

The Treasury

Annual Letters of Expectation 2023/24 Information Release

March 2024

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Key to sections of the Act under which information has been withheld:

[23] 9(2)(a) - to protect the privacy of natural persons, including deceased people

[35] 9(2)(g)(ii) - to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through protecting ministers, members of government organisations, officers and employees from improper pressure or harassment;

[39] 9(2)(k) - to prevent the disclosure of official information for improper gain or improper advantage

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Catherine Drayton
Chair
Guardians of New Zealand Superannuation
PO Box 106607
AUCKLAND 1143

[23]

Dear Catherine

ANNUAL LETTER OF EXPECTATIONS

Firstly, I'd like to thank you, your colleagues on the Guardians Board, as well as the rest of the Fund's staff, for all of your work in the last year. I am pleased with the relationships you have maintained with my office and with Treasury officials over the past year.

I also draw your attention to the annex, attached to this letter, which outlines my expectations common to all Crown Financial Institutions.

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.

Independent Review 2024

As required under your Act, a five yearly independent review will fall due in 2024, necessitating planning and preparation to commence during calendar year 2023. I expect you and your staff to work collaboratively with Treasury officials in the preparation phase and with the eventual reviewer once the review has commenced.

Responsible Investment framework

I acknowledge your leadership among the CFIs in developing and operationalising a Responsible Investment framework (RI framework). As the RI framework becomes increasingly embedded in your work, I expect that enhanced reporting against it will continue to evolve over the next year. I note that you have recently moved to the MSCI Paris-aligned benchmark and look forward to continuing evolution in this area. I also commend the steps you are taking towards sustainable finance more generally and encourage you to continue in that direction.

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.

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 on behalf of the Crown, 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 affect 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 economic shocks.

The war in Ukraine and its rippling affects throughout the globe show how interconnected New Zealand is with international markets. It is my expectation that you will reflect on the impact that an uncertain geo-political landscape and the investment risks associated with it has on the Fund and on New Zealand Inc.

As for all CFIs, you should be mindful of your 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.

If you have any questions or require further clarification on any of my expectations, please contact Robert Barton at the Treasury in the first instance.

Your sincerely

Hon Grant Robertson
Minister of Finance

cc: Matt Whineray
Chief Executive
Guardians of NZ Superannuation
[23]

ANNEX 1: Expectations for All Crown Financial Institutions

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an extensive impact on households and businesses nationwide, with many social and economic uncertainties remaining. While protecting New Zealand and the lives and livelihoods of New Zealanders has been the urgent and abiding consideration of this Government, it does not limit the ambition for what this Government means to do.

Government priorities

In 2020, the Government 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 support New Zealanders' financial wellbeing across generations. However, your funds can have significant impacts on human, social and natural capitals as well. 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.

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.

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 to adhere 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.