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From: General Manager Estate Strategy, Defence Estate and Infrastructure

15 November 2024

New Zealand Infrastructure Commission

Tēnā koutou i ngā āhuatanga o te wā

## **Testing Our Thinking” discussion document for the National Infrastructure Plan**

The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the “Testing Our Thinking” discussion document for the National Infrastructure Plan.

As the NZDF, we recognise the critical role of sustainable, resilient, and well-maintained infrastructure in supporting national security, public safety, and operational efficiency. We appreciate the document’s structured approach, linking the National Infrastructure Strategy to a long-term, actionable plan. However, we see opportunities to enhance its impact by addressing certain issues and fostering a more robust, action-oriented focus. Our main points are as follows:

### **1. Value and Perception of the Document**

While the document follows a structured pathway, it does not add significant new value to the National Infrastructure Strategy previously published. There is a risk that stakeholders could perceive this plan as more “talk” than actionable commitment. Simplistic or didactic language, as seen on pages 19, 22, and 35, may reduce engagement with the plan’s content. A shift towards more practical and specific language may better support buy-in and signal a clear, results-oriented approach.

### **2. Key Areas of Agreement**

We strongly support several principles outlined in the document, which align with our priorities:

- **Integration with Treasury:** We agree that the Infrastructure Commission should work closely with The Treasury to ensure processes align with the Infrastructure Priority Programme (IPP), minimising duplication and streamlining efforts (p8).
- **System-Wide Needs Assessment:** We support a system-wide approach to assessing infrastructure needs (p22).
- **Public and Private Sector Inclusion:** The representation of both public and private sector investment intentions is crucial for holistic planning.

- **Increased Maintenance Spending:** Maintenance and renewal spending should indeed be lifted to close gaps and prevent future infrastructure deficiencies (p33).
- **Navigating Political Agendas:** Project leaders require stability and continuity amidst shifting political agendas, which often disrupt timelines and elevate costs (p45).

### 3. Responses to Specific Questions

#### Question 1: Critical Infrastructure Challenges (and also Question 14)

Over the next 30 years, the following issues must be addressed to create a robust National Infrastructure Plan:

1. Multi-year funding certainty to support long-term projects.
2. An enduring, adaptable plan that garners buy-in from stakeholders and remains relevant amid changing circumstances.
3. Avoiding a default approach that positions infrastructure as the only solution to policy issues.
4. Recognition of the unique priorities and constraints of each infrastructure owner or agency.
5. Development of a cohesive national vision that clearly connects with infrastructure goals.
6. Reinforcing funding responsibilities, especially for asset maintenance, recognising that government has historically demonstrated a lower level of asset maturity (p53).
7. Balancing infrastructure needs with environmental outcomes, avoiding a zero-sum approach.
8. Delivery autonomy once investment decisions are made, reducing potential disruptions.
9. Reforming the Better Business Case process to better suit the scale of investment.
10. Managing cost escalations by mitigating project scope expansion and addressing the financial impacts of delays.
11. Proactively addressing infrastructure threats such as cybersecurity and supply chain risks (p58).

#### • Question 11: Asset Management Planning and Long-Term View

Effective asset management and a long-term outlook are essential for infrastructure resilience. The following strategies could strengthen asset management across sectors:

1. Recognition of Asset Management: Asset management must be viewed as a strategic function, with appropriate skills, resources, and funding.
2. Data Improvement: Enhancing asset management data collection and analysis for more informed decision-making.

3. Centralised Oversight: A central view, as developed through the Commission's efforts and initiatives like DPMC's critical asset framework, is crucial for consistent asset management standards.
4. Cost Awareness: Recognising that deferred maintenance leads to higher long-term expenses (p53), making a case for timely upkeep and renewal.
5. Preventative Maintenance: Approaches such as early water leak detection and repair before metering systems charge users (p68) can help in reducing waste and cost.
6. Encouraging Divestment: Creating opportunities to reinvest proceeds from asset sales into infrastructure to increase financial sustainability.

By addressing these critical elements, we believe the National Infrastructure Plan can drive real, tangible outcomes and help maintain public trust. As NZDF, we are committed to collaborating on infrastructure planning that serves New Zealand's diverse needs and reinforces our national resilience.

Thank you for considering our feedback. We look forward to continued collaboration to enhance New Zealand's infrastructure planning and investment management.

Ngā manaakitanga



General Manager Estate Strategy