


September 2025

Methodology

2058

Version 6

MCGUINNESS INSTITUTE
TE HONONGA WAKA

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About the Institute	The McGuinness Institute is an independently funded non-partisan think tank. The main work programme of the Institute is <i>Project 2058</i> . The strategic aim of this project is to promote integrated long-term thinking, leadership and capacity-building so that New Zealand can effectively seek and create opportunities and explore and manage risks over the next 50 years. It is hoped that <i>Project 2058</i> will help develop dialogue among government, policy-analysts and members of the public about alternative strategies for the future of New Zealand.
For further information	McGuinness Institute Phone (04) 499 8888 Level 1A, 15 Allen Street PO Box 24222 Wellington 6011 New Zealand www.mcguinnessinstitute.org
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1.0 The McGuinness Institute

The McGuinness Institute (previously the Sustainable Future Institute [SFI]) is a non-partisan think tank working towards a sustainable future for New Zealand. Led by Chief Executive Wendy McGuinness, the Institute undertakes research and analysis with a view to contributing to a national conversation on New Zealand's long-term future. The Institute's work is guided by a commitment to sustainability, fairness, inclusiveness, practicality and relationships. The McGuinness Institute is funded by The McGuinness Foundation Trust, which invests in a range of not-for-profit education pursuits.

2.0 Project 2058

Project 2058 is the Institute's flagship project, established in 2008 to reflect a focus on New Zealand in the year 2058. Its strategic aim is to promote integrated long-term thinking, leadership and capacity-building so that New Zealand can effectively explore and manage risks and opportunities over the next 40 years. The Institute is now 17 years into this 50-year project. In version six of our methodology, we want to undertake research that helps respond to this question:

If we were to look back from 2040, what would we wish we had done in 2025?

The fundamental proposition of Project 2058 is that 'business as usual' is not a feasible option for New Zealand. The world we live in today is fast-paced, interconnected and technologically led. This makes it increasingly dynamic and complex and will lead to new problems and novel solutions for current and future generations. Project 2058 is a mechanism that attempts to explore the future and to develop integrated long-term thinking so that we may progress towards a more sustainable and anti-fragile New Zealand.

All our major reports are grouped together as Project 2058 reports (see Figure 1 overleaf). They are usually supported by working papers and think pieces and sometimes build on the findings from surveys, workshops and other publications (such as our signature book *Nation Dates*). A full list of the types of publications we produce can be found on the McGuinness Institute website.

3.0 Principles

A set of core principles underpinning Project 2058 was developed in 2009. They continue to drive and shape the work programme today.

1. Planning and decision-making must have a long-term focus.
2. Sustainability requires maintaining and promoting opportunity and equity for current and future generations.
3. Sustainability must be pursued through the integration of cultural, economic, environmental and social goals in a way that recognises the interconnected nature of our world. Planning should take a systems approach, celebrate diversity, respect human rights, and seek mutual solutions to mutual problems.
4. Sustainability must be progressed through participation and partnerships. It is vital to work together towards active participation and to give effect to the Treaty of Waitangi.

5. New Zealand should focus on sustainable development by increasing wellbeing and the four capitals of the Living Standards Framework rather than solely focusing on economic growth.
6. Environmental limits must be respected and the intrinsic value of all life systems recognised.
7. Decision-making should be based on the best information, which should be timely, accurate and meaningful.

4.0 Methodology

Acknowledging that there is a multiplicity of ways of planning for a sustainable future, the Institute has chosen to continually review its approach. This is the sixth version of our methodology, following the last review in 2018. Although some methodology components have remained the same, others have changed, and will continue to change over time. This methodology explains how we select our work programme and the reason behind the selection of specific research projects. Our work will always be organic and responsive to the needs and gaps we observe; we are not confined by the parameters of a single project or obliged to follow a fixed approach.

