

# Consultation submission form

## From the Ground Up – A draft strategy to unlock New Zealand’s geothermal potential

### How to submit using this form

This form is used to provide feedback on the document *From the Ground Up – A draft strategy to unlock New Zealand’s geothermal potential*.

When completing this submission form, please provide reasons explaining your answers. Your feedback provides valuable information and will inform decisions about the final geothermal strategy.

You can submit this form by 5pm, 12 September 2025 by:

- Emailing to [resourcesfeedback@mbie.govt.nz](mailto:resourcesfeedback@mbie.govt.nz) with the subject line ‘**Submission on a draft geothermal strategy**’ or
- Posting to:  
**Submission on a draft geothermal strategy**  
Resource Policy  
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment  
PO Box 1473  
Wellington 6140

Your feedback will contribute to further development of a geothermal strategy for New Zealand. It will also become official information, which means it may be requested under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

The OIA specifies that information is to be made available upon request unless there are sufficient grounds for withholding it. If we receive a request, we cannot guarantee that feedback you provide us will not be made public. Any decision to withhold information requested under the OIA is reviewable by the Ombudsman.

# Submitter information

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) would appreciate if you would provide some information about yourself. If you choose to provide information in the section below, it will be used to help MBIE understand how different groups view the draft geothermal strategy. Any information you provide will be stored securely.

## A. About you

Name: Dr Nona Taute

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## B. Are you happy for MBIE to contact you if we have questions about your submission?

Yes

No

## C. Are you making this submission on behalf of a business or organisation?

Yes

No

If yes, please tell us the title of your company/organisation:

## D. Privacy information

The Privacy Act 2020 applies to submissions. Please check the box if you do not wish your name or other personal information to be included in any information about submissions that MBIE may publish.

MBIE may upload submissions, or a summary of submissions, received to MBIE's website at [www.mbie.govt.nz](http://www.mbie.govt.nz). If you do not want your submission or a summary of your submission to be placed on our website, please check the box and type an explanation below:

**E. Confidential information**

- I would like my submission (or identifiable parts of my submission) to be kept confidential and have stated my reasons and ground under section 9 of the Official Information Act that I believe apply, for consideration by MBIE.

If you have checked this box, please tell us what parts of your submission are to be kept confidential.

# From the Ground Up – A draft strategy to unlock New Zealand’s geothermal potential

The Government is developing a geothermal strategy for New Zealand to provide a focused pathway to geothermal leadership and growth and unlock the potential of our geothermal resources across a broad range of applications.

New Zealand’s geographical location has given us a unique geothermal advantage, and New Zealand has been a global leader in geothermal development since the late 1950s. Geothermal contributes nearly one-fifth of our annual electricity generation, is a strong tourism attraction, and geothermal heat and steam are utilised both directly and indirectly in industrial, commercial and residential applications.

However, despite our world-class resource, geothermal development faces some barriers, including high upfront drilling costs, fragmented access to data, complex and dated regulatory settings and the scale of the sector. New technologies, such as supercritical geothermal, are also on the horizon. In order to drive the energy resilience, regional development, economic growth and climate leadership, deliberate and coordinated action is required.

The draft strategy sets out a vision for New Zealand to be a global leader in sustainable geothermal development. Three interconnected strategic outcomes, centred around being a world-leader in geothermal innovation, accelerating energy resilience, and strengthening regional economies and te Ōhanga Māori, have been identified to guide action and focus. Five action plan goals have been identified to guide the Government’s approach, underpinned by a draft action plan. The draft strategy also includes an energy-focused goal to double the use of geothermal energy by 2040.

We are seeking feedback on the draft strategy, particularly whether the proposed direction, ambition and outcomes, and accompanying action plan, capture the necessary government intervention and priorities. We are also interested in views about how the wider geothermal sector can contribute to unlocking our geothermal potential.

Please see the draft geothermal strategy for more information, available on our website:

<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/have-your-say/consultation-on-a-draft-geothermal-strategy-for-new-zealand>

## Questions for the consultation

1. Are the three strategic outcomes of the strategy, centred around **world-leading geothermal innovation, accelerating energy resilience and strengthening regional economies and te Ōhanga Māori**, suitable, or is there more we need to consider?

There is more to consider. Please see my comments as additional feedback.

2. Do the five overarching **action plan goals capture the areas that are most important for achieving** the vision, strategic outcomes and energy goal?

Please see below.

3. Does the proposed action plan correctly capture the necessary **government interventions and priorities**?

Please see below.

4. Is the **role for the sector** clear? How can the wider geothermal sector play a role (e.g. are there specific actions that the sector could own)?

Please see below.

5. Does the strategy and proposed action plan create the right settings to **enable tāngata whenua to realise their aspirations** for geothermal resources in their rohe?

