

2026 Bislama Language Week Information Sheet

Important information brought to you by the New Zealand Bislama National Working Group

What is a Pacific Language Week in New Zealand?

The Pacific Language Week in New Zealand is an initiative of the Ministry for Pacific Peoples and is a week-long celebration that highlights and promotes the diverse languages and cultures of the Pacific Island communities. These communities make up a significant portion of New Zealand's population, and the week is an opportunity to showcase and honour the unique languages, traditions, and histories of the Pacific peoples. The week typically focuses on one of the Pacific languages each year, such as Samoan, Tongan, Niuean, Cook Islands Māori, Tokelauan, or Fijian. During this week, various events, including performances, workshops, and cultural activities, are organized in schools, workplaces, and communities. The aim is to increase awareness and understanding of Pacific cultures and foster a sense of pride in their languages. The week is also a chance to engage younger generations in learning and using their native languages, preserving cultural heritage, and celebrating the contributions of Pacific peoples to New Zealand society. More information is available here: <https://www.mpp.govt.nz/programmes/pacific-language-weeks/>

What is the Bislama Language Week in New Zealand?

Bislama Language Week in New Zealand is brand new! In collaboration with the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, it is a weeklong celebration that focuses on the Bislama language, one of the official languages of Vanuatu. Bislama is a creole language that originated from English and various Melanesian languages, and it serves as a lingua franca for many people in Vanuatu. In New Zealand, Bislama Language Week is observed to honour and celebrate the linguistic and cultural diversity of the Ni-Vanuatu (local or native from Vanuatu) community, as Vanuatu is home to over 110 distinct dialects. It provides an opportunity for Ni-Vanuatu diaspora in New Zealand, as well as the broader population, to learn about the language, its history, and the cultural practices of Vanuatu. The week typically includes events like language workshops, cultural performances, community gatherings, church services and other activities aimed at raising awareness and fostering pride in the Bislama language. These events also help preserve the language and ensure that younger generations continue to learn and use it.

Is there an importance of the Bislama Language Week in New Zealand?

Yes! Just like other Pacific Language Weeks, Bislama Language Week is part of New Zealand's broader effort to celebrate and acknowledge the growing cultural diversity of Pacific Island communities especially the Vanuatu diaspora. It will bring the Ni-Vanuatu diaspora families, friends of Vanuatu and the public together to learn the language, culture and traditional practices and to better understand each other. It also enables our Ni-Vanuatu diaspora families to have a sense of belonging as well.

When is the Bislama Language Week celebrated in New Zealand?

The official Bislama Language Week celebrations in New Zealand for 2026 will run from 26 July to 1 August. For more information about this and other language weeks, please visit their website: <https://www.mpp.govt.nz/programmes/pacific-language-weeks/>

What is the theme of the 2026 Bislama Language Week?

“Tokbaot klaemet jenis – Hemi tru samting mo yumi mas lukaotem gud laef” which translates to *“Talk about Climate Change – it is real, and we must look after life.”*

What does the theme mean?

“Talk about climate change - it is real, and we must look after life” carries a powerful message that highlights the urgency of addressing climate change and its direct impact on life on Earth. Let's break it down:

- **"Climate change is real"**: This statement emphasizes that climate change is a scientifically proven phenomenon. It is not just an idea or theory but a reality that is happening right now, affecting weather patterns, ecosystems, and communities around the world, and especially Vanuatu. According to the World Risk Report, Vanuatu is ranked as the World's most at-risk country to natural disasters and extreme weather patterns. Climate change is the greatest ongoing threat to the well-being and livelihoods of the Ni Vanuatu people and their ecosystems.
- **"We must look after life"**: This part stresses the responsibility we must take to protect the planet and all living beings that depend on it. **"Life"** here refers to the environment, wildlife, and the human population, all of which are impacted by the changing climate. To **"look after life"** means to take actions that safeguard our ecosystems, reduce harm to the environment, and ensure a sustainable future.

