

Sonia Mazey and Jeremy Richardson

Is the Aotearoa New Zealand Policy Process Fit for Purpose?

Abstract

New Zealand is generally thought to be well governed by international standards, with low levels of corruption, innovative policies in some sectors, and high levels of trust in the system of government. But all is not well in the public policymaking system. Rather, the system resembles an endless conveyor belt of unsolved, or partially solved, policy problems that have a tendency over time to become bigger ‘crises’. Effective public policymaking is hard and policy ‘stuff-ups’ happen worldwide. But New Zealanders should not accept policy failures as a fact of life. Our central thesis is that, via a series of reforms, the policymaking process could become much more effective in achieving successful policy outcomes.

Keywords policy failure, deliberation, policy commissions, implementation, ministers, public servants

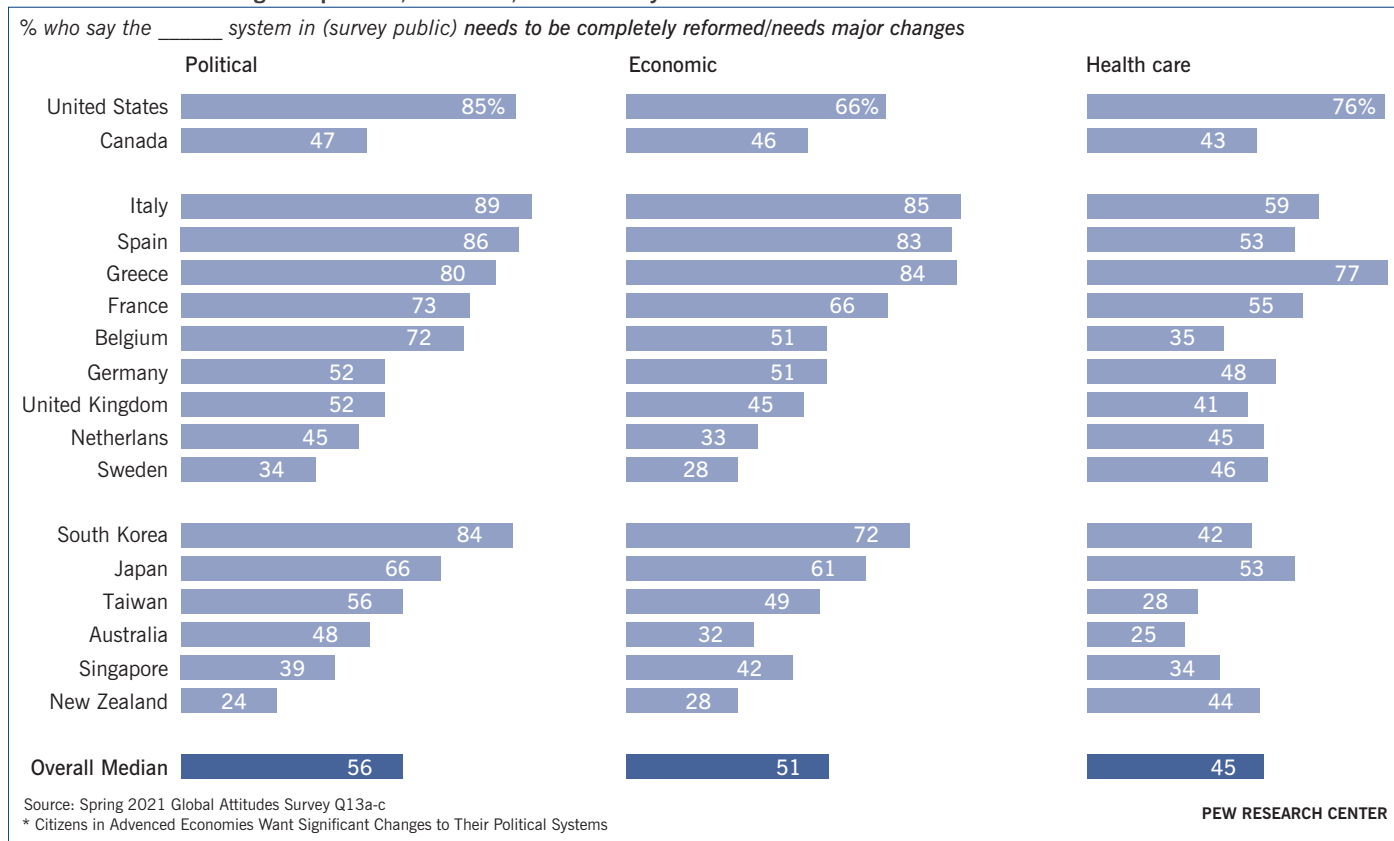
Sonia Mazey is principal of Arcady Hall and an adjunct professor at the University of Canterbury. Jeremy Richardson is an emeritus fellow at Nuffield College, Oxford, and adjunct professor at the University of Canterbury. They are the co-editors of *Policy-making under Pressure: rethinking the policy process in Aotearoa New Zealand*, recently published by Canterbury University Press.

