



NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF LANGUAGE TEACHERS  
TE ROPU KAIWHAKAAKO REO AOTEAROA

**Patron**

His Excellency the Governor-General of New Zealand, The Honorable Anand Satyanand, PCNZM

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P.O. Box 12 237  
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The Honourable Steve Maharey  
Minister of Education  
299 Ferguson Street  
PALMERSTON NORTH

Dear Mr Maharey

The Executive of the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers (NZALT) congratulates the Ministry of Education on the recognition afforded the learning and teaching of languages through the creation of the new learning area Learning Languages in the Draft New Zealand Curriculum (2006).

We applaud your statement in the House (August 1, 2006) where, in response to a question from another Member you confirmed the government's commitment to the support of this learning area:

*The new draft curriculum will ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn a second language from year 7. To support schools in delivering this, the Government has provided funding of more than \$20.4 million since 2000. As a result, 42 percent of primary schools, 64 percent of intermediates, and 96 percent of secondary schools now offer teaching of other languages. The Government intends to lift this further so that every New Zealand child has a chance to learn another language.*

We have seen this funding in action through the

- Second Language Funding Pool
- Learning Languages Series
- provision of languages advisers through School Support Services
- Digital Learning Objects
- funding for conferences

- Ministry of Education/ AFS Immersion Awards.

Many of these initiatives are focused on the crucial area of years 7-10 and have supported the Curriculum Stocktake recommendation of 2002 and subsequent Cabinet approval which stated that “schools should be required to provide instruction in an additional language for students in years 7 to 10.” It is pleasing to also see that the generic outcomes for languages have also been developed under the very able leadership of Mrs Gail Spence, former Senior Curriculum Adviser, Languages, and included in the Draft New Zealand Curriculum. The NZALT Executive commends the process of this development and appreciates the many opportunities for involvement already through the participation of NZALT members either in the Writing Team, Key Reference Group or Focus Group.

At the recent Australian Federation of Modern Language Teachers’ Association (AFMLTA) conference held in Perth, our Australian colleagues were envious that New Zealand has a national curriculum (across learning areas) and they approved the professional development opportunities, resources and immersion experiences that some of the New Zealand year 7 and 8 teachers were able to access for the learning and teaching of languages.

NZALT has also benefited from the close relationship with your Ministry via the Senior Curriculum Advisors, Languages who go out of their way to attend our Executive meetings several times a year. The openness of this relationship has meant that we have been able to keep our members accurately informed of opportunities and initiatives that will benefit their practice, and ultimately the outcomes for their students. With regard to maximising the learning opportunities for all students, NZALT is mindful that recent New Zealand research (Loewen, Ellis and Hacker, 2006) points to two years of second language learning being a minimum start for ongoing learning to occur at secondary school.

In closing, we thank you once again for your commitment to this new learning area and look forward to the release of the final curriculum document which will affirm the Cabinet’s decision of 2002 that “schools should be required to provide instruction in an additional language for students in years 7 to 10”. NZALT sees this as an important step towards the ultimate goal of ALL students in New Zealand schools learning an additional language.

We invite you to contact us regarding any of our above points and look forward to a continued productive relationship with the Ministry of Education as we work together to provide effective language learning opportunities for students in Aotearoa-New Zealand.

Yours sincerely  
Adèle Scott  
President  
NZALT