

A Partial History of Futures Thinking in New Zealand

What is futures thinking?

Futures Thinking offers ways of addressing, even helping to shape, the future; it is not about gazing into a crystal ball. It illuminates the ways that policy, strategies and actions can promote desirable futures and help prevent those we consider undesirable. It stimulates strategic dialogue, widens our understanding of the possible, strengthens leadership, and informs decision-making (OECD, 2017).

Defining futures thinking (also known as foresight) is like trying to pin the proverbial tail on the donkey. But in public policy terms it might best be characterised as anticipating tomorrow's problems, protecting the long-term public interest and endeavouring to 'future proof' the state. For New Zealand, that includes managing a distinctive set of risks (Boston, 2016).

However defined, futures thinking is important because many developments, particularly those that affect the development of people, or a country's infrastructure or economic base, or the sustainable development of its environment, are extremely long-term processes. It is important to set off on the correct path now. To find out in several decades' time that the wrong turning has

been taken would be disastrous, and futures thinking aims to reduce the chances of this happening (Menzies, Newell and Peren, 1997).

No one can credibly predict the future, as can be illustrated by many amusing examples of people who tried and spectacularly failed.¹ Being right in retrospect is not necessarily helpful. Forecasts based on extrapolating from current trends can be useful, but if they extend over more than five years in a complex and fast-changing world² their reliability diminishes considerably (New Zealand Treasury, 2013, 2016). More than five years out, projections might be informed by a number of different techniques, such as horizon scanning, cross-impact analyses and Delphi panels. Projections are usually also based on a range of assumptions and often underpin two, three or four scenarios of possible futures. It is generally accepted that all these might be upset by a 'disjunctive shock' (James, 2017) that either can't be foreseen or is not

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registered despite the presence of warning ‘straws in the wind’. An example is the global financial crisis, which came as a shock, but not to everyone.³

The use of the plural in ‘futures thinking’ is deliberate, since futures thinkers argue that from the standpoint of the present there is no one future, and the one that finally arrives is not predetermined. On the other hand, it has to be recognised that for a small country like New Zealand, there are some outcomes that are highly likely (an aged population structure) and some that are less within our power to influence (such as the growth of artificial intelligence).

Indeed, there may be ‘probable’ futures in the near term, ‘possible’ futures which depend on a whole range of factors, and ‘preferred’ futures able to be shaped by human agency. All of these will overlap. Preferred futures bring into play notions of ‘visioning’ and ‘backcasting’, wherein a future is imagined so that strategies and plans can be developed and implemented in order to get there. Visioning processes are challenging and take many forms. George Bush senior once laconically referred to ‘the vision thing’ while campaigning for president, and this remark summed up many people’s ambivalence (Menziés, 2000). On the other hand, in 1999, Singapore, which is very future-focused (and perhaps less cynical, yet successful on many counts), proposed a new national vision for the 21st century.⁴

Scenarios are particularly useful tools for testing how robust strategies are in the face of multiple possible futures, and for detecting signals of the actual, emergent future. However, like many futures thinking concepts, scenario planning is interpreted in a number of ways (Börjeson et al., 2006), and can even be misused.

Done properly, futures thinking is a creative process which often overturns conventional mental models (Johnson-Laird, 1983). Eminent futurologist Jim Dator goes so far as to say that ‘any useful statement about the future should appear to be ridiculous’. The OECD (2017) uses more conventional language, but along the same lines. Futures thinking:

uses a multidisciplinary approach to pierce the veil of received opinion and

identify the dynamics that are creating the future. ... A variety of methods – qualitative, quantitative, normative, and exploratory – help illuminate the possibilities, outline policy choices, and assess the alternatives. ... Futures thinking looks beyond immediate constraints. It helps people remember that existing attitudes and frameworks, which often seem immutable and insurmountable in the short term, are ripe for change in the long term. Futures thinking creates an environment for deeply informed decision-making with a sustainable

and commissioners for Children, Race Relations and Retirement. The Office of the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment has a greater degree of autonomy and independence since it reports to Parliament, rather than the government of the day.

However, when measured against 17 criteria, New Zealand gets at best a mixed scorecard for the quality of its anticipatory governance (Boston, 2016, 2017b). While there are a number of ‘commitment devices’ to protect future-oriented interests (e.g. the Public Finance Act 1989 and the Reserve Bank Act 1989),⁵ still in many policy areas outcomes are poor, often with

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balance between short- and long-term policy goals, smoothing the transition toward a positive future.

