

Government priorities of the New Zealand government from 2006

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To: <information@dpmc.govt.nz>

Subject: Our OIA: 2021/11 Government priorities of the New Zealand government from 2006

To whom it may concern,

Our OIA: 2021/11 Government priorities of the New Zealand government from 2006

The Institute is undertaking research into the goals that drive government spending and public policy, with a particular focus on climate change. Our latest work programme can be found [here](#).

Background

We have a working paper in progress, titled: *Working Paper 2021/05: Government priorities of the New Zealand government from 2006 to 2021*. Part of this working paper includes a timeline listing each of the government's priorities mentioned since 2006 (see excerpt attached). These pages are also found on the initial draft of the working paper (found [here](#), please scroll down). To help scope this work, we are writing to see if DPMC officials could answer the following seven questions.

Seven Questions

Question 1: Is it correct to refer to the 'priorities' as the '*government priorities of the New Zealand government*'? If incorrect, please explain and suggest a better term? Note: This is particularly important given it is the title of the working paper.

Question 2: Is the supporting table (Table 1) conceptually accurate in stating 'government priorities' since 2006? Please explain. Note: The relevant references (with links) can be found on page 13 of the initial draft. Each year we reference the relevant *Budget Speech*.

Question 3: Are there other places in the machinery of government where high-level goals, priorities and/or objectives are listed in a regular and consistent manner? If yes, please explain what these are and where we can find them?

Question 4: DPMC's website (found [here](#)) states that the Cabinet Priorities Committee is: 'Responsible for the overall co-ordination and delivery of the government's priorities'.

We have five sub-questions:

- a. When was this committee established?
- b. Are you aware of any other equivalent committees being in operation at any time since 2006? If yes, please explain?
- c. How does the committee define 'priorities', 'budget priorities', 'core goals', 'critical goals' and 'major strategic issues' – and is there a hierarchy? Note: We found some speeches failed to draw a clear distinction between these terms.
- d. Is the committee responsible for overseeing how government department strategies (GDSs) are implemented? Please explain. Note: the Institute has prepared a GDS Index [here](#), and the tentative list of GDSs in operation as at 31 December 2020 can be found [here](#). We are trying to find out who in government has oversight of GDSs. Can you advise?

- e. Is there a working relationship between the committee and the new 'Implementation Unit' established inside DPMC? Please explain? (Please also see question 6 below on the new Unit).

Question 5: In our view, Labour's [manifesto to keep New Zealand moving](#) is not included as a government strategy as it is outside of government and simply drives ministers' decision making. Do you agree?

Question 6: Given the climate emergency, why is there no Cabinet Committee focused specifically on climate change? In addition, please explain how the Minister of Climate Change is able to progress his ideas given he is not a member of the (ENV) Cabinet Environment, Energy and Climate Committee?

Question 7: The government recently established the 'Implementation Unit' within DPMC. The Pre-Budget speech (4 May 2021) states:

*For this term of Government we have **three core goals**. In addition to keeping New Zealanders safe from COVID-19, we are focused on accelerating our economic recovery and addressing the big three foundational challenges, housing affordability, climate change and child wellbeing.*

*The Government is determined that we will deliver on these core priorities. To that end the Prime Minister has asked me to lead the establishment an Implementation Unit based in her department. The Unit will be funded through Budget 2021 and will monitor and support implementation of a **small number of critical initiatives**, particularly where multiple agencies are involved in the work. This includes areas such as mental health, infrastructure, housing and **climate change mitigation**. The Unit will report to me as Deputy Prime Minister, and will engage closely with Minister's offices. At a time, in the wake of COVID-19, where the Government is playing a much greater role in supporting the economy and investing for the future, it is crucial that we ensure that we are getting value for money from every dollar of spending, and **that across the public service initiatives are being delivered in a way that supports our economic recovery**. [bold added]*

- Please clarify what are the 'three core goals' mentioned above (in bold underline)? Are they, for example, housing affordability, climate change, child wellbeing, COVID-19 or the economic recovery?
- Can you provide examples of the critical initiatives for each of the specific areas mentioned in the pre-budget speech: mental health, infrastructure, housing and climate change mitigation?
- The Minister mentioned that 'climate change mitigation' was one the key areas (see bold), but why was 'adaptation' not mentioned?
- Will the new Unit focus on (i) all, (ii) some or (iii) none of the 199 GDSs currently in operation as at 31 December 2020?

If you have any questions or comments please let me know. Thank you in advance.

Best wishes, Wendy

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