



**Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa**  
New Zealand Government

# Summary of Public Consultation on the National Security Long-term Insights Briefing Topic:

Engaging an increasingly diverse Aotearoa  
New Zealand on national security risks,  
challenges and opportunities

March 2022

## Background

1. Long-term insights briefings are a new way for government agencies to better understand issues that matter for the future wellbeing of New Zealanders. From 2022, government departments must produce a long-term insights briefing at least once every three years. As noted on the [Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet website](#) (2022): “The Briefings are think pieces on the future, not government policy. The requirement to publish a Briefing is a statutory duty on departmental chief executives, independent of ministers”.
2. In October 2021, the nine government agencies that make up Aotearoa New Zealand's Security and Intelligence Board (SIB) sought feedback on the proposed topic of the National Security Long Term Insights Briefing (‘the briefing’):

*Engaging an increasingly diverse Aotearoa New Zealand on national security risks, challenges and opportunities.*

3. The SIB agencies working together to deliver the briefing 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.

## We received 105 submissions

4. A [briefing topic consultation document](#) and online feedback form were published on the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (DPMC) website. People were asked about national security risks of concern to them now and in the future. They were also asked to consider how we could engage more effectively on national security.
5. Public consultation on the proposed topic ran from mid-October until 18 November 2021. Submissions were made using the online feedback form, email and post. We also received oral submissions via in-person and virtual meetings.
6. Over 300 organisations and individuals representing different sectors and demographic groups were invited to participate in the consultation. SIB agencies used newsletters and social media to broaden their outreach and increase public awareness.

7. We received 87 written submissions and 18 oral submissions representing a cross-section of community organisations (including ethnic and faith-based groups), businesses, academics and individuals.
8. Topic consultation on the briefing was as much about identifying 'opportunities' as identifying 'risks' and 'challenges' we might face now and in the future. Many submitters saw the briefing as an opportunity to "reset" – to rethink our values, interests and relationships as a country. Some submitters saw the briefing as an opportunity to consider the kind of country we want to be and live in; as well as the values we want to protect and foster.
9. Overall, submitters demonstrated a strong appetite for conversations on national security. Many supported the view that increased public engagement on national security would provide a better understanding of our world, therefore increasing government's ability to manage national security issues we expect to face in future.

*"Actively working with a diverse range of groups... will strengthen our ability to both identify and mitigate risks."*

10. Many submitters focused on the need to build trust between communities and government, and across different communities. It was noted that this is even more important as Aotearoa becomes more diverse.
11. There was broad support for the proposed briefing topic and on this basis the topic has been confirmed.
12. Submitters presented a range of views on the scope and nature of national security risks, challenges and opportunities the briefing could focus on. The submissions have informed our thinking on this, including key themes and risks that will be featured in the briefing. This document summarises what we heard.

## What happens next?

13. We will use the information provided by submitters to inform the briefing.
14. We are further developing our understanding of public views on the topic during the drafting process through a public survey that explores people's attitudes to national security risks, challenges and opportunities in greater depth. An independent research provider will carry out the survey in the first quarter of 2022, with results included in the briefing and a stand-alone report published as an appendix to this.
15. In the second quarter of 2022, we will seek public feedback on the draft briefing, including feedback on policy options and strategic choices. Following this, we will seek to finalise the briefing before the end of 2022.
16. Thank you to everyone who has engaged with us on the briefing to date. You can sign up for updates or other opportunities to be involved in the briefing by emailing [NationalSecurity.LTIB@dpmc.govt.nz](mailto:NationalSecurity.LTIB@dpmc.govt.nz).

# What we heard – risks and issues of concern

Submitters are concerned about a range of national security risks

17. There were different views among submitters about how we define national security, with some considering it to be very broad and all-encompassing and some more narrow. National security risks and challenges listed in the topic consultation document resonated with many submitters.
18. The national security risks listed in the document were:
  - Security of New Zealand’s borders and marine environment
  - Terrorism and violent extremism
  - Defence and protection against foreign interference by other countries (for example interference in general elections) and hostile state activity
  - Cyber threats, online harms and disinformation
  - Trans-national, and serious organised crime (including the illegal movement of money, goods and people)
  - Emerging technology issues (for example artificial intelligence)
  - International relationships and institutions (for example stability in the Indo-Pacific).
19. While current national security risks and challenges were of concern, most submissions focused on the future. For example, some submitters commented on the possibility of future pandemics and how we could respond; climate change; and the growth of islamophobia and racism.
20. There was recognition among submitters that national security risks were constantly evolving and could become even more impactful on a 10 to 15-year horizon. For example, the risks associated with emerging technologies in biotechnology and artificial intelligence (AI) were issues of concern. These submitters emphasised the need for conversations on what limits to impose on the future use of such technology.

