

Kia ora,

On behalf of the Te Waka team, I hope you've had a great start to 2024.

The first quarter of the year has been a busy one for our team, with lots of activity across our four strategic pillars: insights and intelligence, industry growth, regional advocacy, and collaboration and partnerships.

In February, we participated in the 2024 New Zealand Economics Forum, where a clear theme surfaced – the need for targeted leadership and discipline in allocating our country's resources, focusing on areas with the most compelling evidence of enhancing wellbeing and fostering long-term productivity growth.

Renewable energy is a sector with significant growth potential for the region and New Zealand at large. In partnership with EECA, we brought more than 80 Waikato leaders from across the energy sector together for the launch of the Waikato Regional Energy Transition Accelerator Programme (RETA). This initiative highlights our commitment to understanding the local challenges and opportunities in reducing emissions from process heat.

We also had the opportunity to share insights on the Regional Leadership panel at the Offshore Renewable Energy Forum about the crucial role of offshore energy, the opportunities for regional development and the importance of collaboration.

We continue to provide region-specific insights and have updated our economic data offerings, including enhancements to our regional economic dashboard and sector analysis, along with analysis of the latest Regional GDP data published by Statistics NZ.

Our latest Waikato Business Sentiment Survey is currently open. The survey responses will provide valuable insights into the business landscape, guiding our recommendations for strategic investment and prioritisation decisions.

Another key focus for us is the long-term planning process our regional and district councils are undertaking, and how decisions set to be made could affect the future of economic development in the Waikato.

We believe strongly in the importance of a regional approach to economic development.

Te Waka is the only regionally focused economic development agency working for the Waikato's long-term prosperity. Economic development drives the Waikato region's broader growth goals, and Te Waka's work is a key part of that.

We will continue to encourage those in our network to have their say on the future of economic development in the Waikato by participating in council consultation processes.

Looking ahead, the upcoming quarter has exciting prospects on the horizon. We will continue to support the development of the region's tech sector, including being the regional coordinator for Techweek in May. We're also looking forward to the opportunity to welcome international and local businesses leaders to Fielddays® in mid-June for four days of networking and showcasing the latest innovations in the agri sector.

As we move ahead, our commitment to delivering value through advocacy, partnerships and insights remains, aligned closely with the economic priorities of the Waikato region.

Ngā mihi



Fiona Carrick | CEO

A Snapshot of the Quarter

Key Achievements

Quarter 1 was a busy start to 2024. Below is a summary of Quarter 1's key highlights and achievements. You can find a more detailed report for each activity in the Appendix.

Strategic Pillar	Highlights and Achievements
Insights & Intelligence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Q1 Te Waka attended and shared reflections from several conferences in alignment with our regional economic priorities, including the NZ Economics Forum, the Te Hono Māori Te Pou Tuangāhuru Conference, and the NZ Offshore Renewable Energy Forum (at which Te Waka spoke on the Regional Leadership panel). We continue to update and evolve the range of economic data and insights we share, including updates to our regional economic dashboard and sector pages, and analysis of the latest Regional GDP data published by Statistics NZ. The latest Waikato Business Sentiment Survey is now open – we encourage you to complete and share the survey which is available here.
Industry Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting development of the Renewable Energy sector has been a priority focus area for Te Waka this quarter. In partnership with EECA we brought together over 80 Waikato leaders from across the energy sector for the launch of the Waikato Regional Energy Transition Accelerator Programme (RETA). We also welcomed the publication of the New Zealand Offshore Wind Industry National Impact Study. We continue to support the development of the Waikato Technology sector, including supporting the delivery of several industry workshops on the prototype tech apprenticeship model, promoting Techweek24 which is running from 20-26 May, and securing TechStep funding for a technology careers event in Te Kuiti later this year. Te Waka is also supporting the development of a Regional Aquaculture Strategy and Implementation Plan via our participation in the Waikato Regional Aquaculture Group. In support of the International Education sector, we attended the Civic and Cultural welcoming event for all new international students studying in the region. We have also secured Education New Zealand funding to deliver an inter-regional tour for international education agents in April.
Regional Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The quarter Waka lodged submissions on the Draft 2024 Future Proof Strategy, the Draft Waikato Regional Land Transport Plan 2024-2054, and the updated Draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport 2024-34. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Our Future Proof Strategy submission focussed on supporting robust alignment between the 30-year spatial strategy and the Waikato's agreed regional economic priorities. Our Transport submissions focussed on supporting economic growth and productivity and the importance of collaboration between the Government and Future Proof on regional transport planning and investment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Several new stories were published on Waikato.com this quarter, profiling innovative local companies and initiatives from across the region, including Mynd, Nothing Naughty, Gr8 Job Hauraki, Onetai, and Dynamo6. Te Waka was also interviewed for a recent Listener article, discussing the role of the primary sector and tech businesses in supporting the growth and vibrancy of the Waikato region.
<p>Collaborations & Partnerships</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In February Te Waka hosted the Waikato Economic Development Forum, bringing together economic development practitioners from across the region. The next meeting will be hosted by South Waikato District Council in May. Te Waka has supported promotion of the metro freight study being undertaken by the Future Proof Transport Working Group. We were pleased to support Foodstuffs in the delivery of their 2024 Emerging Supplier Forum at Innovation Park in Hamilton, providing an opportunity for small to medium businesses to gain insight into the process of becoming a Foodstuffs supplier partner.