4.1 Original methodology

The original structure of the Project 2058 methodology was linear, focusing on three distinct stages: research, scenarios and strategy (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Original Project 2058 methodology



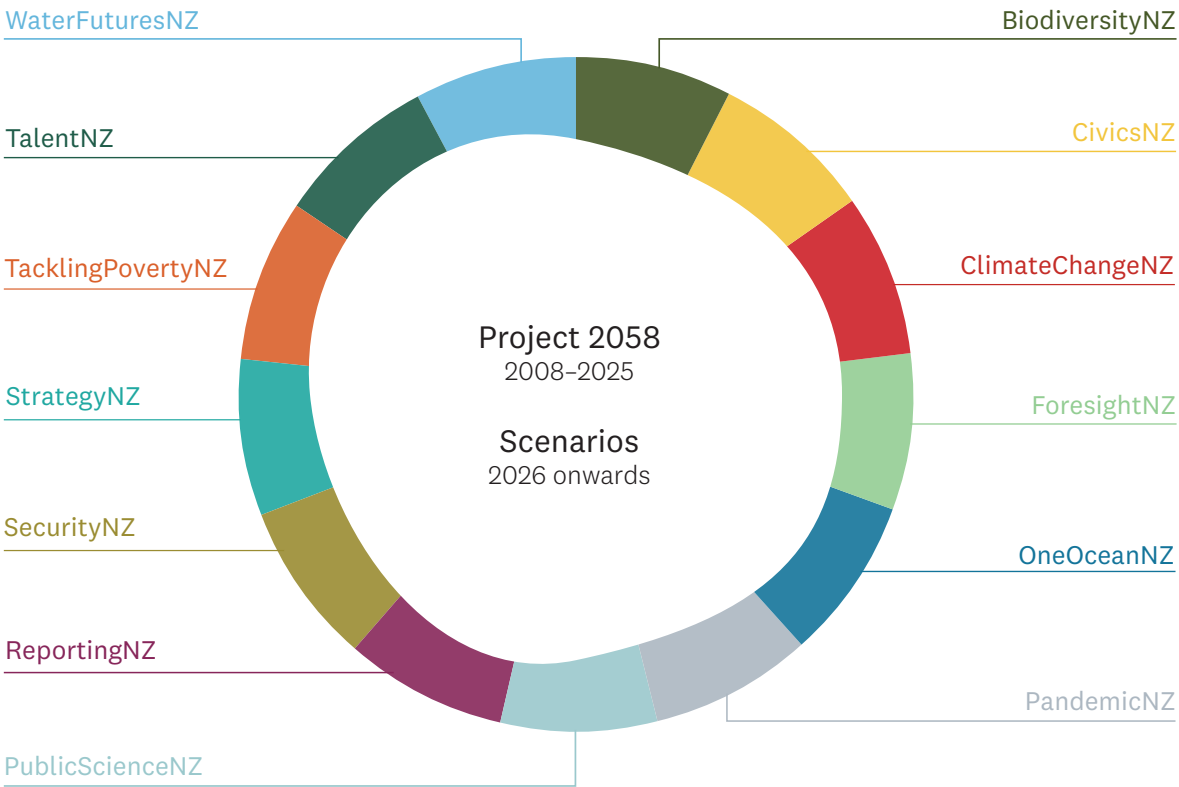
This method was selected as the best way for the Institute to contribute to a discussion on a National Sustainable Development Strategy (NSDS) for New Zealand. The development of an NSDS was the central goal of Project 2058 at its inception; most countries had committed to producing an NSDS, including New Zealand in July 2001. However, at the time of writing, most countries (including New Zealand) still have not delivered on that commitment.

4.2. Modified methodology

In 2016 the Institute significantly altered the Project 2058 methodology, evolving from a staged to an integrated approach. The integrated approach is based on the understanding that foresight drives strategy, strategy requires reporting, and reporting shapes foresight. All three areas must be aligned if we want New Zealand to develop durable, robust and forward-facing public policy. This led to the development of three policy projects: *ForesightNZ*, *StrategyNZ* and *ReportingNZ*.

These three projects are closely interlinked, and as of 2025 have become research projects (as they have broadened in scope beyond policy). Figure 2 below illustrates the relationship between the Institute’s research projects in 2025.

Figure 2: Linkages between projects



Research projects

The methodology that drives our work is shaped by the need to have an integrated, whole-system approach to policy-making. We believe that policy requires equal amounts of focus on foresight (*ForesightNZ*), strategy (*StrategyNZ*) and reporting (*ReportingNZ*).

However, foresight, strategy and reporting alone will not ensure that we create value; we need to delve into complex problems in order to solve them. That is the role of all our research projects, which have been developed in response to a range of study areas. The Institute’s work programme therefore focuses on a selection of significant issues facing New Zealand, each of which relates to one or more of our research projects. We often focus on issues that are difficult to research because they are too uncomfortable, too political or too audacious to solve. As a non-partisan institution, the Institute sees value in identifying these uncomfortable policy gaps, and then working to produce quality independent research into complex topics.