Introduction: the New Zealand paradox

We are puzzled. As public policy analysts who have been researching public policy processes over decades and across several countries and jurisdictions, we find the New Zealand case unusual. New Zealand is highly regarded internationally as a policy innovator, specifically with regard to the establishment of an independent central bank, the introduction of Kiwisaver, the creation of Pharmac and of ACC.¹ Additionally, the New Zealand politico-administrative system ranks highly internationally for lack of corruption, high-quality public service and high levels of public trust in governance institutions. Along with the country’s ‘clean and green’ environmental image, New Zealand’s governance structures are widely admired overseas. Many insiders also share this view. As a former chief executive of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet has noted, ‘New Zealand is relatively well served in its policy formulation processes and decision-making’ (Wevers, 2021, p.209). Similarly, the Public Service Commission’s deputy commissioner, Hannah Cameron, recently argued that the public service’s ‘focus on building confidence in the public service ... has paid off: it was already strong prior to the pandemic, and broadly speaking, we’re seeing that maintained throughout time’ (Ross, 2022).

Yet just as New Zealand’s environmental policy track record is not as clean and green as widely marketed overseas, our public policy system is also less robust than typically portrayed. Our central thesis is that there is a very different way of ‘framing’² the New

Table 1: Desire for changes in political, economic, and health systems



Source: Wike et al., 2021

Zealand policy system. Many insiders, and even more overseas observers, focus on the ‘good’ aspects of New Zealand’s governance system: low levels of corruption, high levels of public trust and lack of deep social cleavages.³ In contrast, our ‘frame’ is anchored in a critical evaluation of policy outcomes: namely, does the policymaking system deliver effective policy outcomes to those who need them? Viewing the system through this lens, we see a disconnect between what we – as policy researchers – see as an almost overwhelming conveyor belt of unsolved policy problems and the relative lack of demand among policymakers,⁴ or indeed from the general public, for reform of the New Zealand public policymaking process.

Indeed, in a recent survey of advanced democracies undertaken by the Pew Foundation, New Zealanders were the most satisfied with their political and economic system (see Figure 1). As the report indicated, citizens of many advanced democracies see need for significant political, economic and healthcare reform (Wike et al., 2021). By contrast, fewer than a quarter of New Zealanders believed complete or major reform of our political system was needed, and only just over a quarter thought major economic reform was necessary. Only in healthcare does New Zealand come close to

the median level of concern. Interestingly, citizens in Germany, which by international standards has a well-funded public health service, were slightly more concerned than their New Zealand counterparts about public healthcare provision. (German per capita public spending on health is US\$5,729, compared to US\$3,355 in New Zealand.) Similarly, when we compare New Zealand with a much smaller country, Sweden, its per capita public spending on health is US\$4,895 (OECD, 2021), but Swedes are also more inclined to see healthcare reform as necessary than are New Zealanders. To use a topical comparison in the context of the current Covid-19 Omicron outbreak, in 2020 Germany had 33.9 ICU beds per 100,000 population and Sweden 5.8 beds, compared to New Zealand’s 3.6 (OECD, 2020).