Our focus for next quarter

In the upcoming quarter, Te Waka intends to prioritise delivery of a focussed work programme including:

- Delivery of the April 2024 **Business Sentiment Survey**, currently out for responses.
- Analysis of the initial **Census Data** results, due to be published in late May.
- Supporting **Renewable Energy** development, including supporting delivery of the EECA RETA programme, engaging with prospective investors, and participating in government policy development processes.
- Ongoing support for the **Technology** sector including supporting the tech apprenticeship initiative, overseeing regional delivery of Techweek24, and preparation for the Te Kuiti tech event.
- Delivering the inter-regional tour for **International Education** agents in April.
- **Agri and Food** sector support via our involvement in the Waikato Regional Aquaculture Group, supporting and attending Fielddays®, and preparing for our 2024 Agribusiness Seminar later in the year.
- Making **submissions** on local and central government policies where relevant, including engagement with council long term planning processes.
- Analysing **Budget 2024**, scheduled to be delivered on 30 May, to understand the implications and opportunities for the Waikato.

APPENDIX – FULL UPDATE ON QUARTER 1 ACTIVITIES

Insights & Intelligence

Reflections from the 2024 NZ Economics Forum



In February we attended the 2024 New Zealand Economics Forum, from which a clear theme emerged – the need for focused leadership and discipline to invest our nation’s limited resources in areas with the strongest evidence of delivering improved wellbeing and long-term productivity growth.

Read our article with reflections from the conference and their relevance to the Waikato [here](#).

Reflections from Te Hono Māori Te Pou Tuangāhuru Conference

Also in February we were grateful to attend the Te Hono Māori Te Pou Tuangāhuru conference at Tūrangawaewae Marae, commemorating a decade of Māori agribusiness innovation and exploring industry futures.



The event enabled thought-provoking discussions on strategic futures thinking in the context of accelerating technology change, significant taiao/environmental challenges, the application of Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge systems), political change and uncertainty, and demographic change.

Read our reflections on the conference [here](#).

Reflections from the 2024 NZ Offshore Renewable Energy Forum

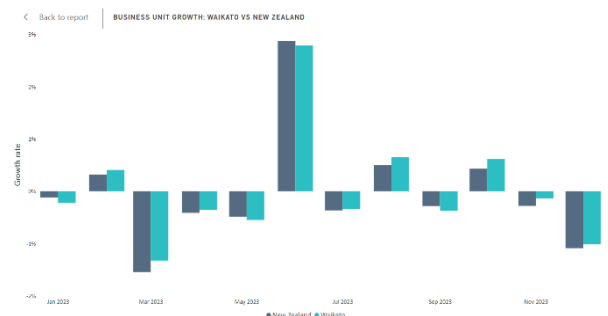


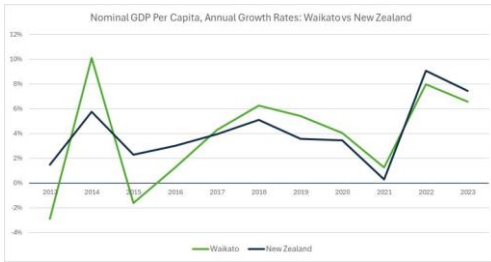
Te Waka was pleased to be invited to speak at the 2024 NZ Offshore Renewable Energy Forum on the Regional Leadership panel session. In our reflections on the Forum we call for a clear strategic framework for making decisions, working towards a shared vision for what we want the energy sector to deliver for New Zealand.

