of the policy to be given effect by this Bill?	NO
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2.5. For the policy to be given effect by this Bill, is there analysis available on:	
(a) the size of the potential costs and benefits?	NO
(b) the potential for any group of persons to suffer a substantial unavoidable loss of income or wealth?	NO

2.6. For the policy to be given effect by this Bill, are the potential costs or benefits likely to be impacted by:	
(a) the level of effective compliance or non-compliance with applicable obligations or standards?	NO
(b) the nature and level of regulator effort put into encouraging or securing compliance?	NO

Part Three: Testing of Legislative Content

Consistency with New Zealand's international obligations

3.1. What steps have been taken to determine whether the policy to be given effect by this Bill is consistent with New Zealand's international obligations?

The Ministry of Justice analysed the Bill and did not identify any obligations that conflict with the policies contained in the Bill.

Consistency with the government's Treaty of Waitangi obligations

3.2. What steps have been taken to determine whether the policy to be given effect by this Bill is consistent with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi?

The Ministry of Justice analysed the Bill and did not identify any inconsistency with the rights and interests of Māori protected by the Treaty of Waitangi.

Consistency with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990

3.3. Has advice been provided to the Attorney-General on whether any provisions of this Bill appear to limit any of the rights and freedoms affirmed in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990?

YES

Advice will be provided to the Attorney-General by the Crown Law Office. This advice will be available on the Ministry's website at <https://www.justice.govt.nz/justice-sector-policy/constitutional-issues-and-human-rights/the-bill-of-rights-act/advice/>

Offences, penalties and court jurisdictions

3.4. Does this Bill create, amend, or remove:

(a) offences or penalties (including infringement offences or penalties and civil pecuniary penalty regimes)?

NO

(b) the jurisdiction of a court or tribunal (including rights to judicial review or rights of appeal)?

NO

Privacy issues

3.5. Does this Bill create, amend or remove any provisions relating to the collection, storage, access to, correction of, use or disclosure of personal information?

NO

External consultation

3.6. Has there been any external consultation on the policy to be given effect by this Bill, or on a draft of this Bill?

NO

Other testing of proposals

3.7. Have the policy details to be given effect by this Bill been otherwise tested or assessed in any way to ensure the Bill's provisions are workable and complete?

NO

Part Four: Significant Legislative Features

Compulsory acquisition of private property

4.1. Does this Bill contain any provisions that could result in the compulsory acquisition of private property?	NO
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Charges in the nature of a tax

4.2. Does this Bill create or amend a power to impose a fee, levy or charge in the nature of a tax?	NO
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Retrospective effect

4.3. Does this Bill affect rights, freedoms, or impose obligations, retrospectively?	NO
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Strict liability or reversal of the usual burden of proof for offences

4.4. Does this Bill:	
(a) create or amend a strict or absolute liability offence?	NO
(b) reverse or modify the usual burden of proof for an offence or a civil pecuniary penalty proceeding?	NO

Civil or criminal immunity

4.5. Does this Bill create or amend a civil or criminal immunity for any person?	NO
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Significant decision-making powers

4.6. Does this Bill create or amend a decision-making power to make a determination about a person's rights, obligations, or interests protected or recognised by law, and that could have a significant impact on those rights, obligations, or interests?	NO
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Powers to make delegated legislation

4.7. Does this Bill create or amend a power to make delegated legislation that could amend an Act, define the meaning of a term in an Act, or grant an exemption from an Act or delegated legislation?	NO
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4.8. Does this Bill create or amend any other powers to make delegated legislation?	NO
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Any other unusual provisions or features

4.9. Does this Bill contain any provisions (other than those noted above) that are unusual or call for special comment?	NO
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