There are many possible reasons for this apparent disconnect, but one obvious explanation is to be found in two related concepts drawn from sociology, ‘relative deprivation’ and ‘reference groups’. In relatively affluent societies, individuals feel deprived not in absolute terms, but relative to a chosen reference group, namely a group that enjoys a lifestyle to which those individuals aspire. Regarding the public healthcare data cited above, few New Zealanders will have experienced the German

or Scandinavian healthcare systems. Scandinavian countries compare themselves closely with each other and there is much policy learning between the various systems. But New Zealanders’ main comparator is Australia, and New Zealanders have for many years now accepted the fact that Australia is a wealthier nation. Only occasionally does ‘catching up with Australia’ reach the political agenda. Back in 2008 Prime Minister John Key pledged to close the wage gap with Australia; 14 years later this remains an unrealised goal, but it is no longer a burning public issue. Moreover, the perception that ‘things are generally getting better’ economically in New Zealand, at least for most people, has dampened feelings of relative deprivation.⁵ Rising prosperity buys off a lot of discontent. Additionally, national cultural traits may also play a role in explaining New Zealanders’ relative lack of discontent about poor public policy outcomes. As English immigrants, we are struck by the fact that New Zealanders (unlike their English counterparts) are not a nation of grumblers. For example, in 2022 New Zealand was very highly ranked (9th) in the World Happiness Report, behind Finland, Denmark, Switzerland, Iceland, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Luxemburg (World Happiness Report, 2022).

A conveyor belt of policy problems leading to policy stuff-ups

New Zealand may rank alongside the wealthy (and highly taxed) Scandinavians in terms of happiness, but in Aotearoa (as elsewhere in the world) the reality is that we have an overcrowded conveyor belt of serious unsolved policy problems. These include a longstanding housing crisis, increasing levels of child poverty, the highest youth suicide rate in the OECD, growing economic inequity, lower productivity and lower wage levels than comparable countries, declining educational standards, grossly polluted waterways, failing infrastructure, an overloaded judicial system, and a health service in seemingly constant crisis. These problems are well publicised, extensively debated and firmly on the political agenda. Other serious policy problems, however, are recognised only by those working at the delivery point of public policies. These issues include a tsunami of type-2 diabetes cases likely to hit the health service in future decades, as well as a predicted severe shortfall in palliative and dementia care for the elderly over the next 20 years. We could go on. When we started work on our book (Mazey and Richardson, 2021), we decided to monitor our local newspaper (the Press) for policy issues that, if we were working in the prime minister's office, we would wish to bring to her attention. After a few months we gave up, as hardly a day went by without at least one such issue arising which would justify a 'Dear Prime Minister, you might need to ask your minister about this' memo.

Faced with so many policy problems, it is no wonder that policy failure, policy fiascos, and plain old stuff-ups seem to be rife worldwide. As governments stuff up everywhere, why should we expect New Zealand to be different? Our central argument is that although stuff-ups and implementation failure will always occur, we can do significantly better. Some stuff-ups can be avoided, and some can be much less serious. Doing better is not rocket science.

Studying the New Zealand policy process might sound boring to most people, but when governments make mistakes the consequences are not 'just' traffic jams, declining educational standards or a worsening housing crisis. People also die. Of course, governments facing exceptional crises, such as a global pandemic, are bound to make errors. However, public policy blunders and implementation failure are common even in 'business as usual' circumstances. An irony of

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New Zealand's response to the Covid-19 pandemic is that, having long failed to heed warnings from qualified experts that we were ill prepared for a pandemic (one epidemiologist told us they 'had been preaching to empty halls for years'), New Zealand's 'hard and fast' initial response to the pandemic (lockdown and border closure) was initially very effective in keeping Covid-19 out of the country. However, quite quickly the policy process reverted to business as usual – i.e., muddling through – and as a consequence we started to encounter some very basic implementation problems.

