

# **Draft summary:**

## **New Zealand Sign Language Strategy 2025 to 2030**



**Published: April 2025**

## Before you start



This is a long document.



It can be hard for some people to read a document this long.



Some things you can do to make it easier are:

- read it a few pages at a time
- set aside some quiet time to look at it
- have someone read it with you to support you to understand it.



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# About this document



This document is:

- an Easy Read **summary** of the **draft** of the full New Zealand Sign Language **Strategy**
- a **consultation** document.



A **summary**:

- is shorter than the main document
- tells you the main ideas.



A **draft** is the first version of something like a document.



Here a **strategy** is a set of long term plans that are made to reach a goal.



Here **consultation** is the different ways we find out what people think about this draft summary of the New Zealand Sign Language Strategy like:

- meetings
- interviews.



We call New Zealand Sign Language **NZSL** for short in this document.



This Easy Read document is from the:

- **New Zealand Sign Language Board**
- Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha.



The **New Zealand Sign Language Board** is a group of people who:

- have lived experience of using NZSL
- know a lot about NZSL
- give advice about NZSL to the:
  - Government
  - community.

We call the New Zealand Sign Language Board the **NZSL Board** for short in this document.

When you see the words **we / us** in this document it means the NZSL Board.

The work of the NZSL Board is supported by the Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha.



This year we are **updating** the New Zealand Sign Language **Strategy**.



**Updating** means looking at something to see what needs to be done to make it better like:

- changing it
- adding something.



The new NZSL Strategy will guide our work from 2025 to 2030.



This document tells you about the changes we want to make to the NZSL Strategy.





We want to know what you think about the changes we want to make to the NZSL Strategy.



You can read the full report at this **website:**

**[www.nzsl.govt.nz](http://www.nzsl.govt.nz)**



This full report is not in Easy Read.

# New Zealand Sign Language – everywhere and every day



We want everyone to:

- know about NZSL
- use NZSL
- accept NZSL as an **official language**.



An **official language** means that:

- it is protected by the Government
- people are supported to use it
- it can be used in places like the courts.



Supporting New Zealanders to learn more about NZSL will assist more people to use NZSL.



We want deaf / hard of hearing people to be able to take part in their:

- whānau / family life
- community life
- **cultural life.**



**Cultural** means where a group of people share the same things like:

- language like NZSL
- experiences
- history.



We want **Turi Māori** to be able to take part in **te ao Māori**.



**Turi Māori** are Māori who are deaf / hard of hearing.

**Te ao Māori** is the Māori world.

## About NZSL



NZSL is:

- an important part of Deaf culture
- the language deaf people use.



When you see the word deaf with a small d this means it is something about **audiological deafness**.



**Audiological deafness** is about hearing loss like when a person:

- has some hearing loss
- has a lot of hearing loss
- cannot hear anything.



When you see the word Deaf with a capital / big D it means:

- Deaf culture
- the Deaf community.



The Deaf community:

- use NZSL as their first language
- is a cultural group.



We want all New Zealanders to know that NZSL is an official language.



NZSL was made an official language in 2006.



Not many people use NZSL.



Only half a percent of people here in Aotearoa New Zealand use NZSL.



This means we are in danger of losing NZSL.

We need to grow the language to make sure we do not lose NZSL.



To do this we need more people to use NZSL.



To grow NZSL we need support from:

- the hearing community
- iwi / tribes
- whānau / families
- everyone.



# The Deaf community



The Deaf community in Aotearoa New Zealand is made up of many different groups of people.



Deaf people:

- are different ages
- are from different **ethnicities**
- have different levels of hearing loss.



**Ethnicity** is the group a person belongs to that shares some of the same things like:

- language
- cultural background.

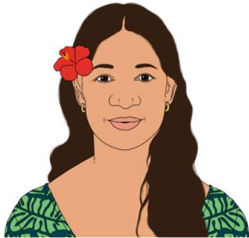






There are many different groups within the Deaf community like:

- Turi Māori
- Māori
- Pasifika peoples
- Rainbow communities
- Deaf+ who are Deaf people with an extra disability
- disabled people.



