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**Prime Minister's Science, Innovation and Technology Council (PMSITAC)  
Meeting summary notes and actions**

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**Date:** Friday 21 November 2025

**Chair:** Dr John Roche

**Attendees:**

- PMSITAC members: Komal Mistry-Mehta, Professor Sir Peter Gluckman, Professor Merryn Tawhai (online), Grant Wright, Craig Piggot
- Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) representatives: Privacy of natural persons
- Apologies: Hon Dr Shane Reti, Professor Russell Frew

**Introductions**


- Chair explained the purpose of this meeting and its intended outcomes.

Out of Scope

- Chair provided an update on the recent meeting with the PM:
  - PM resonated with the four pillars proposed, expressed interest in accelerating progress, and sought clarity on priority areas within these pillars as they relate to the work programme.
  - PM emphasised the importance of appointing the right people on the Research Funding New Zealand (RFNZ) Board, including new and capable members. The Chair updated that it is unclear whether the Board will be in place by Christmas.
  - There is an opportunity for the Council to provide early advice and work closely with the RFNZ as it takes shape.

Out of Scope

Out of Scope



## Item 2: Sign out Priorities Report

(Relevant paper: Report to Prime Minister: Prioritisation in New Zealand's Science Innovation and Technology System)

Changes and recommended adjustments outlined below.

- Addition to the Executive summary
  - Include a statement on the purpose of publicly funded science, including its role in stewardship.
  - Include a statement that the PMSITAC have been asked to provide their advice within current funding restraints, acknowledging previous reports that the system is under-funded relative to international comparators.
- Paragraph 7
  - Add a footnote explaining the makeup of MBIE's \$1.2B science investment. Indicate interest in exploring whether the remainder of the \$1.2B could be reprioritised.
- Paragraph 11
  - Rephrase paragraph 11 and consider splitting it into two separate paragraphs as suggested below.
  - Acknowledge that there are multiple reasons for the current unsatisfactory performance of New Zealand's economy and focus on the opportunity that a well-functioning SI&T system may provide.
  - Note that we are referring to "public spending outcomes" not the entire sector.
  - Acknowledge that the existing workforce performs well within the constraints of the current SI&T system.
  - Note this report addresses specific parts of the system.
- Paragraph 32
  - Replace the phrase "*weak on human capital*" as it could reflect negatively on the workforce, instead focus on re-framing to develop science education, building the future workforce and retaining existing talent.
- Para 34 and 35
  - Remove the repeated reference to "*research infrastructure*".
- PMSITAC Principles
  - Move a summary form of the PMSITAC decision-making principles for prioritisation/deprioritisation to the Executive summary.

- Make the principles and criteria for funding decisions and reprioritisation explicit in the report, as these are enduring principles.
- Figure 1
  - Note add Australia.
- Figure 2
  - Ensure the logic behind country selection is transparent and consistent to avoid any perception of cherry-picking. Provide an alternative set of relevant countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, and the Small Advanced Economies) to strengthen scientific defensibility.
  - Consider referencing reports on environmental spending by the PCE and compare those figures for context.
  - Explore variations such as level of investment divided by population and investment as a percentage of GDP.
- Figure 3
  - Check whether including the New Zealand proposed data column is appropriate, as these decisions have not yet been made. However, it is important that we are able to clearly explain the rationale for its inclusion, particularly regarding the social science component. Chair to confirm before sign-off.
  - Consider presenting variations such as investment quantum per capita and investment as a percentage of GDP.
  - Consider grouping socio-economic categories by pillar, if possible.
- Figures 4 and 5 (priority changes to be completed first)
  - Add clarifying paragraphs before Figures 4 and 5 and accurately reflective Captions to explain that these figures are non-exhaustive, non-definitive and directional only. Emphasise that they represent the highest-level guidance on PMSITAC's direction, with the next level of prioritisation to be developed in early 2026.
  - Highlight that focus areas will include analysis of "niche opportunities and partnerships" ensuring investment is not spread too thin while maintaining sufficient scale to achieve outcomes.
  - Consider an infographic showing the "Technology for Prosperity" pillar as a horizontal foundation underpinning the other three pillars, to demonstrate its role in driving system-wide innovation and clarify confusion around advanced technologies. Also important to explore placing it across the top, middle, and bottom of the diagram to determine which layout best conveys integration across the system. Also, include a paragraph outlining the intent behind this visual approach.
  - Note that "Technology for Prosperity" include NZIAT's *known* platforms (including quantum).
  - Also broad agreement that aerospace should be added.
  - Note no mention of Antarctica, should be included as a strategic interest.
  - Reduce detail in Figure 5 and provide a more fitting title.
  - Add the Pacific region under the "Health" pillar.
  - Refine language for "*in-scope not limited to*" to convey flexibility rather than determinism.
  - Use bold value statements instead of technology areas.