Read our full article on the forum [here](#).

Regional Economic Data and Insights

The team has been busy making updates to the economic data and insights shared on our website, www.waikato.com. This has included updates to our [Regional Economic Dashboard](#) to add Business Unit growth data for the Waikato region, and updates to our [Sector pages](#) to provide information about local training providers and workforce initiatives that businesses can engage with to support talent development.





We also analysed the latest Regional GDP data from Statistics NZ, published in March. This data showed that while the Waikato region continues to be one of the fastest growing regional populations in the country, our GDP growth is not keeping pace. This indicates that we are not generating enough productive growth from our increased population.

Read our full analysis of the Regional GDP data [here](#).

Waikato Regional Business Sentiment Survey

We have just launched our first Waikato Regional Business Sentiment Survey for 2024. Acknowledging the pressure that many businesses are facing at present, we have shortened the survey to reduce respondent burden. The survey focuses on key indicators of sentiment, regional performance, and business priorities.

We encourage everyone who leads or works for a business in the Waikato region to complete and share the survey, which is available [here](#).



Industry Growth

Renewable Energy



Supporting development of the renewable energy sector has been a priority focus area for Te Waka this quarter. In partnership with EECA (the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Authority), we brought together over 80 Waikato leaders from across the energy sector for the launch of the Waikato Regional Energy Transition Accelerator Programme (RETA).

With local lines companies, manufacturers, iwi leaders and council representatives among those in the room, we're gathering on-the-ground insight and understanding of the barriers and opportunities specific to the Waikato. Learn more about the RETA programme [here](#).

This quarter we also welcomed the publication of the [New Zealand Offshore Wind Industry National Impact Study](#), which delves further into the potential of this key growth opportunity for the Waikato region. The study uncovers the immense potential of offshore wind while identifying and mitigating possible negative impacts. The west Auckland-Waikato coast is identified as a key location with high potential for development and is considered among the best offshore wind resources.

Te Waka will continue to engage with the various offshore wind developers that have expressed interest in developing the industry in the Waikato and with the Government as it develops the regulatory framework for offshore wind.



Technology

Developing apprenticeship models

We continue to support the Waikato Tertiary Tech Alliance, hosted by the Ministry of Education, in the development of an apprenticeship model for the local technology sector. We have supported the delivery of multiple industry workshops this quarter that have refined the initial prototype developed in late 2023 and more clearly identified the most critical skills we need to develop for those wanting to start careers in the tech industry.



Further industry engagement and workshops are planned for the coming months to complete the pilot design.

Techweek24



As the regional coordinator for Techweek24, Te Waka is actively promoting Techweek24 as an opportunity for local tech businesses to run events that spark technology conversations. Running from 20-26 May this year, the Techweek24 festival is open to all. Whether you're planning the launch of a new product, networking with potential investors, holding a hackathon or a family day – this diverse, open-source festival is a chance to celebrate the world-first, world-class tech that's being created in the Waikato.

Learn more about submitting an event for Techweek24 [here](#).

Tech Step Te Kuiti

Building on our engagement with workforce development stakeholders in the Waitomo District, Te Waka is pleased to have secured TechStep funding to support the delivery of a technology focussed event in Te Kuiti later this year.

The event will focus on showcasing career pathways into the technology industry, and we aim to feature a mix of speakers and interactive booths/demonstrations, including Māori and Pasifika speakers with local connections, local training providers that can advise on education and work-experience pathways, and opportunities for hands-on technology experiences.

If you're interested in supporting or participating in this event, please [get in touch](#).



Aquaculture

Te Waka is a member of the Waikato Regional Aquaculture Group that is supporting the development and delivery of a Regional Aquaculture Strategy. This quarter we have provided input into the refinement of the draft strategy and implementation plan, which we expect will be published by the Waikato Regional Council next quarter.

Promoting International Education

In March all new international students studying in the Waikato were welcomed to the region at the Civic and Cultural welcome event hosted at The University of Waikato. We were pleased to attend this event which was a great opportunity to welcome and celebrate 2024's cohort of international students that build our global connections, and add vibrancy and diversity to our region.

