

Office of the Minister of Justice

Cabinet Business Committee

Declaring English an Official Language

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks agreement to policy decisions to legislate for English as an official language of New Zealand.

Relation to government priorities

- 2 This proposal contributes to the commitment in the coalition agreement between National and New Zealand First to progress legislation to make English an official language of New Zealand.

Executive Summary

- 3 The National-New Zealand First coalition agreement includes a commitment to legislate to make English an official language of New Zealand.
- 4 New Zealand has three official languages but the status of English as an official language is not set out in legislation. Both te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) have legislation that set out their status as official languages.
- 5 I seek agreement to progress a Bill that declares English an official language of New Zealand, in line with the coalition agreement.
- 6 As the predominant language in New Zealand, I do not consider it necessary to provide any other specific provisions in the Bill for the use of the English language.

Background

- 7 The National-New Zealand First coalition agreement states that to “uphold the principles of liberal democracy, including equal citizenship and parliamentary sovereignty, the Parties will: Legislate to make English an official language of New Zealand.”
- 8 An official language is the language, or one of the languages, accepted by a country's government, used in the courts of law, and used in schools. Official language status can be ‘de facto’, that is, widely used and accepted as an official language but not having its status as an official language set out in legislation, or its official status can be in legislation.
- 9 New Zealand has three official languages, two of which have their official language status set out in legislation. Te reo Māori through Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016 / The Māori Language Act 2016 and NZSL through the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006. For those languages, legislation was considered necessary to protect the rights of linguistic minorities under section 20 of the Bill of Rights Act 1990 and to

legislate for the right to use each language in legal proceedings where they may otherwise not have been provided for.

- 10 The English language has ‘de facto’ official language status in New Zealand. It is the predominant language used across government institutions, the courts, and Parliament, and is spoken by approximately 95 percent of the New Zealand population.¹

Analysis

- 11 English is not legislated as an official language in New Zealand. Some consider, therefore, that the legal status of the English language is unclear and raise concerns with the legislative inconsistency amongst the official languages of New Zealand. Some also have a perception that, without legislation, the status of the English language could be diminished in future.
- 12 I consider that legislating to clarify the status of English as an official language would prevent any confusion about the status of the language, resolve any inconsistency that the status of only some official languages is set out in legislation, and make it clear that New Zealand has three official languages.
- 13 In line with the coalition agreement, I seek agreement to progress a stand-alone ‘English Language Bill’ that would legislate English as an official language of New Zealand. This would be a straightforward Bill to set out the existing status of English, which is recognised already as a ‘de-facto’ official language, as an official language in legislation.
- 14 As the predominant language of New Zealand, English does not require provision to continue to be used in the courts, Parliament, and government communications. I am therefore not seeking to include any other provisions for the language in the Bill.
- 15 Legislative recognition of the status of English as an official language will not affect the status or use of te reo Māori and NZSL, nor will it affect the use or status of other languages used in New Zealand.

Implementation

- 16 I expect to introduce legislation in August 2025 and for the Bill to progress through the remaining parliamentary stages by April 2026.
- 17 The Bill will come into force upon Royal Assent.

Cost-of-living Implications

- 18 The proposal contained in this paper has no cost-of-living implications.

Financial Implications

- 19 There are no financial implications arising from this proposal.

¹ 4.75m out of a total population of 4.99m - Census 2023 Data.

Legislative Implications

- 20 This paper is seeking agreement to a proposed Bill being included in the 2025 Legislation Programme with a priority Category 5 to progress to select committee by the end of the year.
- 21 The proposed Bill will bind the Crown. The Bill will be administered by the Ministry of Justice.

Impact Analysis

Regulatory Impact Statement

- 22 The Ministry for Regulation has determined that this proposal is exempt from the requirement to provide a Regulatory Impact Statement on the grounds that it has no or only minor economic, social, or environmental impacts.

Climate Implications of Policy Assessment

- 23 The Climate Implications of Policy Assessment (CIPA) team has been consulted and confirms that the CIPA requirements do not apply to this policy proposal, as the threshold for significance is not met.

Population Implications

- 24 The proposal is not expected to change the use of the English language in New Zealand, nor impact the use and support for the two other official languages, te reo Māori and NZSL, nor the use and support for any other languages used in New Zealand.
- 25 The proposal is not expected to impact any population groups in New Zealand.