There is also a deafblind community.



People who are deafblind are:

- deaf
- and**
- blind.



We accept Turi Māori are tangata  
whenua / first people of  
Aotearoa New Zealand.

Many Turi Māori see themselves as:



- Māori
- and**
- members of the Deaf community.



It is important for Turi Māori to be  
able to take part in both these worlds.



Deaf people are also part of other communities like the:

- disability community
- Rainbow community.



Other people who are not part of the Deaf community can be a link between the:

- hearing community



**and**

- Deaf community.



These are people like:

- NZSL interpreters
- whānau / families of Deaf people.





Most deaf tamariki / children are born into hearing families.



It is important to have a link between the Deaf and hearing communities to support:

- deaf tamariki / children
- and
- their whānau / families.



## Why an NZSL strategy is important

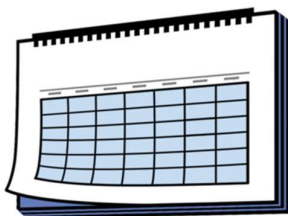


Our job as the NZSL Board is to:

- support people to know what NZSL is
- make sure Deaf people can use NZSL in all parts of their life
- give advice about NZSL to the:
  - Government
  - community.



Having an NZSL Strategy supports us to do our job.



The new NZSL Strategy will guide our work for the next 5 years.



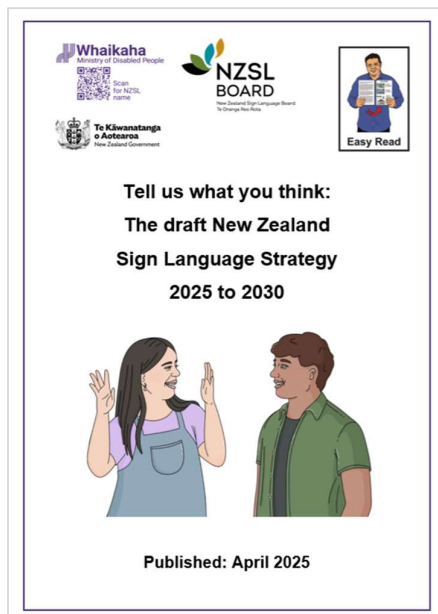
It will also support our decisions about what things to fund to support NZSL.



Our decisions will be based on what the NZSL Strategy says.



We want to know what you think about the ideas in this draft NZSL Strategy.



We have made another Easy Read document to support you to give us your feedback called:

**Tell us what you think: The draft New Zealand Sign Language Strategy 2025 to 2030.**



You can read it at this **website**:

**[www.nzsl.govt.nz](http://www.nzsl.govt.nz)**



To find out how to give your feedback  
go to **page 62**.

# What should happen to make life better for Deaf people



Government agencies have very little information about the lives of New Zealanders who are:

- deaf
- hard of hearing.



This means government agencies do not know what they need to do to make their services better for the Deaf community.



It is important to find out what is happening in the lives of deaf / hard of hearing people.





Research tells us the lives of deaf / hard of hearing people are harder than the lives of hearing people.



Here **research** means someone:

- looks at what has happened
- tries to find ways to do things better.



Research other countries have done show learning a sign language like NZSL early in life:

- is very important
- supports deaf people to have a good life.





This means finding out what **barriers** deaf / hard of hearing people experience in their daily lives.



A **barrier** is something that stops a person doing something they:

- want to do
- need to do.



Deaf people along with their whānau / families find it hard to do things like:

- learn NZSL
- use NZSL in everyday life
- get the information they need in NZSL.



Supporting NZSL is an important way to assist deaf / hard of hearing people to live good lives.



Deaf / hard of hearing people find it hard to get services in NZSL from:

- their local government like the council
- government agencies.



Deaf people face many barriers to getting education in NZSL here in Aotearoa New Zealand.



Turi Māori also face many barriers to being able to take part in te ao Māori.

For example there are not many NZSL interpreters who speak te reo Māori **fluently**.



Here **fluently** means you can speak a language like te reo Māori:

- easily
- quickly.