How does New Zealand rate?

Boston (2016, 2017b) describes the challenges to be faced and the institutional arrangements required for ‘anticipatory governance’. Drawing on various studies and other available data (e.g. Ryan and Gill, 2011) Boston finds it reasonable to conclude that ‘many of New Zealand’s governance arrangements, policy settings and regulatory frameworks are appropriately future-focused and suitably anticipatory’ (2016, p.17). There are certainly some forward-looking elements contained within public sector management and reporting frameworks (e.g. statements of intent and performance expectations). Social investment is an inherently future-focused process (albeit controversial) and a more analytical approach is being taken in assessing new budget bids (O’Fallon, 2017).

There have also been attempts to address short-termism by setting up ‘arm’s length’ Crown entities to advise governments on long-term issues: for example, the Productivity Commission

significant intergenerational implications. For example, there remain relatively high rates of childhood poverty, high rates of obesity, major housing challenges and weak environmental performance.

These poor outcomes are deemed to reflect (inter alia) the unwillingness of successive governments to make hard policy choices and confront vested interests. Furthermore, no government can bind its successors and there is a focus on the short term, exacerbated by our three-year election cycle. But a more fundamental barrier to futures thinking is human beings’ inherent ‘presentist bias’. We would rather have things today than wait until tomorrow,⁶ and a general lack of demand for future-oriented policies causes a lack of response within the policy system. There is clearly room for improvement:

By comparison with many other democracies, including small ones, New Zealand invests relatively little in formal foresight processes and reviews. We have no dedicated, high-level foresight unit in central government, no academic research centre devoted to foresight methodologies and

assessments, no national scenarios to use in such assessments, no parliamentary committee focused on emerging and long-term policy issues, few serious evaluations of the societal impacts of emerging technologies and important scientific discoveries, and only sporadic efforts by major departments and agencies to undertake horizon-scanning and scenario analyses in their respective areas of responsibility. (Boston, 2017b)

Back to the Futures Commission?

Recently a call was made for the formation of an apolitical Futures Commission to decide what New Zealand should look like in 50 years' time, and to determine what needs to change if we are to realise that vision (Macdonald, 2017). The idea

thinking initiatives.

There are also questions of scope. For example, some books or campaigns on 'national identity' (Laidlaw, 1999; the New Zealand flag referendum) embody a degree of futures thinking. Many leadership programmes aim to build future capability, and a number of sector-specific initiatives assess wider future impacts (e.g. Gill et al., 2010; Gluckman, 2012; Hawke et al., 2014). The word 'future' can be appropriated for all sorts of purposes: former prime minister Mike Moore wrote a book entitled *A Brief History of the Future* to support his bid to become director-general of the World Trade Organisation (Moore, 1998). An additional challenge is presented by the ephemeral nature of many futures thinking initiatives. A plethora of policy papers, organisations and websites have come and

and in the second half of the 19th century colonial treasurer Julius Vogel raised debt to pay for the infrastructure that would underpin New Zealand's economic development. Vogel also wrote a science fiction novel set in the year 2000 which anticipated air travel (though by airship, not aeroplane) and a world where women would hold many positions of authority – including the presidency of the United States (Vogel, 1889).

There was no shortage of individual visionaries leading change into the 20th century, but the beginning of institutionalised futures thinking has been traced by the Sustainable Future Institute (now the McGuinness Institute) to the work of the Institute of Public Administration (IPANZ), formed in 1936.⁸ In the 1960s, IPANZ published papers on planning and forecasting in New Zealand. Indeed, formalised planning seemed to take off in the 1960s. A widely representative Industrial Development Conference was held in 1960 (Industrial Development Conference, 1960) and national development conferences were held in 1968⁹ and 1972.

