

Subject: Government Department Strategies Index (our reference: OIA 2024/01)

Date: Sunday, 28 January 2024 at 12:37:03 PM New Zealand Daylight Time

From: Wendy McGuinness

To: Wendy McGuinness

CC: Arne Larsen, Eilish Cartysquires

Tēnā koe,

Government Department Strategies Index (GDS Index) – updating the GDS Index to 31 December 2023 (our reference: OIA 2024/01)

Happy new year.

Every few years the Institute identifies and assesses GDSs in operation against a transparency scorecard. GDSs drive and shape public policy and act as a key instrument for Ministers (and therefore officials) to bring about change. For this reason we are keen to understand, analyse and report on any changes in strategic direction and any improvements in the level of transparency in existing strategy documents. The Institute believes better transparency will lead to better trust in government.

Background

In June 2022, the Institute published the *2021 Government Department Strategies Index Handbook – He Puna Rautaki*. It listed and scored every GDS in operation as at 31 December 2021. The Institute is interested in understanding how Government Department Strategies (GDSs) operate individually and collectively to effect change. The *GDS Index* website can be viewed [here](#). For the purposes of the *GDS Index*, a ‘government department strategy’ must have all seven elements:

1. be a publicly available document accessible on a government department website,
2. be public-facing, therefore excluding a strategy only made public as the result of an OIA request,
3. be strategic, containing long-term thinking and setting out both the means (how) and the ends (the purpose),
4. be produced by a government department, therefore excluding situations where a strategy is written or published by another party (e.g. a Cabinet paper),
5. be national rather than local in focus, therefore excluding regional strategies,
6. guide the department’s thinking and operations over two years or more, and
7. not be a statement of intent or annual report.

In 2024, the Institute aims to update our records to 31 December 2023, by adding all newly published GDSs and archiving all GDSs no longer in operation. 2024 is a particularly important year for strategies, due to the change in strategic direction (as a result of the election) and the urgent need to respond to climate change.

OIA questions

The purpose of this OIA is to create an accurate list of GDSs in operation as at 31 December 2023. In order to achieve this, we would like to ask you the following three questions summarised below, but specified in more detail in the Excel attached. The Excel notes by row, (i) all existing GDSs in 31 December 2021 (in blue) or (ii) possible GDSs (in green), found by my team. Our preference is that you answer the questions in the Excel, and email the Excel back to us.

- Are the existing GDSs (as at 31 December 2021) still active?
- Are there any GDSs that are missing from the attached document? If yes please add to the Excel document attached.
- Are there any GDSs that are included in the attached document that have been recently archived (and therefore need to be removed from our list)?

About the Draft Master Excel

- Each department has its own sheet.

- Each row represents one GDS.
- The rows **in blue** are copied directly from our *2021 GDS Index*.
- The rows **in green** represent potential GDSs that my team has found by reviewing your departments website.
- The cells **in yellow** indicate specific questions (see Column J: McGuinness Institute's comments and questions). Your responses should go into Column K (coloured orange). The Institute holds a 'Draft Master Excel, Version 1 (dated 29 January 2024)', which contains all the sheets. The 'Draft Master Excel' can be found on the Institute's website [here](#) and will be updated so that you can see the changes as they come in so that you have the latest list. However, the correspondence between the Institute and the departments will not appear on the 'Draft Master Excel'. We have made the summarised 'Draft Master Excel' accessible so you can check for shared GDSs, held by more than one department. We have found a few of these in our initial scoping exercise, and these have been included in your departments Excel (if they exist). Our view is that GDSs signed off by one of the six interdepartmental boards (as per Schedule 2 of the Public Service Act 2020), should by their very nature, be treated as 'jointly held'. Note: This issue became apparent to us when we found [Te Aorerekura – National Strategy to Eliminate Family Violence and Sexual Violence](#). This GDS was signed off by the Executive Board for the Elimination of Family Violence and Sexual Violence; which includes Department of Corrections, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Māori Development—Te Puni Kōkiri, Ministry of Social Development, New Zealand Police, Oranga Tamariki—Ministry for Children and Public Service Commission. For the purposes of the 'Draft Master Excel', we have treated it as 'jointly held' between all the departments (with the exception of New Zealand Police, as they are not a department). If you disagree with this treatment, please let us know.

Next Steps

We aim to send all chief executive a complimentary copy of (i) our *2021 GDS Index* (so you have a hard copy for your records) and (ii) our signature book *Nation Dates: Timelines of significant events that have shaped the history of Aotearoa New Zealand (5th Edition)*. A copy of *Nation Dates* was sent to all MPs just before the summer break.

We will alert Ministers by email that we are in the process of creating a *2023 GDS Index* and that they can find the latest 'Draft Master Excel' (Version 1, dated 29 January 2024) on our website. We have no doubt officials will have let Ministers know of the GDSs under their departments control, but they might not have a complete list of all GDSs potentially in existence as at 31 December 2023.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. If I am not available, please feel free to also contact Eilish Cartysquires [or](#) Arne Larsen (copied in).

Wishing you all the best for 2024.

Ngā mihi,

Wendy McGuinness

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