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Working Paper
2021/05 – Government
priorities of the
New Zealand
Government from
2006

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TE HONONGA WAKA

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Contents

- 1.0 Introduction x
- 1.1 Background x
- 1.2 Purpose of Working Paper 2021/05 x
- 2.0 Methodology x
- Step 1 x
- Step 2 x
- Step 3 x
- Step 4 x
- 3.0 Research and analysis x
- 3.1 Introduction x
- 3.2 Results x
- 3.3 Key findings x
- 4.0 Observations x
- 4.1 Introduction x
- 4.2 Key findings x
- References x

List of Figures

Figure 1: Strategic Instruments in the Public Service	x
Figure 2: Timeline: Government Priorities from May 2006	x

List of Tables

Table 1:	x
Table 2:	x

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

In December of 2014, the McGuinness Institute published *Working Paper 2014/02 - Analysis of Government Department Strategies Between 1 July 1994 and 30 June 2014 – An overview*. The purpose of this paper was to provide an overview of the 290 government department strategies (GDS) published between 1 July 1994 and 30 June 2014, and to review the 136 GDSs that were active as at 30 June 2014 (McGuinness Institute, 2014). The paper contained, among other things, an analysis of the government priorities with respect to the GDSs. The government priorities are announced as part of the Budget speech yearly by the Minister of Finance, and are high level goals (see Figure 1) that the government is funding and aiming towards achieving. These priorities provide direction to a lot of the lower level government decisions and strategies, and therefore often effects how decisions are made in the public arena.

Figure 1: Strategic Instruments in the Public Service

Source: *Working Paper 2019/04 – Analysis of Government Department Strategies Between 1 July 1994 and 31 December 2018*



The government priorities are decided by the Cabinet Priorities Committee. The committee considers major strategic issues as determined by the Prime Minister or Cabinet and sets major policy directions as a result. They are responsible for the coordination and delivery of these priorities (DPMC, n.d.).

1.2 Purpose of Working Paper 2021/05

2.0 Methodology

3.0 Research and Analysis

Table 1: Government Priorities from May 2006 – Dec 2021












Adapted from Budget Speeches (Treasury, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020)

Year	Government priorities	Fiscal Priorities
2006	1. Economic transformation (p. 20)	
	2. Deliver a better quality of life for families young and old (p. 27)	
	3. Supporting the evolution of national identity (p. 30)	
2007	4. Economic transformation (p. 27)	
	5. Families – young and old (pp. 19, 30)	
	6. National identity (pp. 19, 31)	
2008	7. Economic transformation (p. 32)	
	8. Support for families (p. 29)	
	9. National identity (p. 31)	
	10. Tax cut package (p. 29)	
2009	11. Support public services (p. 19)	
	12. Lift productivity and economic performance (p. 19)	
	13. Keeping debt under control (p. 19)	
2010	14. Better delivery of public services, to make them better for users of those services and better for taxpayers (p. 20)	
	15. Lifting the long term performance of the economy (p. 20)	
	16. Reform of the tax system, to make it fairer, more sustainable and more supporting of economic growth (p. 20)	
	17. Maintain firm control of the Government’s finances, so we can return to budget surpluses and pull back our rising debt (p. 20)	
2011	18. Target a lower level of public debt (p. 25)	
	19. Improving core front-line government services (p. 29)	
	20. Maintain investment in core public assets (p. 31)	
	21. Rebuilding Christchurch (p. 24)	

Year	Government priorities	Fiscal Priorities
2012	22. Good fiscal management (p. 1)	
	23. Building a more productive and competitive economy (pp. 1, 5)	
	24. Delivering better public services within tight financial constraints (pp. 1, 8)	
	25. Rebuilding Christchurch (pp. 1, 12)	
2013	26. Responsibly managing the Government's finances (pp. 3, 4)	
	27. Building a more productive and competitive economy that supports higher incomes and more jobs (p. 6)	
	28. Delivering better public services within tight fiscal constraints (pp. 3, 9)	
	29. Support the rebuilding of Christchurch (pp. 3, 12)	
2014	30. Responsibly managing the Government's finances (pp. 2, 4)	
	31. Building a more productive and competitive economy (pp. 2, 6)	
	32. Delivering better public services (pp. 2, 9)	
	33. Rebuilding Christchurch (pp. 2, 14)	
2015	34. Responsibly manage the Government's finances (p. 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returning to surplus this year and maintaining surpluses in the future; • Reducing net debt to 20 per cent of GDP by 2020, including repaying debt in dollar terms in 2017/18; • Further reducing ACC levies; • Beginning to reduce income taxes from 2017; • Using any further fiscal headroom to reduce debt faster (pg. 3)
	35. Build a more productive and competitive economy that supports jobs and higher incomes (p. 4)	
	36. Deliver better public services (p. 8)	
	37. Supporting the rebuild of Christchurch (p. 13)	
2016	38. Responsibly manage the Government's finances (p. 3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining rising operating surpluses; • Reducing net debt to around 20 per cent of GDP in 2020; • If economic and fiscal conditions allow, beginning to reduce income taxes; • Using any further fiscal headroom to reduce debt faster (pg. 3)
	39. Build a more productive and competitive economy that supports jobs and higher incomes (p. 4)	
	40. Delivering better public services (p. 9)	
	41. Christchurch regeneration (p. 14)	

Year	Government priorities	Fiscal Priorities
2017	42. Keep the economy growing (pp. 3, 12)	
	43. Invest in the public services necessary for a growing country (pp. 5, 12)	
	44. Social investment (p. 6)	
	45. Investing in the infrastructure for a growing economy (pp. 7, 12)	
	46. Resilience (pp. 8, 12)	
2018	47. Rebuilding core public services (p. 5)	
	48. Sustainable economic development (p. 9)	
	49. Building stronger communities (p. 12)	
	50. Sharing propensity and measuring success (p. 13)	
2019	51. Create new frontline services for mental health (pp. 5, 14)	
	52. Improve child wellbeing (pp. 7, 14)	
	53. Supporting Māori and Pasifika aspirations (pp. 9, 14)	
	54. Investing in crucial infrastructure while managing the books responsibly and assessing long-term economic challenges (p. 14)	
2020	55. Boost critical [core] public services (pp. 2, 10)	
	56. Fund infrastructure (p. 2)	
	57. Invest in the second and third stages of our plan to face COVID-19: Recover and Rebuild (p. 2)	

Key

 Debt/Surplus	 Climate/Environment	 Māori/Pasifika/ National Identity
 Tax and ACC Reform	 Earthquakes	 Resilience
 Economy	 Wellbeing (Children and Families)	 COVID-19
 Public Services	 Wellbeing (Physical and Mental)	

4.0 Observations

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