# How we plan to update the NZSL Strategy



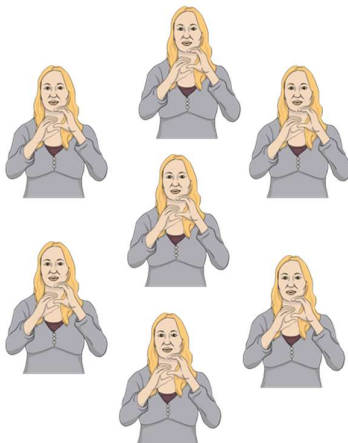
Our **vision** is NZSL everywhere and every day.

Here **vision** is how we imagine NZSL will be used in the future.



The 2 main ways we want to update the NZSL Strategy are:

- **revitalisation**
- **integration.**



Here **revitalisation** means supporting NZSL to:

- grow
- be used by more by everyone.



Here **integration** means getting hearing people:

- to learn NZSL
- use NZSL every day.



## 1. Revitalisation

The main goals of revitalisation are to make sure NZSL:

- survives
- **thrives.**



Here **thrive** means NZSL is:

- growing well
- being used by lots of people.



We will work closely with the Deaf community to be able to revitalise NZSL.



## 2. Integration

We want NZSL used every day and everywhere by all New Zealand:



- children
- adults.

This means we want people in the hearing community to

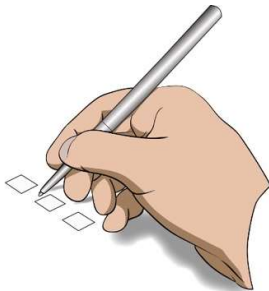


- learn NZSL
- use NZSL.



Doing this supports the integration of NZSL into everyday language here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## 5 priority areas of work



Here **priority** means the most important areas of work we need to do to:

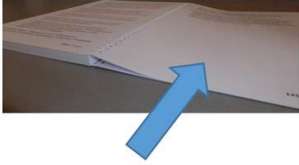
- revitalise NZSL
- integrate NZSL.

There will be 5 priority work areas in the NZSL Strategy.

There are **actions** in each priority work area.

Here **actions** are the different jobs to be done in each priority work area.



