**Proactively Released**

### Briefing Note: Meeting with New Zealand China Council 14 February 2019

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<th>To:</th>
<th>Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education</th>
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**Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this paper is for you to:

**Note** the content of this paper to support your meeting with Rt Hon Sir Don McKinnon, in his capacity as Chair of the New Zealand China Council, on 14 February 2019.

**Agree** that this Briefing will be proactively released.

**Summary**

- You are meeting with the Right Hon Sir Don McKinnon, Chair of the New Zealand China Council, on 14 February 2019. This meeting is in response to a letter from Sir Don McKinnon dated 28 August 2018 regarding teaching Chinese in New Zealand schools.
- This briefing provides talking points and background notes to support your meeting. Topics likely to be covered include language teaching and learning in New Zealand, provision of Mandarin Language Assistants in New Zealand, and New Zealand's broader education relationship with China.
Talking Points

How is the Government supporting and promoting language learning in education?

1. New Zealand is a diverse nation in which over 160 languages are spoken. The Government wants to foster diversity as a strength, and language learning is a valuable way to prepare students to engage and work with people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

2. While there are benefits to encouraging more students to learn Chinese languages in particular, we have a responsibility to recognise and support our official languages; Te Reo Māori and New Zealand Sign Language, support English as the medium for teaching and learning in most schools, as well as support the languages of our Pacific Realm nations.

3. The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) provides the framework for the teaching and learning of languages that are additional to the language of instruction. Chinese languages are offered within the NZC framework, and I note that in recent years Chinese languages have had the highest participation rate for international languages at primary school.

4. The Ministry of Education provides a suite of supports across a number of languages and language learning settings. This includes the Support for Learning Languages programme which helps schools build sustainable languages programmes, and supports building teachers’ capability in effective languages pedagogy.

5. The Ministry is also trialling different approaches to the delivery of language learning programmes, for example through digital apps which includes Mandarin. The use of apps like this may be an effective approach to scale language learning in a New Zealand context.

6. My Ministerial Advisory Group for the Curriculum, Progress and Achievement work programme is also providing advice to me on strengthening progress across the broad curriculum, which includes Learning Languages.

Asian Language Learning in Schools (ALLiS)

7. This programme was time-limited with funding allocated to schools across two funding rounds. The fund was designed to support schools to set up new, or to strengthen existing, Asian language learning programmes and establish language learning pathways, with programmes becoming sustainable by the end of the funding period. I note that the Ministry of Education provides a package of supports for language teaching and learning in schools that ALLiS participants may wish to access to continue their programmes (refer paragraph 16).

Chinese language teacher supply

8. Around $40 million has now been provided to address teacher supply through a range of initiatives to lift enrolments in initial teacher education, encourage former teachers back to the classroom, attract overseas qualified teachers and support principals with their recruitment practices.

9. The Ministry of Education works closely with sector groups to gather information about particular subject areas where teacher shortages are being experienced. Chinese language teaching has not been identified as having a shortage through this sector engagement. If schools are experiencing shortages, NCEA Levels 1, 2 and 3 Chinese is available through Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu.

Will you review the limit placed on Mandarin Language Assistants?
10. I recognise the strong interest of New Zealand schools in the Mandarin Language Assistants (MLA) programme and am aware of the request from New Zealand universities of using the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) Upgrade negotiations to secure an increase to the MLA visa quota. Visa issues generally remain sensitive in the FTA Upgrade negotiations and how this issue may be addressed in the negotiations is still uncertain at this stage. I will certainly convey to my Ministerial colleagues the importance that the Council attaches to this issue.

General comments on the relationship with China

11. I visited China in July 2018 and was reassured that the education relationship remains very positive and secure.

12. I was struck that, despite clear differences in scale, both countries face similar challenges designing an educational system that prepares students for the 21st century.

13. Supporting more people-to-people exchanges and lifting New Zealand students’ capability to engage with China is something that I strongly support.

If raised – A commitment to take action to facilitate Chinese language learning in New Zealand would be something that the Prime Minister could highlight during her forthcoming visit to China

14. While I have no update on any possible dates, I anticipate that if the Prime Minister visits China in 2019 she will be hoping to reinforce and strengthen all aspects of the relationship, including education, and matters such as language learning will be a part of those conversations.

If raised – Is the education relationship at risk if our relationship with China deteriorates?

15. The relationship with China – including in education – brings value for both sides. We work with China to ensure that we can manage any issues constructively. We’ve seen no sign that the recent education relationship is affected by anything other than market forces.

If raised – Are there any issues with the FTA upgrade negotiations?