Wallace (2012) reports thus on the 1960 conference:

Very briefly, its purpose was to establish an agreed direction for diversifying the New Zealand economy away from its dependence on primary agricultural products (wool, butter, meat carcasses, etc.). The conference opened with plenary addresses from the prime minister, Walter Nash, the head of the Department of Industries and Commerce, W.B. Sutch, and the farmers' official representative, W.P. O'Shea. The gesture of inclusion towards the farmers, as the dominant force in economic production, backfired. O'Shea used his centre-stage opportunity to tell the exact opposite story to the one the government was trying to have heard: he claimed that if the farmers were only given enough resources, they could solve New Zealand's economic problems all by themselves – i.e. by producing more of the same – for as

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may have some merit, but there has already been a statutory Commission for the Future and it met an untimely end. Before proceeding further with the notion of a new organisation, it makes sense to review the history of futures thinking in Aotearoa New Zealand, to see what lessons can be learned. This article seeks to provide such a review, while fully cognisant of its partial nature, in both senses of the word. Over the last 20 years the author has been involved in several of the initiatives described below and there is inevitably an element of personal reflection, particularly when it comes to discussing possible ways forward. Second, even setting aside possible selection bias, a totally comprehensive history of futures thinking in Aotearoa New Zealand is almost impossible to achieve. An early draft of this article, discussed at a roundtable meeting held at Victoria University's School of Government in July 2017, revealed a large number of overlooked or hitherto unknown futures

gone over the years, leaving little trace of their existence.

What follows is focused mainly on *institutions* and *processes* of futures thinking or foresight, with reference to some key individuals and related literature. Most emphasis is placed on Aotearoa New Zealand, but acknowledgement is made of the inherently internationalist nature of futures thinking. A full treatment awaits the attention of some future PhD scholar.

Early days

Kupe was perhaps the first futures thinker to reach New Zealand. Like other explorers who set out towards geographical unknowns, he must have imagined a future time when he and his companions would arrive somewhere new.⁷ Early European adventurers would have experienced a similar convergence of place and time in their respective imagined futures.

Those who signed the Treaty of Waitangi had future generations in mind,

long as anyone present was likely to be interested in the matter.

Wallace goes on to describe the National Development Council system. The council and its satellite committees provided the institutional arrangements for gathering data from all sectors of the economy and setting targets for future output. A vital tool for the management of this process was the computerised model of the economy. Bryan Philpott became the leading New Zealand exponent of econometric modelling. As described later by the Task Force on Social and Economic Planning (1976), the aim was to ‘produce an economic model which could be used to assess where the economy was heading on current trends, what it could feasibly or optimally achieve and what were the policy implications of the optimum blueprint’. According to Wallace this approach was an example of a Newtonian/mechanical approach to planning for the future. But economies and societies are too complex for this to work satisfactorily, and there followed a rise of faith in free-market, ‘self-organising’ mechanisms. Over time in markets, however, the long-term view can be lost and the pendulum tends to swing back to some kind of external organising framework.¹⁰

As a follow-up to the two national development conferences, the New Zealand Planning Act 1977 formally established two sibling bodies, the New Zealand Planning Council and the Commission for the Future. In summary, the functions of the Commission for the Future were: to study the possibilities for the long-term economic and social development of New Zealand, with particular reference to developments in science and technology and trends and events in New Zealand and overseas; to report to the minister and inform members of Parliament; and to publish and promote discussion and education about the future. The particular reference to science and technology is significant, because many futures initiatives and the people involved have come from the natural and physical sciences.

The Commission for the Future did not last. It attracted the ire of Prime Minister Robert Muldoon and was abolished by the government in 1982. The commission’s

chairperson, James Duncan (a professor of chemistry) responded by setting up the New Zealand Futures Trust, which maintained a significant base of corporate and individual members into the early 2000s and continued to carry out research and produce a journal (*Future Times*) up until 2012.¹¹ James Duncan also wrote a substantial book on *Options for New Zealand’s Future* (Duncan, 1984).

The Planning Council, with its medium-term horizon, survived until 1990, when it, too, was disestablished.

Into the new millennium

At this stage, institutionalised approaches to futures thinking were on the back foot, but the 1990s onwards saw a flurry of disconnected planning and futures-related activity. For example, the Porter Report

to 2010 (Bolger, 1993) and subsequent updates, and *Strategic Result Areas for the Public Sector* (New Zealand Government, 1994), which were agreed policy priorities set by Cabinet for government departments – presaging today’s Better Public Services targets (State Services Commission, 2017). The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet carried out an annual review of progress against the strategic result areas, which also gave rise to key result areas for chief executives. The Ministry of Commerce ran an extensive consultation on how to encourage the growth of a knowledge economy, resulting in a report entitled *Bright Future: making ideas work for New Zealand: 5 Steps Ahead* (Ministry of Commerce, 1999).