Human Rights

- 26 The proposal in this paper raises no inconsistencies with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 or the Human Rights Act 1993.

Use of external resources

- 27 No external resources were used in the development of this advice.

Consultation

- 28 The following departments have been consulted on this paper: the Department of Internal Affairs, Cabinet Office, Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha, the Ministry for Regulation, Treasury, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, and the Public Service Commission. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has been informed.
- 29 The ACT Party and the New Zealand First Party have been consulted on this paper.

Communications

30 I intend to issue a press release when the Bill is introduced later this year.

Proactive Release

31 I will proactively release this Cabinet paper, with appropriate redactions, alongside the introduction of the Bill, in accordance with paragraph 25.2 of the Cabinet Office Circular CO (23) 04.

Recommendations

32 The Minister of Justice recommends that the Committee:

- 1 **note** that the National-New Zealand First coalition agreement includes a commitment to legislate to make English an official language of New Zealand;
- 2 **agree** to progress a stand-alone 'English Language Bill' to meet the coalition agreement to make English an official language of New Zealand;
- 3 **note** that the proposed Bill will have no impact on the official status and use of te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language as provided for in their legislation;
- 4 **agree** to include the Bill on the Governments 2025 Legislative Programme with a priority Category 5 (to progress to select committee by the end of the year);
- 5 **agree** that the Bill will bind the Crown;
- 6 **invite** the Minister of Justice to issue drafting instructions to give effect to the decisions in these recommendations;
- 7 **authorise** the Minister of Justice to make any minor and technical policy decisions that may arise prior to the Bill's introduction in accordance with policy agreed by Cabinet.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Paul Goldsmith

Minister of Justice



Cabinet Business Committee

Minute of Decision

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Declaring English an Official Language

Portfolio **Justice**

On 30 June 2025, the Cabinet Business Committee:

- 1 **noted** that the National-New Zealand First Coalition Agreement includes a commitment to legislate to make English an official language of New Zealand;
- 2 **agreed** to progress a stand-alone English Language Bill (the Bill) to meet the commitment referred to in paragraph 1;
- 3 **noted** that the Bill will have no impact on the official status and use of te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language as provided for in their legislation;
- 4 **agreed** to include the Bill on the 2025 Legislation Programme with a category 5 priority (to proceed to select committee by the end of 2025);
- 5 **agreed** that the Bill will bind the Crown;
- 6 **invited** the Minister of Justice to issue drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office to give effect to the above decisions;
- 7 **authorised** the Minister of Justice to make any minor and technical policy decisions that may arise prior to the Bill's introduction in accordance with the policy agreed by Cabinet.

Rachel Clarke
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon David Seymour (Chair)
Rt Hon Winston Peters
Hon Nicola Willis
Hon Chris Bishop
Hon Simeon Brown
Hon Shane Jones
Hon Erica Stanford
Hon Paul Goldsmith
Hon Louise Upston
Hon Judith Collins KC

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report of the Cabinet Business Committee: Period Ended 4 July 2025

On 14 July 2025, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Business Committee for the period ended 4 July 2025:

Out of scope

CBC-25-MIN-0029

Declaring English an Official Language
Portfolio: Justice

CONFIRMED

Out of scope

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Justice

Cabinet Legislation Committee

English Language Bill: Approval for introduction

Proposal

1 This paper seeks approval to introduce the English Language Bill (the Bill).

Policy

2 The National-New Zealand First coalition agreement includes a commitment to legislate to make English an official language of New Zealand.

3 On 14 July 2025, Cabinet agreed to progress the English Language Bill [CAB-25-MIN-0228]. The Bill will recognise the official status of the English language in legislation.

4 New Zealand has three official languages, two of which already have their official language status set out in legislation. Te reo Māori through Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016/The Māori Language Act 2016 and New Zealand Sign Language through the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006. For those languages, legislation was considered necessary to protect the rights of linguistic minorities under section 20 of the Bill of Rights Act 1990 and to legislate for the right to use each language in legal proceedings where they may otherwise not have been provided for.

5 As the predominant language of New Zealand, English does not require special provision to continue to be used in the courts, Parliament, and government communications. Therefore, no other provisions were agreed for inclusion within the Bill.

