



FORMAL RESPONSE TO HE TŪĀAPAPA KI TE ORA

Infrastructure for a Better Future



23 June 2021

Infrastructure for a Better Future

An overall response from two Kiwi's who are passionate about the growing potential of New Zealand in the evolving world.



The dialogue in this short paper is not a point by point response to the Infrastructure for a Better Future consultation document.

We have instead, written a summary of our response in seven key dimensions.

“The difference between vision and fantasy is execution”

Ben McMillen. COO Telecom New Zealand 1992-1997

Prologue

We have read the consultation document many times and have discussed its content with scores of our friends and colleagues. The views we have expressed resonate with anyone who has had any experience of delivering large complex outcomes on substantial capital budgets at a national level or beyond.

The fact that these views are being expressed is evidence that the document as it stands does not really serve as a basis for any consultation that can quickly result in decisions and prioritisation as a basis for moving to commitment to delivery. There is too little substantial information in the report for anyone to make any reasonable response that is beyond a simple acceptance that this is the beginning of a communication process.

Therefore our response highlights those things that we think a delivery focussed consultation should include and some guiding principles to assure success. Every New Zealander needs this level of investment in infrastructure to have an expedient, effective and affordable outcome.

A Visible Process

A public consultation sounds as if it is a good thing to do. And many Kiwis will appreciate the intent of the document as doing just that.

It is our view that the document does not actually lay out a strategy for the future of Infrastructure in New Zealand and does not lay out a process for moving from that strategy to a set of objectives which ultimately can be broken down into a cohesive set of milestones against which plans can be drawn up and then the people and skill sets and fiscal capacity committed to turn that strategy into the outcome that we all need.

The document strays from its core tenet of Infrastructure into many other hoped-for outcomes that are really nothing to do with that topic. This makes for engaging reading but should not be the focus of this consultation.

Clarity and Definition

The key element that is missing in terms of the process is clear identified objectives and some objective measures that make it clear when the process can tick that box as being delivered and the task complete.

“Begin with the end in mind”

Without that process this document lacks an anchor. As a result it wanders through many areas of interest but at the

end a common response from us and from our colleagues and friends was that we still didn't know what this report was committing to deliver and how the agency charged with delivery would know that it had completed what it had set out to do.

A Problem Statement

This document fails to articulate the problems that it is trying to address and the consequences of inaction.

The problem statement needs to be broken down into detail. And facts provided to back up that detail. The scope of the problem statement should include:

- Transport
- Housing
- Technology (not constrained to Telecommunications)
- Energy
- Water

If we don't really know what the problem is then we will never know what the correct solution is and we will never know when we have delivered it.

A Point of View about the Future

Forty years is a long time. The iPhone was launched in 2007 and look at the disruption and change and opportunity and challenge that it has directly been accountable for in just 14 years. The internet has only really been available in a form that made it widely usable for 25 years. And this report is looking out almost twice as far. Does that even make sense? Will that mean we start with a set of admirable goals that constrain what we need in the next ten years for our projections that are in the best case, guesses of what might happen over forty years. Maybe the outlook of this report would be more meaningful if it were reduced to 20 years with hard deliverables which needed to be delivered every five years.

In this arena of infrastructure there are many trends and technologies that are in train at the moment which will intercept any plan which simply assumes that everything will continue as it is today unless we do nothing.

Eg. Motor Vehicles and Autonomous Capability

It is expected that by 2030 the national fleet of cars owned by the residents of North America will drop from its 245 million to a level of less than 40 million vehicles on the road every day. This is unimaginable to most of us. But not to those people who have been following the discussions led by groups like Rethink X who have been laying out easy to read and understand papers on the future of transportation and the future of food and the future of

energy. And their forecasts and predictions have been amongst the most accurate of strategists.

