

# 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: Andrew Wilson

Email address: Andrew.wilson@rotoruanz.com

## 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:

RotoruaNZ

## 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:

*I do not want my submission placed on MBIE's website because... [insert reasoning here]*

**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?

We support the three strategic outcomes proposed. However, the overarching vision could better reflect the role of regional economies in delivering them, particularly those with existing geothermal investment and infrastructure. We suggest strengthening the vision statement with language such as: *“New Zealand is a global leader in sustainable geothermal development, delivering innovation, resilience, driving regional economic growth and te Ōhanga Māori for future generations.”*

The Rotorua and Taupō District (home to the Taupō Volcanic Zone) is home to New Zealand’s largest and most advanced geothermal operations, leading in generation, geoheat innovation, Māori enterprise and workforce development. We see an opportunity for the strategy to better

reflect the importance of place-based leadership and implementation. This is where the resource, expertise, workforce and demand-side potential align.

We recommend the strategy be better aligned with demand-side initiatives, including the New Zealand Energy Strategy and EECA's Regional Energy Transition Accelerator (RETA), to ensure supply growth is matched with clear pathways for decarbonisation and regional industry development.

Our submission aligns very closely with Amplify (Taupō EDA). This reflects the strong economic alignment between the region which was highlighted by our joint Regional Deals proposal, of which energy and decarbonisation was a core pillar.

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

The goals are well-structured, but would benefit from stronger emphasis on economic delivery and commercial enablement through investment attraction and an aligned national approach to consenting. The current focus leans heavily on supply-side development. To accelerate uptake, we need to ensure the same emphasis is applied to attracting users, supporting feasibility and enabling infrastructure at the local level.

We support the goals relating to geoheat uptake, cluster development and research and innovation. We recommend they be strengthened by:

- Incentivising and simplifying the uptake of geothermal energy for industrial and commercial users.
- Supporting place-based clusters in geothermal-rich areas like the Rotorua and Taupō District, where established infrastructure and available supply create strong foundations for industry growth and geothermal use.
- Better linking the action plan to national and regional decarbonisation priorities.
- Adding in a specific action relating to the exploration and application of both residential and commercial geothermal heating networks.

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

We broadly support the priority areas and interventions in the proposed plan but have some suggestions on reprioritisation within this.

We support the focus on ensuring the regulatory and systems settings are fit for purpose. Specifically though, the ordering of the actions within this priority area should be reordered.

- We propose that “Investigate the appropriateness of field classifications” should be reprioritised to horizon one. Many of the geothermal fields in the Rotorua district have been designated as protected or research fields. Alongside having an overly conservative regional council, this has been a significant roadblock to any exploration or development taking place on these fields – and a key reason why Rotorua has no geothermal power stations compared to Taupō. In no way would we want to jeopardise any of the surface features in our world class geothermal tourism attractions but there needs to be a relooking at the classifications using an evidence-based assessment on these classifications. Given that this would also enable Māori landowners to explore development opportunities on their whenua, we believe that this should be a top priority.
- We strongly support taking a national approach regarding the planning and environment legislation. The inconsistency between regional councils is prohibitive in facilitating development.
- “Consider system-wide funding mechanisms”. We support this action but again, believe this should be brought forward to horizon one. This will be a key facet of assisting Māori in unlocking geothermal opportunities and more broadly, encouraging new investment into the sector. Globally, feed-in tariffs are standard practice in encouraging investment into energy infrastructure. These types of mechanisms – alongside other incentives and settings - should be explored in this strategy. Special enterprise zones and accelerated depreciation were both proposed in our regional deal.
- “Identify geothermal tourism opportunities in Taupō and Tarawera regions, in partnership with iwi to support Māori economic development”. We are very supportive

of this action area but strongly recommend to work alongside Economic Development Agencies who understand the local context and specific tourism opportunities.

Other opportunities include:

- Support public-private partnerships to co-invest in infrastructure, test wells and shared-use infrastructure. These partnerships between government, iwi and industry can de-risk innovation, support early-stage investment and enable faster uptake.
- Provide early-stage funding for feasibility studies, pre-commercial trials and first-mover industrial conversions.
- Develop a streamlined national consenting pathway, especially for low- and mid-temperature geohot use.
- Improving access to geothermal resource data - we suggest a model where data becomes public after a five-year confidentiality period. This would allow innovation and commercial confidence to grow over time.

**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)?**

The sector's role is broadly outlined, but the strategy would benefit from clearer recognition of regional partners, including economic development agencies, who have local on-the-ground networks, are already supporting investment, connecting industry users and supporting infrastructure planning.

A more defined co-delivery model would help, where:

- Government enables through policy, funding and incentives.
- Industry leads on technical development and operations.
- Regional partners coordinate clusters, infrastructure and commercial uptake.
- Iwi lead and co-lead development, particularly in rohe with established geothermal enterprises.

We also see an important role for the sector (or a sector cluster tasked to deliver) in:

- Developing education and workforce pathways through schools, iwi partnerships and tertiary training.
- Leading commercial engagement and outreach to potential users of direct-use geothermal energy.

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?

The strategy acknowledges the role of tāngata whenua in geothermal development. However, it would improve with clear delivery mechanisms to support Māori-led enterprise and ownership.

We recommend:

- Support for Māori enterprise leadership, including capability funding, partnerships and access to capital.
- Co-investment funding for feasibility studies, shared infrastructure and early-stage geoheat adoption.
- Investment in training and workforce initiatives designed by iwi and for iwi.
- Inclusion of iwi in the design and leadership of any future geothermal hub or Centre of Excellence.
- Support for research and innovation that combines mātauranga Māori with technical expertise and commercial expertise.

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

There are economic opportunities that could be better supported:

- Development of Geoheat Innovation Precincts, offering shared infrastructure access for heat-intensive users like food processing, horticulture and manufacturing.
- Use of geothermal energy in circular economy models, including CO<sub>2</sub> capture and reuse, mineral recovery and green chemical production.
- Targeted attraction of power and heat-intensive industries to geothermal zones, supported by spatial planning, infrastructure coordination and economic incentives.
- Greater positioning of geothermal as a high-value export sector, promoting New Zealand's capability in geothermal services, technology and training.
- Better considering the educational / tourism opportunities around geothermal. A centre of excellence, coupled with a visitation product could be a strong drawcard for the region, while at the same time educating the populace.

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

- A national consenting pathway or 'single-window' process for geothermal under the new resource management system.
- Some of the specific challenges to managing existing geothermal infrastructure – e.g. bore management in the Rotorua region. Challenges relating to the likes of geothermal cuttings

which our regional council considers to be a hazardous substance, causing excess disposal costs making drilling new bores cost prohibitive.

- Co-investment funding for feasibility studies, shared infrastructure and early-stage geoheat adoption.
- Integration with the New Zealand Energy Strategy, Emissions Reduction Plan and EECA's RETA programme, to align geothermal with national energy and decarbonisation goals.
- Success metrics that include job creation, regional GDP uplift, emissions reduction, number of connected users and export growth, not just generation output.

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

- A national consenting pathway or 'single-window' process for geothermal under the new resource management system.
- Co-investment funding for feasibility studies, shared infrastructure and early-stage geoheat adoption.
- Integration with the New Zealand Energy Strategy, Emissions Reduction Plan and EECA's RETA programme, to align geothermal with national energy and decarbonisation goals.
- Success metrics that include job creation, regional GDP uplift, emissions reduction, number of connected users and export growth, not just generation output.

# 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:

