



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

Let's Talk about our National Security: Summary of Public Consultation on the Draft National Security Long-Term Insights Briefing

March 2023

Background

1. In November 2022 the nine government agencies¹ that make up Aotearoa New Zealand's Security and Intelligence Board (SIB) sought feedback on the draft National Security Long-term Insights Briefing ('the briefing').

Let's talk about our national security: National Security Long-term Insights Briefing. Engaging an increasingly diverse Aotearoa New Zealand on national security risks, challenges and opportunities

2. The draft briefing and online feedback form were published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) website, alongside results from the 2022 National Security Public Survey. Using the online feedback form, we asked people what they thought about the ten features that could support Aotearoa New Zealand's national security outlined in the draft briefing. We also asked people to consider how they could contribute to New Zealand's national security.
3. Public consultation on the draft briefing ran from 1–22 November 2022. Submissions were made using the online feedback form or by email. To facilitate a broader range of responses, the draft briefing was translated into six languages additional to English.² We received 45 submissions from a cross section of individuals, businesses, academics, and community organisations, including ethnic and faith-based organisations.

What we heard – features supporting Aotearoa New Zealand's national security

4. Overall, submitters expressed support for the general content of the briefing. The majority were complimentary of the work undertaken and positive about the ten features outlined as supporting a bright future for New Zealand's national security.

"This is one of the first LTIBs I have read where I personally think all the right pieces are evident in the right way ..."

"The overall document is a good starting point and the 10 features cover the main issues."

5. Where submitters expressed concern regarding content, this tended to relate more to the level of detail included (either too much or too little) rather than the overall direction or nature of the document and its focus.

¹ SIB agencies are: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Government Communications Security Bureau, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Ministry of Defence, New Zealand Customs Service, New Zealand Defence Force, New Zealand Police, New Zealand Security Intelligence Service.

² In addition to English we are translating the draft into Arabic, Chinese – simplified, Korean, Te Reo Maori, Samoan, and Spanish.

6. Many submitters identified specific actions and activities that the Government could take. Long-term Insights Briefings are intended to provide information to inform future decision-making by current and future governments. In line with official guidance, the briefing does not include specific recommendations or detailed plans for action.
7. Submitters expressed support for **transparent and accessible public information**. In the words of one submitter: *"An informed public is a resilient public."*
8. A number of submitters believed we have work to do in sharing accessible information with the public, and considered New Zealanders poorly informed on national security issues. Submitters noted the limited number of opportunities available for people to learn about the work of the relevant government agencies responsible for protecting our national security interests. Educational activities by the Government were suggested as a useful way to raise national security awareness and knowledge among the public.
9. While transparency and accessibility needs to be balanced with the need for some information to remain classified, many submitters agreed the public had a right to know what the Government was considering on these matters. Positive references were made in relation to the development of New Zealand's first National Security Strategy.

Submitters expressed support for increased public consultation and engagement on national security. However, some submitters were concerned that releasing public survey results alongside the briefing suggested the public should decide what our national security focus ought to be, and that this might come at the expense of specialist agency knowledge and expertise. The briefing has since been amended to make clearer the views of the national security sector throughout the briefing *alongside* those of the public.

10. Another suggested key feature to be more fully explored was **education**. Many submitters suggested building greater resilience among youth to help protect against the spread of mis and disinformation. The briefing has been amended to include this.
11. There were differing views on what constituted mis- and dis-information. Reference was made to disputes arising over Covid-19 information and responses.
12. **Strengthening references to social cohesion** in the briefing was suggested by some submitters. They noted that trust between people was not independent of trust in institutions and that a decline in trust in institutions would therefore impact our communities. This breakdown in trust at both the personal and institutional levels could have serious negative effects, particularly in relation to people's mental health and wellbeing. The briefing has been amended to include this.
13. There was general support for briefing content related to **international partnerships**. Submitters expressed concern over increasing tensions between countries, including mentions of Taiwan and the possibility of interstate conflict within the next 20 years.
14. Reinforcing this point, another submitter stressed, *"Our focus - as a nation - needs to be on the world around us. Our cousins in Australia. Within the Indo-Pacific."* At the same time an alternative view was also expressed that New Zealand might be subjected to pressure from its allies to, *"follow them into another prolonged, unjustified, and destructive geopolitical folly."*

