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

Date: Friday 18 July 2025,

Chair: Hon Dr Shane Reti, Minister of Science, Innovation and Technology

Attendees:

- PMSITAC members: Dr John Roche, Russell Frew, Komal Mistry-Mehta, Sir Peter Gluckman, Professor Merryn Tawhai, Malcolm Johns, Craig Piggott
- MBIE representatives: Nic Blakeley, Privacy of natural persons

1. Prime Ministers opening remarks

- The Prime Minister thanked the members for being part of the PMSITAC.
- The Prime Minister discussed the importance of the five pillars of growth for his Government – World Class Education, Modern and Reliable Infrastructure, Competitive Business Settings, Global Trade and Investment and **Embracing Science, innovation and Technology**.
- The Prime Minister emphasised learning from successful small advanced economies—Ireland (strategic ecosystem), Israel (knowledge commercialisation), and Denmark (health and weight focused priorities) —to help New Zealand set effective priorities without 'reinventing the wheel'.
- The Prime Minister shared his Goals for SI&T and the role of PMSITAC to develop those priorities:
  - A demonstrably sharper focus on commercialisation.
  - Utilising science and technology to promote growth and investment by adding value to our products and services.
  - Setting clear research priorities and ensure funding is targeted for maximum impact.
  - Reform of intellectual property settings so researchers see a greater commercial share of their own research.
  - Connecting ecosystems of growth and innovation – PROs, Universities, Business, Start-Up Community – overcome the siloes and fragmentation.
  - Increasing international connectedness and investment.
- The Prime Minister challenged the PMSITAC to be:
  - Intentional and action-oriented
  - Back where NZ is strong and clarify NZ's strategic focus and cut what's not working
  - Make tough trade-offs for impact and productivity
  - Prioritise strategic partnerships and commercialisation
  - Position NZ as a fast adopter
  - Narrow SI&T priorities, pick proven examples, and drive them for NZ.

2. Introductions and intended outcomes

- Attendees introduced themselves and shared opening remarks.
- The Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology explained the purpose of PMSITAC: to help set national priorities for science, innovation, and technology. With around $1.2B in the SI&T portfolio alone, the goal is to guide SI&T investment toward boosting productivity and economic growth.
- MBIE reviewed the process for managing conflicts of interest and reminded members to declare any new conflicts that may arise during discussions.

3. Items: New Zealand's current SI&T investment landscape and strategic context and What does this mean for New Zealand's SI&T research priorities?

(Relevant paper: New Zealand's R&D investment landscape and tools for prioritisation slide deck)

- MBIE provided an overview of:
    - New Zealand's current SI&T investment landscape and strategic context by providing a high-level view of government investment in R&D, both domestically and internationally.
    - the changes the Government is making to New Zealand's science, innovation and technology system, including current thinking on establishing a single decision maker for SI&T funding and mechanisms to drive investment in advanced technologies.
    - the different approaches to prioritisation and de-prioritisation, including potential lessons from overseas and different risk or opportunity lenses that can support PMSIATC to make recommendations
- Key themes of the discussion are summarised below:
    - ***Investment Priorities***: Members endorsed MBIE's draft funding pillars as well aligned with the Government's goals for science, innovation, and technology (slide 22 refers). Members emphasised the need to prioritise scientific excellence, taxpayer value, and national relevance, supported by clear performance measures and appropriate funding models—whether mission-led or investigator-led.
    - ***Emerging shifts*** early indications from the PMSITAC identified shifting focus on environmental research to advanced technologies, from contestable funding models to mission-led approaches, and from investigator-led initiatives to those increasingly driven by industry needs. These shifts signal a move toward more targeted, collaborative, and impact-oriented investment strategies.
    - ***Measuring Impact and Guiding Investment*** systematically setting outcomes, tracking investments and evaluating their effectiveness, enables informed decisions about follow-on funding—amplifying success where it's paying off and ensuring resources are directed to areas of greatest impact.
    - ***Technology Rediness Level (TRL)*** There is a shared view that the current horizontal classification of research along the TRL spectrum—from basic to applied—is too fragmented and often subjective. A more effective approach would be to structure funding vertically, based on the purpose of investment, with each stream spanning the full TRL range:
        - White-space – high-risk, high-reward exploration

