

Item 2: Approach to Advocacy for the New Triennium

SESSION TYPE: Workshop

PURPOSE/DESIRED OUTCOME:

The purpose of this workshop is to provide an overview of Queenstown Lakes District Council's current approach to advocacy and undertake an exercise to determine the priority topics for the triennium ahead.

DATE/START TIME:

Thursday, 29 January 2026 at 11:50am

TIME BREAKDOWN:

Presentation: 10 minutes

Questions or Debate/Discussion: 60 minutes

Prepared by:



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Title: Policy Advisor

20 January 2026

Reviewed and Authorised by:



Name: Michelle Morss

Title: General Manager Strategy & Policy

20 January 2026

ATTACHMENTS:

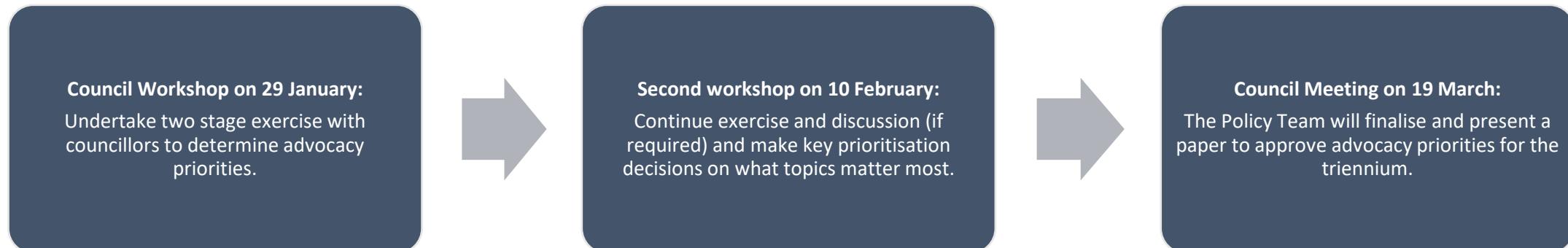
A	QLDC Advocacy
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QLDC advocacy

