

Te Ara Paerangi - Future Pathways submission

Submission of the Māori Health Committee

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The Māori Health Committee¹ of the Health Research Council of New Zealand submission on the Te Ara Paerangi Future Pathways green paper

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) developed a Green Paper (the paper) to stimulate discussion on the future design of the Research, Science, and Innovation system (RSI system). The Māori Health Committee (MHC) of the Health Research Council of New Zealand (HRC) wish to provide a submission on the paper.

The MHC have statutory roles and responsibilities to provide advice to the HRC on health research into issues that affect Māori, these are outlined in the Health Research Council Act 1990 (the Act).² The MHC wish to provide feedback from the perspective of a statutory governing committee within the existing RSI system.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

As a Ministry and Crown organisation, MBIE has a responsibility to ensure the RSI review process and outcomes give practical effect to the rights guaranteed to Māori by Te Tiriti o Waitangi ('Te Tiriti'). Central to Te Tiriti, is the mutual recognition of tino rangatiratanga and kawanatanga. While the paper explores the idea of 'partnership', it is unclear whether the paper itself has been initiated or driven by Māori, in partnership with the Crown. Rangatiratanga resides with Māori. An effective system-wide review and transformation process must centre priorities stemming from Māori communities equally to those defined by the Crown.

The MHC shares MBIE's vision of a Te Tiriti-led RSI system but are concerned that the paper has missed an important opportunity to realise this vision. The paper maintains an unequal status quo by prioritising a Pākehā framework of inquiry. The paper explores ways to "enable" and "protect" Mātauranga Māori, rather than exploring transformative ways to structurally elevate Māori knowledge systems and worldviews. As discussed in the report *Te Pūtahitanga*, a meaningful commitment to Te Tiriti would explore ideas in support of a tino rangatiratanga model of governance (Article 2) through the transfer of power, resource, and creative freedom to Māori.³

The paper minimises the importance of Te Tiriti across the RSI system. Consideration of Te Tiriti, Mātauranga Māori, and Māori aspirations are considered collectively in a single chapter with little reference to the role of Te Tiriti across the broader ideas presented for discussion. This approach is tokenistic and reductionist in nature. The rights and responsibilities of Te Tiriti should be structurally embedded throughout the entire RSI system and reflected in the overarching policy framework and governance structures.

Strategic re-set

The paper does not currently highlight an opportunity to discuss re-setting the strategic direction of the entire RSI system. The paper explores tweaking the existing system rather than interrogating opportunities to fundamentally re-think the status quo. Beyond 'strengthening the role of Māori in the existing system' a strategic re-set would explore ways

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² The Health Research Council Act 1990, ss17-21.

³ Ngā Pae o te Māramatanga. (2021). *Te Pūtahitanga: A Tiriti-led Science-Policy Approach for Aotearoa New Zealand*. http://www.maramatanga.co.nz/sites/default/files/CB_TePutahitanga_A4_2021_inner_Digital_final.pdf

to re-build a funding system in support of autonomous Māori-centric science activity and leadership.

It is recommended that greater consideration be given to the recommendations outlined in *Te Pūtahitanga*. In particular, the recommendation to develop an autonomous Mātauranga Māori commission to provide leadership over Mātauranga Māori including priorities that extend beyond the RSI system. Consideration should also be given to the development of regional Te Ao Māori policy hubs to provide ongoing strategic leadership.

Vision Mātauranga

The MHC note that system level reform should take place alongside a revision of its underlying policy frameworks. In particular, the Vision Mātauranga policy (VM) is outdated. As it currently reads, the VM policy has great potential to support the extraction and appropriation of Mātauranga Māori rather than creating a pathway to elevate Māori knowledge systems. The VM policy needs to be re-developed alongside Māori research leadership and communities to ensure the future RSI system has solid structural foundations in support of a Te Tiriti-led future.

Synergy with cross sectoral reforms

The current ideas in the paper do not draw on the broader direction of government towards an equitable and Tiriti-responsive public service. As a Crown Agent, the HRC are engaged in a similar process of reviewing and re-aligning our health research funding system with Te Tiriti including the development of the Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Māori Health, the launch of our Māori Health Advancement criterion, the scoring of the Māori Health Advancement criterion within assessing committees, and the ringfenced Rangahau Hauora Māori investment stream.

The HRC are also currently engaged in a process of reviewing and reorganising its existing decision-making structures to allow for more Te Tiriti compliant models of governance within the current restraints of the Act. We also note similar structural reforms are occurring across the public service to support more equitable governance arrangements and enhance tino rangatiratanga. A recent notable example being the establishment of the Māori health Authority by the Ministry of Health. It is recommended that MBIE examine its own institutional foundations to ensure more appropriate governance models are in place to guide MBIE's work moving forward.

The New Zealand Health Research Strategy 2017-2027

The paper would be strengthened by aligning to the goals and priorities outlined in the New Zealand Health Research Strategy 2017-2027 (NZHRS). The NZHRS places equity and Māori Health Advancement at the forefront of the government's strategic direction. A considerable level of consultation took place to inform the development of the NZHRS. It is advised that MBIE review these submissions to help inform its thinking around priority setting and the direction of the future RSI system.

Any changes to RSI policy, workforce strategies and funding structures should be built to create and maintain equitable access and outcomes across Aotearoa. The WAI 2575 – the Health Services and Outcomes Inquiry, highlighted that the health system's funding models created and maintained inequitable outcomes for Māori. Therefore, there is a need for appropriately designed funding models to ensure structurally excluded groups and institutions are not further marginalised from government resources.

The paper could also align with MHC aspirations with a more defined focus on social equity or equity for Māori as a motivator for change across the RSI system.

Language and framing

The MHC note that language used in formal documentation reflects the values of our organisation(s). There was concern that the language utilised in the paper does not reflect values that align with a Te Tiriti-led model.

The use of terms such as ‘unproductive competition’ is without a clear context in the paper and is placed within a subjective and emotive landscape. Such language does not acknowledge the complexities of the current research funding systems and ignores that most Māori models of research practice are rooted in collaboration. The NZ health National Science Challenges were originally formed from a perspective that competition is not ideal, whereas the HRC operates from a framework where competitive bids are encouraged, as do the CORE bids. We feel that all models are required to allow different research teams to determine the model and approach that best works for their kaupapa.

A revised system should retain a level of competition in support of excellence, to ensure Māori-led bids are not disadvantaged by the requirement to ‘merge’ or be ‘integrated’ into larger general research teams/bids. The MHC also encourage MBIE to commit to rewarding research that advances Māori health and well-being and is responsive to Māori, in support of any shifts in the research environment being a leverage for positive change.

Accountability and transparency

The MHC report that the paper would have been further strengthened by presenting data available to MBIE to provide clear evidence of current gaps in the system and patterns of funding distribution. This would have created a more meaningful commentary and provided transparency over several key statements within the paper.

Concluding comment

The MHC strongly recommend that MBIE engage with our organisation and committee to further discuss how we could align our future policies and procedures to meet the aspirations of a Te Tiriti-led framework, build on the momentum of cross sectoral reforms, and demand bold system level change.