



16 April 2021

Hon Minister Megan Woods  
Minister for Science & Innovation  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington

Dear Minister Woods

I acknowledge your Annual Letter of Expectations for 2021/22 and note your comment that the nation's economic recovery from COVID-19 requires a cross-government response with each entity doing their part. In that context, during 2021/22 NIWA will:

- Continue to work with MPI, MFE and DOC as a key supporter of and contributor to implementation of the *Fit for a Better World Roadmap* and the *Conservation and Environment Science Roadmap*,
- Collaborate with the other CRIs with the implementation and development of the *National Environmental Data Centre*,
- Specifically amend its sustainability goals to include a target of achieving carbon neutrality in 2025,
- Be cognisant of the Public Service Commission's principles on pay restraint for senior staff remuneration during the 2021/22 remuneration review negotiations, and pay particular attention to pay equity and alignment of remuneration packages with government organisations. We will also continue to monitor and address any gender pay gaps among NIWA's workforce.

As a consequence of the support NIWA received from the *COVID-19 Response and Recovery Fund*, over the past year NIWA has been able to retain all its capability and maintain its capital investment programme intact. We are mindful, however, that we are now in a period of fiscal restraint and commit to working within existing Crown funding as you expect. NIWA's 2021/22 Statement of Corporate Intent (SCI) will demonstrate our commitment to maintaining critical scientific capability and services, and to providing scientific support to government to contribute to evidence-based decision-making.

#### **Co-location and connectivity**

I note your expectation with regard to greater connectedness across the research community with particular reference to collective strategic planning, particularly where significant capital expenditure programmes are contemplated, and a pan-CRI approach to the use and sharing of resources, services, capability, assets and people. NIWA will actively look for opportunities to collaborate with all the CRIs and universities in this regard.

The CRIs have committed to collectively identify national priorities where science can have an impact, and to develop pan-CRI science strategies that will support that. Areas where

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NIWA will have an important role to play in developing those pan-CRI science strategies are climate change, freshwater management, energy, biosecurity, biodiversity, hazard management and emergency response.

### **Vision Mātauranga**

NIWA's 2021/22 SCI will outline its plans, led by its Te Kūwaha division, to develop capability and capacity to contribute to Maori aspirations, form strong relevant partnerships across Maori, and take a co-development approach in the science sector.

### **Well-being and workplace diversity**

I note your expectation that NIWA should support well-being, while fostering diversity throughout the organisation with particular reference to gender, age, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation. NIWA is mindful of this and will continue to act as a good employer in line with corporate social responsibility practices. In particular, NIWA will continue its focus on building Maori knowledge and expertise, the number of Maori researchers, and increasing the level of diversity at the senior management level as you expect.

### **Future Property Programme**

As you will be aware, NIWA is at an advanced stage with its Future Property Programme, particularly with the redevelopment of its Hamilton and Wellington sites. The tender process for the construction of the new Hamilton development is underway, and the detailed designs for the Wellington site are near completion. We have taken note of your expectation that we revisit NIWA's earlier investigation into opportunities for co-location and connectivity with universities and other science providers, particularly in the Wellington region. Similarly, we will thoroughly investigate further opportunities for co-location and connectivity in the Christchurch region alongside our commitment to co-locate with Scion there.

As requested, NIWA will provide robust implementation business cases for its proposed developments in Wellington and Christchurch that will demonstrate how they are resilient investments for the Crown and maximise the impact of collaboration.

### **Weather Data**

I note your expectation that NIWA provides greater transparency in its provision of and access to weather data. This has been an area of considerable focus for NIWA over the past two years and we look forward to working with your officials to provide you with an update on this matter when the Commerce Commission review is finalised.

### **Research Vessels**

I note your expectation that NIWA will continue to work closely with MBIE, the Ministry for Primary Industries and Fisheries New Zealand, as we consider our investment in the research vessel fleet.

After extensive consultation with the relevant stakeholders, NIWA has completed the first draft of a review of its, and the nation's, research vessel fleet requirements which supports the need for a 3-vessel combination. This is comprised of a shallow water, near-shore research platform (circa 15m), a mid-size (circa 35m) ocean going research platform, and a larger (circa 70m) deep-sea research platform capable of operating extensively in the Southern Ocean and Antarctic waters.

NIWA's immediate requirement is to replace its current research vessel *Kaharoa* which is at the end of its useful life. s9(2)(b)(ii) Scoping and design of a new 35m vessel is well advanced and we expect to present you with a Single Stage Business Case for this in the 2021/22 year. NIWA's long term investment plan provides for this investment, and NIWA will not require any Government funding for it.

### **Prudent approach with an eye on opportunities**

Given the ongoing economic uncertainty brought about by COVID-19, NIWA's 2021/22 SCI will show that we will continue to adopt a prudent approach to NIWA's financial planning in 2021/22 and the out-years.

However, as was the case last year, over the longer term we still foresee an operating environment of significant opportunities for NIWA due to the nation's focus on climate change and its impacts, the implementation of the freshwater reforms, the growing interest in the value of New Zealand's marine environment, and the rapidly growing deployment of NIWA's considerable investment in digital technologies and capabilities.

Yours sincerely,



Barry Harris  
Chairman