



# Briefing on long-term insights briefings

Interim report of the Governance and Administration Committee

May 2022

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Ian McKelvie  
Chairperson

## Briefing on long-term insights briefings

### Recommendation

The Governance and Administration Committee has considered a briefing on long-term insights briefings, and recommends that the House take note of its interim report.

### About long-term insights briefings

The Public Service Act 2020 came into force in August 2020. The Act updated public service legislation that had been in place since the 1980s. It introduced new mechanisms to enable the public service to better serve New Zealanders. One of these was “long-term insights briefings”.

Long-term insights briefings are designed to make information available to the public about medium- and long-term trends, risks, and opportunities that affect New Zealand and New Zealanders.<sup>1</sup> The briefings contain information, analysis, and options for responding to these matters.

Each chief executive of a public service department must give a long-term insights briefing to the appropriate Minister at least once every three years. Two or more chief executives may prepare a joint briefing. These briefings must be prepared independently of Ministers. A Minister must present a copy of a briefing to the House as soon as is reasonably practicable after receiving it.

Once a long-term insights briefing is presented to the House, it stands referred to the Governance and Administration Committee.<sup>2</sup> Our committee can either consider the briefing or refer it to another committee for consideration. Committees have 90 working days to report back to the House on the briefing.

When discussing long-term insights briefings, the Standing Orders Committee of the 52nd Parliament thought that detailed scrutiny of these briefings would bring long-term issues to the fore during each parliamentary term.<sup>3</sup>

The 53rd Parliament is the first time long-term insights briefings will be prepared and considered. We initiated this briefing to get a better understanding of the briefings before they are referred to us. We hope that this will result in better scrutiny of the briefings, both by us and by other select committees.

This interim report sets out what we have learnt so far, and our expectations of other select committees when considering long-term insights briefings that are referred to them.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Service Act 2020, Schedule 6, clause 8.

<sup>2</sup> Standing Orders, Appendix E.

<sup>3</sup> The Standing Orders Committee report that discusses long-term insights briefings can be found on the [Parliament website](#).

## Process for producing long-term insights briefings

The chief executive of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) has responsibility for the long-term insights briefings, in their capacity as the “policy system lead” across the public service. DPMC has a coordination role across all the public service’s long-term insights briefings. However, the responsibility for each briefing rests with individual chief executives.

A set of guidance material was developed to support government departments with their briefings. It was published in April 2021. The guidance sets out what is required by the Public Service Act for the briefings, good practice for what to include, and how to develop the briefings.<sup>4</sup> We heard that the guidance was informed by workshops with departments and other stakeholders, and by research into relevant practice and models in other jurisdictions.

The guidance sets out eight steps in the process for developing the briefings:

1. intelligence is gathered about the future
2. subject matter and potential for joint briefings is considered
3. the public is consulted on proposed subject matter
4. briefing content is developed
5. the public is consulted on the draft briefing
6. appropriate Minister(s) are given the final briefing
7. select committees examine briefings
8. review activity is conducted by the public service.

The Act requires public consultation on both the subject matter for the briefing and a draft of the briefing.<sup>5</sup> The chief executive is required to take into account any feedback received from public consultation when finalising the briefing.

Chief executives must select the subject matter for the briefing by taking into account the purpose of the briefing and those medium and long-term trends, risks, and opportunities that are particularly relevant to the department’s functions. Chief executives have discretion whether to produce a briefing from just their department, or a joint briefing with other departments.

After guidance material was published, DPMC’s chief executive convened a reference group of chief executives to look at the number and topics of briefings. The purpose was to get feedback on what was proposed, and identify links, duplication, and prioritisation. However, each agency still has discretion to choose their own topic, despite any recommendation from the chief executives reference group.

DPMC gave us a list of the first round of long-term insights briefings and the stage of preparation each has reached so far. This information is available on the Parliament

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<sup>4</sup> Links to this guidance can be found here: <https://dpmc.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/long-term-insights-briefings>.