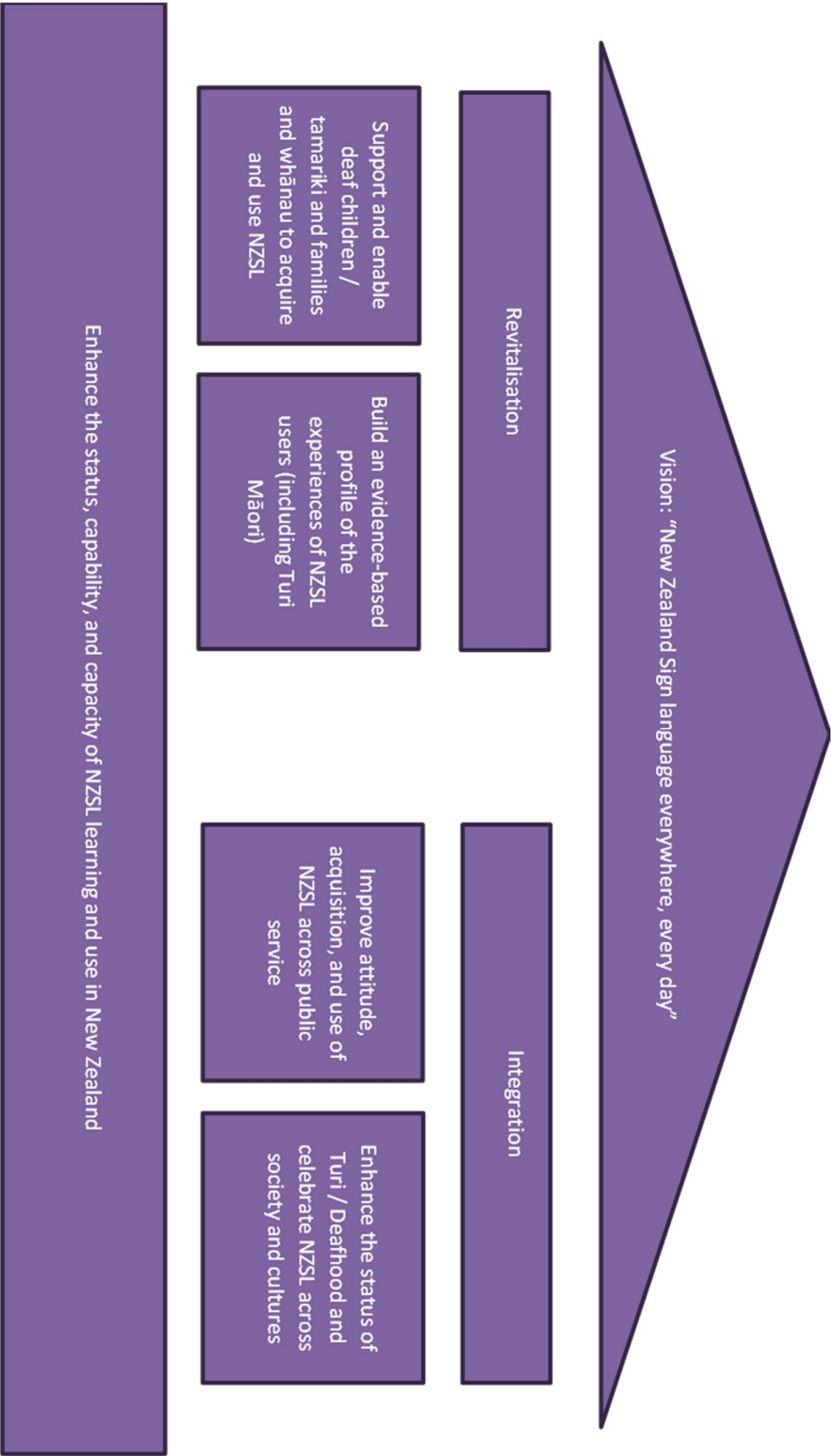
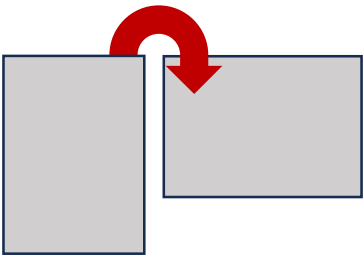


There is a picture on the next page to explain the NZSL Strategy.



It is not in Easy Read.

Turn this page on its side to read.





## Priority work area 1

This priority area is to do with:

- the revitalisation of NZSL
- supporting deaf / hard of hearing tamariki / children to learn to use NZSL with their whānau / families
- supporting communities to grow NZSL.





## Proposed actions for priority work area 1

Here **proposed** means the work we think should be done to support each priority work area.

1 proposed action to grow NZSL is making **language nests** where:



- people share what they know about NZSL
- there are safe places for people:
  - to learn NZSL
  - to use NZSL



- Deaf adults can share their knowledge about NZSL with:
  - parents of deaf pēpē / babies
  - deaf tamariki / children.





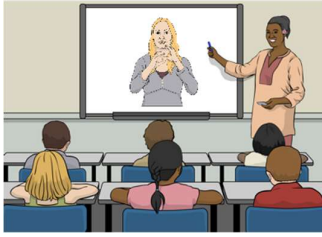
Here a **language nest** is a safe place people can learn NZSL with others.



Other proposed actions are doing things like:

- making more time for deaf / hard of hearing children and their whānau / families to learn together
- making sure parents of deaf pēpē / babies and tamariki / children can get good NZSL:
  - information
  - resources
  - supports.





Other proposed actions are doing things like:

- making sure deaf students:
  - can use NZSL in the classroom
  - have the resources they need in NZSL
- finding other learning **opportunities** to support:
  - deaf tamariki / children
  - Turi Māori to learn NZSL in te ao Māori
- growing NZSL learning opportunities.



An **opportunity** means when you have the chance to do something.



We also want to support people to become leaders who are:

- Deaf
- Turi Māori.





## Priority work area 2

This priority area is to do with:

- revitalisation
- having good information about the lives of deaf / hard of hearing people.



