

Aotearoa New Zealand Infrastructure Strategy Consultation

June 2021

Submitter details:

Name of contact person:	Sam Newton – Advocacy Manager
Organisation name:	New Zealand Recreation Association t/a <i>Recreation Aotearoa</i>
Postal address:	PO Box 11132, Manners Street, Wellington 6142
Telephone number:	027 723 9380
Email:	sam@nzrecreation.org.nz

Submission:

Introduction

1. The New Zealand Recreation t/a Recreation Aotearoa is a registered charity and the organisation responsible for providing leadership, advocacy and professional development opportunities for those involved in the broader recreation sector. We work at an agency, industry and professional level to build capability, develop partnerships, and equip individuals and organisations with the skills they need to deliver high quality recreation experiences that engage participants.
2. Recreation Aotearoa's membership includes recreation policy makers, territorial local authorities, voluntary organisations, regional sports trusts, outdoor recreation businesses, and others involved in the delivery of recreation throughout New Zealand.
3. Our mission is enhancing wellbeing through recreation.
4. Recreation Aotearoa believes recreation is vital to New Zealand society. Recreation is not just about enjoyment, it is about being healthy, engaged, stimulated, and interacting with others, and this occurs via outdoor recreation, community recreation, parks, and aquatic and facility-based recreation centres.
5. Recreation is a major contributor to the physical and mental health of individuals, and to the resilience of our communities. 90 per cent of New Zealanders believe that by being active they are in turn maintaining a good level of health and fitness, and this helps to relieve stress.
6. A thriving recreation industry can also help our nation prosper socially and economically. Play, Active Recreation and Sport contributes \$4.9 billion or 2.3% to our annual GDP, and the sector employs more than 53,000 New Zealanders. The nation's recreation values and opportunities are fundamental to the nation's tourism industry. Approximately 50% of international visitors to New Zealand participate in one form of outdoor recreation or another.
7. Recreation is part of what it is to be a New Zealander. Many of us are members of clubs and groups that enjoy recreation for fun, health and

social reasons. 84% of New Zealanders believe sport and physical activity bring people together and create a sense of belonging.

8. For individuals, recreation contributes to physical and mental wellbeing and provides an opportunity to meet new people. People define themselves and their communities through their recreation opportunities. Recreation fosters community cohesion and resilience and supports the integration of social groups such as diverse ethnic groups. 74% of New Zealanders agree that physical activity helps build vibrant and stimulating communities.
9. Investment in recreation generates tourism opportunities and supports regional development by encouraging skilled professionals and migrants to consider business options in and beyond the main centres.
10. Research shows that recreation makes a significant contribution to social resilience. It allows individuals to thrive, and to connect with each other. This, in turn, makes communities stronger. A society in which people are active and healthy is also more economically sound.
11. Physical inactivity is associated with loss of productivity, health costs, as well as associated costs such as pain and suffering. Healthier, happier individuals are more likely to do well in other areas of their lives, whether it is in social or professional situations. This has a positive flow-on effect for communities and society as a whole.
12. Greater understanding of these benefits and their downstream impacts, along with awareness of how laws and regulations can influence recreation delivery, are key to ensuring that New Zealand's recreation opportunities remain among the world's best.

Specific Comments

13. Recreation Aotearoa submits its support for the proposed 2050 infrastructure vision for New Zealand. We commend its broad and progressive scope beyond traditional and outdated conceptions of infrastructure.
14. However, we note that after this strong start, the strategy tends to revert back to more traditional and narrower conceptions of infrastructure in the remainder of the document.

15. Recreation Aotearoa is particularly supportive of the inclusion of infrastructure that supports access to Recreation, in the vision.
16. Recreation Aotearoa has a specific interest in the provision of places and spaces in which New Zealanders can engage in Active Recreation and Play. When thinking about these spaces and places, it is helpful to understand three types of recreation infrastructure.
17. The three types of infrastructure of interest to Recreation Aotearoa are (a) built facilities that to support Active Recreation and Play, such as aquatic facilities, playgrounds or skate parks; (b) 'non-built' infrastructure that creates opportunities for physical activity such as parks, walking tracks or cycle paths; and (c) the nascent field of infrastructure design that explicitly includes opportunities for physical activity and play in the design of infrastructure projects.
18. Recreation Aotearoa submits its broad support for the decision-making principles articulated in the strategy.
19. Recreation Aotearoa submits that the principle of Integration is particularly relevant to the Recreation sector. We point to the example set by various Regional Sports Trusts who have undertaken Sport and Recreation Facilities planning. These plans are developed by a cluster of adjacent Local Territorial Authorities to assess the current network of facilities, the projected demand on spaces and places and forecasted changes in population, in order to prioritise projects for the region as a whole. This kind of integration avoids duplication, enhances recreational opportunities and ensures efficiency of expenditure at a regional level.
20. However, Recreation Aotearoa submits its disappointment that the Strategy does not pay due regard for, or express value in the terms of, the NZ Treasury Wellbeing Framework. We submit that the Wellbeing Framework would provide the Infrastructure Commission and the Strategy with the perfect set of tools to measure the determinants of New Zealanders' wellbeing, now and through to 2050. In particular, among the 12 domains of wellbeing expressed in the framework, 'Time Use' is closely aligned with Recreation.

21. Finally, we would make the very general point that the Strategy does not pay due regard to the social value of infrastructure spending and the implicit opportunity costs that are incurred when infrastructure decisions are made.