January 2026

Advocacy priorities for the triennium ahead

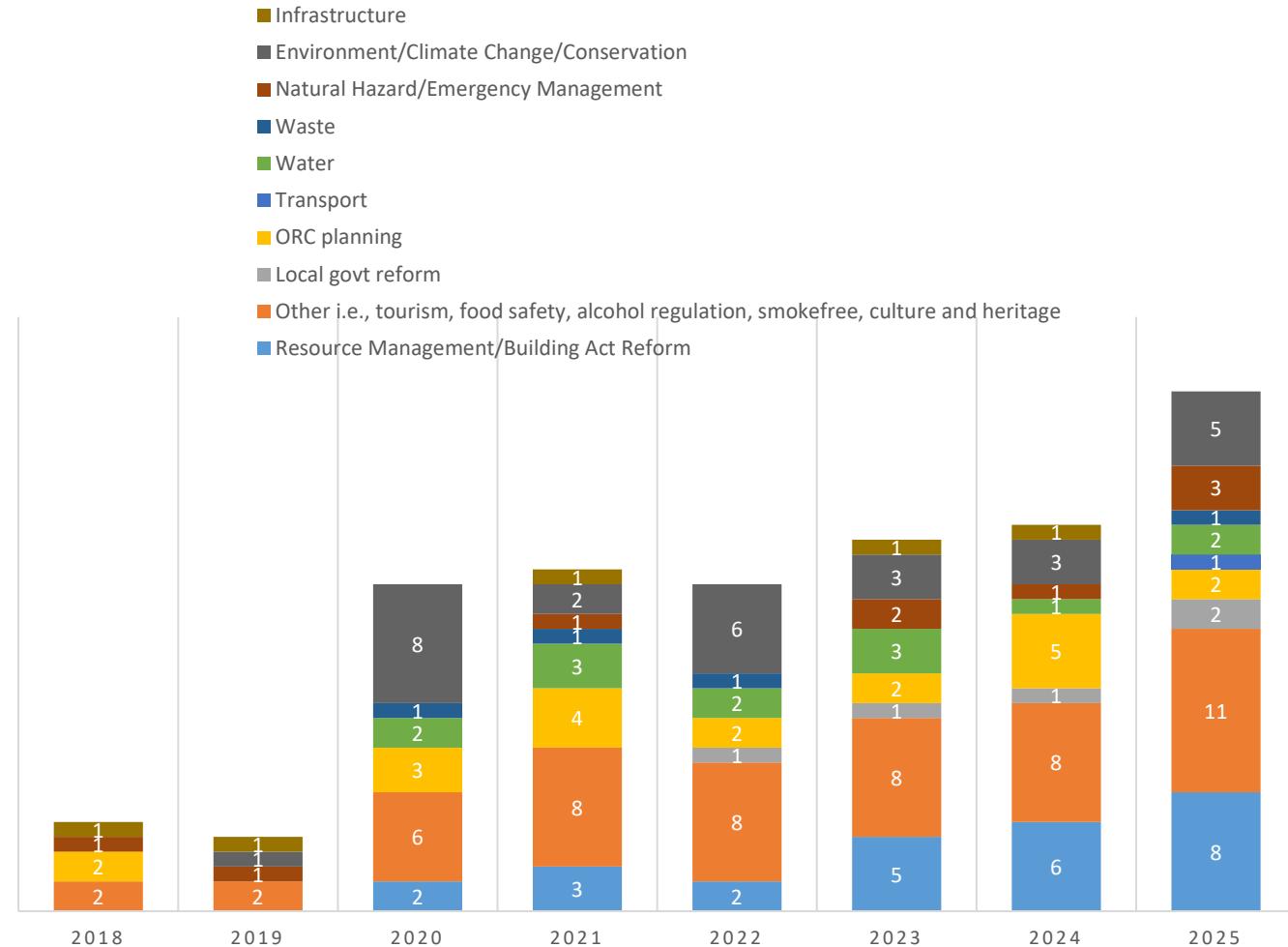
- > External policy whether at the local, regional or national level, can significantly impact QLDC and the district. Advocacy is about making sure QLDC's voice is heard and considered in decisions that affect the district, including how QLDC delivers its services. Advocacy done well has the potential to influence changes in policy and ensure the best outcomes for the district.
- > Currently, QLDC's main method for advocacy is via making written submissions in formal consultation processes. On average over the last triennium, QLDC made 30 submissions per year.
- > Historically, QLDC has been reactive to these processes – this workshop, at the beginning of the triennium, is an opportunity to consider if a different approach and prioritisation of resources could result in better outcomes.
- > This workshop will include an interactive exercise and discussion to **determine Council's advocacy priorities for this triennium**. With an agreed set of priorities, staff would be able to focus and strengthen advocacy, by developing more strategic and proactive positions, deepening staff expertise in key areas, broadening the advocacy methods used and engaging with elected members earlier in the process.
- > After today's workshop and time to reflect, a second workshop will be used to further refine these ideas so that officers are able to develop these into options for a Council report.



Submissions are QLDC's main method of advocacy and have increased over time

- > Written submissions to formal consultation processes entail QLDC providing advice and recommendations for changes to the policy proposal.
- > Over the last two trienniums the number of submissions QLDC has made has been steadily increasing (Figure One).
- > A key driver for the increase in number of submissions has been **central governments significant reform programme** (resource management, local government, water, environmental, natural hazard reforms).
- > Also, as a high growth district – there may be a heightened sense of urgency or potential impact in responding to consultation processes.
- > QLDC submits because of the potential for these reforms to change local government's ability to deliver, or its operating environment.
- > The 'other' category (tourism, food safety, hospitality, alcohol regulation, health, culture, heritage and tax policy) has also increased over the last triennium, indicating a broadening scope.
- > QLDC makes more submissions than other councils (Attachment B).