Even if the national fleet of our nation can drop to only half of that that projected proportion within a decade then our planning should reflect that. And that is just residents. Public transport will be transformed. Mass transit will become less and less effective and efficient. Commercial transport will be transformed. That will drive new levels of efficiency, not just of road space that will not be needed but of the parking buildings and locations that will not be needed. What we do with all of the freed up real estate in our city centres? What it will mean for the already-existing roads that no longer have cars parked along the side and the capacity increase that will yield? And most of this will happen because it will make economical sense to every citizen. Not because we use the heavy handed techniques of new taxes and 'freebates' to incent desired behaviour.

The report is completely silent on anything that thoughtfully discusses this kind of evolution on our roads but it is real and it is happening.

We have a colleague who is 76 years of age and many years retired. He has been interested in electric vehicles since they first became available in our country and has owned several. The most recent car he has owned is a Tesla Series 3. In it, he drove from Waihi to Gulf Harbour on the Hibiscus Coast and, although he was required to keep his hands on the steering wheel, he did not have to physically steer the car or control its speed in the entire 206 kilometre journey. He was amazed. So were we. But it shows how far

the technology has come and the role that it will play. We should plan for it and expect it to deliver.

Technology-driven trends will impact infrastructure

A consultation like this should talk about it. It should at least communicate the major trends that it must intercept over its forty year journey. Trends like the localisation of power production and the lessening dependence on state assets. Trends like the localisation of food production and the role that science will play in moving our world to a world that no longer needs to grow and kill animals at scale to feed itself. These are huge trends which have massive implications for our planning on infrastructure. And maybe especially so for New Zealand and our role in the world. But there is no view expressed that gives the reader any idea of the significance of these developments.

Clarity of Purpose

The document's title gives the reader the impression that it is directed at addressing the infrastructure needs of our nation. But it wanders into all sorts of other adjacent areas as well. Which would be okay if it delivered a complete and comprehensive picture of its core mission but, as we have already discussed, it does not. The result is that the smorgasbord of arenas that this document is consulting on is huge and growing.

- Building a responsive planning system
- Ensuring equitability with respect to the treaty
- Assessing plans for climate change
- Partnering with Maori
- Enabling interregional competitiveness
- Reducing costs
- Building a new digital strategy

Without clarity then the reader is left to ponder the likely outcome of something which is so large and so mission-less that it can only become yet another part of the bureaucratic process which is perceived by most people in New Zealand to be overly intrusive, expensive to the point of unaffordable and slow.

It is our view that this consultation should stay focussed on a core set of deliverables that are focussed on infrastructure and leave other topics out of its mission.

Stakeholder buy-in and support

One example of a bad outcome from taking on too many missions is that stakeholders get confused by the outcomes being focussed on. For example, the document frequently refers to the need to honour the treaty. But then it goes on to assume that the reader agrees that the treaty is about partnership. There are many many people in New Zealand who do not believe that is the correct interpretation of the treaty. And so, as support is being garnered for the infrastructure needs of the country, the opportunity to rally

the nation around a core mission and set of deliverables will be significantly diluted by a set of subjective and political intents which should have no place in its strategy or delivery.

Fundamental Elements of a Strategy

There are five simple elements to a strategy that should be not only evident in the consultation document but should be the baselines against which everything else is anchored. Therefore there should be five themes that are repeated and built upon throughout the document.

A clear **problem statement**

The document has many statements and many of them sound like problems. But it does not read clearly that there is a fundamental problem which we are setting out to address.

A clear articulation of **what is planned**

We have already pointed out that the process ahead of this document is not clear or even described. There are no timeframes. No next steps. Again, there are many pages given out to problems and many pages of text given over to the things we need to keep in mind as we address the future of infrastructure but there is nothing laid out clearly that shows the core substantial action.

Clarity around **method**

How is it planned to deliver this infrastructure of the future? What is the framework against which we will be able to see delivery? How will it be measured? Where is the acceptability? Is this just another layer on top of all of the other bodies who are already doing their best to build what we need for the future? Is funding going to be provided to those bodies so that they can even focus beyond their current day to day priorities? Or are we contemplating yet another oversight on top of oversight and this document is the justification for that?

