

Emerging Technology Policy Working Group

Terms of Reference

Purpose

The Emerging Technology (ET) Policy Working Group aims to provide a consistent policy framework for identifying and managing the national security risks associated with emerging technology for New Zealand, and for balancing these risks with existing economic and national security opportunities.

Context

Emerging technologies are radically novel and fast moving, with the potential to transform the way society operates. They are numerous and varied, and include new, innovative technologies as well as older technologies that are potentially underutilised. Assumptions about their development, use and application often rely on an uncertain and complex relationship between technological, economic and geopolitical trends. This makes it difficult to predict which technologies will become most influential. Many of these technologies are also likely to have an effect (both positive and negative) on New Zealand's future national security and wellbeing in ways that are not yet clear.

The national security system is dealing with many emerging technology risks and opportunities, as they relate to national security policy on emerging technology. While MBIE leads the development and assessment of economic opportunities from potential emerging technologies, related national security risks and benefits cut across the work of several agencies. There is a risk that in the immediate pursuit for businesses and government to secure economic gains from technology, we miss the opportunity to effectively manage associated national security risks. This means key New Zealand sectors could be exposed to undue vulnerabilities.

New Zealand needs a consistent policy framework for applying a holistic due diligence lens to emerging technology decisions – balancing emerging technology national security risks with existing economic and national security opportunities. This working group will bring agencies together to help develop a set of principles to underpin New Zealand's approach to emerging technology opportunity and risks to form the basis of a policy framework.

Scope and Role of the Group

For the purposes of the ET Policy Working Group, emerging technologies are defined in terms of their attributes, which are: (i) radical novelty; (ii) relatively fast growth; (iii) coherence; (iv) prominent impact; and (v) uncertainty and ambiguity. Prominent impact in this context includes “the potential to exert a considerable socio-economic impact” on society.¹ This definition allows the Group to distinguish between technologies that are emerging and have a pervasive effect on the economy and society, such as AI, and other technologies that may have a significant impact in a particular area but do not pass the prominent impact test required to bring them within the scope of the Group.

Key tasks of the Group include:

- a. Developing principles to underpin New Zealand’s approach to emerging technology opportunities and risks to form the basis of a national framework;
- b. Establishing a threshold for evaluating national security risks of emerging technology;
- c. Reviewing national security implications of emerging technology that meet this threshold in light of the developed principles (including opportunities and risks);
- d. Evaluating the adequacy of existing legal and regulatory frameworks to manage the national security risks of emerging technology;
- e. Developing risk mitigation strategies for national security risks of emerging technology;
- f. Identifying priority areas (including technology domains) for policy attention, including through activities like horizon scanning;
- g. Providing policy advice on national security risks of emerging technology and possible risk mitigation strategies; and
- h. Maintaining shared resources and tools.

The Group will prioritise these work areas when developing a forward work programme for the year.

Governance and Reporting

There is no formal reporting requirement. The ET Policy Working Group may choose to report to the Security and Intelligence Board, other governance bodies, and Ministers on a case by case basis.

¹ Rotolo, Hicks, & Martin, 2015.

Meeting Arrangements

The ET Policy Working Group will be co-chaired by MBIE and DPMC and will meet at least once every 6-8 weeks. MBIE will serve as the group's secretariat and will coordinate the working group meetings, including circulating the meeting agenda and providing meeting summaries for group members. Papers or documents required for the working group should be submitted to the secretariat no later than 6 working days prior to a meeting date. The secretariat will circulate the papers to group members no later than 3 working days prior to the next meeting. Workshops and/or intersessional sessions will be held as needed.

Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually.

Membership

The ET Policy Working Group members are drawn from policy, science, regulatory and intelligence communities from across the public sector. The composition of the Group is intended to create a balance between both risk and opportunity-focused agencies. Given the national security subject-matter, it is advisable that members hold a SECRET clearance.

Agencies represented include:

MBIE	Office of the PM's Chief Science Advisor (DPMC)
DPMC	NAB (DPMC)
MFAT	JDGO (NZSIS and GCSB)
DIA	LINZ
MoT	MoD
MPI	NZDF
Police	

Other agencies or organisations may be asked to join on an ad hoc basis or participate in the Group for specific projects.