

From: no-reply@mbie.govt.nz
To: [Research, Science and Innovation Strategy Secretariat](#)
Subject: Draft Research, Science and Innovation Strategy submission
Date: Sunday, 10 November 2019 4:48:58 p.m.
Attachments: [Online-submission-form-uploadsdraft-research-science-and-innovation-strategy-submissionsP-Priest-submission-form-research-science-and-innovation-strategy.docx](#)

Submission on Draft Research, Science and Innovation Strategy received:

Are you making your submission as an individual, or on behalf of an organisation?

Individual

Name

Patricia Priest

Name of organisation or institutional affiliation

University of Otago

Role within organisation

Head of Department, Preventive and Social Medicine

Email address (in case we would like to follow up with you further about your submission)

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Which of the below areas do you feel represents your perspective as a submitter? (Please select all that apply)

Researcher

If you selected other, please specify here:

Gender

Ethnicity

Name of organisation on whose behalf you are submitting, if different to the organisation named above

In which sector does your organisation operate: (Please select all that apply)

If you selected other, please specify here:

How large is your organisation (in number of full-time-equivalent employees)?

Please indicate if you would like some or all of the information you provide in your submission kept in confidence, and if so which information.

Please upload your submission document here

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Research, Science and Innovation Strategy

Submission form

Researching and innovating towards the frontier

Question 4: Do you agree that the RSI Strategy should be focused on innovation at the “frontier” (creating new knowledge) rather than behind the frontier (using existing knowledge to improve the ways we do things)?

Please type your submission below. If applicable, please indicate the question(s) to which you are responding.

Q4 – No, I don't agree; both are required, although it depends a bit on what you mean by 'creating new knowledge'. Working out how best to apply things that are already known is, in itself, creating new knowledge but I am concerned that that's not what you mean. There's no point spending all the money on new things that may or may not be useful, and ignoring the need to work out how best to apply knowledge gained from previous research. Also there is 'innovative' research that is a waste of money because the question being asked is pointless, or the answer won't matter.

Our key challenge – Connectivity

Question 10: Do you agree that a key challenge for the RSI system is enabling stronger connections? Why or why not?

Please type your submission below.

I agree that connectivity is important. A type of connectivity that I'm not sure you're considering is the connection of policy with research. There are many public health issues for which there is clear research evidence of the best way forward but policy-makers have failed to follow the evidence (e.g. the recommendations of the 2010 Law Commission report, *Alcohol in Our Lives: Curbing the Harm*).

Guiding Policy – Excellence

Question 11: Do you agree with the definition of excellence presented here as the best thing possible in its context? Why or why not?

Question 12: How can we achieve diversity within our research workforce? What are the current barriers preventing a diverse range of talent from thriving in the RSI system?

Please type your submission below. If applicable, please indicate the question(s) to which you are responding.

Q11 Yes, I agree with your definition. I exhort you not to bow to the pressure of the people who say "Excellence is just about 'the quality of the work'. All this diversity stuff is secondary". I agree that if you don't have a diverse group of people doing the work then you can't assume that the quality is the best it can be (unless you subscribe to the idea that any white man is better than all non-white non-men, which is obviously ridiculous).

Q12 The current barriers are a range of structural and system factors that entrench existing privilege. They have to be actively addressed and broken down; by doing serious work to understand what those factors are and how they work, and changing them, by explicitly valuing all researchers, by changing the incentives for institutions. I know that the Athena SWAN system has been looked at and put into the too hard basket by the Royal Society – it's not perfect but it would be a start. Fund some properly evaluated trials of interventions, for example (there are probably enough research organisations in NZ to do a randomised controlled trial of an intervention!). Some sanctions for institutions with particularly non-diverse leadership / senior staff. I'm not deeply familiar with the research in this area, and so to be consistent with my advocacy for evidence-based policy above, I won't put forward any further off-the-top-of-my-head ideas for things to do, but I do really recommend that you fund serious research into how to address the barriers. Hand wringing and asking people to play nicely will not effect change. Empowerment of groups only works if you also break down the barriers to their success.