<sup>5</sup> Public Service Act 2020, Schedule 6, clause 9.

website.<sup>6</sup> As at 6 April 2022, the proposed long-term insights briefings from across the public service were:

- He Tirohanga Mokopuna 2021: The Treasury's combined Statement on the Long-term Fiscal Position and Long-term Insights Briefing—The Treasury<sup>7</sup>
- Tax, investment and productivity—Inland Revenue Department
- The future of business for Aotearoa New Zealand: opportunities and implications for productivity and wellbeing—Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
- How can we better support public participation in government in the future?—Public Service Commission
- The impact of automated vehicles operating on New Zealand roads—Ministry of Transport
- How can community participation and decision-making be enabled by technology?—Department of Internal Affairs
- Youth at risk of limited employment—Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry for Women
- The long-term implications of our ageing population on the future of housing and urban development in Aotearoa New Zealand—Ministry of Housing and Urban Development
- How can we help biodiversity thrive through the innovative use of information and emerging technologies?—Department of Conservation, Land Information New Zealand
- Engaging an increasingly diverse Aotearoa on national security risks, challenges and opportunities—Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government Communications and Security Bureau, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Ministry of Defence, New Zealand Customs Service, New Zealand Security Intelligence Service
- Long-term insights about imprisonment and what these tell us about future risks and opportunities—Ministry of Justice, Department of Corrections, Crown Law Office, Serious Fraud Office, Oranga Tamariki
- Into the future, what are some of the key areas that will influence the vibrancy and resilience of the cultural sector ecosystem?—Ministry for Culture and Heritage
- Data as a driver of national competitive advantage – fostering improved social wellbeing and economic growth—Statistics New Zealand
- Thriving Whānau 2040—Te Puni Kōkiri
- Improving Pacific Data Equity: Opportunities to enhance the future of Pacific wellbeing—Ministry for Pacific Peoples
- Responding to Diverse Cultures: Schools' Practice—Education Review Office
- People and place: Ensuring the wellbeing of today and tomorrow's generations—Ministry for the Environment

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/business-before-committees/document/BRF\\_112098/briefing-on-long-term-insights-briefings](https://www.parliament.nz/en/pb/sc/business-before-committees/document/BRF_112098/briefing-on-long-term-insights-briefings)

<sup>7</sup> This briefing has already been presented and reported on by the Finance and Expenditure Committee. The committee's report can be found on the [Parliament website](#), and the briefing is on the [Treasury website](#).

- The future of New Zealand’s Food and Fibre Sector: Exploring new demand opportunities for the sector in the year 2050— Ministry for Primary Industries
- Title TBC—Ministry of Health.

We were informed that some departments are exploring medium- and long-term trends by first considering past trends, the current state, and then future trends. Other departments are considering future scenarios. DPMC told us that departments are generally exploring how to respond to the risks and opportunities presented by the trends through policy options or the strategic levers that are available.

DPMC noted that the briefings do not go into recommendations in the same way that advice to Ministers does. Instead, the briefings look at ways of responding to issues, benefits and costs, and potential effects if the issues are not responded to.

### **Independence from Ministers**

Chief executives are legally required to prepare these briefings independently from Ministers. Long-term insights briefings are “think pieces on the future, not government policy”.<sup>8</sup> The briefings provide an opportunity for the public service to think about long-term issues. They are intended to enhance public debate on these issues, and contribute to future decision-making by government, Māori, business, academia, not-for-profit organisations, and the wider public.

DPMC assured us that Ministers are not able to change the content of these briefings. It is the department’s expectation that the version of the briefing that is sent to the Minister will be the version that is presented to the House. DPMC assured us that it will be monitoring the briefings to ensure this is the case. We would like to be kept informed of the result of this monitoring. Any “sanitising” of the briefings by Ministers would reduce the benefit of the briefings, and make them not fit for purpose.

### **Timing of long-term insights briefings**

The Act requires each chief executive to produce a long-term insights briefing once every three years. The initial three-year period began when the Act came into force in August 2020, so departments have until August 2023 to produce their first briefing. It is hoped, however, that the briefings will be completed well before then.