16. There is no suggestion that other events in the bilateral relationship last year impacted the FTA Upgrade process. As with any negotiation, the tougher issues are taking time. This is not unusual.
Background

17. You have agreed to meet with the Right Hon Sir Don McKinnon, in his capacity as Chair of the New Zealand China Council, on 14 February 2019 to discuss:

   a. his letter dated 28 August 2018 regarding teaching Chinese in New Zealand schools

   b. the Teaching Languages in Schools: Rationale, Potential, Constraints and Recommendations with particular relevance to Mandarin Chinese report commissioned by the New Zealand China Council.

New Zealand China Council

18. The New Zealand China Council (NZCC) was established in 2012, and is intended to support New Zealand’s relationship goals with China. The Right Hon Sir Don McKinnon is the Chair of the Council. Stephen Jacobi was appointed Executive Director in May 2016. The NZCC Executive Board comprises leading New Zealanders from many fields. The NZCC Executive Board is supported by a larger Advisory Board. One of the NZCC’s focuses for 2019 is Chinese language learning, with a report on this likely to be released in March.

19. The NZCC is intended to operate as an umbrella organisation stretching across the breadth of the China-New Zealand relationship. Its stated mission is to convene a range of leading New Zealanders engaged with China to advocate for the strongest possible relationship; promote the importance of that relationship within New Zealand; raise the profile of New Zealand in China; and co-ordinate public and private sector effort to ensure that the relationship achieves its full potential.

20. The NZCC receives approximately two thirds of its operational funding from the New Zealand Government through an annual grant from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. The balance of funding is received from individual and corporate members of the Council’s Executive and Advisory Boards.

21. Sir Don McKinnon is a former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of New Zealand. He was the Secretary-General of the Commonwealth of Nations from 2000 until 2018. In addition to being Chair of the New Zealand China Council, he is an Honorary Adviser of the Asia New Zealand Foundation, Chair of Regional Facilities Auckland, sits on the Board of Advisors of the Global Panel Foundation, is an Associate with the Aspen Atlantic Group in Washington DC, and is a Patron of the New Zealand War Graves Trust and the Rutherford Foundations.

Education relationship with China

22. The education relationship between New Zealand and China is broad and multifaceted. It includes staff and student exchange, joint academic research, joint education programmes and the offshore delivery of New Zealand qualifications, Chinese language learning, professional development and training, qualifications recognition and education business and consultancy work.

23. All parts of New Zealand’s education sector are engaged in relationships with Chinese counterparts, with formal government work streams to support university relationships (the Tripartite Partnerships Programme); vocational education relationships (the Model Vocational Education Partnership) and schools (New Zealand-China Sister Schools initiative). Education New Zealand (ENZ) coordinates the bilateral education relationship, working in partnership with the Ministry of Education and New Zealand Qualifications Authority. All bilateral arrangements are effected between the Education Ministries, with ENZ designated as an "implementing body".
24. China has been New Zealand’s largest source country for international students since 2002. Chinese student enrolments showed a slight decline in first-time student visas 2018 but an increase in higher level enrolments.

25. Bilateral education business is transacted through a range of mechanisms and involves a range of actors. The 9th Joint Working Group on Education & Training is due to be held this year, following a postponement in December 2016, with a date yet to be agreed. High-level visits, such as your own in July 2018, have also provided a mechanism to advance the relationship.

26. New Zealand actively encourages New Zealand students to study in China. In 2017, China’s Ministry of Education recorded 1,079 New Zealand students studying in China. Initiatives such as ENZ’s Prime Minister’s Scholarships for Asia (PMSA) programme are well-received, as demonstrating a commitment to reciprocity and people-to-people links. Since 2013 the PMSA has funded 630 New Zealanders to undertake study, internship or research in China. China is the most popular PMSA destination.

27. As with the PMSA, the establishment of the Centres of Asia-Pacific Excellence (CAPEs) was appreciated by China, which further demonstrates the value we place on (and investment we are prepared to make in) understanding Chinese language and culture.

28. While cooperation is robust and positive we are keen to see further developments in the relationship, including in offshore delivery of New Zealand qualifications in China, increased policy dialogue at both national and provincial levels, and additional mutually beneficial institutional relationships.

29. Agencies are currently mapping out a range of engagement opportunities for 2019 and will present these to you as an item at your regular inter-agency meeting shortly.

Language learning in New Zealand

30. The New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) provides the framework for the teaching and learning of languages that are additional to the language of instruction. Chinese languages are offered within the NZC framework. Since 2015, Chinese languages have had the highest reported participation rate for international languages at primary school.