When the last Project2058 methodology was written in 2018, there were five research projects and three separate policy projects (*ForesightNZ*, *StrategyNZ* and *ReportingNZ*). Seven years later, these have been combined and expanded to a total of 13 research projects. These research projects are part of an ecosystem and are intended to overlap with, and feed into, one another.

1. BiodiversityNZ

BiodiversityNZ (formerly *EcologicalCorridorsNZ*) contributes to the discussion on how New Zealand can safeguard biodiversity and the environment. Research under *BiodiversityNZ* aims to contribute to a discussion on how we protect, maintain and build our existing ecosystems. A significant portion of New Zealand's flora and fauna is found nowhere else on earth, yet many species are already extinct, or near extinction. Due to New Zealand's geographical isolation and unique geography, the country is home to a diverse array of endemic species, particularly plants, insects and marine life. These species are facing an increasing amount of pressure, including introduced pests, a changing climate, natural disasters, pollution, habitat loss and environmental degradation.

BiodiversityNZ explores how New Zealand can use research and public policy to protect native species and their habitats, with the goal of becoming a world leader in conservation and biodiversity protection. This project therefore aligns and sometimes overlaps with the Institute's *OneOceanNZ* and *ClimateChangeNZ* research projects.

2. CivicsNZ

CivicsNZ promotes good civics education in New Zealand, contributing to a discussion on its importance, showcasing the machinery of government, and empowering citizens through a shared understanding of our common rights and responsibilities. Participants in our youth workshops, in particular the EmpowerNZ workshop, have consistently voiced concern at the lack of information provided to educate young people on civics in New Zealand.

CivicsNZ is closely aligned with the Institute's *ForesightNZ* research project as it is about developing youth knowledge and understanding of civic processes.

3. ClimateChangeNZ

ClimateChangeNZ aims to suggest what a climate strategy for 2040 might look like, using foresight tools to explore scenarios and second- and third-order impacts. 2040 was selected because it is the year many climate models predict significant and potentially irreversible impacts will be unavoidable, although the extent of the predicted change varies considerably.

The *ForesightNZ*, *StrategyNZ* and *ReportingNZ* projects are all linked with climate change and its current and future impacts. *ForesightNZ* includes national scenarios which will be used as a resource to support our climate change work.

4. ForesightNZ

ForesightNZ contributes to discussions that help inform decision-makers using scenarios to explore the long-term future. Foresight tools are a critical part of the project as they help encourage people to brainstorm ideas about the future in order to be better prepared for opportunities and challenges that may arise. The project works to develop, share and improve the use of these foresight tools across New Zealand.

The *ForesightNZ*, *StrategyNZ* and *ReportingNZ* projects are interlinked. Foresight shapes strategy; strategy requires reporting; and reporting creates foresight.

5. OneOceanNZ

OneOceanNZ contributes to a wider discussion on how we might best manage our oceans, exercising stewardship so they remain healthy and productive. Oceans are a public space and provide a critical resource for current and future generations. We rely on our marine ecosystems to purify the air, store carbon, grow food, ship products and provide habitats for marine life. The oceans' governance must therefore navigate a complex set of goals and objectives, and deliver cost-effective public policies that are measurable, transparent and able to be policed.

OneOceanNZ explores how New Zealand can use research and public policy to protect marine species and their habitats. This project therefore aligns and overlaps with the Institute's *BiodiversityNZ* research project, as well as *ClimateChangeNZ*.

6. PandemicNZ

PandemicNZ aims to build capability, resources and resilience for the next pandemic, and to contribute to discussions on ways to increase pandemic preparedness. By recording the past and using foresight to explore the potential futures, the project works to help New Zealand prepare for future pandemics, by identifying key lessons before they are lost and forgotten. It draws together early Institute publications as well as an increasingly comprehensive suite of research into and publications on the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

New Zealand has the unique opportunity to learn from the COVID-19 pandemic, identifying key lessons that will be beneficial in the long term. It is essential that we review what New Zealand did well, and what can be done to improve our capabilities and preparedness in the future. *PandemicNZ* aligns closely with the Institute's *ForesightNZ* research project.