Why did we choose this theme?

The Bislama National Working Group selected this theme to recognize the significant efforts made by the Vanuatu Government, led by Honourable Minister Ralph Regenvanu, the Special Envoy for Climate Change, and the University of the South Pacific Law students in Port Vila, in addressing climate justice over the years. The impact of climate change in Vanuatu has grown, as we continue to experience more frequent and intense cyclones, earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, droughts, volcanic eruptions, rising sea levels, extreme temperatures, and other natural disasters. These events contribute to the loss of lives, languages, and cultures, making it essential for us to do our part in protecting them.

How do we celebrate the Bislama Language Week with this theme?

In essence, the phrase is a **call to action**. It encourages people to acknowledge the reality of climate change and take meaningful steps to protect and preserve life—whether it's through reducing carbon emissions, conserving natural resources, supporting sustainable practices, or raising awareness about the importance of environmental care. The Vanuatu communities in New Zealand will be sharing and teaching Bislama using the climate change theme to promote their activities throughout the weeklong celebrations.

Please give an example of how I could organise an activity using this theme.

There are various activities you can engage in using the theme and demonstrating it while speaking in Bislama. For instance, you might decide to prepare a traditional Vanuatu dish that your family regularly eats after a natural disaster and discuss it in Bislama. This involves gathering the ingredients, demonstrating the preparation process, and explaining how you serve it within your family. You can also share the significance of the recipe, particularly in relation to customs and traditions followed or during a natural disaster. These practices are what helps to sustain us to keep us alive.

Give me another example for this theme please.

You could organize an activity where you speak in Bislama about the materials we use to prepare for cyclones or how we respond when a natural disaster occurs—how we stay safe or if there are any traditional or *kastom* remedies or medicines for injuries caused by storms. You may also choose to share *kastom* stories in Bislama about weather patterns and climate change with your audience.

I still don't get the theme – please give me one more example.

You can teach your friends and new colleagues about how your family or community prepares for a disaster, highlighting the strength of coming together and sharing important messages in Bislama. Alternatively, you could teach them in Bislama what to do after a disaster has occurred. You might also choose to hold a Sunday church service in Bislama, focusing your sermon on how God provides challenges to help us prepare for disasters and similar situations. Consider incorporating Vanuatu music, especially string band songs, that tie into the theme of climate change to share with your audience. It is the same with arts and crafts.

I am a Ni Vanuatu diaspora youth in New Zealand – how should I get involved in this?

The Bislama National Working Group has a Youth Representative for both the North and South Islands. To contribute, please reach out to aotearoavanuatubislamalanguage@gmail.com as your input is important for the growth and preservation of Bislama internationally.

I am a student at a New Zealand University – what should I do?

As a university student, there are several ways you can get involved. Reach out to your student association and collaborate with your local Pacific or Vanuatu student group to organise the week. You could also ask one of your professors, especially if they have conducted research in Vanuatu, to give a talk about the country. Share with them the theme of climate change and emphasize how vital our languages are for communication, especially in helping us survive after natural disasters.

I am a Ni Vanuatu diaspora and would like to learn more about Bislama – where should I go?

Get in touch with your local Vanuatu Community Association in New Zealand. The Bislama National Working Group is currently partnering with the Vanuatu Language Service

Department, under their Ministry of the Prime Minister, to provide resources for teaching and learning Bislama. A website will be launched soon.

How do I access more Bislama resources for teaching in the education sector?

We are in the process of developing a website that will serve as a central hub, where our Bislama resources will be accessible for use soon.

Where are the Bislama language classes for those of us foreigners who work in Government sectors in Vanuatu?

Currently, we are gradually developing our Bislama resources, particularly Bislama Language Classes, which will be offered both in person and online. If you are in New Zealand, please send an inquiry email to: aotearoavanuatubislamalanguage@gmail.com, as there may be a nearby *Bislama Kastom School* to help you get started with basic lessons and learn about Vanuatu culture. The *Bislama Kastom School*, led by *Kastom* Chief Billy Begley and supported by *Kastom* Chief Richard George, will collaborate with regional museums to provide access to Bislama classes and cultural insights.

I am looking for a Bislama Translator to help with some translation services – where should I start?

You have come to the right spot! Reach out to us at aotearoavanuatubislamalanguage@gmail.com with your inquiry, and we will assist you in connecting with a Bislama translator in your area. We also look forward to collaborating with the Centre for Pacific Languages (Auckland) in the future to enhance our Bislama language services. You can learn more about them here: <https://centreforpacificlanguages.co.nz/>

I cannot read the Bislama language – are there any other options available?

Yes! We have a regular Bislama radio show (for audio audiences) called *Yumi Talem* on the *Fresh FM* community radio network, which airs in the top of the South Island of New Zealand via various radio the frequencies from Blenheim to Golden Bay and also *live* on their website: www.freshfm.net. The show is hosted by Valorie Patrick, a former producer and broadcaster from Vanuatu Broadcasting and Television Corporation (VBTC), and it airs every Sunday at 6pm and Monday at 2pm. You can also follow the *Yumi Talem* social media pages for updates and www.yumitale.com

How did we score this Bislama Language Week?

The National Melanesian Steering Committee, in partnership with the Ministry for Pacific Peoples, our Melanesian communities—particularly the Regional Vanuatu Associations in New Zealand—and the New Zealand Human Rights Commission, made this initiative possible. We also received support from external partners and stakeholders who recognized the importance of a Bislama Week. Over the course of two years (2023–2024), the Vanuatu communities piloted Bislama Language Week with the theme "*Embrace Bislama – the main trading and communication language of Vanuatu.*" The pilot was a success, leading to official submissions, which included 40 documents and 2 videos, to formalise Bislama as part of the New Zealand Pacific Language Series.

I am a *Fren blong Vanuatu*, and I am interested – what should I do?

We would love for you to join us! Please reach out to the local Vanuatu Community Association on social media – there are a few, including those in Northland, Auckland, Bay of Plenty, Hawkes Bay, Wellington, Marlborough, Tasman, Canterbury and Otago.

I am a Ni – Vanuatu RSE worker. Am I part of the Bislama Language Week?

Yes! If you're working in New Zealand during Bislama Language Week, you have an important role in the celebrations. Please reach out to your local Community Association, Bislama Language Week Coordinators, the Country Liaison Officer, or your main RSE Team Leader for more details.

As an RSE worker, I would like to bring some Vanuatu artefacts and *kastom* materials to show case these during the Bislama Language Week. What should I do?

We encourage you to consult with the Country Liaison Officer Olivia Johnson and the Vanuatu Customs Officers for guidance on handling your artefacts when entering New Zealand. Your local Community Association and Bislama Language Week Coordinators will work with local New Zealand Museums to display your artefacts and *kastom* materials during the week. Additional information can also be obtained from the Vanuatu High Commissioner to New Zealand (vhcwellington@vanuatu.gov.vu).

Is there a Bislama *Kastom* School to maintain the Bislama speakers?

Yes! This is part of our long-term strategy to preserve the Bislama language internationally. Our Vanuatu Chiefs and Bislama Language Coordinators will spearhead this effort in the regions, collaborating with local museums and Ni-Vanuatu RSE workers to provide this valuable resource.

How do I contribute financially to support the Bislama Language Week?

We welcome and greatly appreciate your support and would be thankful for any financial contributions you can give us to help with the planning and execution of our language week. Please contact your local or regional Vanuatu Association through social media to connect with them and support the great cause to preserving languages and cultures.

Is there anything else I should know about the Bislama Language Week?

Yes! Our Melanesian Language Weeks were made possible through the unity and strength of all Melanesians coming together to accomplish this historic achievement. This means everyone is included. During Bislama Language Week, we will also feature and recognise the New Caledonian and South Sea Islander communities in Australia as part of the festivities. Meanwhile, Papua New Guinea will focus on West Papua, and the Solomon Islands will spotlight Timor Leste and Bougainville.

