

LINGUISTIC SOCIETY OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA
1988**DRAFT SUBMISSION**

to

The National Cultural Council

and

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism

BACKGROUND:

Economic and social development in the rural areas of Papua New Guinea depends heavily on PNG languages like Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu to pass information about development programmes. But without any standards for spelling and the creation of new words, these languages become cumbersome to use, lead to misunderstanding and slow down the development process.

This submission proposes that PNG follow the lead of countries like Indonesia and Tanzania where an approved body has been set up to promote the standardisation of spelling and the use of proper guidelines for introducing new technical terms into the key languages of rural development.

This kind of attention to language development will considerably increase the effectiveness of development efforts in the rural areas of the country. If development messages are properly understood, programmes have a much better chance of being successfully implemented.

The idea is to use provisions under the existing Culture Development Act to attach to the appropriate department of UPNG (after restructuring) an officially recognised PNG Language Development Authority. Specific projects sponsored by the Authority in promoting its objectives would seek external funding. A Director and secretary would be sufficient skeletal staff to solicit the outside funding.

OBJECTIVES:

The key objectives of the authority would be to:

1. promote increased standardisation of spelling for PNG languages
2. promote guidelines for the development of new terminology for PNG languages
3. promote guidelines for improving the quality of translations and interpretations in Papua New Guinea
4. liaise with other related bodies in the region in general and in Melanesia in particular

CONSTITUTIONAL IMPLICATIONS:

The National Goals of the Constitution foresee a multi-lingual society and direct that reading and writing be developed in PNG languages as well as English. The Third National Goal on Equality and Participation calls for:

"all persons and governmental bodies to endeavor to achieve universal literacy in *Pisin, Hiri Motu*, or English and in "*tok ples*" or "*ita ede tano gedo*" (1.2.12, p.17)

However, reading is based on predictability so that it is extremely difficult to read a language where the spelling changes and technical terms are borrowed wildly from foreign languages. A PNG Language Development Authority would help by encouraging standardised spellings and standardised terminology that would be predictable and easier to read.

The Constitution under the Cultural Development Act established the National Cultural Council to...

"formulate and implement a program for the preservation and development of all aspects of culture and art in the country" (Chapt. 153.20.14)

And Article 20 of Chapter 153 further empowers the National Cultural Council to establish national, provincial and local cultural institutions or cultural centers. With language being the *sine qua non* of culture, this provision of the Act provides the appropriate body for establishing the authority.

STAFFING IMPLICATIONS:

The value of placing the Authority within the context of the University is that it could depend on the the larger Institution for minor support services rather than creating new infrastructure. A further advantage is that research projects at the University (such as the current dictionary projects for Tok Pisin and Hiri Motu) can be easily tied into achieving the objectives of the Authority.

As such, the Authority would be in a good position to attract external grant funding, as long as there is a skeleton staff who can commit time to developing that funding base. Minimal funding of this kind is important because it provides external funding agencies with the evidence they require that the Government is committed to the objectives of the Authority.

It is therefore recommended that a skeleton staff consisting of a Coordinator (Level One) and one secretary (Grade Three) be funded positions.

ALIGNMENT WITH CURRENT GOVERNMENT DIRECTIONS:

Current Government policy focuses on development in the agricultural sector.

Basic information associated with agricultural development must make use of PNG languages. Consider the heavy of use of Tok Pisin by the Coffee Development Agency in assisting rural coffee growers. Standardised spelling and standardised terms for talking about the coffee rust and coffee rehabilitation are crucial to getting the right information to the growers. The same kind of standardisation is needed for developing the other major commodities of the agriculture sector.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS:

- a. That a PNG Language Development Authority be formed under Section 20, Chpater 153 of the Constitution in order to:
 - promote the standardisation of spelling for PNG languages

- promote the standardisation of new technical terms for PNG languages**
- promote improved standards of translations and interpretations from PNG languages**
- liaise with other related language development bodies in the region**

- b. That this Authority be attached to UPNG's Department of Language and Literature (or the appropriate counterpart in the rationalised structure)**
- c. That future National Cultural Council submissions for budget funding include salaries for a Level One coordinator and a Grade Three secretary for the PNG Language Development Authority.**