



## OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S CHIEF SCIENCE ADVISOR

Professor Sir Peter Gluckman, KNZM FRSNZ FMedSci FRS  
Chief Science Advisor

---

### Media Release

**21 December, 2015**

#### **Science Advisor looks ahead to 2016 priorities**

As the year draws to a close, Sir Peter Gluckman, the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor is taking stock of the progress made in promoting the use of evidence in public policy formation and the Office's work programme for the first half of 2016.

This year has seen the appointment of further Departmental Science Advisor positions across ministries in the environmental and social sectors. This network is now established with highly accomplished scientists who are also skilled brokers at the interface between science and policy. This Committee of Science Advisors, which also includes the Chief Economist and the Government Statistician, is chaired by Sir Peter. The network has been called upon to provide and feedback on a number of projects, including an evidence review of selected budget bids.

In 2016, Sir Peter and the Science Advisory network will turn their attention to developing further guidance on the procurement and commissioning of research by government departments and agencies and on the engagement of the academic community with government data. This work, expected to take 6 months and including extensive consultation, will likely result in further recommendations to the Prime Minister on the principles and practices for the production and treatment of science based evidence for public policy decision-making and on the interface with academia.

Sir Peter describes this report as the logical next step in a series of reports he has produced on the use of evidence in policy making in New Zealand. The objective of the 2016 project is to produce practical guidance for agencies, research providers and academics on the interface between government departments and the research community. Government departments increasingly seek to commission and use science in their decision-making. Conversely, there is a growing opportunity to promote academic research that requires access to governmental data.

In these interfaces the integrity and independence of the science, its process and its findings must be protected. However, there often needs to be engagement between the policy maker and the research community to ensure the questions addressed can impact on policy processes. The key is how to strike the right balance, with appropriate provisions in place to protect the integrity of both the science and the policy process. The culture of accountability in the public service can be strengthened with principles-based guidance for policy makers on how to treat scientific knowledge production and its use within the public sector.

One other project is well underway and will be delivered in the first half of 2016. This will be on 'decision making in the context of uncertainty,' which looks at popular and scientific understandings of risk, uncertainty and precaution and how these are applied in different contexts. The report is intended to be a discussion starter for New Zealanders about the risks we face, the risks we take, and how we can make better informed decisions about these.

Sir Peter will also be working with government departments on the longer-term research needs of Government and New Zealand in areas such as primary production, conservation and the environment.

He will continue also to devote time to supporting New Zealand's international interests through science diplomacy and to promoting science in society initiatives - in particular those initiatives launched through *A Nation of Curious Minds* and looks forward to visiting many of its school- and community-based science projects throughout the year.

Sir Peter will also be developing initiatives to engage emerging scientists in understanding the science-policy interface.

For more information, contact:

[peter.gluckman@pmcsa.org.nz](mailto:peter.gluckman@pmcsa.org.nz) or +64 (0)9 923 6318

-ENDS-