Figure One: QLDC Submissions 2018-2025

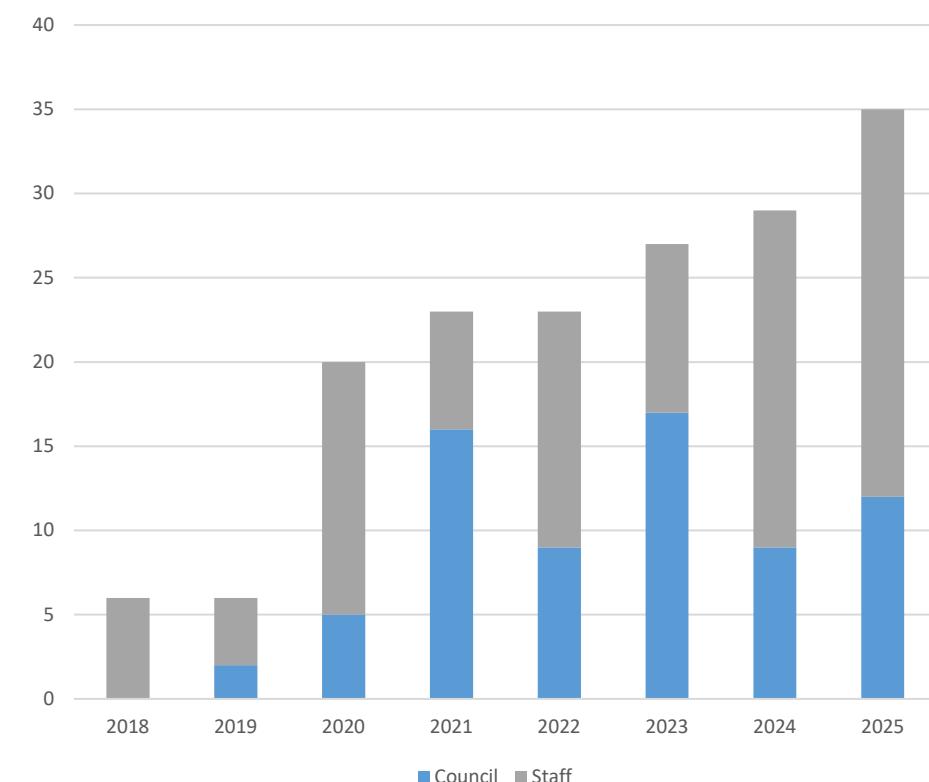


Context: the distinction between Council and staff submissions

- Submissions are either approved and signed off by Council or by staff. The focus for **Council submissions** has been on topics that are strategic, long-term, or have the potential to significantly change QLDC's roles, responsibilities, strategic priorities, or ability to deliver services. **Staff submissions**, in contrast, have typically focused on operational, technical, and implementation-focused matters. Over the last triennium, approximately 40% of QLDC submissions were Council submissions and 60% were staff submissions.

	Council submission	Staff submission
Topic	Strategic, long term or presents the potential for significant change to QLDC's roles and responsibilities, strategic priorities or ability to deliver.	Technical or detailed in nature, they are frequently in the final stages of policy development and operationally focussed.
Past examples of consultation topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Otago Regional Council Annual Plan (2025-2026), Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) local electoral reform issues paper or Energising Queenstown's future electricity infrastructure options for Queenstown (alongside Regional Deal partners). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed changes to the Building Code Clause H1 Energy Efficiency (insulation requirements in housing and other buildings). Proposed amendments to the Litter Act 1979 into Waste Minimisation Act 2008.
Drafting	Led and drafted by the policy team with input sought from SMEs (subject matter experts) across the organisation.	These are led and drafted by SMEs (or specialised teams).
Sign-out	Signed out by elected members.	Signed out either by General Manager or the Chief Executive.

