

Quarterly Update

July - September 2022



Executive Summary

Kia ora koutou,

The end of September brings to a close my first three months as Chief Executive of Te Waka. I'm proud to present a recap of the latest quarter during which the team has planned and activated a wealth of activity across our four priority areas: facilitation, connection, advocacy and data and insights.

This quarter we have progressed the Waikato & Bay of Plenty Freight Action Plan, led hui in the education and technology sectors, explored opportunities to power up Māori business networks and collated cutting-edge insights for sharing with local businesspeople. That's just a snapshot: read on for our full summary.

Grouping our activity to the four priorities identified above enables my team to focus on the mahi that contributes directly to the purpose of Te Waka: lifting economic performance across the region and improving the wellbeing of Waikato people and communities.

Waikato tops the charts

We welcomed the results of the latest Westpac Regional Economic Survey, which recorded a 23% surge in economic confidence in the Waikato during the September quarter, placing our region at the top of the nationwide confidence charts.

Alongside the end of the drought and record high milk prices, the opening of the Ruakura Inland Port is a development said to have boosted business confidence, and we have no doubt that the impact of this investment will be widely felt.



As highlighted by our Freight Action Plan, the freight and logistics sector is a key driver of economic development in the Waikato. This project will unlock significant supply chain efficiencies for importers and

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exporters in our region, and we applaud Tainui Group Holdings and the Port of Tauranga for their forward thinking in establishing this piece of infrastructure.

Unlocking agribusiness potential

Experts and industry leaders came together last month to discuss the Agribusiness Agenda at Te Waka's annual Agribusiness Seminar. With climate resilience, the labour market and agritech innovation all on the agenda, the conversation about how to unlock the potential of our agribusiness sector is ongoing and one we're committed to being part of.

Thank you to our presenters and panellists, and to the guests who joined us.



Business Sentiment Survey

This month we will open our regular Business Sentiment Survey for response. This survey provides valuable insights for our organisation and others to make decisions regarding strategic planning, direction and investment. Please keep an eye out for it in your inbox; we look forward to receiving your responses.

Ngā mihi



Fiona Carrick | CEO

Facilitation

Learn Waikato

Te Waka facilitated the formal [launch of Learn Waikato](#) in September. We introduced the website, resources, and digital assets with an interactive toolkit for both onshore and offshore education providers and stakeholders. These tools will enable them to promote Waikato as an ideal destination for international students planning to study in New Zealand. These resources will equip our stakeholders with better knowledge about how to approach international marketing of the region and inform any future marketing activities.



The launch enabled us to lead engagement with national and regional education sector stakeholders, with the support of our steering group members and funding from Education New Zealand Manapou ki te Ao. The event welcomed 50+ attendees including members of the Thai community, as the project now moves into its second phase, targeting Thailand as a key international growth market for the Waikato education sector.

Te Waka has secured funding from Education New Zealand Manapou ki te Ao for a marketing campaign in Thailand this financial year. Through this project we aim to increase the volume of international students from Thailand that come to study in the Waikato region by 20% by the end of 2023.



Māori Business Directory and Toolbox

Te Waka is committed to establishing a Māori Business Directory for the Waikato region alongside a toolbox which will identify providers available to support the growth of Māori businesses. While our priority is to develop a regionally focussed solution, we also recognise the value of exploring options to be a part of a national database, particularly to unlock social procurement opportunities for local Māori businesses.