Then, in 2001, Prime Minister Helen Clark co-chaired the high-profile

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outlined ways to upgrade New Zealand’s competitive advantage (Porter, Crocombe and Enright, 1991). The Ministry of Research, Science and Technology (MoRST) ran a science priority-setting process which was grounded in a report on future prospects for New Zealand (Strategic Consultative Group on Research, 1994) and morphed into a wide-ranging Foresight Project, followed by MoRST’s FutureWatch programme and then the Navigator Network to provide ‘early alert’ advice about emerging science trends and innovations.

A book entitled *Vision Aotearoa: kaupapa New Zealand* was published, based on interviews with 20 New Zealanders (Capper, Brown and Ihimaera, 1994). And the New Zealand Futures Trust produced a collection of ten essays for the new millennium, entitled *Our Country: our choices* (Menzies, Newell and Peren, 1997).

The National government set out futures frameworks: for example, in Path

Knowledge Wave conference, which sought to identify strategies for New Zealand’s transition into a knowledge society. At the conference there were echoes of the 1960 National Development Conference stand-off, when a speech by the then governor of the Reserve Bank almost prompted a walkout by trade union representatives, highlighting the inherent risks of a ‘conferencing’ approach to futures thinking (Wallace, 2012).

A separate agency emerging from discussions held at the Knowledge Wave conference was the future-focused New Zealand Institute, which operated for a number of years before merging with the Business Roundtable to become the New Zealand Initiative. Also in 2001, as part of a campaign heralding the introduction of Kiwibank, New Zealand Post invited New Zealanders to submit visions for the country’s future.

The Local Government Act 2002 required local authorities to develop long-

term plans, to cover a period of not less than ten years and among other things 'provide a long-term focus for the decisions and activities of the local authority'. The act also specified some consultative procedures – later repealed – for developing long-term plans. Specific regional futures exercises were carried out in Auckland (to produce a 100-year long-term sustainability framework) and in Waikato, where the Creating Futures Project 'created tools to inform communities about the long-term effects of current development patterns and trends and to enhance community involvement in choosing and planning for

capability among senior managers. Latterly, a cross-agency Strategic Futures Group with around 70 participants has been rebuilt in the public sector.

In 2004 an amendment to the Public Finance Act required the Treasury to produce a report every four years on New Zealand's long-term fiscal position, with a horizon of at least 40 years. Mostly these long-term fiscal statements – a form of 'commitment device' – have been low-key affairs, but in 2013 there was an exceptionally high-profile process of consultation and publication. This had little impact, but Treasury was undeterred and made another attempt to influence

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desired futures' (Regional Growth Forum, 2007; Waikato Regional Council, n.d.).

Also in 2002, as a result of the Review of the Centre, the State Services Commission started in-house futures research and then a Futures Programme which included working with public service chief executives to build their shared understanding of the future.¹² This led to an upsurge in futures thinking projects in the public service and the commission's development of a network (the Future Practitioners' Forum) to support public servants undertaking futures projects.

Between 2004 and 2009 the Future Practitioners' Forum had around 200 members (from across the state sector, not just the public service) and met monthly, with 70–120 members attending meetings. It collected a repository of shared futures resources in a very early online shared workspace. As well as continuing to work with chief executives, the Futures Programme expanded to include work with the commission's Leadership Development Centre to build futures

thinking with production of the 2016 long-term fiscal statement (New Zealand Treasury, 2013, 2016). Treasury also produced a forward-thinking Living Standards Framework to convey a vision wider than one based only on traditional economic measures.¹³

A 2013 amendment to the State Sector Act 1988 established the notion of 'stewardship' and defined it to be the 'active planning and management of medium- and long-term interests, along with associated advice'. The purpose of the amended act is to 'uphold a State sector system' that, among other things, fosters a 'culture of stewardship' as defined above.

The New Zealand Defence Force has strong futures capabilities, and the Ministry of Transport produced a set of scenarios for the future of transport along with a dedicated futures page on its website, and provided advice and mentored new teams on futures approaches. In 2016 and 2017 the ministry sponsored several well-attended '101' foresight courses for the public sector.

Non-governmental initiatives

Other futures-related activities in the 2000s included a 'Being there in 2025' series of scenario debates broadcast by Radio New Zealand in partnership with the New Zealand Futures Trust;¹⁴ the 2025 Taskforce;¹⁵ and a visioning process promoted by Anew New Zealand, a privately-run non-governmental organisation.

