

IrrigationNZ's points on Research, Science and Innovation Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways Green Paper 2021

24th March 2022

Addressed to:-

FuturePathways@mbie.govt.nz

Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)/Hikina Whakatutuki
PO Box 1473, Wellington 6140

Dear Ministry Business, Innovation and Employment,

We are writing to you to address IrrigationNZ's views on the 2021 paper from MBIE, *Research, Science and Innovation Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways*. IrrigationNZ acknowledges that the formal consultation process has ended, however we still feel our views are important to be heard on this topic.

About IrrigationNZ

Irrigation New Zealand (IrrigationNZ) is the national representative body endorsed to represent over 3,800 members, including irrigation schemes, individual irrigators, and the irrigation service sector across all regions of New Zealand.

Our irrigator members include a wide range of farmers and growers – sheep and beef, dairy and cropping farmers, horticulturalists, winegrowers, as well as sports and recreational facilities and councils. We also represent over 120 irrigation service industry members – manufacturers, distributors, irrigation design and install companies, and irrigation decision support services for both freshwater and effluent irrigation.

Irrigation NZ is a voluntary-membership, not-for-profit organisation whose mission is to create an environment for the responsible use of water for food and fibre production for local and international consumers and to sustain the wellbeing of communities.

As an organisation we actively take a technical leadership role in promoting best practice irrigation and carry out a range of training and education activities associated with freshwater management. Over the last five years, we have trained over 3,000 irrigators on different aspects of irrigation best practices to improve water use efficiency (lowering consumption) and better manage environmental effects (improved soil moisture management).



IrrigationNZ members share many of the same goals as other New Zealanders:

- Reduce their environmental footprints and see improvements in the health of the natural environment
- Contribute to the wellbeing of their communities, and
- Provide for a sustainable future for New Zealand.

IrrigationNZ General Statements of Principle

IrrigationNZ supports the initiative from MBIE to revitalise discussion around the future of Aotearoa's research and science sectors, as detailed in the Research, Science and Innovation Te Ara Paerangi, Future Pathways Green Paper, 2021.

Key points discussed in this paper IrrigationNZ agreed would improve the current RSI system, in terms of our perspective as a representative body for irrigators across New Zealand, are detailed below.

- IrrigationNZ agrees that mātauranga Māori can and should be further integrated into the current research system. IrrigationNZ believes mātauranga Māori clearly links to irrigation processes and research, specifically when looking at issues of freshwater and land use, for example how effluent and other potential contaminant runoff could impact mahinga kai.
- IrrigationNZ agrees that a base funding model will improve the stability and resilience of organisations. It will also support learning and employment outcomes in the research workforce.

However, there are a few key areas IrrigationNZ believes should have been included in this paper. These are detailed below.

- IrrigationNZ would like to see further opportunities for the private sector to apply for and receive funding from public research grants. This would result in further innovation and entrepreneurialism in the agricultural sector.
- IrrigationNZ believe that part of designing collaborative, adaptive and agile research institutions that will serve our current and future needs will mean expanding laboratories and research areas that are involved in testing primary sector tools in the real world. For example, research laboratories on farms and in freshwater catchments.
- IrrigationNZ believes a renewed focus on the actual outputs and outcomes of research is needed in Aotearoa, over and above the current concentration on the research itself. Further clarity is needed in New Zealand's research pathways in how funding results in operational innovations, that make a positive difference for our industries. From our perspective, this means developing answers to real and relevant questions the agriculture sector has.



- IrrigationNZ also see a need for better science communication capabilities in New Zealand's research and science pathways. There needs to be a much stronger focus on being able to convey complex scientific ideas to people and companies, within the vast range of scientific knowledge that exists. Amongst our over 3,800 members there is a diverse range of understanding and skillsets, and a more effective RSI sector would be able to communicate its findings and innovations clearly across the board. This would mean the maximum amount of people can benefit from what New Zealand scientists uncover and invent using taxpayer funds.

Overall, IrrigationNZ would like to see a more efficient and more effective science and research process in Aotearoa. More efficient in terms of funding, and creating useful outcomes from funding, and more effective in terms of being much more capable of reaching a broad and diverse audience.

We would appreciate the opportunity to discuss the responses in this letter or to provide additional information needed.

Please, direct any inquiries to:

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Kind regards,

Vanessa Winning

Chief Executive

IrrigationNZ

CC:

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