## **The spread of mis- and dis-information**

21. The spread of mis- and dis-information on complex challenges such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic response were seen by submitters as potentially fueling disagreement and conflict between groups. Submitters were concerned that mis- and dis-information decreases social trust and amplifies differences between communities and the government.

## **Violent extremism and terrorism**

22. Extremist views were a concern for many submitters, including youth. Some submitters were concerned that extremist groups and individuals have largely unrestricted access to platforms (both online and physical) to promote their views. Submitters were concerned this may make future terror attacks more likely.
23. Some submitters stated that tackling mis- and dis- information and building trust were important ways to prevent terrorism and violent extremism.

## **Foreign interference as a threat to individual and national security**

24. Several submitters saw foreign interference as a threat, both at a personal and national level. In the context of a weakening global rules-based international order, some submitters were concerned that foreign states could divide ethnic communities in New Zealand.
25. Just over one-third of submitters made reference to China as part of their submission. Concerns raised related to interference in communities living in Aotearoa, and possible influence over New Zealand's political institutions, media and businesses.
26. Some submitters felt an overreliance on trade with some markets could expose us to economic coercion. They also discussed the need to diversify our trade relationships to better manage economic risks.

## **Cyber-attacks and data breaches**

27. Several submitters were concerned about New Zealand's preparedness to defend itself against cyber-attacks. In particular, submitters noted that individuals were not often adequately equipped to maintain their safety online. Many submissions also noted the need to put the same effort into online security as we do into offline (physical) safety, especially for groups that may be naive of the online world or vulnerable for other reasons.
28. One submission commented on the "*exponential rise in malicious cyber activity (especially ransomware)*". They noted that this had not yet been matched with a corresponding level of investment by businesses and would require coordinated effort across government to protect and respond to this activity.
29. A related area of focus was on foreign states and individuals targeting New Zealand's national institutions for criminal purposes, such as damaging critical infrastructure, and intellectual property (IP) theft. Submitters perceived weakness in cyber security as enabling other crimes and negative activity such as data theft and fraud, exacerbating the impact of foreign interference and facilitating the spread of mis- and dis-information. Some submitters stated that the consequences of these actions were likely to be disproportionately experienced by more marginalised groups, including ethnic minorities.

## **Geopolitical instability in the Indo-Pacific region and impacts for New Zealand**

30. Several submitters expressed concern over growing geopolitical instability around the world. Some suggested that New Zealand should play a more active role in the Indo-Pacific and further develop international relationships.
31. South-East Asia was seen as an important region for New Zealand to further build relationships and engage with, to protect New Zealand's interests and those of the Pacific region, particularly in the context of superpower rivalry. Some submitters raised concerns relating to an increasingly assertive China, with increasing tension across the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea cited as examples of this.
32. Another potential issue identified by a small number of submitters was the Antarctic Treaty and maintenance of the New Zealand Ross Dependency.
33. Building on these concerns, some submitters commented on the need to adequately resource New Zealand's defence and security forces to maintain international relevance. These submitters noted the value of collective defence – building support and international relationships with our Pacific partners was considered vital to maintaining stability in the region and protecting Aotearoa.

## **Security risks from climate change, inequality, future pandemics and high-risk rare events**

34. Issues such as food security, housing, adequate income, health, and stable livelihoods were concerns for some submitters. These submissions noted that “non-traditional” national security risks were vital to wellbeing and national security.

*"Issues of food security, housing security, income and livelihood security, health security and climate and environmental security of the people of Aotearoa and the ongoing decolonisation process within the nation must be afforded as much, if not more attention than the traditional areas that are deemed to be "National Security"."*

35. There was also a recurring concern among many submitters that mitigating the impacts of climate change and creating a more sustainable future should be considered a national security priority for New Zealand. The potential impacts of climate change on the livelihoods and wellbeing of people in the South Pacific was a focal point for many submissions.
36. Climate change was referred to as a 'crisis' and a 'catastrophe' by these submitters. The impact of climate change on regional stability, food security, and sea-levels was seen as destabilising.  
  
*"[Climate change] will make it extremely difficult to feed the world's population and with major numbers of displaced people this will greatly increase the risk of major conflict."*
37. Considering the current global environment, several submitters were concerned about future pandemics and New Zealand's preparedness to respond. These submissions were concerned by how unprepared the international community was in responding to COVID-19.
38. Some submitters raised the possibility of terrorists engineering a virus more harmful than COVID-19 in the future. They noted biotechnology advances and the risks of an

accidental or intentional release of an engineered virus for which preparation is needed.

39. A small number of submitters suggested the briefing should focus on high-risk but rare events that could have a catastrophic impact on New Zealand. While the probability of these events happening is low, these submitters felt both the government and the public are not yet prepared for them. Examples of such events were large volcanic eruptions, solar flares and future pandemics.

