



17 March 2019

Hon Dr Megan Woods
Minister of Science and Innovation
Parliament Buildings
Private Bag 18041
Wellington 6160

Dear Minister Woods

NIWA Letter of Expectations 2019/20

I write in response to your Annual Letter of Expectations for 2019/20 for NIWA.

NIWA plans to continue strengthening its position as New Zealand's predominant *Freshwater, Marine* and *Climate & Atmosphere* science provider by continuing to invest in people and capability in these areas, working collaboratively with end users and other agencies and aligning its science strategy and activities with the sectors it serves.

In doing so, NIWA will be mindful of the Government's priorities of building a productive, sustainable and inclusive economy and to improve the wellbeing of New Zealanders. In particular, we note the Government's objective to build an economy that produces and exports higher value goods, protects the environment, and supports our regions to grow.

Protecting the environment and transitioning to a low carbon economy

Given NIWA's environmental and big data analytics capability, we acknowledge that NIWA has a major role to play in supporting the Government's objective to build an economy that protects the environment. To this end we will continue to work closely with the natural resources sector agencies (in particular; the Ministry for Primary Industries, Ministry for the Environment, Department of Conservation and MBIE), local government and industry as they develop and implement their respective plans. This will be particularly relevant for NIWA in assisting with improving the quality of New Zealand's freshwater and transitioning to a low-carbon economy by 2050 and understanding climate change and its possible effects on New Zealand.

An economy that produces and exports higher value goods

NIWA has been working on developing the biological capability to establish a high value white flesh finfish aquaculture industry to complement New Zealand's salmon industry, with a focus on kingfish and hāpuku. We have now reached the stage where we plan to establish an experimental 600 tonne land-based kingfish aquaculture operation at NIWA's Northland Marine Research Facility at Bream Bay. The purpose of this is to test the biological, operational and financial sustainability of a commercial scale land-based kingfish aquaculture operation. During 2019/20 we will be working closely with Northland Regional Council, the Provincial Growth Fund and the fisheries industry to effect this.

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Māori Partnership and Co-innovation

During 2019/20 NIWA will, with support from its Te Kūwaha business unit, be proactive in strengthening its partnerships with the Māori sector and will be mindful of the recommendations in the CRI report back. With this in mind, a new position of *General Manager Māori Strategy & Partnerships* has been established within NIWA's Executive Team.

CRI Science Workforce

With over 30 different nationalities employed at NIWA, we are strongly committed to a diverse and inclusive workforce and valuing the knowledge systems and perspectives they bring. As is the case with the CRI report back on *Māori Partnership and Co-innovation*, during 2019/20 we will be mindful of the recommendations in the *CRI Science Workforce* report back, and MBIE's goal of cultivating a science and research workforce that reflects the diversity of Aotearoa New Zealand. We will also continue to promote science to young people through the national secondary school science and technology fairs, NIWA's joint graduate schools in Marine and Freshwater Science with Auckland and Waikato Universities, collaborating with the Sir Peter Blake Trust, fostering student engagement in science as a solution-provider through the Sir Paul Callaghan Eureka Awards and supporting universities through the supervision of circa 75 Masters and PhD students.

Employment and workplace relations

We note and support your expectation that NIWA will conduct employment and workplace relations in a manner consistent with the Government's overarching policy for employment and workplace relations. During 2019/20 NIWA will continue its detailed analysis of its practices in relation to opportunities and remuneration by gender and ensure that action will be taken where any inconsistencies are identified.

Finance and investment

During 2019/20 the Board will ensure NIWA continues to be a financially robust and resilient business, particularly in the context of NIWA's long term investment plans. The Board will ensure that the focus of NIWA's investment will remain on supporting its ability to undertake high quality and relevant science, in collaboration with universities, CRIs and other research organisations.

MBIE review of CRIs

NIWA will provide its full support for the MBIE review of how well the CRIs are positioned to meet New Zealand's future needs and will work closely with MBIE to give effect to the outcomes of that process.

We agree that effective engagement underpins excellent research. To this end NIWA commissioned an independent qualitative survey of its customers last year which is being used to inform its engagement and customer service plans. We intend to repeat this exercise biennially to inform the operation of our business and will report the findings to MBIE as requested.

Building deeper and effective relationships

We note your observation about NIWA's strong international collaboration as evidenced by the high percentage of joint publications in peer-reviewed journals, and your expectation that the quality of these collaborations deepens. During 2019/20 we will focus on that and continue our efforts to build stronger relationships with institutions in New Zealand, and in particular we will monitor the trend in joint science inputs and outputs with them.

Open access to data

We acknowledge that NIWA hosts several of New Zealand's nationally significant environmental databases and is responsible for the collection, curation and accessibility of the data within them. We are pleased that 99.9% of the data downloaded from these databases by up to 42,000 register users was done so at no cost over the past year and, to the extent possible, we aim to maintain that during 2019/20. We note your emphasis on the importance of the transparency of the pricing of this data and will take actions to ensure that is the case.

National property programme

We will continue to work with your officials as we develop the business case for NIWA's Future Property Programme across our Hamilton, Wellington and Christchurch sites. We note your expectation that we identify options and opportunities for effective collaboration with our partners, and that any decision around the property investment will be assessed in the context of NIWA's broader capital expenditure needs.

Tangaroa Funding Contract Review with MBIE

We note that the contract for the Crown's contribution to the funding of *Tangaroa* is being reviewed during 2019/20 for its continuation beyond its current expiry date of 30 June 2020. We will work with your officials to ensure that all the information they require is made available and that this important marine science platform remains accessible to New Zealand's broader science community.

National Science Challenges

During 2019/20 the second five year phase of the National Science Challenges (NSCs) gets underway. NIWA remains fully committed to supporting the NSCs through its role as host to the Sustainable Seas and Deep South Challenges, and its contribution to three others.

NeSI Contract Review

We will continue to work with your officials as they review the contract for the future funding of National eScience Infrastructure (NeSI). We remain a committed and enthusiastic host of the nation's high performance computing facility and will continue to collaborate with our NeSi partners to ensure the best outcome for the nation.

Finally, we acknowledge Annex 1 of your letter and your expectation of the NIWA Board.

Yours sincerely

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF WATER & ATMOSPHERIC RESEARCH LIMITED



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Chairman

cc John Morgan – CEO NIWA
 Paul Stocks, DCE - Science Skills and Innovation, MBIE
 Michael Bird, General Manager - Entity Performance & Investment, MBIE