MEDIA RELEASE: Islands for the Future of Humanity

For immediate release: 16 November 2026

New Zealand needs survival plans, not just priority lists, to ride out global catastrophe

New Zealand plans its infrastructure for earthquakes and floods, but its biggest risks start overseas, Dr Matt Boyd of the charity “Islands for the Future of Humanity” told last week's **National Lifeline Utilities Forum in Hamilton**.

New Zealand imports all its liquid fuel, most of its fertiliser, and many medicines and spare parts, and its data runs through a handful of undersea cables. Nuclear war, a pandemic worse than Covid-19, a major cyber-attack abroad or trade collapse could cut them for months or years.

"Most critical infrastructure thinking stops at the border," Dr Boyd said. "If parts, fuel and contractors can't arrive, recovery isn't restoring what existed. It's reorganising to survive."

In *Policy Quarterly* last year, Dr Boyd and Professor Nick Wilson (University of Otago) found the government's long-term hazards briefing focused on familiar local hazards, omitting global catastrophe and the cascading crises that could trigger one.

This year's fuel shock showed the gap. Organisations competed to get onto the government's diesel priority list. That is not a survival plan.

"A priority list without communication of quantities or a Plan B isn't a plan," he said.

New Zealand needs separate, survival-level plans, quantified in calories of food, litres and the minimum consumption of each essential service and sector. Those numbers can be calculated now, before a crisis.

The new Emergency Management Act requires essential infrastructure to keep functioning "to the fullest possible extent". Islands for the Future of Humanity calls on the next government to:

- widen the National Vulnerability Assessment to global dependencies, assuming no outside help arrives
- set quantified, survival-level Plan B targets for liquid fuel, food and essential services
- treat food production as critical infrastructure, under a National Food Security Strategy
- publish a national risk register with scenarios, likelihoods and Plan B options, and let citizens choose among them through citizens' assemblies.

"We need resilience infrastructure, not just resilient infrastructure," he said

There are grounds for hope. The recent *No Place to Hide* review, which Dr Boyd co-authored, finds New Zealand is among very few places well placed to ride out a global catastrophe, and the *NZCat* report shows it could feed itself even through nuclear winter, with planning. Two-thirds of New Zealanders want the government to plan for global catastrophe.

"Less exposed, but only prepared through anticipation," Dr Boyd said.

ENDS

Contact: Dr Matt Boyd, Islands for the Future of Humanity, +64 223512350, matt@adaptresearchwriting.com

Notes for editors

- Islands for the Future of Humanity is a New Zealand registered charity (CC63160): islandfutures.earth
- Talk: audio, slides; forum report: https://adaptresearchwriting.com/2026/11/14/its-never-just-one-thing-catastrophe-lessons-from-the-2026-national-lifeline-utilities-forum/
- Research: *Policy Quarterly* (2025); *No Place to Hide*; *NZCat* report; 2025 survey