



---

## Key themes from Tier 1 Stakeholder Engagement - Prime Minister's Science, Innovation and Technology Advisory Council (PMSITAC)

---

PMSITAC Briefing Note - September 2025

### Purpose

---

1. This paper provides an overview of stakeholder perspectives submitted to the PMSITAC during the tier 1 engagement. This paper was requested by PMSITAC at the meeting on 22 August 2025.
2. It revisits the foundational purpose of PMSITAC and synthesises key themes emerging from engagement with a wide range of contributors across the Science, Innovation and Technology (SI&T) system.
3. The examples included illustrate how stakeholders in the SI&T system envision a more coherent, inclusive, and impact-driven system, aligned with Te Tiriti o Waitangi, national priorities, and long-term strategic goals. These perspectives are intended to inform PMSITAC's understanding of systemic challenges and opportunities, and to support its advice on future system design, investment priorities, and innovation pathways.
4. The purpose of the engagement was to provide stakeholders with an overview of the role of the PMSITAC, why the PMSITAC is focused on prioritisation, and the roadmap to providing advice to the Prime Minister on priorities. This was also an opportunity for stakeholders to contribute their perspectives on prioritisation of SI&T research.

### Overview of tier 1 engagement

---

5. The tier 1 engagement reveals a strong appetite for bold, strategic change in New Zealand's SI&T system. Stakeholders are united in their desire for a more balanced, outcomes-focused, and inclusive approach, one that leverages national strengths, supports talent, honours Treaty commitments, and delivers tangible benefits for all New Zealanders.
6. Engagement included formal meetings and written feedback from:
  - a. Universities and tertiary sector leaders
  - b. Deputy Secretaries from the Ministry for the Environment, Department of Conservation, Ministry for Primary Industries, Ministry of Health and the National Emergency Management Agency
  - c. Māori science and innovation leaders
  - d. Independent Research organisations (IRANZ), business and industry
  - e. Public research organisations (PRO) Chairs and Chief Executives
7. These stakeholders represented a broad cross-section of disciplines, sectors, and knowledge systems, including mātauranga Māori perspectives.

## Key themes from tier 1 stakeholder engagement

### *System performance, productivity, and investment balance*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Detail</b>
Persistent productivity gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Zealand’s productivity and GDP per capita remain significantly below OECD comparators, despite strong foundational inputs and a respectable global innovation ranking.</li> <li>• There is a consensus that the system is not delivering sufficient value or economic outcomes from its investments.</li> <li>• IRANZ and the PRO Chair and CEs noted that researchers are increasingly burdened with administrative tasks due to underfunding, reducing research productivity.</li> </ul>
Imbalance in R&D investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders consistently noted a disproportionate focus of government R&amp;D funding on environmental and primary sectors, with underinvestment in advanced technology, health, and other high-growth areas.</li> <li>• There is a call for a more deliberate, strategic rebalancing to align with future national priorities and productivity goals.</li> <li>• IRANZ recommends recognising the distinct contributions of independent research organisations, PROs and universities, and ensuring all receive adequate public support to avoid suboptimal innovation outcomes.</li> </ul>
Need for outcome accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a strong desire for mechanisms that track and report on the outcomes and impacts of research investments, not just activities or inputs.</li> <li>• Stakeholders want to see a shift toward impact-based reporting and greater system-wide accountability.</li> <li>• PRO chairs and CEs called for outcome-based reporting frameworks and regular reviews (e.g. quarterly) to assess progress and adjust investments.</li> </ul>

### *Innovation, commercialisation and industry uptake*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Detail</b>
Lag from research to market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Across all groups, there is concern about the slow translation of research and innovation into commercial products and industry uptake.</li> <li>• The fragmented investment landscape, lack of cohesive pathways, and insufficient private sector engagement are seen as key barriers.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders highlighted the need for better support for early-stage commercialisation, including clearer IP pathways and co-funding models.</li> </ul>
Role of social license and uptake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The importance of social license, public and industry acceptance of new technologies was highlighted as a critical factor in successful commercialisation.</li> <li>There is a need to better integrate social science perspectives to support adoption and impact.</li> </ul>
Public-private partnerships (PPP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Zealand's PPP frameworks are seen as fragmented and underdeveloped compared to international best practice.</li> <li>Stakeholders urge the creation of more cohesive, mission-led PPPs to accelerate commercialisation, infrastructure development, and innovation outcomes.</li> <li>Stakeholders noted the absence of robust PPP frameworks, which is a key barrier to commercialising health and biotech research. Other countries are leveraging PPPs more effectively through coordinated, whole-of-government approaches.</li> </ul>

### *Strategic Prioritisation and Government Coordination*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Detail</b>
Whole of Government approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a strong call for cross-government prioritisation and coordination, with senior officials working together to set and align research priorities beyond individual portfolios.</li> <li>This is seen as essential for maximising impact and avoiding duplication.</li> </ul>
Clarity and stability in priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders want early and clear guidance from PMSITAC on national priorities, risk appetite, and expected outcomes, to enable effective organisational planning and financial sustainability.</li> <li>Stability and bipartisan support are seen as crucial for long-term progress.</li> </ul>
Framing of impactful research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is broad support for prioritising research that delivers broad societal benefits, not just economic growth.</li> <li>Stakeholders emphasise the need to focus on what research New Zealand must do, and what only New Zealand can do, leveraging unique national strengths.</li> </ul>