There are critical aspirations yet to be enabled or enhanced in the strategy. Please see below.

6. Are there **opportunities** for our geothermal sector that we haven't considered?

There are opportunities to expand our industry's view of sustainability and success. Please see below.

7. Are there **challenges** for our geothermal sector that we haven't considered?

There are challenges in navigating cultural indicators of success. I propose a way to improve that navigation. Please see below.

8. Are there **any other things** that the strategy should include or exclude?

Please see below.

# Thank you

Thanks for your feedback, we really appreciate your insight. It helps us establish a long-term strategic approach to unlock the potential of our geothermal resources in a sustainable manner.

To help us continue to develop a geothermal strategy for New Zealand, we would appreciate any additional suggestions or comments you may have.

Please leave your feedback here:

*Kia ora, I am a lecturer at the University of Auckland, specializing in defining and enabling Māori values in geothermal development in the TVZ. I am a descendant of Te Arawa and grew up in Rotorua, where geothermal resources were an everyday utility and feature in my life. The release of this draft strategy is timely, as I have recently completed my PhD in culturally sustainable geothermal development. As explained below, I wish to offer the output of my PhD as a vehicle for the industry under this new strategy to better plan for Māori values in resource consenting and to better implement Māori views of project success.*

## **Overview:**

In all, the strategy effectively outlines the need for a more strategic approach to geothermal development from the Government's position. It highlights many beneficial outcomes for Aotearoa, all of which are true and realistic. The Action Plan Goals are, for the most part, entirely sensible and should not garner much opposition from stakeholders in the industry. While I did not see anything that concerns me, I would like to offer some additional considerations as discussed herein.

Broadly, I offer answers to the following questions:

1. Does the strategy and proposed action plan create the right settings to enable tangata whenua to realise their aspirations for geothermal resources in their rohe?
2. Are there opportunities for our geothermal sector that we haven't considered?
3. Are there challenges for our geothermal sector that we haven't considered?

## **What does sustainability involve?**

The vision to become a global leader in sustainable geothermal development is commendable and certainly achievable under a united and coordinated approach. However, I believe the term "sustainable" needs to be fleshed out. While I imagine (or hope) that economic prosperity and the environmental sustainability of our geothermal reservoirs and surface features are at the forefront of what the strategy refers to as "sustainable", there are other factors that I would like to see explicitly included. It is my view that we should be a global leader in sustainable geothermal development, not only in the technical or monetary sense, but also in the sense of social and cultural intangibles. The strategy highlights the importance of Māori culture in geothermal tourism. That importance should be carried through to our view of geothermal project success to lead the world in Indigenous empowerment beyond the show of Māori arts in tourism.

## **How to achieve true and inclusive sustainability:**

I offer something that I have developed over the past several years – a means to practically apply Māori cultural values (both tangible and intangible) to the decision-making processes of geothermal management and development. I developed a streamlined quadruple-bottom-line (environmental, cultural, social, economic) impact assessment tool that is specifically tailored to geothermal development in the Taupō Volcanic Zone. This tool will inform holistic and culturally aligned decisions in future projects, navigating uncertainty in what is contextually important to tangata whenua.

Ensuring the protection of our geothermal taonga for the nation is one thing, giving effect to the historical relationship between iwi Māori and their geothermal taonga is another. There are numerous examples of

historical geothermal developments that severed these relationships and belittled the stewardship and rangatiratanga of hapū. Providing for iwi-developer partnerships is commendable and a step towards better maintaining stewardship and rangatiratanga. However, it is important to remember that these partnerships are between developers and small representative groups who may not carry the same values and priorities as those they represent. There will always be a need (as demonstrated by the ongoing Taheke 8C Geothermal Project) to look beyond representative groups to the values demonstrated by wider iwi populations, thereby minimising the occurrence of hapū internal disarray and potential backlash. My tool can navigate those values to ensure that they are accounted for.

**Where can we account for a true indication of cultural sustainability?**

The consenting process is a bottleneck for most projects, whether it is through traditional processes or through the Fast-Track process. The practice of cultural impact assessment (which holds increasing influence for consenting authorities) is ad-hoc, uncertain, and largely ineffective. It does not provide clear or practical solutions for developers or consenting authorities. In the Action Plan Goals of the strategy, there is focus on ensuring regulatory processes are fit-for-purpose. The cultural aspect of the consenting process is certainly one area that needs to be more fit-for-purpose. My tool offers this structure in determining who should be involved, what values need to be considered, how those values can be measured, and how those values can be practically and realistically preserved or enhanced.

I hereby propose that the Minister consider incorporating this tool (or something of equivalence) to the regulatory process of impact assessment and resource consenting. Please reach out if you would like to explore this proposal in detail.

**Dr Nona Taute**

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