

29 June 2023

[REDACTED]

REF: OIA-12839

Dear [REDACTED]

Request made under the Official Information Act 1982

Thank you for your email of 5 June 2023 requesting the following information under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) relating to the He Tohu Huarahi Māori bilingual traffic signs programme. I will answer each of your questions in turn.

1. Please advise what research was undertaken, by whom, and what the results were of any such research, to assess the road safety benefits of introducing bi-lingual road signs.
2. Please advise the number of lives that the NZTA estimates will be saved by introducing bi-lingual road signs.
3. Please advise how many fewer injuries are expected on the roads as a result of introducing bi-lingual road signs.
4. Please advise how many lives the NZTA estimates would have been saved if bi-lingual signs had been in place previously.
5. Please advise how many fewer injuries the NZTA estimates would have occurred historically had bi-lingual road signs been in place previously.

Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency undertook research to determine whether there were any safety disbenefits accompanying bilingual traffic signage. It found that there were no more deaths or serious injuries as a result of establishing bilingual traffic signs, which are used safely in many countries and are considered 'standard' in the European Union (EU).

This research is available at the following links:

- <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/resources/research/notes/005/>
- <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/research/research-notes/005/005-bilingual-traffic-signage.pdf>

A memo released as part of the current public consultation identifies safety enhancements as one of the likely benefits of bilingual traffic signage and is available at:

- <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/resources/research/research-notes/005/memo-likely-benefits-of-bilingual-traffic-signs-in-aotearoa-new-zealand.pdf>

Waka Kotahi does not have any data available relating to the number of estimated lives saved or reduced injuries. I am therefore refusing these parts of your request under section 18(e) of the Act, as

the document alleged to contain the information does not exist, or despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

6. Please advise how much money the NZTA has paid to consultants to develop bi-lingual signs, and how many consultants continue to be employed by the NZTA on this work, and how long any consultants will continue to be paid for this work.

As at 23 May 2023, \$739,802 has been spent on consultants for the He Tohu Huarahi Māori bilingual traffic signs programme. The services procured relate to skills and expertise around design, rules and guidance; research in relation to the safety as it relates to bilingual traffic signs; and translation specialists.

Translation specialists continue to be engaged on an as needed basis and therefore will be paid for their relevant expertise as and when it is required.

7. Please advise how much money the NZTA estimates will be spent on advertising and campaigning to introduce bi-lingual signs.

Subject to Ministerial decisions to change the Land Transport Rule: Traffic Control Devices (Bilingual Signs) Amendment 2023 following consultation, Waka Kotahi estimates that \$100,000 will be spent towards a public information campaign to educate the public and share safety messages for bilingual signs. Waka Kotahi research into the international experience with bilingual signage recommended an education campaign to make people aware of this change.

8. Please advise whether all iwi across New Zealand agree on the translation (or transliteration) of the wording to be included on all of the various signs across the country.

Iwi and Māori are being invited to submit their views during the consultation period.

Representation on the Pae Whakamāori covered most of Aotearoa. The members of Pae Whakamāori are experts in te reo Māori and were tasked with considering and proposing translations for bilingual signs as part of the He Tohu Haurahi Māori bilingual traffic signs programme. The members of Pae Whakamāori were selected in recognition of their expertise in te reo Māori and te ao Māori.

The translations also went through a moderation process, supported by Te Mātāwai. The moderation process made sure translation and the messages for users were consistent across the different traffic signs.

9. Please advise if money has been set aside or estimated for future consultation or court proceeding with various Maori entities, to argue the meanings or merits of signs.

No money has been set aside or estimated for this.

10. Please advise why priority is to be given to Maori language on signs, with English (the most spoken and universally understood language on Earth) being secondary and less prominent – noting that Maori is understood by less than 5% of New Zealand’s residential population, and probably NONE of the tourists or overseas visitors who will need the information contained in road signs.

Waka Kotahi research found that it would not take road users long to recognise a new sign and comprehend the translation they were most proficient in. In places overseas where bilingual traffic signs are used, long term road observations revealed there were no negative effects on road user experience in terms of deaths and serious injuries, even if the less spoken language was placed in a position of primacy.

Te Puni Kōkiri recommends that where te reo Māori and English text cannot be displayed as equal then te reo Māori should be more prominent.

Colmar Kantar public opinion polling by Te Taura Whiri i te reo Māori, the Māori Language Commission has found that more than eight in 10 New Zealanders see the Māori language as part of the New Zealand identity.

11. I consider it reasonable to assume that the purpose of all road signs is to convey important information clearly to road users. That being the case, what is NZTA's reasoning and justification for deliberately introducing risks and adding unnecessary hazards for road users, by introducing complicated and confusing messaging that will distract road users' attention from essential tasks?

Waka Kotahi conducted a range of investigations into bilingual traffic signs, including potential safety concerns, overall performance, and likely benefits. These can be accessed at the link provided to you in response to questions 1 – 5 of your request.

Evidentially, in places where these data points were measured there were no more deaths or serious injuries as a result of establishing bilingual traffic signs. Elsewhere bilingual traffic signs are used safely in many countries and are considered 'standard' in the EU.

When designed well, bilingual traffic signs are not arduous for a reader. The design standards we have established require visual elements to aid the reader in subconsciously selecting the language they are most familiar with.

12. Please advise what research was undertaken to address the human factors issues of human attention and mental comprehension required to interpret confusing signs.

We are confident that the Human Factors perspective has been incorporated into the research. Early research into bilingual traffic signs (issues, safety, overseas experience) was led by a human factors and systems safety specialist. This early research delivered an investigation into the safety, safety factors and best-practice design guidance developed by overseas experience with bilingual signage. This was then peer-reviewed by certified third party experts in transport research and human factors.

The research report is available at the links provided to you in response to questions 1 – 5 of your request.

13. Please outline details for the cost-benefit analysis undertaken to justify introduction of bilingual road signs.

A cost-benefit analysis has not been undertaken for the introduction of bilingual traffic signs. I am therefore refusing this part of your request under section 18(e) of the Act, as the document alleged to contain the information does not exist, or despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Under section 28 of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review my decision to partially refuse your request. The contact details for the Ombudsman can be located at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz.

In line with Waka Kotahi policy, this response will soon be published on our website, with personal information removed.

If you would like to discuss this reply with Waka Kotahi, please contact Ministerial Services by email to official.correspondence@nzta.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ian Duncan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ian Duncan

Acting National Manager Policy and System Planning