

# 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**

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Email address: newzealand@womeningeothermal.org

**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:

Women in Geothermal New Zealand Inc.

**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?

### Context

Systems and processes to support women in the geothermal sector remain insufficient in many areas of the industry, creating barriers to growth. Women—particularly those working in operations, modelling, leadership, and research—are disproportionately disadvantaged. They are often required to work harder, balance parental leave with limited institutional support, and frequently encounter undermining experiences, including persistent gender pay inequities.

Although this challenge is often not openly discussed, it continues to significantly constrain sector development.

### WING NZ Contribution

Women in Geothermal New Zealand (WING NZ) has been actively addressing these challenges for over a decade and has achieved substantial progress through a range of initiatives, including:

- Developing guidelines to improve recruitment practices.
- Advocating for stronger parental and maternity leave policies.
- Delivering training programmes for men in the industry to increase awareness of, and reduce, gender bias.
- Requiring male representation through two compulsory seats on the WING NZ Board, ensuring a deeper understanding of gender equity issues and enabling them to act as effective ambassadors among their peers.
- Recognising high-achieving women in geothermal, as well as men who demonstrate role-model behaviour, through awards.
- Facilitating networking opportunities to ensure women have access to supportive professional communities.
- Hosting events to raise awareness, foster engagement, and promote discussion on gender equity, highlighting the importance of diversity and inclusiveness for successful organisations.
- Programs to support female youth career awareness in geothermal.
- Equal women representation on panels, conferences and boards.

#### **Need for a People-Centred Approach**

Organisations are fundamentally composed of people; therefore, any effective strategy must be people-centred. At present, this principle is not sufficiently reflected within the three strategic outcomes. The geothermal workforce currently lacks adequate equality, inclusiveness, and diversity, and this deficiency is hindering sector progress. Addressing this gap is essential and must be positioned as a central element of the strategy.

#### **Recommendation**

We recommend the addition of a further strategic outcome, to be embedded into the action plan:

**“A workforce with the right skillset, able to thrive in diverse, inclusive, and equitable work environments.”**

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

**Recommendation:**

That a sixth goal be added to the action plan, explicitly focused on workforce planning, to ensure the sector has the capability and capacity required to successfully deliver the strategy.

That the value of direct use and tourism for regional economies and women is explicitly recognized across the Action Plan, particularly in the “Enabling place-based geothermal clusters” goal.

**Rationale:**

None of the current goals in the action plan are people-centred and explicitly mentions gender equality. Embedding a dedicated equitable workforce goal will ensure that the strategy recognises the central role of people in driving outcomes and addresses existing gaps in equality, inclusiveness, and diversity.

**Role of WING NZ:**

We recommend that Women in Geothermal New Zealand (WING NZ) be explicitly referenced within the strategy to ensure close collaboration with all organisations delivering the action plan. This reflects the cross-cutting nature of our mission and the value of our expertise in advancing gender equity across the sector.

**Proposed Wording for Inclusion Across Horizons 1–6:**

**“A diverse, gender-inclusive, and skilled workforce, with 40:40:20 participation of women and men across all areas, including leadership and decision-making roles.”**

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

**Support for WING NZ and Workforce Equity**

Women in Geothermal New Zealand (WING NZ) is a non-profit organisation, run entirely by volunteers who balance this work with busy professional roles. Despite limited resources, WING NZ delivers impactful initiatives that strengthen the geothermal sector.

Worldwide, companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams are 25% more likely to outperform on profitability, and firms with more women in leadership report up to 15% higher net profit margins and stronger innovation revenues. In New Zealand, achieving gender parity in leadership could lift firm ROA by 1.5 percentage points and add \$881m to GDP, while gender-diverse executive teams demonstrate higher earnings quality and stronger governance.

It is not yet clear how the geothermal industry in New Zealand is tracking on diversity across all levels, including leadership. To achieve the strategy’s aspiration of being a global and influential leader, the industry must measure itself against these benchmarks and act quickly where gaps exist. WING, as the largest global geothermal organisation with deep insight into workforce equity, is well placed—through WING NZ—to work alongside central government so that diversity and inclusion strengthen, rather than hinder, our progress.

