

TamakiLegal

Barristers & Solicitors

Friday, 12 September 2025

Environment Committee
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, rau rangatira mā,

SUBMISSIONS ON “FROM THE GROUND UP” – A DRAFT STRATEGY TO UNLOCK NEW ZEALAND’S GEOTHERMAL POTENTIAL

Introduction

1. This submission is provided on behalf of the following whānau, hapū and iwi with geothermal-related claims before the Waitangi Tribunal and the senior courts, to whom the draft Geothermal Strategy for New Zealand (“**Strategy**”) is highly relevant:
 - (a) Te Urunga Aroha Evelyn Kereopa, on behalf of her whānau, and of Te Ihingārangi, a hapū of Maniapoto;
 - (b) Anthony Whareroupo Olsen, on behalf of the iwi Waitaha, Kāti Māmoe;
 - (c) Ian John Mitchell, on behalf of Ngāti Hineira and Te Uri Taniwha of Ngāpuhi; and
 - (d) Merle Ormsby, the late Tiaho Pillot, and Daniel Ormsby on behalf of themselves, and the descendants of Te Taawhi Patena Mariu and Rauaiterangi Mary Patena.

(“**Submitters**”)
2. The Strategy sets out the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment’s (“**MBIE**”) vision to place Aotearoa as a global leader in sustainable geothermal development (“**Vision**”). MBIE proposes that the Vision can be achieved by securing three strategic outcomes (“**Outcomes**”).

3. The process of procuring the Outcomes is broken down into five action plan goals (“**Goals**”), each of which have specific targets to be met within three timeframes (“**Horizons**”) spanning the next four years and beyond.
4. In short, the Submitters support the Vision and Outcomes set out in the Strategy, but question *how* the Goals will be achieved. Further details will be required, while the Submitters also emphasise the need to incorporate a Māori lens into the Goals. To do so is integral to ensure that Outcomes and Vision empower tangata whenua, and to guarantee that the Strategy is whakahurihuri (transformative) rather than tangohanga (extractive).

Outcomes

5. As has been stated above, the Submitters support the broad tenor of the Outcomes. However, the key will be the manner through which the Outcomes are achieved, and at what cost. The Strategy’s approach must not treat Māoridom as a matter to be tolerated or a box to be ticked, but instead as a guiding philosophy. Rather than referring to iwi and hapū landowners as “collaborators”, the Strategy must incorporate Māori as strategic leaders of equal importance to members of industry, academia and government.
6. In this sense, the Strategy must move past mere consultation into more meaningful co-design. This can be done through the establishment of joint ventures with ahu whenua trusts, as well as monitoring by tikanga and Māori-led innovation hubs. Kaitiakitanga therefore necessitates ownership and sharing in any benefits that result. This helps set in place a system allowing for reinvestment and growth.
7. Similarly, the various concepts outlined in the Strategy must not be viewed solely through a Pākehā lens. For example:
 - (a) “innovation” must incorporate Mātauranga Māori;
 - (b) “energy resilience” should include Māori energy sovereignty;
 - (c) “strengthening te Ōhanga Māori” should include intergenerational equity and Tino Rangatiratanga.

Action Plan Goals

8. Once again, the Submitters do not oppose any of the Goals, but instead highlight what is missing: the facilitation of Māori energy sovereignty within the geothermal sector. It is vital that utilisation of Māori resources is ultimately Māori-led. There must be sharing of the benefits and the provision of funding that builds Māori capacity through increased co-governance. This must occur at both a national level, as well as on a case-specific basis for whānau, trusts and hapū to exercise tino rangatiratanga over their taonga. Without this, the action plan risks reinforcing existing power imbalances.
9. As part of this, the Submitters emphasise that the commitment to work with the education sector to strengthen geothermal career pathways to support an ongoing talent pipeline should also be included in Horizon 3 2029 onwards as part of the Geothermal Centre of Excellence.
10. Linked to the discussion on Outcomes above, it is vital that the Goals endorsed by the Strategy are not solely Pākehā and profit-centric. Innovations such as supercritical exploration and data access stand to greatly increase the efficiency of geothermal resources. Nevertheless, it is vital that they reflect a Māori worldview. While Māori knowledge of geothermal resources may be couched in non-scientific terms (ie referring to taniwha), they demonstrate a deeper understanding of how geothermal taonga operate. This must be borne in mind when seeking to tap into resources deeper within the whenua. Being aware of how to deal with heavy metals and minerals is important – there are some taniwha you do not want to disturb.
11. Accordingly, the Goals should not be swayed by solely Crown-centric worldviews and results. Emphasis should also be placed on investment in Māori capability and support for Māori to explore, develop and benefit from their own taonga. Enabling of tangata whenua through benefit-sharing should therefore be mandatory, rather than optional.

Overarching Direction

12. As has been hinted at, the Submitters emphasise that a kaitiakitanga approach that looks at geothermal taonga as more than a simple profit-generating enterprise should be adopted. For example, place-based

geothermal clusters should be an overarching group for individual place-based cluster groups to go to for help and assistance. This would ensure that a collective voice is maintained rather than siloing development.

13. Similarly, there needs to be a centralised body to assess feasibility and data use to ensure consistency of policies applied. There will inevitably be local variances at a micro level, but the overarching direction should be shared.
14. Finally, there should be a commitment stated within the Strategy to implement the Wai 2358 findings in full, excluding any assumption that Crown-led development is the default and language that treats Māori as stakeholders rather than just Rights-holders.

Conclusion

15. The Submitters believe that the approach set out provides a pathway to give effect to the Strategy's aspirations. Meaningful partnership and strong commitment to these goals will help ensure that the Strategy does not succumb to the pitfalls which have undermined the existing regime.

Ngā mihi nui, nā

Dated on 12 September 2025

Privacy of natural persons

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