

# Terms of Reference for the New Zealand Science Media Centre

## OBJECTIVES

MBIE is responsible for implementing the Government's "A Nation of Curious Minds – A National Strategic Plan for Science in Society" (the Plan), via initiatives funded from the Engaging New Zealanders with Science and Technology Appropriation. The Science Media Centre (the Centre) will contribute to the outcomes set out in the Plan, by facilitating and strengthening links between the media and the science community. Its Objectives are to:

- work with the media to improve the quality, depth and breadth of coverage of science related issues (particularly coverage of New Zealand science and innovation);
- improve the accessibility of science to the media;
- work with the media to improve public awareness and debate about the role science and innovation can play in society and emerging issues;
- provide training and resources to support scientists and research organisations to respond to the media's queries, and to communicate science more effectively (including raising awareness about the available communication channels);
- provide training and resources to support journalists to produce responsible and insightful science news reporting and analysis that is relevant to the New Zealand public;
- build networks and manage relationships between the key components of the science system and media;
- develop tools and resources to improve public access to New Zealand science content.

The Centre will achieve the Objectives above by;

- providing a first port of call for media requesting information related to science and innovation;
- proactively providing timely information and material on science and innovation topics;
- working to develop science and innovation reporting capability within the New Zealand media;
- assisting scientists and research organisation to become better able to deal with the media's queries, and to communicate their science effectively, using a range of mechanisms;
- assisting journalists to produce responsible and insightful science news reporting and analysis that is relevant to the New Zealand public;
- building networks and managing relationships between the key components of the science system and media; and
- developing tools and resources to improve public access to New Zealand centric science related content.

## CENTRE OPERATION

### *Scope*

- The Centre will assess the needs of the media and the science community, and identify ways to improve their respective capabilities and linkages. It will structure its operations to ensure these improvements can be made.
- The focus of the Centre will be solely upon matters related to science and innovation.

- The Centre will primarily deal with New Zealand based science and innovation but international science and innovation can be included where there is a strong connection with or relevance to New Zealand.
- The Centre needs to add unique value over and above the activity already occurring within the science and innovation sector. It may co-ordinate, facilitate, enhance and/or complement but not duplicate the communication activities undertaken by other science based organisations.
- Where the Centre is addressing issues that reasonably appear to lie within the realm of another institution or institutions, the Centre should focus on cross-sector issues rather than on topics the individual science based organisations can, or should be, promoting themselves.
- The Centre will not provide a service for the public, or for the education community, although some resources will be able to be accessed and used by them.
- The Centre will provide training and resources to assist scientists and their institutions to become better able to deal with the media's queries, to communicate their science effectively.

#### *Operating Principles*

- The Centre will not take any particular standpoint or position on science and innovation issues.
- The Centre will not lobby on behalf of the government or the science and innovation sector.
- The Centre will be neutral in matters of policy and politics. It will not act in a way that could reasonably be perceived to be supporting or opposing any aspect of government policy or any other issues subject to political debate.
- The Centre will be open and transparent about its funding sources.
- The Centre will operate to the highest ethical standards.
- The Centre will operate in a way that is responsive and transparent.
- These principles will apply to the Centre and any other activities funded by the Centre.

#### *Independence*

- The Centre will operate as an operationally independent unit within the Society, responsible for its own strategic direction, operational matters (including the delivery of the services to MBIE) and its communications and branding activities. The Society's name and brand will not form any part of the activity that relates to the Centre.
- The manager of the Centre will report to the chief executive or nominee of the Society and will be editorially and operationally independent from the other operations of the Society.
- In its work the Centre will be editorially independent from: the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE), and any other government agency; the Society; and from any organisation that funds, provides content to or in any way supports the Centre.
- Reflecting the taxpayers' investment in the Centre, the Society will be accountable to MBIE for the efficient operation of the Centre.
- The Centre will ensure it does not appear to favour any particular medium, media outlet/s or institution/s.