

Central Government is suffering from strategy fatigue

A lack of a strategic government framework for sustainable development is being highlighted in the initial results from an ambitious research project looking at how New Zealand may look 50 years into the future.

Project 2058 is a two year research project, which is examining New Zealand's past and current landscape in order to explore and develop scenarios of how New Zealand could look and feel in fifty years. It aims to promote long-term thinking and leadership in sustainable development so that New Zealand can effectively manage risks and opportunities.

Sustainable Future is an independent think-tank based in Wellington. It is funded by a charitable trust, called the New Zealand Sustainable Future Foundation Trust. Sustainable Future was set up by risk management consultant Wendy McGuinness, with the aim of establishing an integrated long-term sustainable development plan for New Zealand.

New Zealand Central Government Strategies, Reviewing the Landscape 1990-2007 is the second of approximately ten reports which will be released over the next two years.

One of its key findings is that central Government strategy does not follow any overarching strategy goal or plan for sustainable development. Wendy McGuinness, who is one of the authors of the report, says central government departments and ministries are principally responsible for shaping New Zealand's strategic long-term direction in sustainable development.

But she says between 1990 and 2007, over 130 strategies have been published by central government ministries and departments under both Labour and National Governments. This shows that central Government, and therefore the country, is suffering from a type of 'strategy fatigue'.

"National strategies are produced without an effective governance framework to manage, monitor and feedback the results. Importantly, this is not an issue about volume, but about efficiency and effectiveness."

As a result of this research, Sustainable Future is recommending that the government develop a 'New Zealand-wide' National Sustainable Development Strategy to provide a link between all central government strategies, so that the central government is moving in the same direction.

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