31. During 2018 the Ministry of Education had a focus on language learning in New Zealand, particularly around the efficacy of our curriculum and school supports in this area. As of 2019 we are now providing a suite of supports that has an expanded focus on more languages and language learning settings. The package includes:

a. Support for Learning Languages: This is a new programme being delivered by Auckland UniServices to help schools build sustainable languages programmes, and support building teachers’ capability in effective languages pedagogy. Languages focused on in the programme include New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), a number of Pacific languages, and a number of international languages including Mandarin. The programme is inclusive of mono-, bi- and multilingual settings.
b. **Coordination and Management of the National Language Advisors and Assistants and Administration of the Mandarin Language Assistants**: Both of these programmes coordinate and provide foreign language assistants to work in New Zealand schools.

c. We also fund the provision of five **National Language Advisors** from countries including China, who support schools in their language teaching and learning.

d. A trial of the *Languagenut* app: This is a language learning app that can be used in schools to support delivery of their learning languages curriculum. We are funding a small trial across a small number of schools in 2019 to test whether digital language learning programmes may be an effective approach to scale language learning in a New Zealand context. As part of this work, we have also commissioned the app's provider to develop content for five Pacific languages.

33. In addition to the package of supports, the Ministry is actively involved in promoting Māori language acquisition and use in English medium classrooms through the *Te Ahu o Te Reo Māori* initiative.

34. We are also focused on promoting Pacific languages through such initiatives as the Pasifika Early Literacy Project, Dual Language resources which supports English literacy for young students whose first language is a Pacific language, and sponsorship of Polyfest.

35. As you are aware, a Private Member’s Bill focused on second language teaching and learning is currently awaiting its first reading in Parliament. This Bill provides for regulations to be made to identify 10 priority languages, and for a new National Languages Policy.

**Comment on Teaching Languages in Schools report**

36. The *Teaching Languages in Schools: Rationale, Potential, Constraints and Recommendations with particular relevance to Mandarin Chinese* report was prepared for the New Zealand China Council by Martin East, who is Professor of Language Education at the University of Auckland, in mid-2018.

37. Professor East has worked as a secondary and tertiary language teacher, as well as a language teacher educator. He is the former president and current senior vice-president of the New Zealand Association of Language Teachers, and is also president of the International Association for Task-Based Language Teaching. He has long been an advocate for language learning in the New Zealand education system.

38. The report argues that more support is required in order to raise the number of students learning second or additional languages in New Zealand. The notion of a national languages policy is raised as a way to support this.

39. The report includes a number of points or issues raised in other, similar stakeholder papers (for example, the draft *Strategy for Languages in Education in Aotearoa New Zealand* prepared by the Auckland Languages Strategy Working Group in 2018 – Ministry comment was provided as Meeting Advice in September 2018, METIS 1150415 refers). The start of the report is a general comment on languages education in schools, including curriculum requirements and constraints and issues. The second half focuses on Chinese language education in New Zealand schools.
40. We note that the report, although not explicitly stated, is written with a focus on English medium schooling and *The New Zealand Curriculum* only, with no particular consideration of Māori medium education, and any recommendations should be considered with this in mind.

41. The report makes reference to four key factors that Professor East and a colleague identified as having an impact on the success of language programmes in schools:

   a. "The quality and capability of teaching staff.
   b. Timetabling and curriculum choices in schools.
   c. The lack of status for languages, compounded by an entrenched monolingualism.
   d. The lack of a languages policy or compulsion in the curriculum."

42. The report notes that, despite an overall decrease in the number of students learning a second or additional language in New Zealand, there has been an increase in Chinese language learning in New Zealand schools in the last decade, and largely attributes this to the Mandarin Language Assistants programme.

43. Mandarin Language Assistants (MLAs) are Chinese tertiary students who work in New Zealand schools for one academic year to assist classroom teachers with delivering Mandarin language learning opportunities. The programme is largely funded through the Chinese Government. MLAs provide an opportunity for New Zealand children to have authentic Chinese language experiences and learn about another culture. Currently there is provision for 150 MLAs to work in New Zealand each year, and the Ministry part-funds 12 of these MLAs in the upper North Island. The MLA programme is run through the Confucius Institutes based in three universities, The University of Auckland, Victoria University of Wellington and the University of Canterbury.

44. In his letter to you, Sir Don McKinnon requested that the New Zealand Government reviews the current limit on the number of MLA placements per year. Further comment on this issue is provided in the following section.

45. The report closes with six recommendations that focus on increasing workforce capability ("effective pedagogy is crucial"), developing clearer pathways for students, encouraging schools and communities to embrace languages as a core part of education, and the need for a national languages policy.

Other Relevant Information
49. We recommend that this Briefing is proactively released as per your expectation that information be released as soon as possible. Any information which may need to be withheld will be done so in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.