Secondary Futures was an OECD-affiliated project which engaged New Zealanders in an extended national conversation about their vision for the 20-year future of secondary education in New Zealand. It was funded but not driven by government, being put instead under the direction of four independent 'guardians' of the conversation.¹⁶ The New Zealand Council for Educational Research has produced *Key Competencies for the Future* (2014), and the New Zealand Curriculum for schools contains future-focused key competencies and encourages students to look to the future by exploring such significant issues as sustainability, citizenship, enterprise and globalisation, and to explore possible futures.

Continuing with the youth theme, in 2007 the Families Commission published a report on how young New Zealanders imagined family, friends and relationships across the course of their lives (Patterson et al., 2007). Generation Zero is a youth-based activist organisation with a focus on achieving a safe, zero carbon future.¹⁷

The FutureMakers initiative¹⁸ was a collaborative partnership between Victoria University's Institute for Governance and Policy Studies, Secondary Futures and Landcare Research to cast a light on the challenges and choices facing New Zealand over a 20-year horizon and to build capability for taking the long view. Landcare Research explored possible futures for New Zealand under the rubric of 'building capacity for sustainable development', using a series of participatory workshops supplemented by expert input and reflection and followed up with over 2,000 people at 34 conferences and workshops.

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with a commitment to building public futures literacy designed and managed three free, game-based public futures conversations in partnership with Crown research institutes and centres of research excellence. The first conversation, Magnetic South, was in partnership with Landcare Research in 2011 on the long-term future of Christchurch. The next two, both called Pounamu, were on science and the future of New Zealand, and were run in 2012 in conjunction with the MacDiarmid Institute for the Royal Society's Transit of Venus event (Gluckman, 2012) and in 2013 with Professor Shaun Hendy, with support from the MacDiarmid Institute and other centres of research excellence. These futures games engaged New Zealanders from nine years old to 90 and from Kaitiaia to Invercargill.

Foresight and futures research have been built into public policy courses at the University of Canterbury. The Tourism Group at Victoria University has undertaken a considerable amount of futures work, and in 2012 produced *Tourism 2050: planning for the future* (Moriarty, 2012).

The McGuinness Institute has collected a repository of futures resources in the James Duncan Memorial Library. In recent years, several specifically futures-oriented books have been written by New Zealanders (Gilbert, 2005; Carden and Murray, 2007; Wallace, 2011; Kelsey, 2015; Palmer and Butler, 2016; Boston, 2016, 2017a, 2017b; Harris, 2017; James, 2017).

In 2016 the New Zealand Labour Party published reports on the future of work (Future of Work Commission, 2016). In the same year, as a way of winding up the New Zealand Futures Trust (latterly known as Futures Aotearoa) an online series of interviews on the future with both prominent and young New Zealanders was posted on the Institute for Governance and Policy Studies website. Television New Zealand aired a series of interactive programmes on New Zealand's future (*What Next?*) in 2017.²⁰

The international scene

Boston's two books on the theme of governing the future (Boston, 2017a, 2017b) draw on his studies of other countries' approaches to futures thinking. Finland seems to be particularly strong

in this area, with its requirement for governments to produce a report on the future every parliamentary term, but there are many other international examples of futures thinking. To pick just a few, Scotland's Futures Forum commissions in-depth studies and undertakes scenario-planning; Wales has a Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act; Possible Canadas is a partnership of diverse organisations which share the goal of supporting forward-looking conversations about the future of Canada; Switzerland has prepared an Outlook

ments, considered 14 case studies of success in government foresight.²⁴

There are also a number of international initiatives with New Zealand representation: for example, the World Future Society, the World Future Studies Federation, Oxford Analytica and the Mont Pelerin Society, not to mention the World Economic Forum, the Club of Rome and the United Nations Millennium Project. All these are eminently searchable online, as is the Project for the Study of the 21st Century, an impressive collection of individuals who characterise themselves as

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2030 review of opportunities and risks for federal policy.²¹ Singapore has a Research, Innovation and Enterprise 2020 Plan aimed at 'winning the future through science and technology', and in July 2017 that country organised an International Risk Assessment and Horizon Scanning symposium involving government agencies, think tanks and businesses from around the world, including representatives from New Zealand.²² The European Foresight Platform is a network-building programme supported by the European Commission. It aims at building a global network which brings together different communities and individual professionals to share their knowledge about foresight, forecasting and other methods of future studies.²³ The OECD created a similar International Futures Programme to explore potential emerging sectors or future domains of interest for member economies, and has hosted annual meetings of the Government Foresight Community: in 2016 this meeting, of over 60 experienced foresight practitioners from 23 govern-

a 'global think tank for a new global era'. National Geographic has a website dedicated to exploring (mainly technological) futures.²⁵ Alongside these initiatives are journals of futures thinking (*Futures, the Journal of Futures Studies and Foresight*).

