



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S CHIEF SCIENCE ADVISOR

Professor Sir Peter Gluckman, ONZ KNZM FRSNZ FMedSci FRS
Chief Science Advisor

Briefing Note: The New Zealand Science Advisory System¹

1. Overview

This document provides a brief overview of the NZ science advisory system as it has developed since 2009 when the position of Chief Science Advisor was established.

2. The Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor (PMCSA)

This is an independent role established constitutionally through the mechanism of a single-member Advisory Board reporting directly to the PM. This mechanism allows the role to be filled by the secondment of a practicing academic. The PMCSA has a separate Office, which is physically within the appointee's home institution, but has direct liaison into the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

The PMCSA has the following responsibilities:

- To enhance the use of science in policy making;
- To promote public understanding of science
- To promote STEM education;
- To promote NZ's interests through science diplomacy;
- To provide scientific advice to the PM
- To act as sounding board on policy for science;
- To commission deliberative advice on selected topics,
- To serve on specific governmental boards;
- To chair the network of Science Advisors.

Core staff of the Office of the PMCSA comprises the PMCSA, a strategic scientific advisor (0.3 FTE), a chief of staff, two research analysts and an executive assistant. Project-specific staff comprise 2 FTE leading the secretariat of the international Small Advanced Economies Initiative (www.smalladvancedeconomies.org), a coordinator for the government's science in society program (www.curiousminds.nz), an international relations officer (0.5 FTE) to support the International Network on Science Advice to Government.² (www.scienceadvicenetwork.org).

The national science advisory system comprises the PMCSA and DSAs. In addition, the Royal Society of NZ is protected under its Act to provide advice.

¹ New Zealand is a parliamentary democracy with a unicameral parliament elected by proportional representation. The Rt Hon John Key became Prime Minister in 2008 and established the role of PMCSA in 2009.

² Funded by a grant from the Wellcome Trust

3. Departmental Science Advisors (DSAs)

DSAs have been appointed in major ministries and report to their Chief Executive with a 'dotted line' reporting structure to the PMCSA. The following ministries of government have established DSA positions:

- Science and innovation
- Primary industries (agriculture)
- Environment
- Conservation
- Education
- Social Development
- Justice* (including police, courts)
- Health*
- Foreign affairs (covered by the PMCSA through the cross-appointment as 'Science Envoy' for New Zealand)³

**appointments in progress*

The responsibilities of DSAs include: providing strategic input within their ministries on the development and application of science-derived knowledge for public policy; assuring the quality of internal and commissioned research; and provision of advice as required. The DSAs are also engaged through the Science Committee by Central Agencies of Government to formally review selected budget bids from an evidential perspective.

4. Government's Network of Science Advisors/He rauinga Tohu Putaiao:

The PMCSA chairs regular meetings of the government's Network of Science Advisors, which comprises the Departmental Science Advisors, the Government Chief Statistician, the Chief Economist (Treasury). Attending as observers are the President of Royal Society of NZ (representing the national academy), and a deputy head of the State Services Commission (the authority administering the civil service).

The responsibilities of the Science Committee include:

- Networking and peer review;
- Identifying cross-governmental needs in research;
- Scientific review of specific budget proposals as requested by Treasury;
- Input into science system development (sounding board role);
- Subject-matter advice (e.g. risk, big data).

Additional information and material relating to any of the elements mentioned above can be obtained on the PMCSA website (www.pmcsa.org.nz). Specific questions may be directed to Kristiann Allen, Chief of Staff, Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor kristiann.allen@pmcsa.org.nz

³ The role of Science Envoy is a formal appointment allowing the PMCSA to represent the government in matters relating to development of scientific partnerships, as well as in matters of foreign policy that have a science component.