### *International collaboration and strategic positioning*

Topic	Detail
International collaboration and strategic positioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stakeholders emphasised the importance of leveraging New Zealand’s strong international research reputation and partnerships.</li> <li>There is a call for more deliberate engagement in global science platforms, trade-aligned research agreements, and international PPPs.</li> <li>IRANZ and PRO leaders noted that international collaboration is a key driver of impact and should be supported through stable funding, infrastructure, and policy alignment.</li> <li>Concerns were raised that fragmented infrastructure and lack of government support may reduce New Zealand’s global competitiveness and institutional rankings.</li> </ul>

### *Advanced technology, AI and infrastructure*

Topic	Detail
Underinvestment in advanced technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is widespread recognition that advanced technology (including AI, data science, and digital infrastructure) is underfunded relative to its potential to drive productivity and economic growth.</li> <li>Stakeholders see advanced tech as a key enabler for leveraging NZ’s comparative advantages.</li> </ul>
AI capability and sovereignty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The need for a national strategy on AI capability, workforce development, and data sovereignty is a recurring theme.</li> <li>There are questions about whether New Zealand should invest in sovereign AI infrastructure and how to ensure responsible, inclusive adoption.</li> </ul>
Infrastructure gaps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Current science and innovation infrastructure is seen as holding the country back. There is a call to activate larger pools of capital (including Iwi and NZ Super) and to accelerate investment in enabling infrastructure.</li> <li>Stakeholders noted that infrastructure gaps are particularly acute in health research, AI, and digital platforms. There is a call for investment in sovereign capabilities and shared research infrastructure.</li> </ul>

### *Skilled workforce and talent retention*

Topic	Detail
Support for early and mid-career researchers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is concern about the loss of talent due to limited career pathways, contract insecurity, and lack of support for early and mid-career researchers.</li> <li>• Stakeholders emphasise the need to align postgraduate training and workforce development with national priorities.</li> <li>• IRANZ recommends co-supervised applied PhDs and fellowships between universities and IROs, with adequate funding for supervision.</li> </ul>
Integration of skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of integrating research, teaching, and skills development, especially critical thinking and advanced tech skills was highlighted as essential for building a resilient, future-ready workforce.</li> <li>• Stakeholders noted that workforce development must also include AI capability-building and support for applied research careers outside academia.</li> </ul>

### *Māori economy, Mātauranga Māori, and Treaty obligations*

Topic	Detail
Visibility and inclusion of Māori	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders stress the importance of Māori representation and visibility in PMSITAC’s work and priorities.</li> <li>• There is a call for clear articulation of how Māori perspectives, values, and aspirations are embedded across all pillars, not just as a separate priority.</li> <li>• Stakeholders feel that if the PMSITAC is genuine about Māori knowledge and leadership, there should be Māori representation on the council.</li> </ul>
Distinctiveness of Mātauranga Māori	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mātauranga Māori is seen as a unique strength and point of difference for New Zealand, but is currently underinvested in. There are opportunities for greater commercialisation and integration of Māori knowledge systems.</li> <li>• Mātauranga Māori brings unique perspectives and values to the knowledge system, offering alternative approaches to commercialisation.</li> <li>• Could be included in the Emerging Principles to provide greater visibility for Māori.</li> </ul>
Treaty Obligations and Māori Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to map and honour Treaty obligations—including joint decision-making, data sharing, and ongoing investment commitments was strongly emphasised.</li> <li>• Māori investment (including Iwi and Trusts) should be mapped and considered separately from Crown investment.</li> </ul>
Values-Based and Future-Focused Investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Māori leaders advocate for values-based investment vehicles, early investment platforms, and a future-oriented approach,</li> </ul>

	<p>recognising the demographic significance of Māori youth and the broader benefits of Māori economic success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Māori economy is doing well as it takes a different, values-driven approach. Investing in Māori and mātauranga Māori will get us further, faster.</li> <li>• Māori research is happening outside traditional organisations, with MBIE funding supporting this.</li> <li>• It is not true that Māori research cannot be commercialised, rather the focus is on long-term, strategic investments that do not align with short-term election cycles.</li> </ul>
--	--

*Resilience, climate and public good science*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Detail</b>
Investment in resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building resilience to climate change, natural hazards, and other disruptive events is seen as essential for long-term national wellbeing. Investment in resilience is viewed as both a risk mitigation strategy and an economic opportunity.</li> </ul>
Ongoing need for public good science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stakeholders highlight the continued importance of public good research (e.g., land use mapping, hazards mapping, health research) that may not be immediately commercialisable but is critical for national interests.</li> </ul>

*System interoperability, collaboration and integration*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Detail</b>
Breaking down silos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a call for greater integration and collaboration across research organisations, industry, government, and Māori entities. Stakeholders want to see genuine partnerships, shared infrastructure, and more seamless pathways from basic research to commercialisation.</li> </ul>
Inclusion of diverse voices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance of including industry representatives, creatives, and other non-traditional stakeholders in ongoing dialogue and decision-making was highlighted as a way to ensure the system is responsive, innovative, and inclusive.</li> </ul>