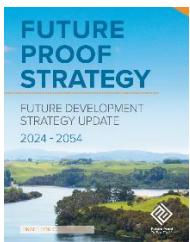


Te Waka has also secured Education New Zealand funding to deliver an inter-regional tour for international education agents, in partnership with Auckland Unlimited and Education Tauranga. Four international agents will be touring the region in April, representing Vietnam, Thailand and Latin America.

International education is worth more than \$280 million to the Waikato region and worth over \$5.1 billion to New Zealand overall.

Regional Advocacy

Submission: Future Proof Strategy



Te Waka submitted on the Draft 2024 Future Proof Strategy to support robust strategic alignment between the 30-year spatial strategy and the Waikato's agreed regional economic development priorities.

Our submission made a series of recommendations, highlighting the need for bold leadership and for difficult trade-off decisions to be made with regional economic objectives and enabling social outcomes at the core.

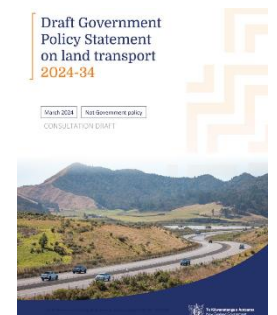
Submission: Waikato Regional Land Transport Plan

In alignment with Te Waka's delivery against the Waikato & Bay of Plenty Freight Action Plan, we made a short submission on the Draft Waikato Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP) 2024-2054. Our submission was broadly supportive of the draft RLTP, with specific recommendations made in relation to the 'Growth and Economic Development' regional policy area.

Submission: Draft Government Policy Statement on Land Transport

Also aligned to the Freight Action Plan, Te Waka consulted with industry in preparing our submission on the revised (March 2024) Draft Government Policy Statement (GPS) on Land Transport 2024-34.

Our submission was supportive of the strong focus and high level of priority placed on supporting economic growth and productivity, along with the increased focus on maintenance and resilience. We provided specific recommendations in relation to opportunities for the government to work collaboratively with Future Proof, the need to enable strategic investment in public transport in high growth regions like the Waikato, and the opportunity to optimise use of existing transport assets in the region to support value for money.



Sharing Waikato Stories



During the quarter we were pleased to share several new Waikato stories, profiling innovative local companies and initiatives from across the region, including [Mynd](#) based in Raglan, [Nothing Naughty](#) from Tīrau, [Gr8 Job Hauraki](#), Taupō's [Onetai](#), and an update on the expansion of [Dynamo6](#) in Hamilton.

We were also interviewed for a recent [Listener article](#) (paywalled), discussing the role of the primary sector and tech businesses in supporting the growth and vibrancy of the Waikato region.



Collaborations & Partnerships

Waikato Economic Development Forum

Te Waka continues to host the Waikato Economic Development Forum, bringing together economic development practitioners from across the region. Our February meeting highlighted a very busy start to the year, with a strong focus on the long-term planning processes of the various district councils in the region.

We are looking forward to our next Forum meeting to be hosted by South Waikato District Council in May.

Future Proof Transport Working Group

Te Waka was pleased to support promotion of the metro freight study being undertaken by the Future Proof Transport Working Group. The study is focussed on gathering industry insights to better understand the barriers and future opportunities for freight routes in the metro areas in and around Hamilton. This metro freight study will complement the inter-regional analysis undertaken for the Waikato & Bay of Plenty Freight Action Plan, and we look forward to seeing the results of the study in the coming weeks.

MSD and Whaikaha Te Rapa Office Opening



During the quarter we celebrated the opening of the new Te Rapa office for the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) Waikato Regional Office, MSD Hamilton Contact Centre, and Enabling Good Lives Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People.

Bringing together these key social support services into a fit-for-purpose space will support greater collaboration and the delivery of critical government services in our region that enhance community wellbeing, social cohesion, and economic development.

Foodstuffs Supplier Forum

Following the successful forum in 2023, we were pleased to support Foodstuffs in the delivery of their 2024 Emerging Supplier Forum at Innovation Park in Hamilton. The Forum was an opportunity for small to medium food manufacturers and other suppliers to gain insight into the process of becoming a Foodstuffs supplier partner.