- Consider limiting to three examples per pillar (no consensus yet). Chair to revisit this action.  
Include specific reference to the Social Sciences and distinguish between humanities
- Figures 6 and 7
  - Label each diagram clearly as Figure 6 and Figure 7.
- Paragraph 55
  - Add “*Projects can be pivoted or stopped and started with rapid iteration*” “*via clear measures of success and milestones*”.  
Replace the term “*whitespace*” in the annex with “*ignition*”.
- Paragraph 72
  - Note that the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) is being reformed to be more economically orientated. However, as the PBRF is outside the Council’s purview and its allocation details are not fully known, it cannot be assumed to offset de-funding in the humanities.
- Implications section
  - Add a new paragraph acknowledging implications for universities.  
Add a new paragraph acknowledging implications for Public Research organisations (PROs) (previously existing paragraph).
- Conclusion/ Next steps section
  - Use careful language around “*public good science*” – replace with “*publicly funded science*”. Chair to advise.
  - Note that PMSITAC have focussed on Tier 1 of prioritisation, with Tier 2 detail to come in 2026 to inform government decisions.
- General notes
  - Anticipate future criticism from scientists, opposition parties, media and status quo institutions within the system.
  - Frame negative aspects of the Priorities Report as opportunities for improvement.

<b>Action</b>	<i>Figures 4 and 5 are to be tabled for PMSITAC member comments and suggestions, with tables to be shared early next week</i>
<b>Action</b>	<i>Chair to check in on the pillar names to be used in the priorities report, and if “publicly-funded science” should replace “public good science”</i>
<b>Action</b>	<i>Chair to check on the inclusion of NZIAT’s known spoke investments (including quantum) but also aerospace in the “Technology for Prosperity” pillar</i>
<b>Action</b>	<i>Chair to check if Figure 5 should include only three investment examples in each pillar</i>
<b>Action</b>	<i>Make suggested edits to the Priorities Report early next week</i>
<b>Action</b>	<i>Explore data and graph various for Figures 1,2,3 early next week and submit to Chair</i>

Out of Scope

Out of Scope



Out of Scope

<b>Action</b>	<i>Chair suggested including a cover note outlining the key areas for future focus</i>
<b>Action</b>	<i>MBIE to clarify with NZIAT team. Chair and PMSITAC secretariat to discuss further on Monday</i>
<b>Action</b>	<i>Policy actions and stewardships functions to be highlighted at the front of the report.</i>
<b>Action</b>	<i>Add to agenda of next meeting: to discuss high level (international expert) consultation on key topics.</i>

#### **Item 4: Working as a team**

- Members agreed this was the most productive meeting to date, thanks to strategic-level discussions and robust debate on priorities.
- The Council is collaborating effectively, with shared goals for year-end and enthusiasm for deeper engagement in 2026.
- The value of considering UAG and SSAG reports in future work was highlighted, along with the need for enduring principles beyond political cycles.
- Updates were shared on team roles: Iain C will be seconded to HUD, and Danette will oversee SIT reform work next year.
- Appreciation was expressed for members' contributions and MBIE's support over the past five months.