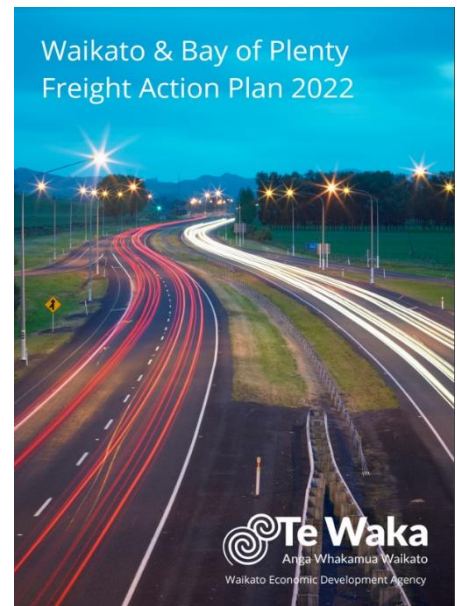
On that basis, Te Waka is exploring the opportunity to work with Māori Verse Limited (Māoriverse) to enable delivery of a Māori Business Directory and toolbox that has strong Waikato representation. Māoriverse, a graduate of the Kōkiri 2022 business accelerator programme, will launch its national directory in December 2022. We are working with Māoriverse to explore opportunities to extend their directory to ensure strong representation and support for Māori businesses within the Waikato.

Freight Action Plan

Following the launch of the [Waikato & Bay of Plenty Freight Action Plan](#) in June we have been focussed on raising awareness of the plan and meeting with a wide range of interested stakeholders to capture feedback that will inform our approach to delivery. Feedback received has been highly constructive, with many stakeholders offering to be involved in active delivery of the action plan.

Key feedback themes and stakeholder suggestions include:

- Broadening the focus to incorporate connections north to Auckland and south to Taranaki
- Developing more granular forecasts and a stronger evidence base to enable prioritisation and support meaningful advocacy
- Significant stakeholder concerns about key roading projects including SH1 Cambridge to Piarere, Southern Links, the SH21 connection between SH1 and SH3, and the SH29 connection between Waikato & Bay of Plenty
- Challenges in attracting trucking companies to engage with programmes aimed at training drivers.



Connection

Education Leaders Forum

In September Te Waka hosted the third meeting of the newly established Education Leaders Forum, which brings leaders and representatives from local education institutions together with the aim of supporting the sustainable growth of the Waikato education sector and boosting its local economic and social impact. This forum is currently considering a range of potential initiatives aligned to its three goals to act on as a collective:

Goals (How)	Building strategic capabilities through connection	Improving learner transitions and their experience of education	Supporting sustainable growth of the education sector
Objectives (Outcomes)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waikato Education leaders are confident in their strategic capability to drive transformation and manage a complex, changing environment • Waikato Education and Business leaders build strong connections that bridge disconnects and enable them to collaborate more effectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional leaders understand and improve the transition frameworks used to support learners on their journey from education to employment • Regional leaders collaborate to develop and implement best practice approaches to support learner wellbeing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional leaders collaborate to manage education growth pressures (e.g. oversubscribed learning spaces) and pursue education growth opportunities (e.g. attracting international students) • Regional leaders collaborate to grow the volume and capacity of the local education workforce

Once a prioritised set of initiatives is agreed, Te Waka will act in a facilitation capacity to support delivery of these industry-led initiatives, for example, inviting businesses to get involved in order to support better connections between our local education and business leaders.

Technology – The Cultivate Trust



Te Waka led the organising committee for the Cultivate Trust launch event on 23 September. The event, attended by over 90 members and supporters of the local tech sector, was very well received and represents a significant milestone: the establishment of an industry-led forum that aims to accelerate the growth, success and diversity of the Waikato's technology and innovation sector, while identifying and inspiring future generations of innovators.

The launch is the first of a series of Cultivate Trust events aimed at increasing engagement within the tech sector and creating a regional database of tech-enabled businesses.



Māori Economic Development Cross-Regional Collaboration

To strengthen Te Waka's work in supporting Māori economic development, we are working to bring together individuals and organisations from across Aotearoa New Zealand who work with and support Māori businesses. Our aim is to support stronger collaboration with other Economic Development Agencies, Chambers of Commerce and regional Māori Business networks already supporting Māori business. We will meet online in the first instance and hope that the forum could be hosted in different regions over time.