The New Zealand government's Covid-19 policy response is 'a game of two halves: strong defence and no own goals in the first half, but plenty of defence errors and own goals after the half-time break' (Mazey and Richardson, 2020, p.564). When we wrote that in 2020 we didn't realise just how many defensive errors and own goals would eventually occur in the management of the MIQ system, the vaccine roll-out, government business subsidies and the introduction of the RAT testing system. Particularly worrying were failures in what used to be regarded as basic public administration, namely the ability to devise sensible and practical 'on the ground' policy delivery systems. We should not be too hard on New Zealand policymakers, however, as there are some generic causes of

policy failure, common to all democratic systems. We outline some of these below.

Managing the political agenda

In democratic regimes the political agenda is always crowded. Faced with a never-ending conveyor belt of new policy issues and demands from diverse groups, governments cannot simply say 'nothing can be done'. Voters expect them to 'do something'. This phenomenon is not new. Nearly 50 years ago political scientists were writing about 'governmental overload': as Anthony King wrote, 'once upon a time ... man looked to God to order the world. Then he looked to the market. Now he looks to government ... the hungry sheep look up and reckon that they have at least a reasonable chance of being fed', with the result that 'government [has] come to be regarded ... as a sort of unlimited-liability insurance company in the business of insuring all persons at all times against every conceivable risk' (King, 1975, pp.164–6). (For an informative recent reflection on overloaded government, see Moran, 2018.) While government overload is not a new development, however, we believe that some trends, such as the apparent general decline of the influence of civil servants, the decreased role for technical expertise in particular policy areas – what Catherine Knight refers to as the 'de-sciencing' of policymaking (Knight, 2021, pp.184–5) – and the seemingly inexorable rise of politically appointed advisors ('often relatively young and with political ambitions of their own' (Gluckman, 2021, p.158)), has reduced the capacity of governments to cope with overload.

Faced with a constant stream of policy issues, policymakers often end up 'managing' the policy agenda rather than addressing the underlying policy issues. At worst, governments resort to 'placebo' policies, introducing measures that they know will have little – if any – beneficial impact, but which will hopefully deflect unwelcome public (and media) interest. This is not to suggest that politicians and governments are cynically dismissive of voters' concerns; rather, that they get caught in 'policy traps', situations where a government is under intense pressure to 'do something', but has very limited capacity to do so meaningfully (McConnell, 2020). There are two variants of placebo policymaking commonly used by governments. The first variant is what we might call 'inquiryitis'. While we are in principle strongly in favour of policy reviews (see below), it is not uncommon for

governments to commission an inquiry into a policy issue as a means of 'kicking the can down the road'. Mental health in New Zealand is a case in point. Since 1985 there have been no fewer than 13 official inquiries of one kind or another into youth suicide. Sadly, youth suicide deaths have continued to rise in New Zealand. The other variant of placebo policymaking is to restructure the agency/ministry/institutions of government responsible for the policy sector in question. In many cases, however, organisational restructuring ('reorganisitis') is akin to rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic.⁶

Of course, governments do occasionally ignore problems in the hope that they will eventually 'go away', or they wait for new issues to displace challenging issues currently in the spotlight. Allegedly, General Franco, the Spanish dictator, had just two trays on his desk: one marked 'problems that time will solve' and the other marked 'problems that time has solved'. In reality, few policy problems resolve themselves, but over time some do fade from public attention, albeit often remaining unsolved. As Anthony Downs argued, there is a natural dynamic to policy issues, what he called 'the issue attention cycle' (Downs, 1972). We are right to blame government for policy failures, but we voters are equally to blame. When a problem comes onto the political agenda, we are initially enthusiastic: something must be done. Quickly, the cost of tackling the problem dawns on us. Solving the problem will cause inconvenience and probably cost money, and we may also have to change how we behave (think of global warming). Consequently, our initial enthusiasm wanes and we turn our attention to some other issue that has forced its way onto the public policy conveyor belt. Meanwhile, the original problem, no longer in the spotlight, remains unresolved, though a burgeoning 'industry' of advocacy groups and experts continue to beaver away, working at trying to solve the original problem.

Detailed policy implementation: yet more policy process problems

Even when governments do enact bold policies, successful policy outcomes are far from guaranteed. Two of the most common problems at the implementation stage are the 'law of large solutions' and the 'law of unintended consequences'. The first law is particularly depressing. As the originator of the concept put it, 'the evils that worry us now spring directly from the good things

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that we tried to do before' (Wildavsky, 1979, p.64). Put simply, many of today's policy problems are the result of yesterday's large policy solutions. For example, the massive expansion of dairy farming in New Zealand, though an economic success, has created major water pollution and carbon emission problems that are now incredibly difficult to solve.

The second law, the 'law of unintended consequences', often comes into play, even with carefully designed policies that are introduced for very good reasons and seem perfectly sensible at the time. For example, in recent years New Zealand governments have increased tobacco taxes to reduce smoking, and hence lower the incidence of many diseases, notably lung cancer. The policy is working. However, increasing the price of cigarettes via tax increases has turned what was a relatively cheap commodity into a very expensive one. Two unintended consequences have resulted from this policy. First, the number of violent and armed attacks on dairies selling tobacco products has increased dramatically. Second, the black market in illegally imported cigarettes has boomed: professional criminals 'are using the same supply lines employed for methamphetamine to bring in illicit cigarettes' (Block, 2021). Similarly, the government's well-intentioned policy of subsidising the purchase of electric vehicles, announced in June 2021, quickly produced some adverse unintended

consequences. As one importer of second-hand EVs explained to us just a few weeks after the announcement: 'The value of the rebate to the New Zealand consumer has already been swallowed by the price increases overseas. This has led to a situation where the rebate money ends up in a foreign economy ... it is Economics 101.' We are unsure why this unintended, but entirely predictable, outcome was not identified at the policy design stage.

This oversight underlines the need for consultation processes to be sufficiently finely grained to ensure that those 'at the coalface' (in this case, those at the car yard) are asked for their views as to whether and how policy proposals might work out in practice.⁷ A more serious example of how intended policy outcomes get 'lost in translation' is provided by the amendments to the Credit Contracts and Consumer Finance Act introduced in December 2021. This reform was intended to protect vulnerable borrowers, such as first-time home buyers and small business owners, from loan sharks; thus, undeniably a good idea. However, the way in which it was implemented by banks (which are trying to act within what has proved to be a very restrictive law) resulted in intrusive investigation into the spending habits of potential borrowers, such as how much they spend on Netflix or on Friday night fish and chips. The lesson here? It is that we have a policymaking system that is often weak regarding detailed policy design. As a result, good ideas generate policies that are simply unworkable – or plain daft – in practice.

It doesn't have to be like this: how might the New Zealand public policy process be improved?

Our policy landscape is littered with time bombs quietly ticking away; they could probably be defused or controlled by early government intervention, but they are not. Instead, known problems are left ticking away until such time as they become a crisis that can no longer be ignored. In summary, the prevalent national 'policy style' in New Zealand has been reactive, not anticipatory. (For a detailed analysis of the lack of anticipatory policymaking, see Boston, 2017, and for an overview of the post-war New Zealand policy style, Easton, 2021.)

The current government's proposed Three Waters reform of the nation's drinking, waste water and storm water management is illustrative of the eventual consequences of this policy style. Whatever the merits or

demerits of this particular proposal, the problems that the government is now trying to address are chronic in nature. They have been a long time in the making and policymakers have known about them for years (including opponents of the Three Waters reform). The Three Waters initiative is a classic example of a government finally addressing a 'reform deficit' (but see below). Similarly, as suggested above, New Zealand has a serious and growing type 2 diabetes problem, exacerbated by the fact that the country has one of the highest levels of obesity, a common cause of type 2 diabetes, in the OECD. A recent report to Parliament predicted that the number of people in New Zealand with type 2 diabetes will increase by 70–90% over the next 20 years, and that the annual cost to the economy of type 2 diabetes is likely to rise to \$3.5 billion during this period. Despite this chilling prediction, New Zealand still has no national strategy or plan for managing what is widely regarded by medical experts as a disease that has reached epidemic proportions, but one that can in most cases be controlled or reversed by diet and (inexpensive) drugs.

In fairness, very few liberal democratic governments are good at anticipatory policymaking. It is seen more often in political science textbooks than found in the wild. Hoping for governments to be more anticipatory – i.e., to think in the long term – is akin to hoping to find that pot of gold at the end of a rainbow. Yet, the policy machine grinds on. Bearing this in mind, what could be done to improve the New Zealand policy machine?

More deliberation, more policy continuity

A recurring theme of contributions to our book is the lack of continuity in policymaking. Political change is a normal feature of democratic government; elections are, as Winston Churchill said, our opportunity to 'turn the buggers out'. However, there is now widespread agreement among political parties that our three-year parliamentary term is too short. It impedes anticipatory policymaking. Rather than moving to a four-year term, we believe that a slightly longer five-year, fixed-term Parliament like the UK model would be even better. A five-year term would allow time for inevitable mistakes to be forgotten and for initially unpopular policies to begin to show benefits. But reducing the pressure of the electoral churn, though helpful (even necessary), will not be sufficient.⁸ The fundamental policy style itself needs to change. We need to change *how* we

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make public policy to achieve better policy outcomes for the team of five million.

The key, fundamental change needed is a general shift to a more *deliberative* approach to policymaking. Deliberation needs to be the overriding characteristic of the policy system. Lack of deliberation is a common cause of policy blunders. King and Crewe argue that a deliberative approach has three main components: carefully considering and weighing up options (exactly what is the problem and what options do we have?); taking sufficient time to analyse the problem and available options (do you want it now or do you want it right?); and ensuring that relevant interests and organisations (those who know where the shoe pinches) have been appropriately consulted and their views taken into account (King and Crewe, 2014, p.386–7).

Alongside a change in policy style, we advocate some institutional changes to the way policy is made. For example, we suggest that New Zealand adopt the traditional Swedish model of policy development, characterised by extensive use of independent policy commissions. Alas, the Swedish model has itself been considerably eroded over recent decades. However, at its height the commissions system mobilised expertise, facilitated negotiation between competing interests, and often fostered compromises

across the political divide. The system had two outstanding advantages. First, it was a slow, deliberative process (commissions often took one or two years to produce a set of policy recommendations). Second, commission reports (which had a major influence on the content of subsequent legislation) were often a 'negotiated consensus', which facilitated policy stability. Here in New Zealand, the Climate Change Commission (though in our view having a far too narrow membership) holds some promise as a model, as does the tripartite collaboration between the government, BusinessNZ and the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions which collectively produced the proposals for an income insurance scheme. The current disagreements surrounding the Three Waters reform programme might have been avoided had the government *started* with a broadly based commission, rather than setting up a working group only when the policy change process was well underway and the issue had become heavily politicised. In this instance, the shift from intramural to extramural policymaking (i.e., involving a wider range of actors) has come much too late in the game.⁹