    - Mission-led – challenge-based, collaborative, and internationally connected
    - Investigator-led– curiosity-driven discovery
    - Stewardship – sustaining critical capability and infrastructure

  This model would simplify the system, reduce artificial boundaries, and better align investment with strategic outcomes.

- ***International Collaboration:*** Members stressed the need to incentivise global partnerships (e.g. via the Catalyst Fund), noting current relative level of underinvestment. Aligning with InvestNZ is key to attracting international capital.
- ***Advanced Technologies***: Discussion centred on AI, synthetic biology, and gene technology. Members highlighted the need to understand the maturity of each field, as different stages require tailored support.
- ***Sector Development***: supporting development of new sectors implies strong government backing, while enhancing existing ones implies increased co-investment from private sector.
- ***Workforce Connections:*** Emphasis on linking researchers, practitioners, and entities to support the commercialisation of research into products and services.

- PMSITAC provided the secretariat with more guidance on what will be needed to work towards a list of priorities. A summary of the actions for this item is provided in the table below.

Action Area	Requested Information / Action
R&D Expenditure Breakdown	Provide a more detailed breakdown of government R&D spending by socio-economic area (e.g. environment, health, agriculture, energy, defence, industrial production, exploitation of earth/space, and other). Identify what the cost will be from deprioritising investment vs shifting investment within those sectors.
Funding Timelines	Share MBIE's timelines for delivering contestable funding to identify when funds become available for redirection toward new priorities.
Slide 22 Update	Add a horizontal breakdown of private sector, international investment, and leveraged to the pillar diagram. Consider how this applies to the Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) and Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs).
Investment Mapping	Develop a detailed map of public and private investment in SI&T by sector, including gaming and creative film. Align this with advanced technology opportunities (e.g. AI, synthetic biology, aerospace). Use data such as publications and citations to identify NZ's comparative advantages—e.g. low levels of air and maritime traffic for aerospace, and strong biosecurity

Action Area	Requested Information / Action
	standards for bioeconomy. Include case studies to illustrate sector-specific strengths and opportunities.
Case Studies	Provide examples that demonstrate NZ's unique advantages in specific sectors (e.g. aerospace, bioeconomy) and how these align with SI&T investment priorities.
International Benchmarking	Share examples of how other countries address SI&T challenges and opportunities. Map these against NZ-specific opportunities (e.g. supercritical geothermal) to identify relevant strategies.
Performance & Evaluation	Define what performance and evaluation frameworks should look like for SI&T priorities and investment decisions.
Funding Mechanism Overview	Explain the Centres of Research Excellence (CoREs) and Performance-Based Research Fund (PBRF) what they are, when funding becomes available, potential workforce indicators and how they align with SI&T priorities. **Note:** There is a strong desire for CoREs and the PBRF to be considered as integral components of the SI&T system, rather than as standalone or peripheral mechanisms. Their inclusion in the overall system view would support a more coherent and strategically aligned research landscape.
Stakeholder Engagement	Identify key stakeholders and produce an engagement plan for PMSITAC

Out of Scope

Item 4: Wrap up

- The meeting concluded with a consensus on the importance of focusing on New Zealand's strengths, improving funding strategies, and fostering collaborations across sectors to drive innovation and commercialization of scientific research. The action items were clearly outlined, and the committee is expected to follow up on these initiatives in the upcoming meetings.
- MBIE informed PMSITAC members that the next three meetings are planned for the third week of August, September, and October, and can be held in a hybrid format to account for those who cannot attend in-person meetings.