

# Hon Aupito William Sio

## Minister for Pacific Peoples

### MEDIA STATEMENT

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## 2020 begins a new decade for Pacific languages as a competitive edge for Aotearoa

The Minister for Pacific Peoples, Aupito William Sio says the 2020 Pacific Language Weeks begins a new decade of magnifying the value and competitive advantage that Pacific languages and bilingualism brings to the Pacific communities of Aotearoa New Zealand.

“Our collective efforts and motivation to cherish our Pacific languages and bilingualism as a valued competitive edge can only enrich New Zealand’s cultural capital,” says Aupito William Sio.

“Last year’s celebrations of the 2019 United Nations International Year of Indigenous Languages, not only illuminated the value of the languages and the cultures of indigenous peoples all around the world, but it also boosted the confidence of Pacific youth, who proudly stood as a beacon of light to show the world that they too treasure their legacy of diverse Pacific languages and cultures in Aotearoa.

“This passion for Pacific languages and cultures will not grow on its own, and the Government’s Wellbeing Budget allows us to work in partnership with Pacific communities and the Ministry for Pacific Peoples to keep the fires burning so that our Pacific stories, which our languages carry, continue to be passed onto future generations to come.

“Pacific peoples must lead this work with confidence, and also use our cultural values such as collective action to also promote our languages, not just amongst Pacific communities, but nationwide and in partnership with all New Zealanders. Our languages need to be recognised and valued in our schools, community halls, our workplaces and in all areas of our lives.

“Our heritage as great navigators of the Pacific, following the stars to new places and adventures, is captured in our stories and told in our many languages. That relationship between heritage and language is critical for our voice, the voice of Pacific Aotearoa, to thrive and survive.

“For this reason, our languages are a vital bridge between our place in Aotearoa New Zealand and our heritage as peoples of the vast Blue Pacific continent. They are a key part of our individual and community wellbeing.

“Languages are the lens we use to understand and illustrate our history, our culture and the relationship we have with the world around us. It defines who we are, how we embrace our commonalities and why we celebrate our diversity as Pacific Aotearoa. Our languages are who we are and they define us,” says Aupito William Sio.

The Pacific Language Weeks are entering their 11th year, having first started with Samoa Language Week in 2010 and have since grown year on year, promoting and raising awareness of the diversity of our Pacific Languages.

The 2020 Language Weeks line-up begins with Rotuma Language Week in May and ends with Tokelau Language Week in October. Although officially termed Language Weeks, many have extended activities throughout the year.

For further information, please visit the Ministry for Peoples website [here](#).

**Language Week Dates:**

- **Rotuma Language Week:** Sunday 10 May – Saturday 16 May 2020
- **Samoa Language Week:** Sunday 24 May – Saturday 30 May 2020
- **Kiribati Language Week:** Sunday 12 July – Saturday 18 July 2020
- **Cook Islands Language Week:** Sunday 2 August – Saturday 8 August 2020
- **Tonga Language Week:** Sunday 6 September – Saturday 12 September 2020
- **Tuvalu Language Week:** Sunday 27 September – Saturday 3 October 2020
- **Fijian Language Week:** Sunday 4 October – Saturday 10 October 2020
- **Niue Language Week:** Sunday 18 October – Saturday 24 October 2020
- **Tokelau Language Week:** Sunday 25 October – Saturday 31 October 2020

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