

Executive Summary – Feedback on Draft National Infrastructure Plan

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Purpose: To provide concise, actionable feedback to strengthen the Draft National Infrastructure Plan, ensuring effective implementation, strong governance, and positioning New Zealand for OECD leadership.

What Works Well

- Forward Guidance and Sustainable Funding: Commitment to 5–7% of GDP investment, user-pays for network assets, and multi-year budgeting.
- Maintenance First: Strong focus on renewals before new builds.
- Pipeline Transparency and Readiness Assessment: Improving accountability and delivery confidence.
- Workforce Development and Regulatory Reform: Necessary enablers for future delivery.

Critical Gaps

- Lack of Implementation Pathway: No clear roadmap for sequencing and accountability.
- Digital and Cyber Resilience: Missing dedicated strategy for smart and secure infrastructure.
- Governance Fragmentation: Insufficient detail on institutional frameworks and accountability.
- Climate Adaptation Metrics: No mandatory resilience KPIs for project selection.

Key Recommendations

- Publish an Implementation Roadmap with milestones and accountability roles.
- Mandate resilience KPIs and climate adaptation criteria for all projects.
- Introduce a Digital Resilience Strategy covering cybersecurity and future technology readiness.
- Institutionalise governance by legislating asset management plans and decision-making standards.
- Adopt rolling, bipartisan investment frameworks inspired by Finland and Denmark for stability and transparency.

This summary complements my detailed submission (next pages), informed by current postgraduate research into governance and decision-making frameworks for transport infrastructure at the University of Auckland.

Full Submission – Feedback on Draft National Infrastructure Plan

I welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft National Infrastructure Plan. This submission is informed by my ongoing postgraduate research at the University of Auckland, which examines governance and decision-making frameworks in New Zealand's major transport infrastructure initiatives. My feedback aims to strengthen the Plan by focusing on governance, sustainable funding, and delivery certainty, while drawing on best practices from comparable OECD nations such as Finland and Denmark.

What I Strongly Endorse

- **Forward Guidance on Sustainable Funding:** Commitment to 5–7% of GDP investment, user-pays principles for network infrastructure, and multi-year budgeting for agencies with strong asset management practices.
- **Prioritising Maintenance First:** Addressing the backlog of renewals before committing to new projects, supported by independent assurance and transparent reporting.
- **Pipeline Transparency and Readiness Assessment:** The Infrastructure Priorities Programme provides accountability and delivery confidence.
- **Regulatory Reform and Workforce Development:** Streamlining consenting processes and establishing long-term pathways to grow and retain skilled labour in the infrastructure sector.

Critical Gaps and Recommendations

- **Implementation Clarity:** The Plan requires a clear Implementation Roadmap outlining responsibilities, timelines, and performance measures for the 19 recommendations.
- **Affordability Safeguards:** Introduce equity checks within user-pays reforms to protect low-income households' access to essential services.
- **Climate and Hazard Resilience:** Mandate resilience metrics for all new projects and incorporate climate adaptation into prioritisation frameworks.

- Digital Infrastructure and Cyber Security: Develop a dedicated Digital Resilience Strategy to ensure robust cyber protection and smart infrastructure capability.
- Governance and Accountability: Institutionalise transparent decision-making frameworks, require business cases before public announcements, and adopt rolling multi-year investment plans similar to Finland and Denmark.

Learning from OECD Leaders

Finland and Denmark provide strong comparative examples for New Zealand. Both countries, with similar population and fiscal constraints, deliver higher-value infrastructure outcomes through:

- Rolling multi-year investment plans reviewed regularly.
- Embedding bipartisan principles to depoliticise infrastructure decisions.
- Transparent asset management frameworks that prioritise value and resilience.

Adopting similar governance mechanisms will enable New Zealand to lift its performance and improve long-term certainty.

Strategic Governance Imperative

Based on my current research, I recommend that New Zealand:

- Legislates long-term asset management and investment plans for all central government agencies.
- Establishes a single national framework for decision-making and prioritisation, supported by the Infrastructure Commission.
- Requires independent readiness reviews for all major projects before committing funding to ensure value for money.

Closing Statement

The Draft National Infrastructure Plan is a significant step toward improving New Zealand's infrastructure system. To fully realise its ambition, the Plan must go beyond identifying challenges and set out practical implementation pathways, embed strong governance frameworks, and secure bipartisan support. By doing so, New Zealand can move from the bottom tier of OECD nations for infrastructure value and efficiency to a global benchmark for sustainability, resilience, and performance.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion. I look forward to seeing a final Plan that delivers durable, future-focused solutions for all New Zealanders