

To the Members of the Select Committee,

The New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI) appreciates the opportunity to make this submission on the Treaty Principles Bill. NZSTI is the national professional association for translators and interpreters and upholds the highest standards of translation and interpretation in Aotearoa. Our Māori name, Te Rōpū Kaiwhakamāori ā-waha, ā-tuhi o Aotearoa, gifted to us by Sir Timoti Kāretu, reflects the profound partnership established by Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the unique heritage of Aotearoa New Zealand.

NZSTI stands in solidarity with te reo Māori translators who have voiced grave concerns about the quality of the translation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi quality used to underpin the Treaty Principles Bill. The issues raised highlight critical deficiencies in the translations provided, which fail to meet the rigorous professional standards required for a document of national importance. These flawed translations undermine the Bill's integrity and its alignment with the promises and obligations enshrined in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Translation Concerns

The translation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi must adhere to the highest professional standards to accurately reflect its meaning and intent. The te reo Māori text of Te Tiriti, as recognised under international law, holds paramount authority. Any misinterpretation or inaccuracy in translation can therefore compromise the legislative process.

NZSTI fully supports the concerns raised by te reo Māori translators and their call for the Government to engage culturally appropriate and professionally qualified translators.

Consequences of Faulty Translations

The use of flawed translations risks serious consequences, including:

- Misrepresentation of Māori voices and perspectives in legislation.
- Legal and social misunderstandings.
- A breach of trust between Māori and the Crown.

Support for Māori Translators and Cultural Integrity

NZSTI fully supports the efforts of Māori translators to address these translation flaws. We urge the Government to publicly acknowledge the inadequacy of the translations and commit to rigorous quality assurance processes. This involves consulting expert te reo Māori translators and cultural practitioners.

This issue also underscores the broader need for stronger government support to ensure that professional translators are consistently engaged in work of this magnitude. Translators who adhere to established professional and ethical standards are essential for maintaining the accuracy, cultural sensitivity, and credibility of translations, particularly for documents as foundational as Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Recommendations

1. Do not proceed with the Treaty Principles Bill as the translations of Te Tiriti o Waitangi this proposed legislation is based on fails to meet professional quality standards.
2. Establish and keep a framework for engaging qualified Māori translators in all Treaty-related legislative work to ensure cultural and linguistic integrity.

NZSTI urges the Select Committee to take these concerns seriously and to prioritise the accuracy and integrity of the translation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Thank you for considering our submission. NZSTI remains available to provide further input or clarification as required.

Yours sincerely,

The New Zealand Society of Translators and Interpreters (NZSTI)