6 Cabinet noted that 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.

7 This paper seeks approval to introduce the English Language Bill in August 2025.

Impact Analysis

8 The proposal is exempt from Cabinet's regulatory impact analysis requirements on the grounds that it has no or only minor economic, social, or environmental impacts.

Compliance

- 9 The Bill complies with:
- 9.1 the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi;
 - 9.2 the rights and freedoms contained in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993;
 - 9.3 the disclosure statement requirements (a disclosure statement is attached);
 - 9.4 the principles and guidelines set out in the Privacy Act 2020;
 - 9.5 relevant international standards and obligations; and
 - 9.6 the Legislation Guidelines (2021 edition), which are maintained by the Legislation Design and Advisory Committee.
- 10 The Treaty Provisions Officials Group has not been consulted as there are no specific Treaty provisions in the Bill.

Consultation

- 11 The following departments and Offices have been consulted on this paper: Department of Internal Affairs, the Treasury, Cabinet Office, Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry for Regulation, the Public Service Commission, Ministry of Culture and Heritage, and Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People. The Policy Advisory Group in the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has been informed.
- 12 The ACT Party and the New Zealand First Party have been consulted on this Cabinet paper.

Binding on the Crown

- 13 The Bill will bind the Crown.

Creating new agencies or amending law relating to existing agencies

- 14 The Bill does not create any new agencies.

Allocation of decision-making powers

- 15 The Bill does not allocate decision making powers between the executive and judiciary.

Associated regulations and Other instruments

- 16 The Bill does not contain any associated regulations or other instruments.

Definition of Minister/department

17 The Bill does not contain a definition of Minister, department, or Chief Executive of a department.

Commencement of legislation

18 The Bill will come into force on the day after the day of Royal Assent.

Parliamentary stages

19 The Bill should be introduced by 21 August 2025. I expect the Bill to pass through the remaining parliamentary stages by the end of April 2026.

Proactive Release

20 I propose to proactively release this Cabinet paper, the earlier Cabinet policy paper, and the related Cabinet Minutes, with appropriate redactions, in accordance with Cabinet Office Circular Co (23) 04, following the introduction of the Bill.

Recommendations

21 The Minister of Justice recommends that the Committee:

1. **note** that the English Language Bill holds a priority of Category 5 on the 2025 Legislation Programme (to progress to select committee by the end of 2025);
2. **note** that the English Language Bill provides legislative recognition that the English language is an official language of New Zealand;

Approval to introduce

3. **approve** the introduction of the English Language Bill;
4. **agree** that the Bill be introduced by 21 August 2025 and pass through the remaining parliamentary stages by the end of April 2026;
5. **agree** that the Bill:
 - 5.1. be referred to the Governance and Administration Committee for consideration; and
 - 5.2. come into force the day after Royal Assent.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Paul Goldsmith

Minister of Justice



Cabinet Legislation Committee

Minute of Decision

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English Language Bill: Approval for Introduction

Portfolio **Justice**

On 14 August 2025, the Cabinet Legislation Committee:

- 1 **noted** that the English Language Bill (the Bill) holds a category 5 priority on the 2025 Legislation Programme (to proceed to select committee by the end of 2025);
- 2 **noted** that the Bill provides legislative recognition that the English language is an official language of New Zealand;
- 3 **approved** the English Language Bill [PCO 28180/5.0] for introduction;
- 4 **agreed** that the Bill be introduced by 21 August 2025;
- 5 **agreed** that the Government propose that the Bill be:
 - 5.1 referred to the Governance and Administration Committee for consideration;
 - 5.2 enacted by the end of April 2026.

Tom Kelly
Committee Secretary

Present:

Hon David Seymour (Chair)
Hon Paul Goldsmith
Hon Brooke van Velden
Hon Shane Jones
Hon Nicole McKee
Hon Casey Costello
Hon Penny Simmonds
Stuart Smith, MP
Todd Stephenson, MP
Jamie Arbuckle, MP

Officials present from:

Officials Committee for LEG
Office of the Leader of the House



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Report of the Cabinet Legislation Committee: Period Ended 15 August 2025

On 18 August 2025, Cabinet made the following decisions on the work of the Cabinet Legislation Committee for the period ended 15 August 2025:

Out of scope

LEG-25-MIN-0155

English Language Bill: Approval for Introduction
Portfolio: Justice

CONFIRMED

Out of scope

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

Hon Paul Goldsmith Minister of Justice

Draft Cabinet paper: Declaring English an Official Language

Date	11 June 2025	File reference	DOG-11-06-25
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Action sought

Timeframe

Confirm policy settings for legislating English as an official language of New Zealand, as per coalition agreement.	As soon as practicable, by 19 June 2025.
Approve the attached draft Cabinet paper for Ministerial and coalition consultation, subject to any feedback you may have.	