Figure Two: Number of submissions over time (2018-2025)



Prioritisation is needed so that advocacy may be strengthened

- > Theoretically, submissions can be a strong and effective method for advocacy – however this can be highly variable between agencies and topics, and the success/return on investment/impact can be very difficult to track. They are resource-intensive to prepare and review and are often required in tight deadlines, which limits opportunities for broader engagement or deeper analysis.
- > Advocacy, and submissions, sit alongside a range of other core policy team functions, including the review of Council policies, to ensure they remain fit for purpose, and leading bylaw reviews within legislative timeframes. With constrained resourcing and multiple reform programmes underway (though these may slow in 2026 due to the upcoming central government election), we are seeking direction on priority areas.
- > There is a balance to be struck between advocacy work (external focus) and other policy work (internal focus), to meet the objectives of council.
- > The objective of prioritising advocacy topics is to narrow the scope ensure that limited resourcing can be targeted where it is most important. Additionally, it will create an opportunity to improve outcomes for the district (i.e., staff can plan policy positions, shape a broader narrative, proactively engage and advocate for change). This opportunity is outlined in more detail on the following slide.
- > Technical staff submissions are out of scope of this exercise, as these will continue to proceed as determined by GM/ELT.

What changes would we make to improve QLDC advocacy?

Strategic and proactive advocacy

Developing QLDC position would be based on priorities - rather than a specific process. QLDC would be able to tell a bigger story in the way it advocates and shares its positions.

Broader advocacy methods

Staff could be using other advocacy methods (other than formal submissions) i.e. participation in internal and external working groups. Utilising more methods would ensure advocacy is accessible and inclusive, not just relying on written submissions.

These other methods are often more collaborative and provide an opportunity for QLDC to provide input earlier in policy making processes. This ultimately means they are more impactful. This was evident in QLDC advocacy on Energising Queenstown's Future Options which led to positive changes to reflect the interests of the district.

Deeper expertise in priority areas

Staff would be able to specialise in advocacy areas more than current practice. In doing so, they can build expertise, evidence base and proactively develop QLDC policy positions.

Early engagement with elected members

Staff could be engaging earlier with Councillors, where consultation timelines allow. Currently, draft submissions being circulated via email for ~5 working days to councillors.

Advocacy shared with the community

Key findings and recommendations of QLDC's advocacy could be shared with the community. This may foster greater transparency and community trust by sharing how QLDC is advocating for the interests of the district.

Collaborative exercise to determine priorities

- > Our goal is to work together to agree on a finite set of high- and medium-priority areas, recognising that this requires making trade-offs about where time, expertise, and resources will have the most impact.
- > At today's workshop, we aim to complete the following **two stage exercise**:

Stage One: confirming the full list of potential topics.

We will review what's currently captured (Attachment C) and check for gaps. Councillors can add any additional areas that are not included.

Stage Two making prioritisation decisions.

With the agreed list of topics councillors will participate in an exercise to select their high and medium priority topics. Topics that councillors determine high priority areas will be those where Councillors wants to be engaged early, involved in the shaping of policy positions and responsible for signing out submissions. Staff will invest time proactively, develop expertise and broaden advocacy methods (e.g., stakeholder engagement, research).

- > Following this, staff will go away, analyse and synthesis the discussion. The **objective of the second workshop** (on 10 February 2026) will be for councillors to refine, discuss and finalise priorities. This is critical as mentioned, as we cannot focus on all topics and tradeoffs must be made.
- > By the end of the two workshops, we aim to have a finite set of priorities to guide QLDC's advocacy for this triennium. Staff will present this in a paper for the consideration and approval of Council at the 19 March 2026 meeting.

Attachments

Attachment A: Recap - current submission approach

- > The policy team monitors external policy change processes and manages QLDC's submissions work programme. Currently, external policy change proposals are assessed against the following criteria to determine whether QLDC should submit.

"QLDC has subject-matter and policy resource available and where the external policy is assessed as a high priority as:

There is a significant impact on QLDC's core roles and responsibilities, strategic priorities, investments, or projects or on the social, economic, cultural or environmental wellbeing of the community

There is a specific impact on the district or where QLDC's voice on the issue is important

The proposal has important implementation or feasibility issues, including on QLDC human or financial resources

It will require considerable human or financial resources from QLDC, and

It is at the most effective stage of the policy development process to engage."