15. Having a **national security sector** that reflects the diversity of our nation and is adaptable and capable of responding to future challenges was supported by submitters. Questions were raised as to whether the sector should merely *reflect* existing diversity or whether there should be more active steps to *promote* it.
16. All submitters agreed the government should seek to engage a broader range of perspectives in protecting our national security interests. Submitters thought academics, industry, subject matter experts and international partners should all continue to be part of national security conversations. Some submitters warned of the danger of foreign interference with these groups.
17. In terms of encouraging **open debate among New Zealanders**, the importance of academic institutions and think tanks on national security receiving sustainable funding was seen as necessary for them to be able to undertake research and provide independent advice. In turn, this research and independent advice would help grow public awareness, and support constructive debate about the ways we can respond to increasingly complex national security challenges.
18. Many submitters supported the importance of **an active and engaging media**. There was some concern expressed that the New Zealand media was influenced by outside interference such as global news agencies, and that we would ideally have media that was more reflective of New Zealand's diversity.
19. **Recognising and working with partners outside of government** was also supported by many submitters. The need for engagement with iwi/Māori on national security was encouraged. This included working with Māori and recognising the important role of iwi, hapū and whānau in keeping people secure.
20. Submitters confirmed that our business sector and communities have a vast range of knowledge and skills and are ready and willing to support responses to national security threats. There were calls for the role of business in supporting positive outcomes of this work to receive even greater emphasis in the briefing.
21. There was universal agreement among submitters that **communities had to be engaged** and educated in national security matters and that New Zealanders understood their opportunities to participate in our democratic systems and processes. Civics education was seen as a key component of this (alongside digital literacy) so that people and communities knew how to share their experiences, expertise and input into policy development processes through public engagement.
22. There was strong support for the importance **trusted and accountable institutions**. One submitter summarised this as, *"Our shared vision for a 'Bright Future' is based on principles of trust and social cohesion of all sectors of society. We want and should be able to have confidence in our government and its agencies. Government must be accountable for breeches and rebuild trust that has been eroded."*
23. Some submitters felt that under **global trends** there should be greater mention in the briefing of biological risks and artificial intelligence. These were seen as examples of high risk and impactful events that warrant further examination. The briefing has been amended to include this.

What we heard: ideas for how people contribute to national security

24. We also asked people for their ideas on how they could contribute to New Zealand's national security. Many submitters raised the role of education. One submitter argued the briefing could specifically advocate for additional research and knowledge generation/dissemination about risks and threats that are poorly understood.
25. The need for schools and universities to be aware of warning signs, enhancing youth resilience to mis and disinformation to counter extremism and public facing websites were other common themes.

"There needs to be more education for the public on the challenges we face, and there needs to be more opportunities (like LTIB) for citizens to voice their concerns and areas they believe the government has underestimated or ignored."

"Educating the public to not be paranoid but observant and aware of signs, what are the red flags? Teaching kids early to learn how to find out facts, question things and not assume everything online is true."

26. Ministers may choose to commission agencies to develop policies and approaches based on briefing content. Some of the general ideas included in the briefing are similar to themes from recent engagement on the development of the National Security Strategy. Elsewhere there were instances when it was felt the ideas contained therein, for example initiatives to promote greater social cohesion, could be more appropriately be addressed in the LTIBs of other Government departments to avoid securitising social sector activities. These insights were shared with other relevant agencies.

What next?

27. As illustrated by this summary, we received a broad range of submissions from the public on the draft briefing and the risks and issues on which we ought to focus.
28. While the final briefing could not encompass the full suite of concerns raised, we sought to capture those national security risks, challenges and opportunities most commonly cited.
29. Public feedback has been incorporated into the final Briefing. It will be presented to Parliament, and published in early 2023. The published final briefing will be made available on the DPMC website to support ongoing public conversations about our national security.
30. We are grateful to all submitters for taking time to provide their thoughts and feedback.