How do I learn more about the Melanesian cultures?

The Melanesian communities in New Zealand publish the *Wan Solwara Tok Storian* Newsletter three times a year, managed by the National Melanesian Steering Committee, to share news about their communities. Visit their website at www.melanesian.co.nz to explore and subscribe. Additionally, the annual Melanesian Festival in Auckland is growing in popularity and attracting significant attention from the Melanesian diaspora. Stay updated by following their social media page, Melanesian Festival Aotearoa, brought to you by the *Nambis* Events.

How do I get more information about the Bislama Language Week?

For more information, follow our Ni Vanuatu community association pages on social media or send an email to the Bislama National Working Group at: aotearoavanuatubislamalanguage@gmail.com.

Appendix A

A Guide to the Motif for Bislama Language Week 2026

Green Background – Symbolises the lush, verdant landscapes and the untouched natural beauty of the 83 islands of Vanuatu. The deep green hue highlights the importance of agriculture and subsistence farming to the livelihoods of the Ni Vanuatu people.

Green Background in Relation to the 2026 Theme – Ties into the theme of Climate Change, emphasising Vanuatu's strong bond with nature despite the frequent natural disasters like tropical cyclones, volcanic eruptions, and earthquakes. It calls for immediate action to protect the local environment, resources, and land.

PENAMA Traditional Mats for Borders – The red mats from Pentecost and Ambae Islands in the PENAMA Province are chosen to represent Vanuatu because they hold significant cultural value in traditional ceremonies. These mats symbolise wealth and prestige, and the process of weaving them passes down knowledge to younger generations, ensuring the continuation of Vanuatu's unique and traditional crafts. They are also linked to reconnecting with ancestral heritage and customary identities. The mats play an essential role in the Bislama Language Week, acting as a way to pass down knowledge across generations.

Yellow Pig Tusks – Pigs and their tusks (along with tobacco) are seen as symbols of wealth in Vanuatu. The pig tusk is featured in the Vanuatu's Coat of Arms, signifying prosperity, wealth, and steadfast traditions. It plays a significant role in cultural ceremonies, especially in traditional weddings where it is used as part of the bride price. The circular shape of the tusk is also represented on Vanuatu's national flag, symbolising unity and the preservation of traditional customs.

Namele Leaves/Ferns – Placed inside the pig tusk, the crossed namele leaves or ferns represent peace and prosperity. Their crossed form highlights the importance of stability and unity among the people of Vanuatu. The ferns are commonly used as a mark of respect for customary laws and sacred traditions.

Yellow Color – Yellow symbolises the sun and the light of Christianity. It also holds special significance for the people of Vanuatu, as the country was named the "happiest place in the world" in 2024 and 2007 by the Happy Planet Index. These ranking measures well-being, life expectancy, and environmental impact, emphasizing Vanuatu's positive outcomes in these areas.

Appendix B

A Bislama resource to use as a prayer

The Lord's Prayer in English

Our Father which art in heaven.

Hallowed be thy name, thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, For ever and ever.

A-men.

Prea blong God long Bislama

Papa blong mifala, yu yu stap long heven.

Nem blong yu i tabu.

Mifala i wantem we olgeta man oli ona long yu, mo we yu yu kam King blong olgeta man,

Mo we olgeta man long wol ia oli mekem ol samting we yu yu wantem, osem we olgeta long heven oli stap mekem.

Plis givim kakae long mifala, i naf blong tede.

Yu fogivim mifala from ol sin blong mifala, osem we mifala i stap fogivim ol man we oli mekem i nogud long mifala.

Yu no letem ol samting oli kam traem mifala tumas, mo yu blokem Setan i no kam spolem mifala.

From yu yu King blong mifala, we yu gat olgeta paoa, mo mifala i leftemap nem blong yu God i go antap oltaem, gogo i no save finis.

A-men.