Globally in the private sector there is anecdotal evidence of an explosion of futures consulting:

Trevor Hardy, the CEO of forecasting consultancy The Future Laboratory, which has clients including Diageo and Google, has seen the sector explode in recent years. 'Five years ago we drew up a list of competitors in the UK, which was four agencies. Now our competitive list here is over a hundred,' he says. Hardy estimates that the future gazing industry, comprising traditional trend forecasting companies, futures consulting businesses, and future-facing insight and intelligence, is now worth \$100bn (£77bn) globally. (Cassidy, 2017)

The future of futures thinking

It is clear that there are many excellent developments in futures thinking going on in New Zealand, yet they tend to be disconnected from one another and struggle for acceptance or to become embedded in public institutions and processes. This is a fate shared by many cross-disciplinary fields, but an additional challenge in an evidence-driven world – along with growing threats to that world – is the obvious inability to collect evidence from the future.

This won't change, yet for futures thinking to thrive it may be necessary to 'double down' with an even more cross-disciplinary approach, including contributions from the humanities, arts, social media and communication technologies. Scenario planning is an excellent example of the way different disciplines might be blended, given that scenarios are essentially stories derived from research and analysis, imagination and vision, and are able to be falsified (or not) as time goes on.

There are also lessons to be learned from other fields where there have been attempts to change ways of thinking: for example, in retirement income planning, where people are encouraged to think more about their future selves and the trade-offs required between different time periods. Financial behaviours are susceptible to applied behavioural economics or 'nudges' (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008), such as automatic enrolments in KiwiSaver. Some of the commitment devices identified by Boston (2016, 2017a, 2017b) are analogous to nudges, although others might better be characterised as 'shoves'.

Unfortunately, efforts to promote futures thinking in Aotearoa New Zealand have often become bogged down in topic-based approaches which may capture attention, but inevitably become political and present-centred. There is also a tendency for these efforts to become dependent on one person or a few people, and this is not sustainable. There is a thin base of human capital for futures thinking.

For futures thinking to rise across a complex system, the yeast of human capital will be required. A fruitful strategy would be to concentrate on capability building

and development of the necessary competencies. That will require the involvement of institutions of learning, probably one or more universities. An applied Centre of Future Studies with a solid endowment could develop a new generation of futures thinkers while also carrying out research and scholarship, providing consultancy services and acting as a futures advocate. Programme graduates will eventually fan out across the public and private sectors and bring futures thinking to bear at all levels.

The problem is that generational change takes a generation, and there is not that much time available. A few 'shoves' are required. In choosing what these should be, there is likely to be a continued tension between institutional (centralised) approaches, which are vulnerable to political shifts, and process-based (devolved) approaches which may lack alignment with each other. Returning to the question of whether the time is right for oversight from a new Commission for the Future, Boston has a very forthright answer:

a commission with a generalised responsibility to represent all future interests is unlikely to be effective. Such a task is simply too sweeping, diffuse and open-ended. There are, after all, a multiplicity of future interests. No commission, however well resourced, could adequately investigate, let alone represent, all these interests. (Boston, 2017b)

This assessment rings very true. Furthermore, dependence on a single mechanism – particularly one that is centralised – is unlikely to bring about the desired change in a complex and constantly changing world. Progress is more likely to come from a whole-of-system, multi-faceted approach.

While promising no simple solutions, Boston (2016, 2017b) effectively provides a recipe for ways to enhance anticipatory governance in New Zealand. Ingredient objectives include: constitutional reform; improving long-term reporting; improving foresight capability; strengthening futures-focused institutions; embedding the future within policy frameworks;

nurturing a future-focused political culture; and improving environmental stewardship and adaptive governance. A particular argument is made for instituting commitment devices that require the policy 'system' to conduct regular foresight exercises, undertake periodic long-term forecasts and projections, and develop long-term plans (e.g. for conservation, infrastructure and other forms of public investment).

