

Te Ara Paerangi – Future Pathways Green Paper

Submission by:

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Submitted on behalf of Massey University, College of Sciences Research Committee.

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Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Te Ara Paerangi - Future Pathways Green Paper. The College of Sciences Research Committee represents the research interests of approximately 400 researchers in the College of Sciences, Massey University. This submission represents the collective views of members of the College of Sciences Research Committee who, after discussion with their colleagues, submitted feedback on The Green Paper to the Committee Chair for review, interpretation, and consolidation into this report.

1 RESEARCH PRIORITIES

When it comes to designing the research priorities, we make the following suggestions:

- Map the research landscape – Where are the current national and international research strengths and weaknesses? Where are the national and international research gaps? Where are the current overlaps?
- Link research to national strategic priorities and national industries of significance for current and future growth in research and development.
- Balance the research portfolio so that it has options that cater for researcher needs and is inclusive of fundamental and applied research.
- Provide annual flexibility for new priorities and emerging themes to be introduced.
- Focus on research that matters to Aotearoa, New Zealand and that makes a positive impact to the lives of people.
- Set core values (such as transparency, openness, and inclusivity) in research funding decision making.

When it comes to designing the research process, we make the following suggestions:

- Develop a process which involves wide researcher participation, across national and international research themes, with scope to prioritise themed research initiatives.
- Create teams of experts to assist with design, development and implementation of the research process.
- Create diversity and equity in the decision making process, including government, business and universities/CRIs and junior to senior researchers of different backgrounds, areas of expertise, regions.

- Review the successes and failures of previous funding models to inform new models of funding and infrastructure delivery.

When it comes to implementing the research priorities, we make the following suggestions:

- Reduce bureaucracy, possibly using one agency with a mandate for the discovery, prioritisation, delivery and promotion of national research priorities.
- Refocus on impact not outputs.
- Reduce reporting and over compliance.
- Create trusting partnerships with the researchers and their organisations.

When it comes to engaging about the research priorities, we make the following suggestions:

- Engagement should be ongoing, throughout Te Ara Paerangi – Future Pathways Green Paper development stages and into subsequent funding decisions.

2 FUNDING

When it comes to developing the funding mechanisms, we make the following suggestions:

- Funding is currently fragmented. Research funding could be consolidated into fewer funds.
- A full review of the whole current funding system is recommended given the fragmented nature. NSC, Marsden, PBRF and other funding should all be reviewed as part of this comprehensive systemic review.
- The current reliance upon external grants, coupled with overheads, needs to be addressed as it hinders research innovation.
- Funding could be based on past and current proven excellence (and future potential) using a standardised agreed measurement system across the whole sector (CRIs, Universities, etc.) at individual, group/school/business/faculty and/or institution level.
- Time spent bidding for funding is mostly wasting valuable researcher time.
- International National Research Councils are central to how research directions and decision making occurs overseas– such mechanisms should be explored for suitability in New Zealand.
- Rapid and short-term changes in direction are an obstacle to continuity, stability and progress.
- Longer term research goals (at least 5-10 years in duration) are needed for solid progress to be made.
- A new system should incentivise/mandate collaboration.
- CoREs and NSCs have been collaborative but not adaptive or agile. Such collaborative endeavours could have worked better if they were more open to changing and adapting, including periodically changing their leadership.
- CoREs and NSCs have barriers to entry. In reality, researchers have been either part of CoREs and NSCs, and therefore their research and careers have been well supported, or they have found it difficult to enter. Anecdotally, it appears early career researchers may have been worse affected, unless they had an NSC/CoRE sponsor/mentor to promote them and their research.

3. TE TIRITI, MĀTAURANGA MĀORI AND MĀORI ASPIRATIONS

When it comes to Te Tiriti, Mātauranga Māori and Māori aspirations, we make the following suggestions:

- Māori researchers should be given autonomy to design and develop an integrated research system which is best suited for supporting Māori research success and the success of Aotearoa.
- Māori researchers should be given autonomy to decide whether regionally based Māori knowledge hubs are best suited for supporting Māori research success and the success of Aotearoa.

4. INSTITUTIONS

When it comes to deciding institutional structures, we make the following suggestions:

- Consider international structures which have demonstrated clear collaboration and quality outputs and which include best elements for supporting Māori success and the success of Aotearoa.

Universities and CRIs

- Universities and CRIs are the backbone of the research system, with expectations to deliver high quality research as a core function. They should be adequately funded and trusted.
- CRIs and Universities should be given base grant funding.
- CRI researchers should be held to the same national and international standard as University researchers and subject to the same national performance reviews for their research (currently the PBRF).
- Co-location of CRIs with Universities should be explored, but organisations should be subject to the same conditions and terms of engagement with respect to research funding and conditions.
- Businesses, museums, independent research organisations etc. are highly variable in their research quality and outputs, not usually subject to the same scrutiny for excellence and impact, and could be better aligned with trusted research organisations (Universities/CRIs) for extra support.

5. WORKFORCE

When it comes to the research workforce stability, we make the following suggestions:

- Stability of employment is required (for all researchers but especially in the early career researcher workforce).
- New Zealand needs a well-supported and diverse research workforce with sufficient capacity to deliver national research expectations.
- Casually-employed researchers spend valuable time concerned about their future, and the instability of tenure is not conducive to good outcomes.

6. INFRASTRUCTURE

When it comes to research infrastructure, we make the following suggestions:

- A national audit of research infrastructure can be used to understand needs, reduce duplication, assist with consolidation and allow for any necessary diversification of facilities.
- Understanding what can be consolidated and what must be distributed infrastructure is needed.
- For some research infrastructure it is cost-effective to have a distributed system.

End of Submission