7. PublicScienceNZ

PublicScienceNZ contributes to discussion on New Zealand's government-funded science system. It recommends that New Zealand invest research dollars well to deliver sustainable outcomes for current and future generations. The research aims to help create a vibrant and dynamic science community that is committed to working hard to achieve a shared vision for the future.

PublicScienceNZ aligns with the Institute's *ForesightNZ* research project.

8. ReportingNZ

ReportingNZ contributes to discussions on ways to provide data, information and knowledge in a timely, useful and accurate way. Reporting is essential for transparency, accountability and performance. *ReportingNZ* includes research to analyse current methods of reporting, understand what falls through the gaps, and investigate how we can develop robust frameworks for the future. This includes how climate reporting can help guide stronger decision-making and better public policy. The Institute also has a specific focus on improving New Zealand's accounting frameworks to reflect our changing world.

Improved reporting results in better information, which the Institute believes will allow New Zealand to learn from the past, monitor the present and prepare for the future. The *ForesightNZ*, *StrategyNZ* and *ReportingNZ* projects are interlinked. Foresight shapes strategy; strategy requires reporting; and reporting creates foresight.

9. SecurityNZ

SecurityNZ explores the impacts of international conflict on New Zealand and seeks ways to ensure the country continues to be independent, connected and stable. The research is designed to contribute to a discussion on how New Zealand maintains international relationships, contributes to global democracy, optimises economic and cyber security and protects itself from harm. It does this through collaboration with like-minded individuals and organisations, identifying risks and vulnerabilities for New Zealand so we can develop robust security systems.

This project aligns with *ForesightNZ* and *StrategyNZ*, exploring possible futures and how we can use strategy to protect New Zealand's security in the future.

10. StrategyNZ

StrategyNZ contributes to discussions on ways to develop and execute strategy, aiming to improve strategy development, particularly in the public sector. The Institute has seen first-hand how developing and executing strategy is critical to successful outcomes. Designing efficient, fair and ethical strategy helps provide direction, improve focus and guide the decision-making process. *StrategyNZ* works towards the overarching goal of making strategy easy and accessible for people to develop and execute. Popular strategy tools developed by the Institute include the strategy pyramid and the GDS Index.

The *ForesightNZ*, *StrategyNZ* and *ReportingNZ* projects are interlinked. Foresight shapes strategy; strategy requires reporting; and reporting creates foresight.

11. TacklingPovertyNZ

TacklingPovertyNZ works to contribute to a national conversation on reducing poverty in New Zealand. The project began as a three-day policy workshop run by the Institute in December 2015. One observation made by participants at the workshop was that poverty in New Zealand is too complex an issue to be overcome with a single blanket solution. Instead, solutions must be sought at a local level to acknowledge that poverty has vastly differing consequences for people in different areas of New Zealand. This observation has framed a number of research projects and publications.

The project aims to open public discussion and help develop solutions for poverty across New Zealand.

12. TalentNZ

TalentNZ aims to contribute to Sir Paul Callaghan's vision of making New Zealand 'a place where talent wants to live' by testing his assumptions and exploring ways New Zealanders might make this vision a reality. *TalentNZ* builds on Sir Paul Callaghan's vision, which he originally advocated in 2011 at the *StrategyNZ* workshop. Sir Paul could see the important role that talent would have in New Zealand's economic and social development, he understood the capacity of young people to surprise us with their talents, and he knew we needed to develop a mindset where we respected those whose talents were different from our own.

The *ForesightNZ*, *StrategyNZ* and *ReportingNZ* projects are all linked with *TalentNZ*. Foresight shapes strategy; strategy requires reporting; and reporting creates foresight.