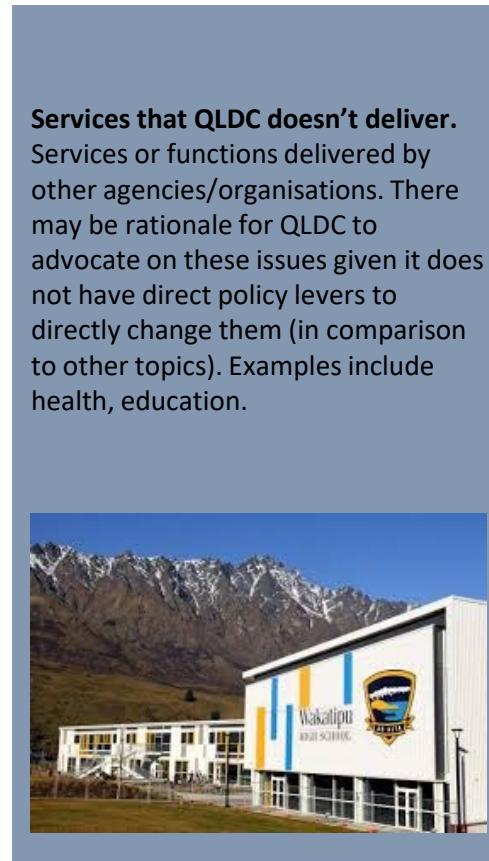
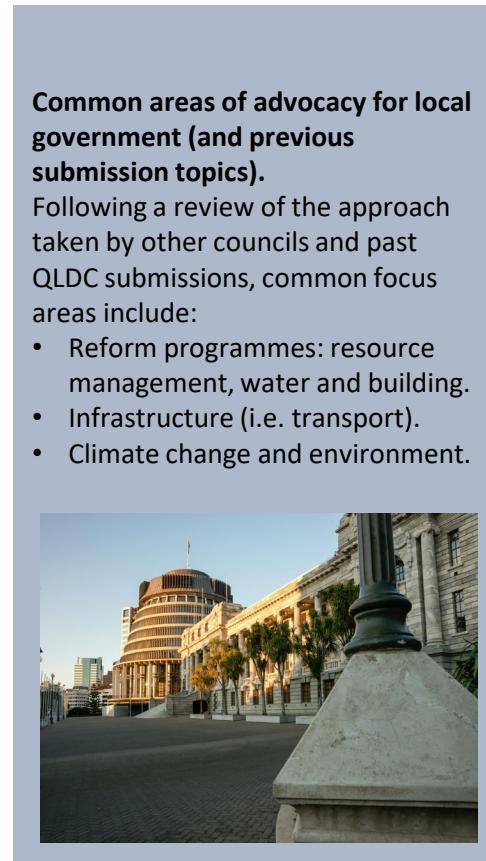
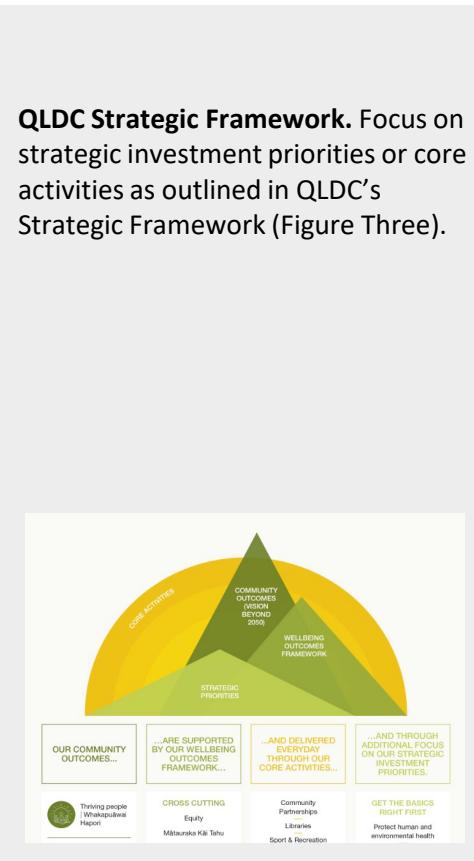
- > If it is determined that QLDC will submit on a proposal, a decision is made as to whether the submission will be a Council-endorsed or a staff submission. There is distinction in the assessment and internal process that is followed depending on the submission-type.
- > Due to the timing of external submission deadlines, it is generally not feasible to present draft Council submissions to a full Council meeting or workshop for prior approval. A draft is circulated via email (for approximately five working days) for feedback before submission. Retrospective approval is then sought at the next council meeting after Chief Executive and Mayor sign-off.
- > Each month the 'Submission Heads' up is developed to provide an overview of upcoming external policy changes impacting the district. The Submission Heads up is discussed with the Mayor and Chief Executive and presented to ELT monthly.

