2<sup>nd</sup> August 2004.

Hon. Joe Natuman Minister of Education Government of the Republic of Vanuatu Port Vila.

Dear Hon. Minister Natuman,

## **RE:** National Language Committee's recommendations regarding vernacular year 1 education policy.

I have the honour of writing you this letter on behalf of the National Language Committee to present to you our recommendations to assist the implementation of the vernacular year 1 classes in Vanuatu, as per Government policy.

As you may be aware, the National Language Committee was established in February 2003 by the Council of Ministers to undertake a number of functions. These include:

- providing advice to Government on language issues, language policy and the implementation of language policy;
- providing advice to and assisting the Ministry of Education in implementing the use of vernacular languages in education (to fulfil the role of the proposed Vernacular Education Advisory Committee);
- encouraging the publication of literature in vernacular languages and Bislama;
- safeguarding linguistic diversity in Vanuatu.

Very shortly the State Law Office will be finalising a draft of the act to legally establish the Committee, which we hope will be presented to Parliament in its end-of-year session.

The National Language Committee has met a number of times over the past year, specifically to respond to a request from the Division of Primary Education within the Ministry of Education to provide technical assistance in the implementation of the vernacular year 1 policy. It is as a result of these meetings and the activities carried out subsequently that we are now officially making these recommendations to you.

Our principal recommendation is that the Ministry of Education formally adopts as policy the vernacular education training package developed and implemented by TLP and SIL which is based on a multi-strategy approach to literacy that was designed by Nicholas Faraclas and Mary Stringer in Papua New Guinea. This approach involves teaching children word-building skills using a primer and whole language skills using locally-developed children's stories. Eventually the training package will include methods for expanding the vernacular curriculum to cover maths and social sciences and for bridging to English or French. You will find attached a two-page description of this approach to developing vernacular language education.

We recommend that the training package be offered to class 1 teachers and ZCAs in their language communities. At present the training is being offered by SIL advisers and three ni-Vanuatu advisers who have completed the "Supervisory Tokples Education Program" in Papua New Guinea, in collaboration with the Primary Education Division of the Department of Education. This training package has already been successfully used in estabishing vernacular year 1 classes in Uripiv, Tangoa (Santo), Paama, North Tanna, North Ambrym, Hog Haba (Santo), Lenakel (Tanna) and Pentecost.

We also recommend that the National Language Committee continue to advise the Ministry on identifying the languages that are ready to be used for the vernacular year 1 classes (in terms of readiness of the alphabet and availability of resource people for preparing written materials).

Thank you for your consideration of these recommendations. The National Language Committee looks forward to continuing to work closely with the Ministry to implement the vernacular year 1 policy.

Yours sincerely,

Ralph Regenvanu Secretary, National Language Committee (Director, Vanuatu National Cultural Council).

cc Abel Nako, Director-General, Ministry of Education, Port Vila. Kalmele Matai, Director, Vanuatu Institute of Education, Port Vila. Pierre Gambetta, Director, Primary Education, Port Vila. Members, National Language Committee, Port Vila.