Workforce Development

Our workforce development focus for the coming months, in alignment with Te Waka's broader strategy, is to support the implementation of the [Waikato Regional Workforce Plan](#) (RWP) and work closely with the Waikato Regional Skills Leadership Group (RSLG). We are mapping existing workforce development activities across the Waikato region to identify key partners, gaps, and opportunities where we can add value and will develop a clear, targeted action plan for Te Waka to help deliver the RWP.

We are proactively supporting workforce development in the Waikato region by:

- Connecting learners with industry
 - In August, Te Waka connected 15 Level 3 Mechanical Engineering students with a Waikato-based engineering company for internship and field visit opportunities
 - We also connect ICT students with industry through the Cultivate Trust
- Collating information from relevant Workforce Development Councils (WDCs), the Tertiary Education Commission, ITO's, vocational education providers and key industry leaders to identify partners, gaps and opportunities in skills needed and current education pathways
- Advocating for introduction and progression pathways for truck drivers and logistics and supply chain workers, in alignment with the objectives of the Freight Action Plan and key growth opportunities within the region.



Advocacy

This quarter we had the pleasure of accompanying South Waikato District Council along with several district and regional agencies to Wellington for **a presentation at parliament**: the South Waikato district roadshow.

We also accompanied Minister for Economic and Regional Development Stuart Nash on a visit to the **Pan Pacific Community Hub** as part of his wider visit to the region and **hosted a group of six Labour Party MPs** during a visit organised by MP for Hamilton East Jamie Strange. Each of the visiting group is a member of a committee related to the economy, and we advocated for several regional economic priorities.

Engagements such as these provide invaluable opportunities for Te Waka to speak to decision makers and drive discussions for the benefit of our region.

We're also pleased to share the following updates from sectors related to our regional economic priorities.

A loan for **AgriSea**, announced by Economic and Regional Development Minister Stuart Nash, will help the Māori-owned, Paeroa-based company to create the world's first commercial seaweed-based nanocellulose manufacturing plant.

And the **Ruakura Superhub** was officially opened, bringing with it the potential to unlock significant supply chain efficiencies for importers and exporters in our region.



UK-based energy company **Harmony Energy** has received approval from the Environmental Protection Authority to develop a solar farm in the Waikato. It will generate electricity to power 30,000 homes.

The **Kōpu business and marine precinct** has been granted consent to build a commercial working wharf and recreational boat ramp. The project is enabled by the government's Crown Infrastructure Fund.



Data & Insights

Insights from the Climate Change & Business Conference 2022

We attended the recent Climate Change & Business Conference in Auckland (hosted by the Sustainable Business Council and Climate Leaders coalition). The two-day conference canvassed a broad range of sustainability challenges and opportunities for New Zealand businesses, large and small. Our key outtakes included:

- The need to plan for fundamentally new business models that will enable businesses to operate at net zero emissions, without over-reliance on carbon-offsetting
- The increasing importance of businesses having credible pathways to net zero, and authentic leadership aligned with that pathway, to unlock investment, partnership and international trade opportunities
- The need for businesses to ensure their sustainability claims are verifiable and backed up with action – the litigation risk to businesses that engage in 'greenwashing' is increasing
- The opportunity to rethink how we design our towns and cities to enable more liveable, equitable spaces that don't rely heavily on car travel
- The need to rethink how we engage with mana whenua, rangatahi and community groups – a shift from consultation to empowerment.

A consistent theme throughout the event was the need for businesses to get started in their journeys to net zero in the face of significant uncertainty. Advice shared for businesses on how to get started included:

- Focus on activities close to your core business as it'll be easier to make the business case stack up
- Don't try to do it alone – look for collaborators
- Focus on your customers – don't lose sight of who you are there to serve
- Don't wait for certainty as inaction will ultimately cost you more – get started now and have the courage to set targets now without yet knowing how you'll achieve them (back yourself to figure it out, but also be open in how you communicate your ambition to avoid greenwashing)
- Make use of the tools that have already been made available to help businesses – you don't have to start from scratch.