The Standing Orders Committee of the 52nd Parliament recommended that the Government coordinate long-term insights briefings so that they are presented to the House no later than 30 June in the second calendar year after a general election.<sup>9</sup> This tends to be roughly the mid-point of the parliamentary term. In this cycle, that would be June 2022. The timing would ensure that consideration does not occur during the post- and pre-election months. It also gives committees enough time to initiate further, more focused inquiries, if they would like to.

DPMC has included this recommendation in its guidance to departments. If June 2022 is not possible, the recommendation is for chief executives to aim for as soon as practicable after

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<sup>8</sup> <https://dPMC.govt.nz/our-programmes/policy-project/long-term-insights-briefings>

<sup>9</sup> The committee’s report and associated recommendation can be found on the [Parliament website](#). The Government’s response is also available on the [Parliament website](#).

this date. DPMC noted that each agency's work programme, particularly in light of the response to COVID-19, has an effect on when briefings will be presented.

We were informed that the briefings are at different stages, with the majority intended for presentation to Parliament in mid-to-late 2022. Progress as at 4 April 2022 was:

When briefing is expected to be completed	Number of briefings
Already completed	1
June 2022	3
July 2022	1
August 2022	1
September 2022	8
October 2022	1
November 2022	3
Completion date still to be determined	1

The above timing may change in the coming months. DPMC told us that this round of briefings has been conducted in a "COVID environment", which has caused challenges for agencies in producing the briefings (including for the public consultation process).

DPMC said that having the briefings land in a staggered fashion will give committees and any advisers they appoint more time to digest them. We intend to ask DPMC to keep us informed of the progress of these briefings over the next few months.

## **Review of long-term insights briefings**

DPMC noted that these briefings are a new instrument and process. It said there will be lessons learnt from the first round that will inform the next round.

DPMC will be conducting a system-wide review of the briefings after the first round of briefings is completed. The review will include feedback from individual agencies. DPMC said that it wanted to reflect on the topics chosen and whether they were fit for purpose, useful, and engaging.

DPMC noted that 19 long-term insights briefings is a large number, particularly when public engagement is required for all of them. The department will be examining the number and sequence of briefings as part of its review.

## **Process for examination by select committees**

The following sections set out steps that committees could take when considering long-term insights briefings that are referred to them.

### **Receiving evidence on the briefings**

Once a committee is referred a briefing, we suggest that it invite the relevant public service chief executive(s) to a public hearing. We think it is important that committees hear from chief executives on these briefings. They hold the statutory responsibility for preparing the

briefings, and should be able to give the committee a good overview of both the content of the briefing, and the process that went into preparing it.

At that point, the committee could consider whether it would like to hear from others on the briefing. The Standing Orders Committee encouraged select committees to receive public input on these briefings (despite the briefings already going through a public consultation process in their development). The committee noted that this might need to be targeted consultation, given the timeframe committees would have to consider them.

The Standing Orders Committee suggested that submissions could focus on people or organisations who contributed to the initial departmental process. Committees could get valuable insights from these people or organisations on how the departments engaged with their ideas and how they interpret the final report.

We also think committees would get value from considering whether any perspectives were missed in the departmental consultation process. Māori, Pacific peoples, migrant communities, and young people will all be affected by these long-term issues and are groups that traditionally do not engage as much with these sorts of processes. Committees could reach out to those people and organisations for their input on the briefings.

Committees could also consider inviting experts and academics in the specific areas to submit on the briefings. Experts and academics are the most likely group to pick up on the topics and sustain focus on these areas. They also have real insight into the issues, from a different lens than the public service is able to provide.

### **Receiving advice on the briefings**

Committees may wish to consider whether they would benefit from independent advice when considering these briefings. Various options are available to committees, including:

- asking for advice from the Parliamentary Library
- appointing a specialist adviser—the Office of the Clerk can fund this for committees
- appointing entities such as the Office of the Auditor-General, the Ombudsman, or the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment as advisers, where appropriate.

