

## **Sport New Zealand Feedback to the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission Te Waihanga on *'Testing our thinking: Developing an enduring National Infrastructure Plan'***

The Te Waihanga Discussion Document is an excellent document, covering many topics we would expect to see in a 30-year National Infrastructure Plan.

However, we would appreciate you considering some further suggestions, particularly concerning our strategic priorities and the extensive network of sport and recreation infrastructure across the motu. These suggestions are outlined below.

### ***Defining Infrastructure***

It would be helpful to include an introductory definition section addressing the question, "What is infrastructure?" While many readers will understand what constitutes infrastructure, the scope can be ambiguous for others. It looks like Te Waihanga is defining it as 'hard infrastructure' (e.g., buildings, pipes, roads), but it would be helpful to make this explicit. Additionally, it would be helpful to clarify whether 'social infrastructure', such as sport and recreation facilities, is included in this definition somehow.

If 'social infrastructure' isn't included, we think it is important to acknowledge the choices and benefits associated with the design and construction of 'hard infrastructure'. These choices can extend beyond the core function to provide more comprehensive benefits, such as supporting physical activity, reducing carbon emissions, and creating spaces for community connections. Although the initial costs may be higher, these investments can lead to significant broader benefits over the infrastructure's lifetime, justifying them from a social investment perspective. Measuring infrastructure's social value and impact should be further explored and trade-offs should be explicitly discussed during infrastructure planning.

### ***Visitors and major event planning***

The paper clearly outlines an understandable push for greater benefits for New Zealanders. However, it also raises the question—not articulated in the paper—of how infrastructure can attract visitors and skilled migrants (not related to building infrastructure) to the country. People tend to favour efficient countries with high-quality infrastructure and where transportation is easy and affordable, both within and between cities (and Islands for us). This is essential for attracting participants and spectators, including international tourists, to major sporting events like the recent World Cups.

### ***Efficiency and maximising use***

Another important factor in planning new infrastructure is considering how to maximise its use. For example, school sports facilities could also be available for community use, and vice versa. Many towns and cities have duplicated sports facilities, with schools and local councils building their own. We can create spaces that benefit students and the local community by adopting a more holistic approach to planning new infrastructure or renovating and replacing existing facilities. This would lead to a better return on investment. This principle can likely apply to other forms of infrastructure.

### ***Adaptation***

Climate change, risk management, responding to natural disasters (including extreme weather), and reducing emissions are discussed, but adaptation is scarcely mentioned. We

believe that upgrades to existing infrastructure— which enhance climate change resilience—and proactive climate adaptation planning for future requirements are essential components of New Zealand's long-term strategy. This aspect could, therefore, be given more emphasis. It is important for sport and recreation infrastructure, some of which sustained damage or were completely wiped out during consecutive extreme weather events in 2023. Conditions will worsen, so we must proactively and collectively address adaptation issues.

***Equity – ensuring low-income households have access to quality infrastructure.***

The discussion paper may intentionally overlook equity issues, but we think they're essential to planning and decision-making. While road tolls and the user-pays model can effectively raise funds, they may also create barriers for some individuals trying to access new infrastructure. Also, most infrastructure spending tends to focus on the same areas, leaving many parts of New Zealand without investment. This is particularly problematic for high-deprivation communities, which often include populations with lower levels of physical activity—groups we aim to engage through our work. We want everyone to have access to quality green spaces (such as parks or trails) and blue spaces (like rivers and oceans) for physical activity, as well as physical infrastructure (such as recreation centres) where possible. This includes infrastructure that supports travel (including by active or public transport) to these areas. We would like to see something established or acknowledged to prevent a growing infrastructure disparity between small towns, rural areas, and major cities. If left unaddressed, this could lead to more neglected or marginalised communities.

***Alternative approaches to infrastructure design: Active Design***

Some of the previously built infrastructure is not functioning as intended, leading to significant retrofitting expenses, notably with bicycle lanes across the country. We would like to see infrastructure development that considers additional benefits for physical activity, such as the Te Ara Tupua seawall between Petone and Wellington, which includes a shared pathway for various forms of active transport. This concept is known as Active Design. We are currently developing Active Design Guidance for our sector and will happily keep you updated on our progress.