This priority area is finding out information to support NZSL like:

- doing **research** about NZSL
- having **evidence based** resources to support:
  - making the right resources to grow NZSL
  - deaf / hard of hearing people to have better lives.







**Evidence based** is the information collected during research to find out things like if something:

- works
- does not work
- has happened
- has not happened.



Having good information supports us to decide what to do about:

- making more opportunities for people to take part in community life for:
  - deaf / hard of hearing
  - Turi Māori.





Having good information will support us to decide what to do about the problems deaf / hard of hearing people face in their day to day lives.



## Proposed actions for priority work area 2

1 proposed action is finding the places where deaf NZSL users **engage** with government agencies to get things like:



- health services
- education services.



Here **engage** means when people contact a government agency about things they need like:

- information
- services
- money.





Having this information will support us to find the:

- gaps in the services deaf / hard of hearing people can get when there is no NZSL
- barriers deaf / hard of hearing people have when trying to get the services they need
- if there are services deaf people / Turi Māori need that are not in place yet.



We will need to make a way to check the **progress** made by government agencies to see if they are following the NZSL Strategy.



Here **progress** means making things better for deaf / hard of hearing people by growing NZSL.



Checking progress made by government agencies will give us information to report on like:

- how many NZSL users are using government services
- what things are being done to support NZSL users to engage with services
- how well things are being done.





## Priority work area 3

This priority area is to do with:

- revitalisation
- integration
- making sure there is a **workforce** to support NZSL to grow.



Here **workforce** means the jobs people will need to do to support the growth of NZSL.



Work will have to be done to find out:

- where support is needed to grow NZSL
- what jobs will be needed to support NZSL
- who will do these jobs.





This means making opportunities to support people in the hearing community to:

- know about NZSL
- understand the importance of using NZSL
- learn NZSL.





## Proposed actions for priority work area 3

Proposed actions will be about deciding things like:



- the people we need in our workforce like:

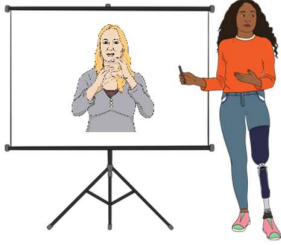
- Deaf teachers
- Turi Māori teachers
- NZSL teachers
- NZSL interpreters



- the work needed to grow the NZSL workforce
- the work needed to make sure Deaf people can get NZSL interpreters when they need them
- the work needed to grow NZSL in the hearing community.







Work will also need to be done to decide how:

- people can be trained to do these jobs
- to support people in the hearing community to learn NZSL
- technology can be used to support NZSL learning like:
  - apps
  - online courses.

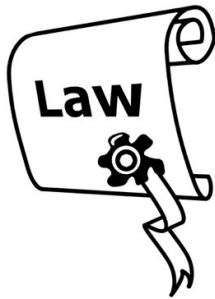




## Priority work area 4

This priority work area is about:

- integration
- what the Government should do to:
  - support NZSL
  - follow the **New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006**.



The **New Zealand Sign Language Act** is the **law** that:

- made NZSL an official language
- guides government work about using NZSL.



A **law** is a rule made by the Government that everybody has to follow.



This means government agencies should follow the New Zealand Sign Language Act better.



This will support deaf / hard of hearing people to get the services they need in a way they can understand.



## Proposed actions for priority work area 4

Following the New Zealand Sign Language Act will mean government agencies should:



- have staff who can use NZSL
- make sure things people need to know are in NZSL like their:
  - information
  - services.



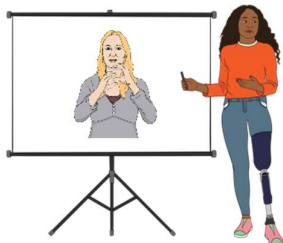
Work will be needed to make more job opportunities for:

- deaf / hard of hearing people
- Turi Māori
- NZSL users.





There should be staff at government agencies working with the public who can use NZSL.



Government agency staff should also have opportunities to learn about:

- NZSL to support the Deaf community
- Deaf culture.