## What we heard – future public engagement

There are opportunities to better engage on national security

### **Hearing from a broader range of voices can strengthen our understanding of current and future risks**

40. While submitters thought academics, industry, subject matter experts and international partners all have useful roles to play in national security conversations, balancing these perspectives by introducing a more diverse range of groups and individuals was seen as an important opportunity.

41. Submitters noted a need to be more inclusive and to recognise the value of grassroots knowledge in order to deepen our collective understanding of national security issues.

*"We should make an effort to engage everyday kiwis in conversation about national security threats in New Zealand and in particular reaching out to communities that are most at risk from national security threats."*

### **Tangata whenua, Māori perspectives and worldviews can shape our national security conversations**

42. Some submitters recommended greater engagement with iwi/Māori on national security. Improved public communication from officials with iwi/Māori was seen as important.

*"I would like to feel that Māori perspectives, worldviews and language have robustly shaped the framing of this briefing in fair and open discourse. Including not only fully literate te reo Māori speakers but people who are streetwise and smart who may have been alienated from the language but who still live by tikanga Māori."*

43. Submitters also wanted to see government demonstrate a better understanding of tikanga, Te Reo Māori and partnering with Māori experts.

## **We can make national security more transparent and accessible**

44. Many submitters commented on what they saw as an overall lack of transparency and accessibility when it comes to national security. In the words of one submitter, *"...government agencies are behind an iron curtain of national security."*
45. More specifically, barriers to accessibility included:
- Limited explanation about national security threats, why they are relevant, and how we should respond
  - The complexity of having a large number of agencies involved in national security
  - For some communities, a fear of engaging with national security agencies based on past experiences.
46. Submitters suggested national security agencies could make themselves more accessible to the public by:
- Undertaking meaningful outreach programmes
  - Publishing an engagement strategy and providing a roadmap for what a developing partnership with the public on national security looked like.
47. For some submitters, conversations about national security needed to be ongoing.
- [People need] "a longer time for the conversation/consultation, people need to have a workshop to understand what is this all about, take that away to think and share to their friends and family, then come back to another workshop to share their insights and comments about it."*
48. Some submitters focused on officials being more responsive and demonstrating openness to ideas and feedback. It was noted that genuine engagement occurred when trust was built over time and the engagement was two-way and sustained.
- "...[Officials need to be] much more responsive and partnership focused, stop acting like they are subject matter experts, realise that government moves and works very slowly, and industry is rapidly outpacing it, so engage it. Better public engagement through greater transparency, improved responsiveness, clearer paths for engagement and act on feedback provided rather than it going into a black hole."*

## **All New Zealanders and people living in New Zealand have a role to play**

49. Some submitters raised the opportunity a 'whole of society' approach to national security presents. A 'whole of society' approach means that every New Zealander and person living in New Zealand has a role to play.
- "We need to be having deeper and more consultative conversations in the public sphere about these key threats and challenges. The public, our indigenous partners, community groups, academics, activists and other groups need to have a voice in these discussions. Until now, it seems as if political elites, economic elites and senior public servants have a privileged voice in these discussions, and too often, have these discussions out of view of the public."*

50. Submitters proposed different options for how people could participate in national security, including:
- Structural change within government, for example, establishing a Parliamentary Commissioner for Extreme Risk
  - The use of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), for example on cybersecurity
  - Establishing and maintaining structures that embed relationships on the ground to hear from and work with communities, for example, resource a community advisory panel for proactive engagement
  - Establishing national security units around the country akin to or in conjunction with civil defence and holding preparedness training and exercises.

## Where to from here – next steps on the briefing

### Feedback from public submissions will be reflected in the briefing

51. As illustrated in this summary, there was considerable meaningful feedback from public submitters on the briefing topic. We are grateful to all submitters for taking the time to provide thoughts and feedback. This information will shape our analysis and drafting of the briefing.
52. As noted, there were a range of views presented regarding the potential scope of the briefing and the risks and issues on which we ought to focus. While the briefing cannot encompass the full suite of concerns raised in all public submissions, we aim to focus on those national security risks, challenges and opportunities most commonly cited.
53. We will consider public submissions feedback alongside a range of information sources, including data and reporting held by Security and Intelligence Board agencies, open source research, demographic data projections and further research into public perspectives via an online survey of a representative sample of people living in New Zealand.
54. It is a requirement of long-term insights briefings to include policy options and strategic choices without providing specific recommendations. We will use the many creative and insightful ideas put forward by submitters, as well as public survey responses to inform the development of potential policy options moving forward. We will seek public feedback on these options as part of public consultation on the draft briefing in the second half of 2022.