



New Zealand House of Representatives
Te Whare Māngai o Aotearoa

Education and Workforce Committee

Komiti Whiriwhiri Take Kuranga, Take Hunga Mahi

54th Parliament
September 2026

Petition of Keely Kalirai Cairns: Recognise and resource Hindi as a language option within NZ Schools

Presented to the House of Representatives
by Katie Nimon, Chairperson

Contents

Recommendation.....	3
Request for Hindi to be a language option in schools.....	3
Submission from the petitioner.....	3
Comments from the Ministry of Education.....	4
Our response to the petition.....	4
Appendix.....	5

Petition of Keely Kalirai Cairns

Recommendation

The Education and Workforce Committee has considered the petition of Keely Kalirai Cairns—Recognise and resource Hindi as a language option within NZ Schools—and recommends that the House take note of its report.

Request for Hindi to be a language option in schools

This petition was signed by 26 people. It was presented to the House by Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan on 26 March 2026 and transferred to us on 25 June 2026, and requests:

That the House of Representatives urge the Government to include Hindi as a language option for NCEA and ensure that resources are available for teaching it at primary, intermediate, and secondary schools.

We note that NCEA is in the process of being replaced by new qualifications, with implementation rolling out from 2028. These changes are aimed at creating more cohesive learning pathways for students at all education levels. We have therefore addressed the petitioner’s request in more general terms, for Hindi to be a language option in schools.

Submission from the petitioner

The petitioner, Ms Keely Kalirai Cairns, is a New Zealander of Indian heritage. Her petition requests that all students, and Indian-New Zealand children in particular, have the option to study Hindi in school. Ms Kalirai Cairns made a submission to highlight the cultural and economic benefits that Hindi language learning would bring to New Zealand. She pointed out that the Indian population is New Zealand’s third largest ethnic group, and that Hindi is the fifth most spoken language in the country. She suggested that including Hindi as a language option in schools would foster cultural connectedness for many communities nationwide. Further, she highlighted that India is one of the world’s largest economies, and it may therefore be economically beneficial for more New Zealanders to learn and understand Hindi.

In her submission, Ms Kalirai Cairns also shared some of her personal experience with language and cultural loss. Her mother did not teach her any Indian language for fear that Ms Kalirai Cairns might be regarded as “different”. The petitioner expressed a sense of disconnection from her heritage and noted that other people from diverse backgrounds feel a similar sense of cultural separation.

The petitioner submitted that there are also economic benefits of learning Hindi. She wrote about the free trade agreement (FTA) signed between India and New Zealand this year. She noted that this FTA will bring business, employment, and trade opportunities that make Hindi a useful language for New Zealanders to learn, understand, and use.

Ms Kalirai Cairns acknowledged that community-led language learning is available and has benefits. However, she noted that community classes often have limited effectiveness due to

insufficient support and resourcing capabilities. Therefore, she advocates the inclusion of Hindi as a recognised and resourced language as part of the New Zealand curriculum.

Comments from the Ministry of Education

We asked the Ministry of Education | Te Tātuhu o te Mātauranga to make a written submission on the petition. The ministry provided information about planned changes to the New Zealand curriculum, including to the “Learning Languages” area, and shared insights about the new educational qualifications for students.

The ministry told us that the language subjects for the refreshed curriculum were confirmed by the Minister of Education in 2025.¹ To inform the Minister’s decisions, the ministry looked at language learning from the primary to the senior secondary school levels. As part of the ministry’s process, it considers community demand for language learning options. The ministry also consults schools and the public on curriculum proposals, to receive feedback on its suggested curriculum changes. The ministry noted that its consultation has not shown significant demand for Hindi language learning in schools.

In its submission, the ministry recognised language learning as an important part of a holistic education experience, with real diplomatic and community benefits. As an example of this value, it highlighted some of the Pacific languages that have recently been included in curricula across the country. Future changes to the language learning curriculum would require many factors to be considered. This includes considering demand, flexibility of learning for students, and the programme’s coherence, as well as the resourcing needed to maintain curriculum subjects appropriately. The ministry noted that schools do have the flexibility to provide education in languages other than those in the curriculum. The ministry also intends to continue reviewing the subjects in the curriculum once the new qualification framework has been established.

Our response to the petition

We thank the petitioner for her advocacy for more formal representation of Hindi in New Zealand schools. We support a wide range of languages being available in the New Zealand education system, and appreciate the diversity of languages spoken throughout the country. Hindi-speaking people are an important part of our society, and we acknowledge the strong ties between India and New Zealand. Based on information provided by the Ministry of Education, we are advised that the current approach for language education and curriculum development is sustainable and appropriate. We encourage the ministry to consider the demand for Hindi language education in its future reviews, taking community interests, educational opportunities, and the diplomatic and economic benefits of New Zealand’s future workforce into account.

¹ We note that the existing list of NCEA language subjects was approved by Cabinet in 2021. It includes 19 languages. The refreshed curriculum will include 14 languages.

Appendix

Committee procedure

The petition was signed by 26 people on the Parliament website. It was presented to the House by Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan on 26 March 2026 and transferred to us on 25 June 2026. We met between 1 July 2026 and 16 September 2026 to consider it. We received written submissions from the petitioner and the Ministry of Education.

Committee members

Katie Nimon (Chairperson)
Hon Ginny Andersen
Carl Bates
Shanan Halbert
Grant McCallum
Dr Parmjeet Parmar
Hon Phil Twyford
Dr Vanessa Weenink
Dr Lawrence Xu-Nan

Related resources

The documents we received as evidence in relation to this petition are available on the [Parliament website](#).