13. WaterFuturesNZ

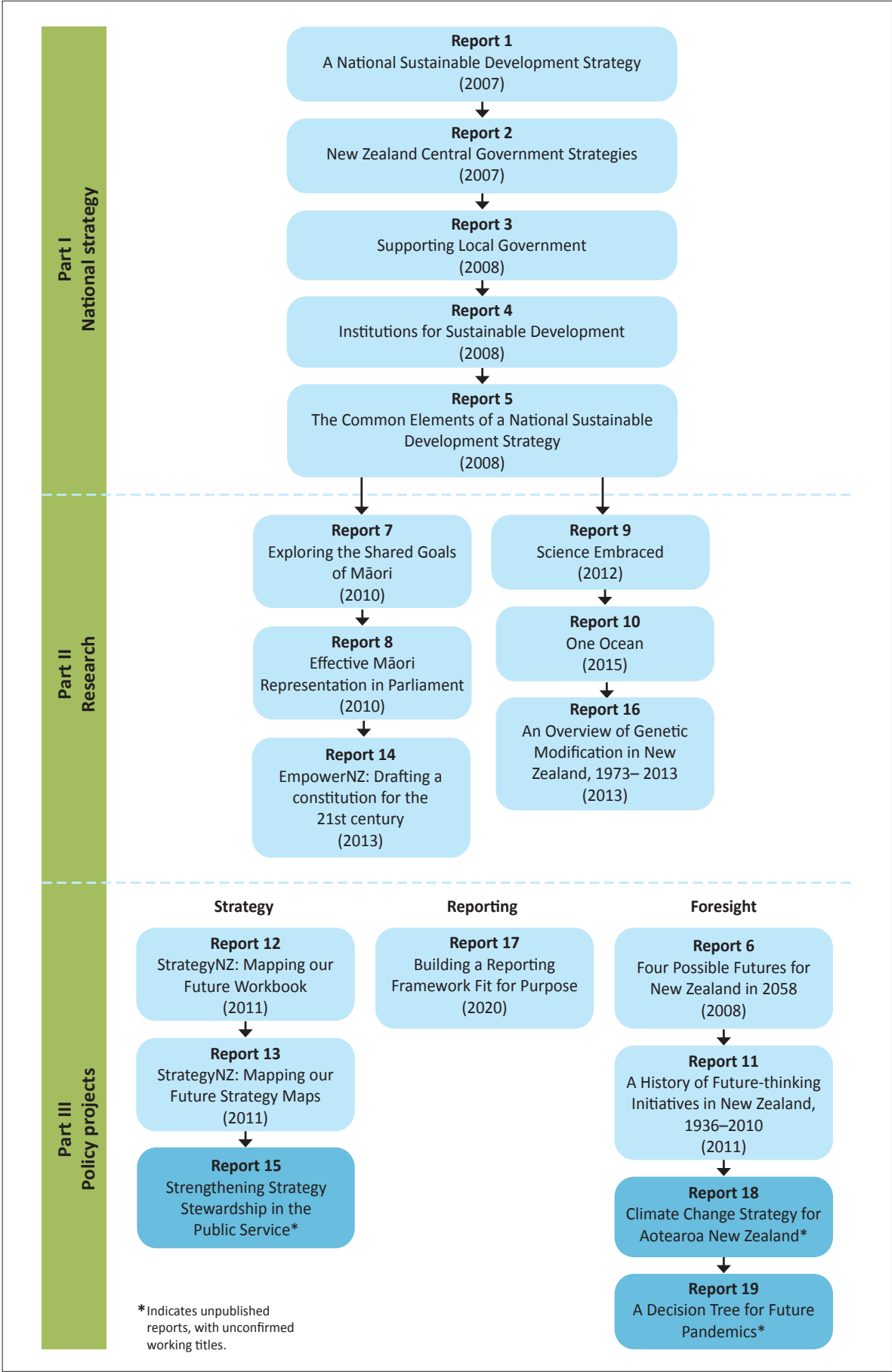
WaterFuturesNZ contributes to national conversations on how we might design safe, accessible and reliable water services for Aotearoa New Zealand. The Institute recognises that water is a significant public asset that requires legal and policy protection. The project aims to help ensure that clean, safe water is freely available now and for future generations.

4.3. Developing the Project 2058 methodology for 2025 and beyond

The thinking that was started in 2016 is now well and truly embedded in our work programme for 2025 and beyond. Our research projects all work to explore how we can improve the future of New Zealand, and interlink with each other in different ways. How this evolves over the long term will depend on many factors, but our short-term goal is to complete the next three Project 2058 reports:

- Report 15 – Strengthening Strategy Stewardship in the Public Service (*StrategyNZ*)
- Report 18 – Climate Change Strategy for Aotearoa New Zealand (*ClimateChangeNZ*)
- Report 19 – A Decision Tree for Future Pandemics (*PandemicNZ*).

Figure 3: Map of Project 2058 reports as at 2025





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