Other things government agencies should do are:

- set out how they are going to use NZSL in their work plans
- make the way to fund NZSL interpreters easier
- make a guide about how government agencies use NZSL interpreters.





## Priority work area 5

This priority work area is about:

- integration
- celebrating NZSL
- building **role models** in the Deaf and Turi Māori communities.



Here a **role model** is someone:

- you look up to
- who is very good at using NZSL.



It is nearly 20 years since the NZSL Act was made a law.



This is a good time to **promote** NZSL to support everyone to use NZSL every day.



Here **promote** means the different ways to let people know about something like putting information:

- in magazines
- on social media
- in government agency newsletters
- on the TV.







## Proposed actions for priority work area 5

There are actions we can take to support this priority work area like:



- writing stories about deaf people / Turi Māori

- promoting NZSL in the hearing community



- putting stories in the media about Deaf culture

- making some events in 2026 to celebrate the anniversary of the New Zealand Sign Language Act

- making more NZSL resources for:



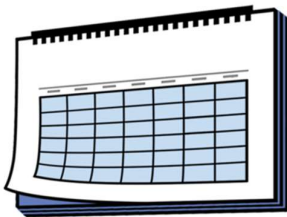
- the Deaf community
- te ao Māori.

# Action plan



We will make an action plan to:

- say what work we need to do in each priority work area of the NZSL Strategy
- decide when this work should be done by.



We understand we will need a lot of support to grow NZSL.



We will need support from:

- government agencies
- local government
- communities like:
  - deaf people
  - Turi Māori
  - deafblind people
  - hearing people
- the NZSL workforce
- businesses
- everyone.





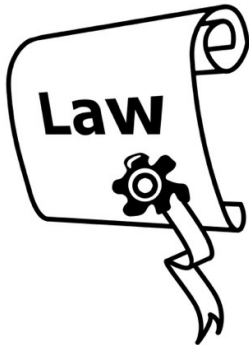
The NZSL Board makes a report every year for the Minister for Disability Issues.



The report tells the Minister about how well the NZSL Strategy is being followed.



We would like reports from government agencies to the Minister for Disability Issues about how well they are following the:



- NZSL Strategy
- New Zealand Sign Language Act 2006.



The NZSL Board will also work with government agencies to make sure they report on NZSL in their annual / yearly report.



This can be about things like how government agencies:

- are using NZSL to deliver their services
- find out how many NZSL users are using their services.



We will also need to find ways of checking that progress is made on the work set out in the action plan for the NZSL Strategy.



We will work with the Ministry for Disabled People – Whaikaha to support government agencies to do this.



We will need to find out things like:

- what information we already have about NZSL
- what information we need to know about NZSL
- how we want NZSL to be used in the future.

## How to send your feedback to us



This part of the document tells you how to give us your feedback about the NZSL Strategy.



The closing date to send us your feedback is **2 June 2025**.



You can read our document **Tell us what you think: The draft New Zealand Sign Language Strategy 2025 to 2030** at this **website**:

**[www.nzsl.govt.nz](http://www.nzsl.govt.nz)**

This document has questions to support you to make your feedback.



You can give us feedback by going to:

- in person meetings
- online meetings.



You can find out more information about these meetings at the NZSL Board **website**:

**[www.nzsl.govt.nz](http://www.nzsl.govt.nz)**



You can also give us your feedback in:

- NZSL in a video
- writing.



You can send us a copy of your answers to our questions.





Send your feedback to this **email** address:

**[nzsl\\_strategy@whaikaha.govt.nz](mailto:nzsl_strategy@whaikaha.govt.nz)**



You can also complete an online form at this website:

**[www.nzsl.govt.nz](http://www.nzsl.govt.nz)**



You can **email** the NZSL team for more information about the consultation process here:

**[nzsl\\_strategy@whaikaha.govt.nz](mailto:nzsl_strategy@whaikaha.govt.nz)**



This information has been written by the NZSL Board and the Ministry of Disabled People – Whaikaha.



It has been translated into Easy Read by the Make it Easy Kia Māmā Mai service of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.



The ideas in this document are not the ideas of People First New Zealand Ngā Tāngata Tuatahi.



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