

30 June 2023

s9(2)(a)

Mālō 'e lelei s9(2)(a)

## RESPONSE TO AN OFFICIAL INFORMATION ACT REQUEST

On 2 June 2023, you contacted the Ministry for Pacific Peoples (the Ministry) requesting under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA), information relating to the Tongan language in Aotearoa. I have outlined your specific requests and my responses to each below.

*1. When did the first Tongan language week start in Aotearoa?*

The first Tongan Language Week was launched in 2011 on the first week of September.

*2. When was the Tongan language acknowledged in schools?*

On 14 August 2007, the Tongan language was officially acknowledged in the New Zealand curriculum. The launch of the curriculum extended opportunities to children to learn the Tongan language in mainstream classes and to safeguard, promote, and revitalise the Tongan language in New Zealand.

*3. How effective is the language weeks for our Pasifika people of Aotearoa? In particular the Tongan people?*

The Pacific Languages Strategy recognises the Pacific Language Weeks (PLW) series as an initiative that supports the promotion and celebration of Pacific languages across Aotearoa. In 2022, the Leo Moana o Aotearoa Survey Report launched and identified PLW as a key enabler to using, learning, and maintaining Pacific languages in Aotearoa.

Since 2010, the Ministry has been supporting PLW alongside communities to promote and raise awareness of the diversity of Pacific languages. The series that began with Vaiaso o le Gagana Samoa now comprises of nine Pacific languages: Tonga, Kiribati, Cook Islands, Tuvalu, Fiji, Niue, Tokelau, Rotuma, and Samoa.

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Since its inception, the PLW series has been instrumental to fostering cultural connections throughout the country and contributing to the overall wellbeing of Pacific people. We have a growing audience that actively participates in the series online through social media platforms.

Tongan Language Week has been received well by many Tongan communities that have expressed their increased confidence to speak the language and feel supported by the series to do so. Since 2020, over 35,000 users have engaged with online content for Tongan Language Week and a total reach of 600,000 people. Community-led language initiatives and events during Tongan Language Week have been key elements in encouraging more frequent use and learning of the language.

In line with standard OIA practice, the Ministry proactively publishes some of its responses to OIA requests. As such, this letter may be published on the Ministry for Pacific Peoples' website. Your personal details will be removed, and the Ministry will not publish any information that would identify you or your organisation.

Should you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact the Ministry at: [ويا\\_requests@mpp.govt.nz](mailto:ويا_requests@mpp.govt.nz).

If you are dissatisfied with this response, you have the right, under section 28(3) of the OIA, to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at [www.ombudsman.parliament.nz](http://www.ombudsman.parliament.nz) or freephone 0800 802 602.

Faka'apa'apa atu



Ta'i Richard  
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**Languages Unit**