

Hon Grant Robertson

MP for Wellington Central
Deputy Prime Minister
Minister of Finance
Minister for Infrastructure
Minister for Sport and Recreation
Minister for Planning



Catherine Drayton
Chair
Guardians of New Zealand Superannuation
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Dear Catherine

ANNUAL LETTER OF EXPECTATIONS

I'd like to thank you, as well as the rest of the Board and staff for all of your work in the last year, particularly the constructive engagement the Crown Financial Institutions (CFIs) have displayed throughout the development of the Crown Responsible Investment Framework.

In conjunction with this letter I am issuing an enduring letter of expectations that sets out the Government's specific expectations in relation to the Crown Responsible Investment Framework. This letter conveys my priorities and expectations of your institution outside of that Framework.

Government priorities and the response to COVID-19

New Zealand still faces many social and economic uncertainties from COVID-19. Protecting New Zealand and the lives and livelihoods of New Zealanders has been the urgent and abiding consideration of this Government and it remains so.

However, that does not limit the ambition for what this Government means to do. The Government has set out clear priorities to help secure our recovery and improve the living standards and wellbeing of all New Zealanders. The Government has three overarching objectives:

- To keep New Zealanders safe from COVID-19
- To accelerate our economic recovery
- To lay the foundations for a better future

Problems that are decades in the making are not easily or quickly solved but this Government is committed to relentlessly pursuing progress. Three of the country's longest-standing and hardest issues demand continued and determined action: affordable housing and homelessness, child poverty, and the global climate crisis.

Your core role is to efficiently and effectively deliver fiscal strategies that supports New Zealanders' financial wellbeing across generations. However, your funds can have significant impacts on human, social and natural capitals also. I encourage you to consider where you could partner within the public or private sectors to develop investment strategies that can also drive positive environmental or social impacts while delivering the long-term investment returns that are so crucial to the funds.

Expectations for All Crown Financial Institutions

Fit for Purpose

I recognise that the ability of all CFIs to deliver on their legislated purpose means that investment returns may vary from year to year. It is my expectation that the Board, acting as the Crown's agent, will continue to focus on the appropriate balance of risk and return to assure the Fund's investment performance is able to meet its long term policy objectives and obligations.

Should investment performance impact your institution's ability to meet its intended purpose, I expect to be informed of this in a timely manner, including any remedial action the Board will take. Such information should include a detailed explanation of risks, financial or otherwise, which may have an impact on the Crown's fiscal position or cause a prejudicial impact on New Zealand's reputation.

Crown Risk

The nature of your mandate is to accept risk, but the Crown must have a good understanding of the potential fiscal implications to the Crown's consolidated balance sheet. To better understand such risks and implications it is my expectation that your organisation will continue to proactively work with the Treasury and collaborate with the other CFIs to build resilience in the New Zealand economy to future financial shocks.

CFIs should be mindful of their fiduciary responsibilities and statutory duties. Where derivative instruments or leverage are employed in your organisation, I expect that their use is aligned with your entity's purpose and the appropriate level of knowledge, skill, transparency and controls are in place throughout your organisation to ensure that negative financial or reputational outcomes do not impact the Crown.

Partnership

Your organisation is an important asset on the Crown's balance sheet and the aggregate size of the CFIs will increase over time. For the Crown to be effective there needs to be a collaborative approach across all of Government (including CFIs and other Crown Entities).

Your institution can play a part in delivering positive outcomes for New Zealanders through active and constructive engagement. This type of engagement, led by the Board, should permeate throughout your organisation, with a focus on collective outcomes for New Zealanders.

The CFI's collaboration on developing a joint response to the Crown Responsible Investment Framework is a good example of the behaviour I expect, driving an increase in capability and ambition across the CFI system.

A successful partnership should be built on openness and trust. I encourage your institution to maintain a policy of transparency in its operations, expenses and communications across all of Government and adheres to the 'no surprises' convention when dealing with officials and my office.

Citizenship

This Government is committed to acting as a responsible citizen. You can play an important part by: adopting, sharing and promoting investment policies and practices with other areas of Government that are not only consistent with your mandate, but help lift New Zealand's reputational standing as a responsible investor in the international community.

To achieve this, it is my expectation that CFIs maintain robust ethical investment policies which are reviewed regularly and reflect best practice standards both here in New Zealand and internationally.

It should be the goal of all CFIs in fulfilling their mandates to give consideration to the part they can play in New Zealand's financial market landscape, helping make the economy more productive, sustainable and inclusive for all New Zealanders.

The CFIs have a unique role in the future of New Zealand, particularly as we look to accelerate an economic recovery. I encourage you to consider where domestic investments can align with your long-term investment strategies to support the goals of the Government, while remaining consistent with your overarching purpose.

Further to this wider arc of responsibility, CFIs must be seen as 'good citizens' in their home markets; and be cognisant of second order effects that can promote, and certainly not hinder, the development of deep capital markets in New Zealand.

Expectations Specific to the Guardians

Government's Strategic Priorities: I encourage you to continue to explore commercially attractive opportunities to invest in New Zealand assets, including infrastructure, housing and climate-oriented investments. The Guardians' SuperBuild model could support both the New Zealand Super Fund and the Government's mutual objectives.

Responsible investing: I welcome the progress that you have made towards adopting sustainable finance principles and refreshing the Guardians' Responsible Investment strategy. I expect you to continue to utilise the expertise that has been developed in this complex area, and be an effective partner with officials and other CFIs to ensure evolving global best practice is understood and applied into responsible investment policies.

Venture Capital Fund (VCF): The Guardians should continue to apply best practise investment management and should be proactive in your engagement with the Government prior to any significant decisions or communications.

If you have any questions or require further clarification on any of my expectations, please contact Oliver Martin at the Treasury on 04 890 7284 in the first instance.

Yours sincerely



Hon Grant Robertson
Minister of Finance

cc: Matt Whineray
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