Contacts for telephone discussion (if required)

Name	Position	Telephone		First contact
		(work)	(a/h)	
Kathy Brightwell	General Manager, Civil & Constitutional	s9(2)(a)		<input type="checkbox"/>
Hayley Denoual	Policy Manager, Democracy and Open Government			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Anna Moore-Jones	Senior Advisor, Democracy and Open Government			<input type="checkbox"/>

Minister's office to complete

Noted
 Approved
 Overtaken by events
 Referred to: _____
 Seen
 Withdrawn
 Not seen by Minister
Minister's office's comments

RELEASED UNDER THE OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT 1982

Purpose

1. This briefing:
 - 1.1. seeks agreement to policy settings to meet the National-NZ First coalition agreement to legislate to make English an official language of New Zealand
 - 1.2. provides a draft Cabinet paper for your approval ahead of Ministerial consultation and consideration by the Social Outcomes Committee (SOU) on 16 July 2025.

Executive Summary

2. The National-NZ First coalition agreement includes a commitment “to legislate to make English an official language of New Zealand”. You have indicated that you would like to introduce legislation by the end of September 2025.
3. New Zealand has three official languages, two of which have their official language status set out in legislation (te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language). The English language is accepted as a ‘de facto’ official language of New Zealand, though its status as an official language is not set out in legislation.
4. To meet the coalition agreement, the Ministry seeks agreement to a stand-alone Bill to legislate for English as an official language. We seek your direction whether the Bill should be specific to the English language or note all official languages of New Zealand with appropriate cross-references. There are opportunities and drawbacks to both approaches.
5. No other provisions are proposed for inclusion within the Bill as the Ministry does not consider that any protections are necessary to support the use of the English language, as the predominant language of New Zealand.

Background

6. The National-NZ First coalition agreement includes a commitment to legislate to make English an official language of New Zealand. You have indicated that you would like legislation to be introduced by the end of September 2025; timeframes to meet this deadline are below.
7. An official language is a language that is accepted by a country's government, used in schools, used in the courts of law, and so on. It can be a ‘de facto’ official language, that is, widely accepted and used as such but not designated as an official language in legislation, or it can have its official language status set out in legislation.
8. New Zealand has three official languages, two of which have their official language status set out in legislation - Te Reo Māori (through Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016 / The Māori Language Act 2016) and New Zealand Sign Language (through the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006).

9. English has 'de facto' official language status as its status is not set out in legislation. In 2018, there was a Member's Bill which sought to legislate the status of English as an official language.¹ Members of the public have also presented petitions on the topic.²

Is there a need for legislation for the English language in New Zealand?

Legislating for an official language can protect the rights of linguistic minorities and provide for the use of their languages in formal settings

10. Some people have argued that the legal status of the English language in New Zealand is unclear. They consider that, because the official status of the English language is not provided for in legislation, it raises concerns with the legislative inconsistency amongst the official languages of New Zealand. Some people may have a perception that, without legislation, the status of the English language could be diminished in future. However, there is no evidence to support concerns about the use or status of English as an official language in New Zealand.
11. Although its status as an official language is not set out in legislation, the English language is the predominant language used in New Zealand, and the English language is the default language used in the courts, Parliament, and government communications. As of 2023, roughly 95 percent of the New Zealand population spoke English.³
12. This differs from both te reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL). For those languages, legislation was considered necessary to protect the rights of linguistic minorities, under section 20 of the Bill of Rights Act 1990, and to legislate for the right to use each language in certain scenarios where they may otherwise not have been provided for.
13. Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016 and the New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006 therefore provide for the right to use those respective language in legal proceedings, as well as a set of principles for consultation with the relevant communities and in the provision of government information to the public.
14. Under its Act, te reo Māori is also acknowledged as taonga to iwi and Māori, and the Act requires the development of Māori language strategies. That Act also established an independent statutory entity (Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori | Māori Language Commission) to provide leadership in promoting the health of the language.