Focus and Timeframe

Forty years is a long time. Is there any concept at all of near or mid term as distinct from long term focus. Are there any items which we need to urgently make decisions on now because the situation is so dire that we cannot afford for the full strategy to be in place before we act? The paper lacks any sense of separation of urgency to act versus strategic longer term priorities.

What are the **benefits and how does this pay for itself?**

Why would we do this? The document is a bottom up view of the horrible state we have got ourselves into over the last twenty or so years. This is not a political statement nor is it a blame statement. It is a reflection of our inability as a nation to properly plan for and anticipate the management of the growth of the country through recent history. This document is still taking this bottom up approach. There is not one single set of statements that

would make the reader feel any sense of urgency; either because something is about to break or because the opportunity is too great to not act.

And these benefits need to be dimensioned. Their value must be articulated in ways that can be measured. Everyone must be able to understand that we either achieved what we set out to do or that we failed.

The categories of benefits should include:

- Productivity
- Education
- Health
- Housing
- Environment

For each of these categories there should be sufficient factual (not anecdotal) detail to understand the baseline which we are setting out to improve and the measures against which we will hold ourselves accountable for the outcomes.

New Zealand is extremely diverse

The document does not discuss or seem to contemplate that our country's infrastructure is not going to be answered as a one-size-fits-all question.

Our view is that there should be clarity between what is considered national infrastructure and the accountabilities and processes surrounding it, and then what is local. And we would clarify local as being:

- Rural
- Small cities
- Large cities (include Hamilton, Tauranga, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin)
- Auckland

Strategies for each of these categories should be specific and distinct. Synergies should be sought but should not be the driver for the strategy.

In Summary

We recognise that this is a strategic direction document. But it is not a strategy.

We are concerned that this document will not lead to a clearly articulated and defined strategy that will result in a timely or beneficial outcome for New Zealand.

The Consultation document suggests that an overwhelming number of respondents to previous consultations and questionnaires rated climate as the key driver in our considerations for meeting our infrastructural needs moving forward. But did those respondents

understand the implications and changes that it would mean to their everyday life and what their country would look like if that were the case? Was it discussed? Did they understand the full picture of costs and benefits? It is easy to just accept those things that an increased portfolio of taxes is designed to achieve because they are not particularly seen to affect the general way of life that is part and parcel of being a New Zealander. What if placing climate as the key consideration means that we are still polluting our waterways or spending too much time and money getting between our homes and our places of work or recreation? What if the benefits which are assumed to be delivered are not explicitly spelled out so that people can see what the consequences of that driver are?

We do very much resonate with the view expressed in the document that we cannot afford to do everything, but the content does not spell out what we will consciously and deliberately ignore or leave out of the deliverables. For people's opinions to have value in such a complex subject area, it is critical to ask for feedback in a framework which lays out enough information for it to be informed and thoughtful. Forty years is a long time to be basing such a fundamentally important plan on human emotion.


Our overriding concern is that if anything, the document is setting out a picture to add more bureaucracy and cost to an already cost burdened and over organised critical capability in the country. We have laid out our rationale for what we believe needs to be included if this is to be addressed:

- A. Keep to the key critical theme of infrastructure

- B. Clearly lay out the process for how this will be moved forward
- C. Take time to define and clarify the problem it addresses
- D. Make benefits measurable and understandable

In particular we think that any plan to introduce yet more oversight to the infrastructure management and delivery of New Zealand needs to clearly show how the current intransigence and bureaucracy is to be addressed. At the moment, this document underlines an increase of bureaucracy and further cost and impediment to the infrastructure that we need now and in the future.

About the Authors

 have extensive experience of many decades of designing, leading and delivering multi-billion dollar projects affecting millions of people. In particular, these projects have been in the arena of critical core technical infrastructure that affects whole nations and sometimes beyond that.

With that heritage and with the learnings from failures as well as many successes we decided to respond to this report with a view to positively engaging in helping New Zealand achieve the success that is critical in key infrastructure delivery.

We hope that this is read as an objective non-political response to the 173 pages.

We look forward to engaging with you and understanding more of how we can contribute.