### **Issues to consider when examining the briefings**

Select committees are responsible for their own subject areas, and are best placed to ask questions related to the content of the briefings and grapple with the issues that the briefings raise. However, we do think that there are some general issues that all committees could consider when examining the briefings.

#### **Long-term trends**

The briefings are aimed at providing long-term insights and trends on topics important to New Zealanders. Committees could consider how well the briefings identify and assess long-term risks and opportunities, and the options that the briefings set out for tackling them.

#### **Cross-agency work**

During this term of Parliament, our committee has been considering how government departments and entities work collaboratively to achieve better outcomes for New

Zealanders on the ground. When committees consider these briefings, they could look at what cross-agency work is going on in the subject area.

Tackling big, long-term issues requires working across government departments and the silos that sometimes exist. Committees could consider investigating how well departments are working together on the topic that their briefing raises. It is particularly important to consider how departments that produce a departmental briefing, rather than a joint briefing, are working collaboratively across the public service on long-term issues.

### **Accessible and useful reporting**

Both Parliament and the public need complex information to be presented simply and clearly, so they can understand difficult subject-matter. Reporting needs to be digestible and accessible for it to be useful. If the briefing is not presented in a way that engages the public, then it is not meeting its purpose. We suggest that committees consider how accessible and useful the long-term insights briefings are for the public.

It is important that committees encourage agencies to consider how they are making these documents and ideas accessible to all New Zealanders. Committees could consider what format the reporting is presented in, how easy the report is for the public to find and engage with, and the type of language used.

Committees could also consider the quality of reporting. It is worth committees looking at how useful the information is, to both Parliament and the public. Committees could consider whether the briefing lived up to its promise, and what it has actually told the public about the future issues and opportunities that New Zealand is facing.

### **Reporting back to the House on the briefings**

Select committees have 90 working days to report back on a long-term insights briefing. The Standing Orders Committee of the 52nd Parliament thought that this timeframe would enable each committee to hear evidence from departments, and to consider matters they wish to draw to the House's attention.

We encourage committees to report meaningfully on the issues raised in the briefings, and the concerns raised during any public consultation process. A report to the House should outline the areas that the committee focused on and any recommendations for the public service to consider issues further. We would also like to see committees reporting on some of the issues we identified above:

- How well did the briefings discuss long-term issues and opportunities?
- How successfully is the public service working together across agencies?
- How useful and accessible are the briefings themselves?

There is a risk that once the briefings are presented and reported back on they will be forgotten about. By their nature, these briefings focus on long-term issues that are important to continuously consider and engage with, even after they are reported on. Committees could consider initiating briefings or inquiries on topics raised in the long-term insights briefing that they would like to consider further. A committee could also make recommendations to the Government on progress it would like to see in a particular area.

## **Conclusion**

We take our role seriously to ensure that proper scrutiny of these briefings occurs. How the briefings are scrutinised in this three-year cycle will set a precedent for future long-term insights briefings. The intent is for them to be a valuable tool for Parliament and the public, and it is in everyone's best interests that they are prepared and scrutinised well.

We look forward to considering these briefings in the coming months. We intend to produce a final report on this briefing once committees have had the opportunity to report back to the House on the first round of long-term insights briefings.

## Appendix

### Committee procedure

We met between 7 July 2021 and 4 May 2022 to consider this briefing. We heard evidence from the Public Service Commission and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

### Committee members

Ian McKelvie (Chairperson, from 31 August 2021)

Rachel Boyack

Naisi Chen

Nicola Grigg (until 8 December 2021)

Barbara Kuriger (Chairperson and member until 31 August 2021)

Dr Deborah Russell (from 25 August 2021 until 4 May 2022)

Jamie Strange (from 4 May 2022)

Tangi Utikere (until 25 August 2021)

Hon Michael Woodhouse (from 8 December 2021)

### Evidence received

We received the following documents as evidence for this briefing. They are available on the Parliament website, [www.parliament.nz](http://www.parliament.nz).

- Public Service Commission
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Supp 1
- Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Supp 2