Attachment B: Comparison of submissions across councils

Council	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Queenstown Lakes District Council	23	23	28	29	35
Selwyn District Council					4
Timaru District Council	10	10	13	3	12
Manawatū District Council	-	6	16	1	14
Waipā District Council	14	7	7	-	-
Hurunui District Council	8	4	4	4	4
Waimakariri District Council	-	-	1	-	-
Dunedin City Council	21	23	21	17	10
Hamilton City Council	-	-	30	31	15
Hutt City Council	1	8	6	14	15
Waikato Regional Council	22	18	17	21	11
Otago Regional Council					11

Attachment C: How council could determine the issues that matter most

> There are different options for how advocacy priorities could be determined. The draft list of topics (on the following slides) have used the following as the basis for identifying topics.



Attachment C: Stage One: Confirm list of topics

> This stage focuses on confirming the full list of potential topics, identifying any gaps, and incorporating additional areas that councillors think should be considered. To support this process, we have provided a draft list for discussion and refinement. This list draws on our strategic framework, key aspects of the regional deal proposal, past submissions, and the typical focus areas for local government advocacy. It includes both overarching themes and a set of more detailed sub-topics.

Topic	Examples and sub-topics	Strategic Framework	Regional Deal area	Previous submission	Delivered by other agencies
Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Local Government system change (including, change to service delivery, electoral reform).Regulatory reforms (i.e., financial management, governance).				
Building and Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Building consent system change (i.e., liability settings).Technical change to Building Code or Building Consent.				
Regional Planning (ORC & Otago)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ORC long term plans (i.e. Otago Regional Policy Statement, regional transport).ORC annual planning.Environmental Strategies and Plans (i.e., Biodiversity Strategy).				
Economy, Tourism and Workforce	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Value capture from tourism/visitor economy (i.e. international visitor levy).Economic development and diversification.Workforce development.				
Land Use Planning and Urban Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Resource management system reform (including national policy statements).Planning and environmental rules (i.e., National Environmental Statements for land use, environment).Regional and spatial planning.New funding models for growth and infrastructure (value capture mechanisms or levy to support infrastructure and affordable housing).				
Infrastructure Planning and Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Nationally focussed land transport policies.Three waters infrastructure and services.National infrastructure planning and investment priorities (i.e., National Infrastructure Plan).				

Attachment C: Stage One: Topics continued

Topic	Examples and sub-topics	Strategic Framework	Regional Deal area	Previous submission	Delivered by other agencies
Local Government Regulation and Enforcement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bylaw related legislation (dog control, traffic and parking, navigational safety). Council monitoring and enforcement responsibilities (alcohol, food safety). 				
Natural Hazard and Emergency Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Civil defence management and recovery policy. National climate change adaption and resilience policy. 				
Climate and Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate change mitigation and emissions reduction (i.e. emission reduction targets). National biodiversity and conservation policies (i.e., Predator Free 2050). 				
Energy Infrastructure and Resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local energy infrastructure for future growth. Renewable resources and local energy resilience. 				
Health Infrastructure and Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local health infrastructure. Local service delivery (i.e., new models for delivery, focus areas such as mental health). Health system reform. Local health workforce. 				
Education Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local education infrastructure (to support population growth, including connective transport systems). Education legislative and structural reform. Local education teaching workforce. 				
Waste Management and Minimisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waste minimisation (i.e., recycling, circular economy) Waste infrastructure and landfill. 				
Community, Culture and Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heritage and place management. Crown–iwi partnerships. Community inclusivity and wellbeing. 				