

Submission to:	Te Tari Taiwhenua: Internal Affairs
Topic:	Long-term Insights Briefing: Initial consultation document, October 2020
Date:	19 November 2021

## Introduction

This submission has been prepared by Simon Wright, who is a committee member of Trust Democracy (TD). TD was established in 2019 as an incorporated society dedicated to strengthening public discourse, education and research on democracy in Aotearoa New Zealand. It does this by providing spaces for everyday people to engage with one another in deliberative dialogue about the state of our democracy and how it could be improved, and other channels for education and advocacy.

Unfortunately, TD has not, to date, been able to engage deeply with this consultation, despite officials from Te Tari Taiwhenua (TTT) contacting one of our members, Dave Henderson, on 21 October. As an organisation with experience and expertise in the fields of democracy and futuring, we would like to come and discuss ways in which TD might be able to assist TTT.

## Support for long-term insights briefings

TD supports the new requirement for agencies to develop long-term insights briefings. The government used to have respected organisations dedicated to providing future-orientated advice (e.g., the Commission for the Future and Toi te Taiao: the Bioethics Council). It is now obvious that the inability of successive governments to adequately address long-term issues (e.g, climate change, inequality, housing) is impacting support for democracy itself. TD hopes that long-term insights briefings can contribute to improving long-term governance and democracy.

## New requirement needs real commitment and a different approach

Given that long-term insights briefings are a new requirement, TD is disappointed that TTT has decided to use what appears to be a fairly standard policy process, albeit one with two stages of consultation. 'Consultation fatigue' is a well-known issue for the public and civil society organisations, which have criticised government consultation practices for years. Furthermore, consultation processes are not suited to future-orientated insights work. Futuring is an established field and TTT does not appear to have engaged sufficiently with it to develop a methodologically

robust approach, noting that the context and practices of community-level democracy are likely to be very different in, say, Naenae, Newmarket, Timaru and Stratford.

TD recommends that TTT reconsiders its approach. By engaging with organisations, both local and international, that are knowledgeable about futuring and contemporary democratic theory and practice, TTT would demonstrate a level of enthusiasm and commitment towards the proposed insights briefing that might actually inspire, encourage and support public engagement, collective learning and critical insights.

## Where to look

If TTT is interested in developing a robust, inclusive and democratic process for developing a insights briefing about democracy, some excellent resources are available from:

- Trust Democracy – <https://trustdemocracy.nz>
- newDemocracy – <https://www.newdemocracy.com.au/>
- NZ Future Times – <http://www.futuretimes.co.nz>
- World Future Studies Federation (WFSF) – <https://wfsf.org/>

Note that the WFSF's 2021 World Conference (<https://wfsfconferenceberlin2021.org/>) included sessions on:

- The Future of Democracy
- Anticipatory Governance
- Strategic Foresight

It would also be worth reviewing the OECD's recent report called *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the deliberative wave*.<sup>1</sup>

## Help

TD's members are sensing a surge in interest in democracy in New Zealand and internationally. This is reflected in new democratic theory and a bevy of democratic experiments at hyper-local, local, regional, national and international scales. TD has members who are able to help TTT engage with both democratic developments and approaches to future studies. TD would welcome the opportunity to help!

Ngā mihi, nā

**Simon Wright**

**Secretary**

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<sup>1</sup> *Catching the Deliberative Wave*, OECD, 2020. Available here: <https://www.oecd.org/gov/innovative-citizen-participation-and-new-democratic-institutions-339306da-en.htm>