Boston has effectively laid out a manifesto for change, which provides a basis upon which Aotearoa New Zealand can build a global reputation as a futures thinking nation. In the short term, leadership would best be provided by a dedicated Futures Unit within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. The time is also right for a commission of inquiry into anticipatory governance, to see which of Boston's proposals can be implemented, and how.

- 1 Some of these have taken on the characteristics of urban myths, such as the Decca executive who declined a contract with the Beatles on the grounds that 'guitar bands are on the way out', or Lord Kelvin who pronounced that flight by heavier-than-air machine was impossible. Niels Bohr is commonly attributed with the statement 'prediction is very difficult, especially about the future', but others may have said it first.
- 2 Sometimes referred to as TUNA conditions of turbulence, uncertainty, novelty and ambiguity.
- 3 The author had a conversation in about 2000 with American futurist Professor James Dator in which he clearly described preconditions – particularly, unsustainable levels of household debt in the United States – that already indicated to him the likelihood of a major 'correction' in the financial system.
- 4 <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/66f2445b-43c1-407a-a3e8-a89083d6f868>.
- 5 To these might be added section 5 of the Resource Management Act 1991, section 6 of the Conservation Act 1987, and sections 15 and 16 of the New Zealand Superannuation and Retirement Income Act 1991, which lock in indexation for New Zealand Superannuation.
- 6 Economists describe this preference in terms of a 'discount rate', which, when it comes to money, indicates how an individual values an amount received today compared to in the future. For example, when a sample of older Australians were asked the following question: 'if you had a choice between receiving \$10,000 now, or a greater amount of money one year from now, what is the minimum amount you would need to receive in one year in order for you to choose this option instead of \$10,000 now?', the median response was \$15,000 – a discount rate of 50%. There are a number of possible explanations for this large discount rate, but it suggests an extreme preference for immediate funds over future funds (Higgins and Roberts, 2012).
- 7 In the Māori language, the past is 'mua' (in front) and the future is 'muri' (behind). This makes sense in a culture that looks first towards ancestors, and is a reminder that there are many kinds of human understanding of time.
- 8 The McGinness Institute has produced A History of Future Thinking Initiatives in New Zealand 1936–2010: learning from the past to build a better future (2014), which reviews 18 initiatives in an effort to learn lessons from the past and to develop a useful model for the future. The current article presumes to continue that tradition of review and reflection.
- 9 A sense of how diverse were the perspectives brought to bear, and how things have changed in 50 years, can be obtained from the photograph at <https://teara.govt.nz/en/photograph/22318/national-development-conference-1968>.
- 10 For an interesting viewpoint from a business leader, see <https://www.mainfreight.com/nz/en/news/don-braid-on-the->

upcoming-new-zealand-election.aspx.
 11 Approximately 30 years worth of Future Times have been archived at www.futuretimes.co.nz
 12 I am indebted to Stephanie Pride for much information on these developments in the public sector, the FutureMakers initiative and associated activities.
 13 <http://www.treasury.govt.nz/abouttreasury/higherlivingstandards/his-usingtheframework-v2.pdf>.
 14 Recordings of these are to be archived in Nga Taonga Sound and Vision.
 15 See <http://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/reviews-consultation/2025taskforce>.
 16 See <http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/34923187.pdf>.
 17 <http://www.generationzero.org/>.
 18 See http://jgps.victoria.ac.nz/events/Ongoing_research/futuremakers/futuremakers.html.
 19 For example, see <https://www.charteredaccountantsanz.com/>

news-and-analysis/insights/future-inc; <https://sciblogs.co.nz/author/ariadne/>.
 20 <https://www.tvnz.co.nz/shows/what-next>.
 21 <http://gov.wales/topics/people-and-communities/people/future-generations-act?lang=en> and also <https://futuregenerations.wales/>; <http://possiblecanadas.ca/>; <https://www.bk.admin.ch/themen/planung/04632/index.html?lang=en>.
 22 <https://www.nrf.gov.sg/rie2020>; <https://www.nscs.gov.sg/public/content.aspx?sid=200>.
 23 <http://www.foresight-platform.eu/>.
 24 <http://www.oecd.org/futures/ifppublicationsandstudies.htm>; <http://www.oecd.org/about/secretary-general/3rd-annual-meeting-of-the-government-foresight-community-opening-remarks.htm>.
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