



Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor  
Kaitohutohu Mātanga Pūtaiao Matua ki te Pirimia

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## Terms of Reference

# Building youth resilience through critical thinking and digital citizenship skills

(working title; consider te ao Māori framing)

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### Background

Access and susceptibility to online information which is false, ranging from being misleading to being harmful and hateful<sup>1</sup>, are rapidly growing global challenges. The increase in use of the internet and social media by our children and young people poses a significant risk for Aotearoa New Zealand. The threats include the undermining of social cohesion, well-being and a well-informed citizenry. The threat is very real. The [Disinformation Project](#) has been monitoring this growth, and their recent report shows how the February-March 2022 parliamentary protest was projected on social media which seeded and spread the false and harmful information that underpinned the events that took place.<sup>2</sup> But importantly, the tools and the communities afforded by the internet and social media also can provide the means to increase citizenship skills.

This general area was addressed by Sir Peter Gluckman in 2018, who released a report prepared by the Chief Science Advisors (CSAs) for Education, Health, Justice and MSD<sup>3</sup> which foreshadowed many of the issues we see today. The CSA for the Ministry of Education, Professor Stuart McNaughton, has continued this work and recently highlighted the central role of education in mitigating the risks and increasing the positive skills, by promoting critical thinking and critical literacies.<sup>4</sup> A working paper by him and other members of the Science Advisors Forum<sup>5</sup> proposed a multi-pronged approach to reducing the threat, including legislative and regulatory approaches. This project will build on these reports.

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<sup>1</sup> False and harmful information includes: misinformation (use of false information that people didn't create, but without the intention to hurt others); disinformation (false information created with the intention of harming a person, group, or organization, or even a country), and mal-information (true information used with ill intent). Wardle, C. & Derakhshan, H. (2018). <https://rm.coe.int/information-disorder-toward-an-interdisciplinary-framework-for-research/168076277c>

<sup>2</sup> Hannah, K., Hattotuwa, S. & Taylor, K. The murmur of information disorders: Aotearoa New Zealand's mis- and disinformation ecologies and the Parliament Protest. (2022). <https://thedisinfoproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/The-murmur-of-information-disorders-May-2022-Report-SHORT-VERSION.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Gluckman et al., 2018: A Commentary of Digital Futures and Education, Office of the PM's Chief Science Advisor.

<sup>4</sup> Stuart McNaughton, (2022). [Digital-Literacy-a-review.pdf \(education.govt.nz\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> Stuart McNaughton (Chief Science Advisor, Ministry of Education), John Roche (Chief Science Advisor, Ministry for Primary Industries), Hema Sridha (Chief Science Advisor, Ministry for Defence), and Jessica Berentson-Shaw (The Workshop). (2022) Dealing with mis information in the digital age: Prevention and intervention for Aotearoa New Zealand. (Link to follow)

Core to a preventive and long-term solution is an educational focus across the life course and at each level of provision, from classroom instruction through to the national curriculum. A similar national approach was adopted by Finland in 2016, when they added information literacy and strong critical thinking to the national school curriculum, at all year levels. This and other approaches overseas will be assessed as part of an evidence base to build resilience in our youth.

## Aim of project

This project seeks to provide a localised and detailed evidence synthesis of how to support children and young people in Aotearoa to:

- a) be more resilient to online manipulation and harassment, including conspiracy theories; and
- b) increase their digital citizenship skills and understand how to use the internet to interact positively with others.

It will support the specific objectives of an education system approach to:

- reduce young people's susceptibility to inappropriate and dangerous online messaging through increased levels of critical thinking and literacy skills
- develop digital citizenship skills (including self-regulation and social and emotional skills) for using the internet and especially social media
- reduce misuses of the internet and social media
- provide interventions which reduce the harmful and hurtful effects of online messaging
- develop system level changes in response to the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the terrorist attack on Christchurch masjidain findings that education has a significant role to play in prevention of such events.<sup>6</sup>

It will draw on the international and national evidence base, with particular attention given to Māori researchers and practitioners who bring a strengths-based approach to foster resilience in tamariki.

## Draft scope

If this project is of interest to the PM, the scope, objectives, workstreams and authors for the project will be finalised in conjunction with experts in Te Ao Māori and Mātaraunga Māori perspectives, such as the Mātuaranga Iwi Leaders Group with the Ministry of Education/Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga. This expertise will be essential for developing appropriate advice for educational provisions in Māori medium education. We will also seek Pacific perspectives.

## Summary of workstreams

- 1. Context:** This workstream will analyse the global and local context and explain the approach taken for the report. It will also provide definition of key terms such as forms of harmful and hateful information, 'resilience' and digital citizenship skills. It will describe how the social and emotional skills and those of critical thinking and literacy are complementary and are needed to develop digital citizenship and resilience.

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<sup>6</sup> The relevant chapter from the Royal Commission is here: <https://christchurchattack.royalcommission.nz/the-report/findings-and-recommendations/chapter-5/> Recommendation 36 is: Invest in opportunities for young New Zealanders to learn about their role, rights and responsibilities and on the value of ethnic and religious diversity, inclusivity, conflict resolution, civic literacy and self-regulation

2. **Curriculum and instructional changes:** This workstream will outline how changes currently underway by the Ministry of Education/Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga, including the 'curriculum refresh' process and development of the 'Common Practice Model' for instruction are able to support the objectives and what changes or new directions might be needed.
3. **School programmes and interventions:** This workstream will describe what school-wide programmes and interventions currently provided by the Ministry of Education/Te Tāhuhu o te Mātauranga, may directly or indirectly contribute to the objectives.<sup>7</sup> It will review the evidence for how these might be best used, or what new approaches are required in the context of international evidence. It will also examine workforce familiarity with tools and approaches. Are teachers using aware of the skills and tools they need, and are they using them?
4. **National uptake, coherence and consistency:** One of the major challenges to address is how to guarantee consistent and equitable implementation, with local adaptation where necessary. This workstream will examine the challenges of scaling successful policies and reducing inequities.
5. **Engagement with parents and whānau:** The current generation of parents is the first to have to consider how best to develop these new forms of resilience. This work stream will examine examples of best practise for how parents and whānau and schools can work together to optimise the objectives.

## Process

- Scope, objectives and workstreams and authorship finalised in collaboration with a diverse group of experts.
- Co-authors to draft the report with support from the OPMCSA and peer review from a wide reference group of experts and stakeholders.
- The report will be delivered to the Prime Minister and Ministry of Education and later it will be made public on the PMCSA website.

## Timeline

- Pre-election with specific timing TBD, commensurate with the size and ambition of the project.

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<sup>7</sup> No one current programme has the full school wide focus for the resilience and include PB4L, NetSafe, and Mana Ake.