Very few predominantly 'English-speaking' countries have legislated for English as an official language

15. Internationally, very few predominantly English-speaking countries have legislated for English as an official language. Where it is legislated, it appears to be to ensure another language is of similar status and use in Government and official contexts. For example, in

¹ 'English an Official Language of New Zealand Bill' (Clayton Mitchell MP). This Member's Bill was never drawn from the ballot.

² Two petitions have been identified; one reported back by select committee in September 2019 and the other in March 2025. In March 2025, the select committee noted English was a 'de facto' official language of New Zealand and mentioned the coalition agreement commitment to legislate its status.

³ 4.75m out of a total population of 4.99m - Census 2023 Data.

IN CONFIDENCE

Canada, the legislation establishes that both French and English are to be used in the courts, Parliament, and government communications.

16. **Annex One** has more information about the status of the language in comparable overseas countries.

We do not consider it necessary to legislate English as an official language of New Zealand

17. In our view, the English language does not need to be legislated as an official language. It does not require statutory support to continue to be used in courts, Parliament, and government communications in New Zealand. Strategies to support the health or use of the English language would not have any advantages or provide any practical changes.
18. Setting out in legislation that English is an official language of New Zealand would not change its status as the default language, nor the status of the other official languages, nor the status of English vis-à-vis the other two official languages.

There are two ways to legislate English as an official language of New Zealand

19. To meet the coalition agreement to legislate to make English an official language, the Ministry recommends the creation of a new stand-alone Act to declare English to be an official language. A new Act is required because there is no existing Act into which such a provision could logically be added.
20. There are two approaches that could be taken to a new Act. Neither approach is intended to affect the current use, status, or legislation of the other official languages of New Zealand, nor the other languages spoken in New Zealand.
21. We are seeking your decision on whether you prefer:
 - 21.1. **Option 1: An 'English Language Bill'** – this would be specific to the English language. This would mean each official language had its own legislation.

It is the most straightforward approach to meet the coalition agreement. It would be a short symbolic Bill and may be criticised as being unnecessary.
 - 21.2. **Option 2: An 'Official Languages Bill'** – this could list in a single statute all three official languages of New Zealand, with cross-references to the two existing official language Acts as necessary.

This would also be a short, largely symbolic Bill. However, this approach would provide some context to legislating the English language as an official language and reduce the possibility of criticism for doing so unnecessarily.
22. We do not recommend attempting to consolidate the two existing official language Acts into one Act, alongside provisions legislating the status of English as an official language. This would be a much more significant drafting exercise and require more time and resource to complete. It could also risk creating undue confusion and concern for users of te reo Māori and NZSL, as these communities might consider that a consolidated Act diminishes the rights

IN CONFIDENCE

of use of each language in their stand-alone legislation. A consolidated Act is also not considered necessary to meet the coalition agreement.

23. We seek your decision between the two options outlined above. You may wish to also discuss with the NZ First Party. The attached draft Cabinet paper can then be amended based on your preferred option, prior to formal Ministerial consultation.

Consultation

24. We have consulted Te Puni Kōkiri (TPK) and Whaikaha | Ministry of Disabled People (Whaikaha) as the agencies responsible for the other official language legislation.

- 24.1. TPK does not support progressing the proposed legislation and raised concerns that the proposal may compromise the status of te reo Māori. TPK considers that there is a potential risk that progressing the proposed legislation may result in a breach of the Crown's commitment to actively protect and promote te reo Māori.

The Ministry notes that the proposed Bill will have no impact on Te Ture mō Te Reo Māori 2016. It will therefore not have an impact on the status, use, or protections for te reo Māori that are found within that legislation (and any relevant strategies).

- 24.2. Whaikaha did not raise any concerns with the proposal.

25. Further consultation with other agencies, including the Treasury, the Department of Internal Affairs, and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage, will be undertaken alongside Ministerial consultation. Public feedback will be sought as part of the select committee process.

