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PanSALB
PAN SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGE BOARD

LANGUAGE ADVICE AND RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT

2025/2026 FINANCIAL YEAR



Language Advice and Recommendations
2025/2026

Executive Summary

This report presents the Pan South African Language Board's (PanSALB) official Language Advice and Recommendations for the 2025/2026 reporting period, submitted for public in accordance with section 12 of the PanSALB Act as amended.

The report reflects a rigorous consultative process involving National Language Bodies, Provincial Language Committees, technical experts, and internal governance structures. It consolidates evidence-based recommendations to strengthen multilingualism, improve language policy implementation, and ensure linguistic equity across South Africa.

The key focus areas included:

- Standardisation of African languages, particularly compliance with Spelling and Orthography.
- Verification and authentication of terminology in education and other sectors.
- Promotion of multilingualism in public administration, including the provision of South African Sign Language.
- Strengthening the implementation and enforcement of language policies.
- Supporting marginalised languages through targeted interventions in the education system.

A central feature of the report is its emphasis on compliance with the PanSALB Act, which mandates organs of state to implement language policies that uphold multilingualism and equitable language use. Some of the language advice or recommendations may be published in the national gazette to formalise their binding status, improve accountability, and enhance public awareness.

Ultimately, the report reinforces PanSALB's role as a guardian of language rights and a driver of inclusive language practices in governance, education, and public life.

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1. Introduction

The Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) presents its consolidated Language Advice and Recommendations Report for the 2025/2026 reporting period. This report is submitted to the public in fulfilment of PanSALB's mandate to promote multilingualism and advise organs of state on language policy, legislation, and practice.

2. Mandate and Legislative Framework

PanSALB derives its authority from the PanSALB Act, which mandates that the institution promote and create conditions for the development and use of all official languages and advise the government on language matters.

Section 8(1) of the Act empowers PanSALB to develop language policy advice, make recommendations to all organs of state, and ensure implementation of advice and recommendations provided. Furthermore, the PanSALB Act provides that the Board's recommendations become binding to ensure enforceability and compliance.

3. Methodology and Consultation Process

3.1. The report is the product of an inclusive and structured consultation process involving taking a bottom-up approach, where the Technical Committees of the National Language Bodies (NLBs) and the Provincial Language Committees (PLCs) identify the language matters that require the Board's attention and direct communication with the organs of state.

3.2. The internal review processes go through the Language Development and Use Division to the Management and Executive Committees to the Core Mandate Committee of the Board and the Board.

3.3. The approval process also depends on whether the advice is operational or more strategic. For the operational advice, the CEO approves for submission to the Accounting Officer of the organ of state. However, for strategic and legislative advice and recommendations, those are approved by the Chairperson of the Board as an Accounting Authority and are directed to the Accounting Authority or Executive Authority of the organ of state concerned.

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All recommendations were verified to ensure alignment with PanSALB's legislative mandate and strategic priorities.

4. Strategic Focus Areas

PanSALB's interventions for 2025/2026 focus on:

4.1. Language standardisation and orthography
4.2. Terminology verification and authentication
4.3. Language policy development and enforcement, and
4.4. Promotion of multilingualism and linguistic rights

5. SUMMARY OF ADVICE TO THE ORGANS OF STATE

5.1. Language Standardisation and Orthography

a) Summary: The National Language Bodies (NLBs), through PanSALB, advised the Publishers Association of South Africa (PASA) to engage with senior provincial managers responsible for administering the NLBs to obtain updated information on the revised Spelling and Orthography Rules of the official African languages. PASA is further encouraged to participate in workshops and engagements that will support the correct implementation of the revised rules and address challenges arising from outdated spelling and orthography found in teaching and learning materials.

b) **Final Resolution:** It was advised that each National Language Board (NLB) convene its respective orthography and spelling rules workshop virtually, utilizing Microsoft Teams. This format is proposed to ensure both financial efficiency and logistical convenience, given that PanSALB members are located across multiple provinces. Each NLB will determine an appropriate date and time for its workshop, which will be facilitated by the relevant technical committee. This operational advice has been concluded.

5.2. Terminology Verification and Authentication

a) Summary: The Xitsonga National Language Body (NLB), represented by its Language in Education Technical Committee, sought an appointment with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to discuss concerns regarding the Xitsonga CAPS document. The NLB has identified that the document does not comply with Xitsonga Spelling and Orthography Rules. The Committee believes that a physical

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meeting would be more effective than written communication (emails or letters) for addressing these issues.

b) Final Resolution: The Xitsonga NLB convened with the DBE to address all authentication issues related to the Xitsonga Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Mathematics, Natural Science, and Technology. Following constructive discussions, a consensus was reached, and the Xitsonga NLB authenticated the learning materials, which were subsequently submitted to the DBE. This matter is concluded.

5.3. **Co-option of Hosi Ngove PC to the Xitsonga National Language Body**

a) **Summary**: The Xitsonga National Language Body (NLB) received letters of objection regarding the co-option of Hosi Ngove PC as a member of the Xitsonga NLB, following a nomination by the Limpopo Provincial House of Traditional Leaders. After review, the Xitsonga NLB rejected the objection, thereby upholding the original nomination of Hosi Ngove by the Limpopo Provincial House of Traditional Leaders.

b) **Resolution:** It was resolved that the correspondence be redirected to the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders, in line with the provincial COGTA advice. The letter has been duly amended to reflect this change and dispatched. The advice is still pending a final response from the Limpopo House of Traditional Leaders.

5.4. **Usage of Sesotho sa Leboa in schools**

a) **Summary**: During its quarter three meeting, the Sesotho sa Leboa National Language Body (NLB) took a resolution that the NLB must request the introduction of phonetics instruction within the curriculum of the Department of Basic Education (DBE), particularly in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases. This intervention is proposed as a measure to strengthen literacy development, improve pronunciation standards, and enhance multilingual education outcomes across official languages.

b) **Operational Recommendation:** The Sesotho sa Leboa NLB should first familiarise itself with the Department of Basic Education's literacy programmes, including curriculum initiatives and plans to address low literacy levels in the language. It should further empower the DBE around the reintroduction of the phonetics based on a research study that the NLB shall conduct. The matter was considered not ready for escalation to the Board. The Sesotho sa Leboa NLB is expected to strengthen its advice by aligning it with national literacy programmes and by conducting a supporting research study. This study will inform the advice by providing proposals and recommendations for the reintroduction of phonetics in Sesotho sa Leboa.

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6. LANGUAGE RECOMMENDATIONS TO ORGANS OF STATE BY PanSALB BOARD

6.1. Advisory Report on Matters Relating to Language Use in Gauteng: Gauteng Provincial Language Committee (GPLC)

a) **Summary:** The Gauteng Provincial Language Committee (GPLC) previously submitted advice—through the PanSALB Board—to the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) regarding the Gauteng post-provisioning model. The GDE responded by indicating that the matter falls under the mandate of the national Department of Basic Education (DBE).

b) **Final Resolution:** A formal letter was submitted to the National Department of Basic Education (DBE) requesting special dispensation for post-provisioning for previously marginalised languages, irrespective of learner enrolment numbers. The DBE acknowledged receipt of the letter and committed to considering and implementing the recommendations put forward by PanSALB. PanSALB will monitor DBE's implementation of this recommendation.

6.2. LACK OF SASL INTERPRETER AT MADLANGA COMMISSION

a) **Summary**: PanSALB is established under the Constitution and the PanSALB Act, and is responsible for promoting and protecting all official languages, including South African Sign Language (SASL). The Act requires PanSALB to operate impartially and independently, while organs of state must support its effectiveness. PanSALB also has the authority to advise government bodies on language-related policies and practices. PanSALB expressed concern that the Madlanga Commission's public proceedings did not provide a SASL interpreter. This exclusion prevented the Deaf community from accessing information, which is especially troubling during Deaf Awareness Month as it infringes on their linguistic rights and undermines inclusivity.

PanSALB advised that:

i. The Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (DoJ&CD) must provide SASL interpreting services for the full duration of the Madlanga Commission to ensure accessibility for the Deaf community.

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ii. Consideration should also be given to making information available in all other official languages.

iii. PanSALB offered to be consulted on the practical modalities for implementing these measures

b) **Final Resolution**: The DoJ&CD responded positively and provided SASL interpretation throughout the sessions. However, it remains the sole responsibility of broadcasting houses to include departmental interpreting in their broadcasts.

6.3. PROMULGATE THE LANGUAGE POLICY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF BASIC EDUCATION

a) **Summary:** PanSALB is a constitutional body mandated to promote and protect all languages in South Africa and to advise organs of state on language policy matters. Acting under its legal mandate, PanSALB raised concern that although the Department of Basic Education (DBE) published a draft Language Policy for public comment in 2015, the policy has still not been promulgated nearly ten years later. This prolonged delay may undermine the promotion of multilingual education and compliance with language legislation.

b) **Recommendation**:

PanSALB advised that the DBE must:

i. Explain why the DBE Language Policy has not been finalised and made legally enforceable.

ii. Clarify the impact of this delay on multilingual education.

iii. Confirm whether the DBE has an established and functional Language Unit as required by law.

iv. Indicate whether the Language Unit, if it exists, is adequately resourced to operate effectively.

6.4. **Resolution**: A recommendation letter was sent to the DBE Minister, and PanSALB is still waiting for a response.

7. Conclusion

7.1. The advice and recommendations issued by the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) to organs of state are grounded in its constitutional and legislative mandate to promote multilingualism, protect language rights, and ensure compliance with national language legislation.

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7.2. Through these interventions, PanSALB seeks to strengthen accountability, enhance institutional capacity, and ensure that language policies are effectively developed, promulgated, and implemented.

7.3. Organs of state are encouraged to give due consideration to PanSALB's advice and recommendations, as doing so contributes to the advancement of equitable access to services, the promotion of social cohesion, and the realization of constitutional language rights.

7.4. Effective collaboration and responsiveness by organs of state are essential to ensure that South Africa's linguistic diversity is meaningfully respected and integrated into public administration and service delivery.

END

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