



Ministry of Research, Science and Technology
PO Box 5336
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Feedback on the Priorities for research, science and technology

The Independent Research Association of New Zealand (IRANZ) is an association of 'independent' or non-government owned research organisations. Our members include BRANZ, Cawthron Institute, CRL Energy Ltd, Heavy Engineering Research Association (HERA), Leather & Shoe Research (LASRA), Lincoln Ventures Ltd, OPUS Central Laboratories and Transport Engineering Research NZ Ltd (TERNZ). Together we employ more than 400 people, and undertake close to \$60 million of research per annum.

IRANZ has the following comments to make on the '*Priorities for research, science and technology*':

1. The Government's goals

IRANZ is very supportive of the explicit link being made between research, science and technology and New Zealand's economic and social performance – the principle of putting 'science at the heart' of economic and social development and protection of the environment.

2. The strategic direction of the New Zealand science system

IRANZ is supportive of the strategic principles for publicly-funded science outlined in the document. A very firm focus needs to be placed on research priorities that will increase productivity and enable business to compete in global markets, driven from business needs and opportunity.

3. Vote RS&T: New investment structure

- IRANZ welcomes the clarity provided by the proposed new investment structure. We do note however that health, environment and risk management identified as Government public good research responsibilities, are also important for economic development.
- IRANZ would like to stress that funding mechanisms that are demand-driven with low transaction costs such as TechnZ and Envirolink should be retained in the new investment structure. The low transaction costs encourage industry and local government to engage with research and development, and enable quick researcher responsiveness with a focus on delivery rather than proposal writing.

4. Priority investment areas

- Individual IRANZ members will provide views on the weighting of funds across sectors/domains.

5. Strategic research platforms

- The organisations represented by IRANZ collaborate and have close relationships with many Crown Research Institutes (CRIs) and Universities. IRANZ is supportive of the



principle of research platforms for New Zealand, as an effective way of achieving national goals by collaborative research programmes.

- Consideration should be given to the governance structure for platforms being at arm's length from the lead research organisation. Platforms should be required to engage all research providers in the research area unless there is an explicit reason for not doing so. Smaller research organisations have important capabilities which need to be well represented and empowered in the governance and management structures. It is essential that the governance and management model for platforms achieves the best science outcomes for New Zealand, not the best financial outcome for the lead research organisation.
- With increasing percentages of research investment being included in platforms within the new structure (with the attendant long term commitment of funds), there is a risk that new innovative ideas will struggle to find an entry. There needs to be checks and balances to ensure this does not happen.
- IRANZ notes that there is good development of platforms for some funds such as 'Biological economy', but not for others, such as 'High technology industries'. It is not clear what the distribution will be between contestable and platform funding, in each fund.

6. Developing people and infrastructure

- **Top talent: Marsden fund, scholarship and fellowships**
Recognition and support for top talent could be better aligned with national priorities and opportunities for economic growth than it is at present.
- **Research infrastructure**
There is a need for a mechanism for supporting research infrastructure in all New Zealand research organisations that undertake publicly funded research. In addition, mechanisms for the sharing of research infrastructure between research organisations would encourage full exploitation of national science resources.
- **Capability funding**
There is a need for clarity as to whether this fund aims to support key capability for New Zealand, or is ownership support for the Crown owned research institutes. If it is the former then recognition is needed of capability in other research providers that is important to 'NZ Inc'. If it is the latter, then it needs to be recognised that increasing capability funding from Vote RS&T results in a decrease in the contestable pool that is available to all research providers.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to further opportunities to participate in the science sector review process.

Yours sincerely,

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