



**METHODIST
ALLIANCE**
NGĀ PURAPURA WETERIANA

Submission to the Governance and Administration Committee on the Plain Language Act Repeal Bill April 2025

This submission is from:

The Methodist Alliance
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Wellington, 6141



Ko wai tātou | Who we are

The Methodist Alliance is a formal alliance of Methodist Missions, parishes and community based social services and trusts, including cooperating ventures. This grouping constitutes a major provider of a range of services for tamariki/children, rangatahi/young people, and their families/whānau.

The Methodist Alliance brings together a number of large and medium social service providers such as Lifewise in Auckland, Methodist City Action in Hamilton, Palmerston North Methodist Social Services, Wesley Community Action in Wellington, Christchurch Methodist Mission, Methodist Mission Southern in Dunedin, as well as local community services provided by individual parishes. It includes new social service organisations, such as Siaola Vahefonua Tongan Methodist Mission; Puna’Oa - the Samoan Methodist Mission that operates within the Samoan Synod of the Methodist Church; and Te Taha Māori.

Ka whakahōnore mātou i tō mātou whakahoatanga Tiriti – we honour our Tiriti partnership. Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the covenant establishing our nation on the basis of a power-sharing relationship. It is the foundation for social, economic and political equality in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Methodist Alliance is grounded in our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi and the bi-cultural journey of the Methodist Church of New Zealand - Te Hāhi Weteriana o Aotearoa, where Te Taha Māori and Tauīwi work in partnership. We claim the right bestowed by Article Four of Te Tiriti o Waitangi:

“E mea ana te Kawana ko ngā whakapono katoa o Ingarangi, o ngā Weteriana, o Roma, me te ritenga Māori hoki e tiakina ngatahitia e ia.”

“The Governor says the several faiths of England, of the Wesleyans, of Rome, and also the Māori custom shall alike be protected by him.”

The Methodist Alliance and our member organisations work collaboratively to achieve our vision of a just and inclusive society in which all people flourish, through our commitment to our faith and Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Tirohanga Whānau | Overview

The Methodist Alliance opposes this Bill, due to the importance of plain language in government communications. clear, plain and audience specific language is essential to make sure New Zealanders from all backgrounds can understand government documents and communications and voice their opinions.

Main Points

- 1. Plain language is essential for people with different abilities to understand what the government is saying and doing.**
- 2. Understanding government communications builds trust.**
- 3. People with English as a second language need to be able to understand government communications.**

Taunakitanga | Recommendations

Point 1: Plain language is essential for people with different abilities to understand what the government is saying and doing.

People with disabilities are in contact with government departments and services more than the average New Zealander¹ meaning their ability to understand government communications is extremely important.

As confidence in government and democracy weakens, citizens need to understand clearly what the government is saying and doing. Government documents are often dense and complicated – covering dense and complex issues. There must be a balance between accurate and detailed writing and writing which all can understand.

Point 2: Understanding government communications builds trust.

Plain language in communications from agencies such as the Ministry of Social Development and Oranga Tamariki means that both providers and users of our services understand and can better engage with them. Clients who understand their rights and responsibilities are more engaged and have better outcomes. More engagement also fosters better relationships with community organisations and government.

¹ Ridout. (2025). *A law aimed at removing jargon from the public service is on the line: is it worth saving?* Stuff. Available at: <https://www.stuff.co.nz/nz-news/360663004/law-aimed-removing-jargon-public-service-line-it-worth-saving>

Point 3: People with English as a second language need to be able to understand government communications.

People arriving from overseas, looking to build a life in New Zealand are often disadvantaged by the fact they have English as a second language. While their standard of English may be high, it does not prepare them for the complicated language used in government communications. This leaves them more vulnerable to being exploited through modern slavery², unfair tenancies³ and other issues. Having plain language guidelines for these people is important to make sure they know their rights and who to contact to get support.

Recommendation:

The Methodist Alliance Recommends that the Plain Language Act remain, as it contributes positively to both our work and the work that government does in the community. We tautoko the words of organisations from the Whaikaha, Māori, and Dementia Mate Wareware communities⁴, who see value in this law and wish it to remain.

For further information or questions regarding this submission, please contact:
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² McCallum. (2025). *Salon ordered to pay \$230k to seven former employees*. The Post. Available at: <https://www.thepost.co.nz/nz-news/360583623/central-wellington-salon-ordered-pay-230k-seven-former-employees>

³ Kerr-Laurie. (2025). *Landlord pays \$13k over leaky, unlawful abode for migrants*. The Post. Available at: <https://www.thepress.co.nz/nz-news/360628894/landlord-pays-13k-over-leaky-unlawful-abode-migrants>

⁴ McMenamin. (2025) *National Party attacks accessibility for disabled people*. OpenAccess. Available at: <https://www.openaccess.nz/blog/national-party-attacks-accessibility-for-disabled-people/>