We therefore recommend that central government commission a report to assess the state of the geothermal workforce, with a focus on gender equity and inclusiveness, and to develop tangible measures to support disadvantaged groups. WING NZ seeks to play an active role in both shaping this work and implementing its recommendations.

We also note that the strategy focuses heavily on power and electricity generation, and gives a lot less attention to other areas of geothermal development. Regional employment and economic

benefits from direct use applications and tourism are significant and, importantly, provide far greater employment opportunities for women compared with energy production alone. Yet these opportunities are mentioned in the current draft only at a very high-level. A more balanced approach would strengthen both the sector and its contribution to inclusive regional development.

We strongly believe the strategy can serve as a powerful lever to promote workplace diversity, fairness, and inclusion—if these principles are embedded at every level of its delivery. One potentially impactful measure, which would send a strong signal to the sector, would be to require certification for workplace diversity, fairness, and inclusion as a condition for participation in public tenders linked to the strategy. EDGE Certification is an example of an internationally recognised system that demonstrates such mechanisms exist; however, strong policy signals are required to encourage their adoption. WING NZ would welcome the opportunity to contribute to such an initiative.

Finally, the programmes outlined in Question 1 have so far been delivered on a volunteer basis with minimal financial and administrative support. To ensure their continuity without heavy reliance on volunteer time—which can fluctuate from year to year—we recommend that MBIE establish a strong partnership with WING NZ Inc to help deliver the strategy. Such a partnership would both safeguard the delivery of impactful initiatives and demonstrate government’s commitment to embedding diversity and inclusion at the heart of the geothermal sector’s future.

#### **Recommendations**

- **Workforce Report:** Commission a report on the geothermal workforce, including gender equity and inclusiveness, with WING NZ actively involved in its design and implementation of recommendations.
- **MBIE / WING NZ partnership:** That MBIE establishes a strong partnership with WING NZ Inc to help deliver the strategy.
- **People-Centered Strategy:** Ensure the strategy embeds diversity, fairness, and inclusion at all levels of delivery.
- **Certification Requirement:** Introduce workplace diversity and inclusion certification (e.g., EDGE Certification) as a prerequisite for public tenders linked to the strategy.
- **Balanced Strategy:** Expand the depth in which the strategy approaches direct uses and tourism, which provide stronger regional and gender-inclusive employment opportunities than geothermal power production alone.

#### **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)?**

##### **Sector Representation and Advisory Role**

A select group of organisations and companies were asked to input the strategy. While we acknowledge and welcome the important role these groups such as NZGA play in representing many aspects of the industry, WING can also provide important feedback as to the issues and challenges that exist within the industry.

##### **Recommendation**

We recommend that MBIE seek input from WING NZ. MBIE could establish a dedicated advisory group with representation from across the sector that includes WING NZ. This would ensure an inclusive, balanced, and holistic approach to delivering the strategy, thereby lifting the entire geothermal community.

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?

N/A

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

**Workforce and Equity Considerations**

As discussed, we believe the strategy places limited emphasis on workforce matters and on equality beyond Māori. While we strongly welcome the focus on strengthening te Ōhanga Māori—which is long overdue and will in itself foster greater diversity—we recommend that the strategy also address broader workforce equity to ensure inclusive outcomes across the sector. The demand for skilled workers is high as NZ progresses through the energy transition, there is an opportunity to access half of the population to support the growing energy sector.

**Recommendation:**

That the strategy includes explicit actions to strengthen workforce development and equity beyond Māori, ensuring all underrepresented groups are supported alongside the important focus on te Ōhanga Māori. WING NZ encourages the NZ government to use the Victorian Government (Australia) "Women in Energy Strategy" as a reference for how to upskill, attract and maintain women in the geothermal industry in order to fill the skills gaps NZ currently has.

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

As discussed in previous sections.

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

**Ongoing Involvement**

We consider that the previous questions have covered the key matters and issues WING NZ wishes to raise at this stage. We would, however, welcome the opportunity to be actively involved in the next phases of the strategy, including participation in any steering or leadership group established to support its delivery.

**Recommendation:**

That WING NZ be included in the governance, steering, or leadership structures associated with the delivery of the strategy, to ensure gender equity and workforce diversity are embedded throughout implementation.

# 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:

