

Prime Minister praises frameworks to lift public service policy performance



A programme to lift policy quality and capability across the public service will benefit the lives of all New Zealanders, according to one of its chief supporters, the Prime Minister.

Prime Minister John Key said New Zealand’s public service was well respected globally. But there was always room for improvement and the project to improve policy quality across government, known as the Policy Project, was designed to deliver on that.

“New Zealand is fortunate in the calibre of people who are attracted into the public service. They have helped successive administrations steer our country through difficult problems, seize opportunities and position us as a confident, outward looking, open and optimistic country.”

The Prime Minister said any good organisation had an eye to the future – maintaining and building capability to continuously improve its offering to its clients and customers.

The three frameworks developed by the Policy Project in collaboration with the New Zealand policy community focus on the policy shop, policy people, and policy advice.

Together, the frameworks, and the tools that have been developed to sit under them, provide an infrastructure for improving policy quality, skills and capability.

The Prime Minister said a robust policy process was vital for delivering to the people it serves.

Mr Key said free and frank advice to ministers, including advice contrary to a minister's preferred option, was vital for good decision-making.

"It's one of the strengths of our constitutional tradition of an independently appointed public service. Officials should actively poke holes in things in the interests of getting a better decision."

Head of the Policy Profession and Chief Executive of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Andrew Kibblewhite, said he wanted to ensure the business of providing advice in New Zealand continues to be world-leading.

In outlining his vision for success, he said: "Our advice is based on the best available evidence and user insights – an understanding of the real lives of real people - we know what works and we keep striving for new and better ways of doing things. We can identify the 'big issues' (whether future, looming or cross-cutting) and can mobilise to collectively find solutions that improve the lives of New Zealanders.

Mr Kibblewhite said the Policy Project frameworks were designed by and for the New Zealand policy community.

"I'm proud of the frameworks the policy community has built for itself. People from across a broad range of policy perspectives, including analysts, managers, academics and HR people, have been involved every step of the way."

The frameworks specifically target policy capability (what makes for a high-performing policy organization); policy skills (setting out the knowledge, applied skills and behaviour expected of policy practitioners) and policy advice (characteristics and enablers of quality policy advice).

The frameworks can be used individually – or as a package. As a package they provide a mutually reinforcing infrastructure for improving policy quality and capability. Kibblewhite called on policy leaders to adopt and use the frameworks in their departments.

"We now need to embed these frameworks in our thinking and our behaviour. This is about us thinking system and not just agency – one policy community that supports the government of the day in the service of the people of New Zealand," Mr Kibblewhite said.

To view the Policy Project frameworks and tools visit www.dpmc.govt.nz/policyproject.