Proposed timelines and next steps

26. In line with the coalition agreement, we attach a draft Cabinet paper that seeks Cabinet agreement to legislate for English as an official language of New Zealand (**Annex Two**). The paper seeks agreement to include a Bill on the Legislation Programme with a category 5 priority (legislation to select committee by the end of the year).
27. Subject to any changes, we recommend you circulate the draft Cabinet paper for Ministerial consultation, including consultation with coalition partners, as soon as possible. Following any feedback from Ministerial consultation by 4 July, we anticipate the Cabinet paper could be finalised for consideration at SOU on Wednesday 16 July.
28. Indicative timeframes for introduction of a Bill by the end of September 2025 are set out below. Parliamentary Counsel Office (PCO) have noted that this timeframe is very tight and will depend on the availability of PCO drafting resource in July and August. If PCO resourcing is tied up on other bills, more time may be required for drafting. An alternative timeframe could provide for a Bill to be introduced during the October sitting period instead, which should still allow the Bill to be enacted by early May 2026. We can liaise with your Office to discuss any adjustments to the timeframe once the drafting instructions have been provided to PCO in late July.
29. Proposed timeline for a Bill is as follows:

IN CONFIDENCE

Date	Deliverable
Thursday 19 June – Friday 4 July	Circulate draft SOU Cabinet paper for Ministerial and coalition consultation
Thursday 10 July	Lodge Cabinet paper with Cabinet Office
Wednesday 16 July	<i>SOU Meeting</i>
Monday 21 July	<i>Cabinet Meeting</i>
Monday 25 August	Bill and draft LEG Cabinet paper provided for Ministerial and coalition consultation
Wednesday 27 August – Tuesday 9 September	Circulate Bill and draft LEG Cabinet paper for Ministerial and coalition consultation
Thursday 11 September	Lodge Bill and Cabinet paper with Cabinet Office
Thursday 18 September	<i>LEG Meeting</i>
Monday 22 September	<i>Cabinet Meeting</i>
By Tuesday 30 September	Introduction
w/c 6 October 2025	First Reading and referral to Select Committee
By end of April 2026	Final House stages and Royal Assent

Recommendations

30. We recommend that you:

- | | | |
|------|---|----------|
| 1. | Note that the National-NZ First coalition agreement includes a commitment to legislate to make English an official language of New Zealand; | NOTED |
| 2. | Agree to progress a stand-alone Bill that declares English an official language of New Zealand; | YES / NO |
| 3. | Agree that the proposed Bill will either; | |
| 3.1. | Option 1: Reference only the English language - ' <i>English Language Bill</i> '; or | YES / NO |
| | | or |
| 3.2. | Option 2: Note all three official languages in one place, cross-referencing the other Acts - ' <i>Official Languages Bill</i> ' (officials' preferred); | YES / NO |

IN CONFIDENCE

4. **Circulate** the attached draft Cabinet paper for Ministerial consultation, including with coalition partners, by 19 June 2025 for feedback no later than 4 July 2025.

YES / NO

H Denoual

Hayley Denoual
Policy Manager, Democracy and Open Government

Hon Paul Goldsmith
Minister of Justice

Date / /

APPROVED SEEN NOT AGREED

Attachments:

- **Annex One: International Comparisons – Official status of the English language**
- **Annex Two: Draft Cabinet paper - Declaring English an Official Language**

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Annex One: International Comparisons - Official status of the English language

Alongside New Zealand, the following countries have been chosen to examine the legal status of the English language due to its use as the predominant language in the country, as well as their comparable democratic systems of governance and overall commonalities as Western societies.

Country	Status of English	Other official language(s)	Mechanism for English
New Zealand	De facto	Te reo Māori, New Zealand Sign Language	-
Canada	Official language	French – equal status with English – both must be used by Government	Official Languages Act 1985
United States of America*	Official language	-	Executive Order 14224
Australia	De facto	-	-
<i>United Kingdom</i>			
England	De facto	-	-
Ireland	Official language	Irish – first official language	Constitution of Ireland 1937
Scotland	De facto	Gaelic – also de facto	-
Wales	Official language - of Parliament	Welsh – also official language of Parliament	National Assembly for Wales (Official Languages) Act 2012

*Only the United States of America has declared English the (only) official language of the country; intended to clarify its superior position. This was achieved through an Executive Order by President Donald Trump on March 1st 2025. An Executive Order has the force of law but is not technically legislation.

Key
Not an official language in law
Some status as an official language in law
An official language in law