On a related theme (inclusive policymaking), much work needs to be done to give meaningful effect to the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi throughout the policy process. As highlighted by policy outcomes across several sectors, particularly education, health and housing, mainstream policy processes have often failed to meet the specific needs of Māori communities and iwi. (The initial roll-out of the Covid-19 vaccination programme was an obvious policy blunder in this regard.) At a formal level, some progress has been made, but we need to ensure that our policy processes are responsive to and incorporate knowledge and values of te ao Māori. Iwi are not 'just' another interest group to be consulted; they are Treaty partners and quite rightly expect to be treated as such by decision makers. Public debate (and political disagreement) about the true meaning and policymaking implications of co-governance (tino rangatiratanga) is now gaining momentum. While this will be a challenging conversation for New Zealand, it is one we need to have in order to ensure that our policymaking processes deliver for all New Zealanders.

More analytical capacity and capability

The analytical capacity of opposition parties to formulate policies also needs to be

increased. Having opposition parties enter government with half-baked policy promises developed on the campaign trail (KiwiBuild being an obvious example) is not in anyone's interest. We suggest establishing a publicly funded, independent policy consultancy agency tasked with providing independent but confidential policy analysis support for opposition parties.

A more radical reform would be to consider a departure from the Westminster parliamentary model of government whereby all ministers must be drawn from the legislature. Party candidates are rarely chosen for their policy expertise or their capacity to run large organisations. The number of MPs is quite small in New Zealand; consequently, the pool of talent from which to select ministers is tiny and the proportion of MPs on the 'payroll vote' is arguably too high. Not all parliamentary systems insist on all government ministers being appointed from among the legislature. Instead, they seek to maximise the government's policymaking capability by seeking ministerial talent from outside Parliament.¹⁰ In Norway and Denmark, ministers do not need to be drawn from the legislature and it is common for some ministers to be appointed on the basis of their technical expertise and knowledge of the policy sector. In such cases ministers are still accountable to Parliament via question time and select committee hearings. Indeed, Denmark's Parliament can force the resignation of a minister if there is a majority vote against him or her in Parliament. A further advantage of including ministers from outside Parliament is that portfolios can be shared among more ministers, reducing the workload of each. Our ministers have multiple and disparate portfolios, to the extent that one wonders how some of them find the time to master complex policy issues and build meaningful relationships with key policy actors and stakeholders.

We are aware that this idea is regarded by some people as contrary to the principle of parliamentary democracy and, therefore, unworkable in New Zealand. Such sentiments are akin to those expressed by opponents of proportional representation in Britain, who argue that 'it just won't work in the UK', despite the fact that electoral systems of this kind function perfectly well in several European countries, as well as in the UK for European parliamentary elections. Moreover, the 'end of parliamentary democracy as we know it' refrain loses its credence when the impact of the New Zealand list system is

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considered. Essentially, we already have ministers in office who have not faced the electorate at all. They are simply party nominees, rarely placed on the party list for their policy expertise or experience of running a large organisation. More worryingly, perhaps, is the fact that MPs can be turned out by their electorates in a general election, only to return as MPs (and ministers) via the list system.

Ministers are not the sole actors in the policy process, of course. They are at the apex, but are served by a raft of public servants. Thus, just as we need to increase the analytical capacity of ministers, we also need to further strengthen the analytical capacity of the public service. As one senior civil servant remarked privately to us, 'the ranks of capable policy advisers are thin'. A significant amount has been done in this area by the Public Service Commission and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. However, we recommend building on these reforms by introducing a centrally managed and competitive graduate recruitment scheme for certain categories of national public servant, to be run by a new public services recruitment agency. Under such an arrangement, individual government departments would lose their exclusive recruitment function for policy-related grades. The careers of entrants would be managed centrally, rather than the existing 'market' system whereby public servants in one department advance their careers by applying, of their own volition, for higher posts in another department. As one insider has noted:

Each agency hires its policy staff according to its own job descriptions, trains and manages them according to its own preferences, and remunerates them

largely as it sees fit. There are few controls at the centre and agencies are free to do as they like in building and maintaining policy quality ... remuneration practices encourage analysts to hop from agency to agency rather than mature in one place. (Parkin, 2021, pp.198–9)

In similar vein, Peter Gluckman, reflecting on his former role as chief science advisor to the prime minister, also notes that, 'as public management is seen as a generic skill, and given the relatively high rotational rates across senior levels of agencies, deep domain knowledge can be hard to find' (Gluckman, 2021, p.155). Apart from helping to break down 'departmental silos', a centralised recruitment system might also make the public service a more prestigious and attractive career prospect for our brightest graduates, as it is in the UK and other European countries.

Another, related public service reform would be to establish a well-funded national public service college (based in two centres, one in the North Island and one in the South Island) to provide ongoing professional development in public policy analysis and public policy management, across the whole of the public service, including local government and all public agencies. This college should also provide training for MPs and ministers in policy analysis. We also believe there is considerable scope for New Zealand universities to engage with public policymakers, policy formulation and implementation via the creation of policy transfer units in each of the eight universities. The Covid-19 pandemic has clearly illustrated both the existence and the value of policy-relevant knowledge within our universities. There is an abundance of policy-relevant knowledge within universities (including in the social sciences). Universities, we believe, need to reflect more on the question, 'what do we know that is useful to public policymakers?' As Gluckman notes, 'the gulf between academia and the civil service is obvious ... in general consultants are more likely to be used than academic expertise' (ibid., p.157). Compared to other advanced liberal democracies, New Zealand is light on independent think tanks, and universities have a public responsibility to make a bigger contribution to public policymaking than they do at present. By doing so, they would help expand the market for policy ideas, consistent with our plea for increased analytical capacity in New Zealand.

The importance of obituaries

Our overriding message is that we need to improve our policymaking processes to achieve better public policy outcomes. Of course, even the best-designed public policies need money, but a further New Zealand paradox is that we face the litany of unsolved policy problems at a time of the highest level of average income and net worth in our history. The problem is not lack of money; it is how we spend it. Thus, our wish list of reforms will come to nothing without bold political leadership. Alas, we voters want jam today, not jam tomorrow, but our politicians need to have courage. We do not need to have quite so many policy failures. And so, we conclude

with an odd request to our political leaders: think of your obituary, rather than winning the next election. Election victories are just footnotes to history. Major successful policy reforms warrant a full-length chapter.

- 1 However, overseas observers seem unaware of the increased questioning of, particularly, Pharmac, but also of ACC, and even KiwiSaver.
- 2 Frames are structures of beliefs or perceptions: see Schön and Rein, 1994.
- 3 Space does not permit a discussion of social cleavages here, but recent events relating to vaccine mandates, the emerging politicisation of co-governance issues, and the expansion of the gap between rich and poor suggest that the 'team of five million' might be more factionalised than previously thought.
- 4 However, for a very perceptive and frank insider view of weaknesses in the policy system, see Parkin, 2021.
- 5 This is not to suggest that the issue is not recognised at all: for example, see Rashbrooke, 2021.
- 6 The current major reorganisation of the health system might

prove to be such an example. When we asked a senior hospital consultant (who had worked in the system through several reorganisations) what they thought the effects of the reorganisation might be, the reply came back: 'The heading on the notepaper will change. I will face exactly the same problems as I do now.'

- 7 One senior public servant commented to us that he was astonished how often policy leaders failed to talk to front-line officials and affected parties.
- 8 We, of course, recognise that a longer term also allows governments to do more damage. However, we believe that a longer term is the lesser of two evils, as it were. Moreover, lengthening the parliamentary term should be seen as one part of a raft of reforms that we are proposing.
- 9 For an informed account of the underlying issues relating to the reform, see Mandow, 2022.
- 10 This idea is not new in New Zealand: see Boston, 1998. For the idea to be implemented, the Constitution Act 1986 would need a simple amendment to section 6, and some amendments would also be required to Parliament's standing orders.

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