

Kia ora,

This year is flying by; as a team, we're reflecting upon an industrious first half of 2023.

After a rocky start to the year wrought by destructive weather events, recovery is still top of mind. However, at the same time we remain committed to propelling our region forward with progress and new initiatives across our four key focus areas: facilitation, connection, advocacy and intelligence and insights.

A highlight in recent months was our speed networking event at Techweek23, which facilitated connections between businesses and local tech talent. This new initiative showcased innovative tech companies to work-ready students in the region (and vice versa) and received a resounding amount of positive feedback from students and businesses alike.

We also progressed the Freight Action Plan and continued advocating to support transport infrastructure investment in the region via a column published in industry publication *TransportTalk*.

Workforce development initiatives this quarter focused on the commercial road sector, with partnerships established to support upskilling and talent attraction, while advocacy efforts have focused on infrastructure planning, trade opportunities, and securing government funding for key projects in the region. Submissions were made on offshore renewable energy, economic resilience, and EV charging strategies.

These are just a few of the developments Te Waka has been involved in over the past few months. Continue reading for our full report.

Looking ahead to the second half of the year, we have a lot to look forward to. The FIFA Women's World Cup is underway, with five games taking place at the FMG Stadium Waikato.

The 2023 General Election is also drawing near, and political parties are ramping up their campaigns. As we move forward, Te Waka remains committed to driving a conversation around how best to plan long term and fund regional infrastructure in a way that enables us to keep pace with our growing population.

In the coming months, Te Waka will continue to focus on opportunities to strengthen and grow economic performance throughout the Waikato region. We are excited about the opportunities ahead as we continue to work together to achieve prosperity for the region.

Ngā mihi



Fiona Carrick | CEO

## Industry Growth

### TechWeek23

Our Tech Student Speed Networking event in May was a great success, with 65 students attending to speed interview with 14 businesses at the sold-out event. We have received very positive feedback from attendees, with an average rating of 4.6/5 (92%). We were successful in opening the eyes of our local students to the great range of innovative tech companies they can work for in the future, we built their confidence to interview and network professionally, and the businesses were able to scout some great local talent. We are grateful for the support of the many partner organisations who helped to make this event happen and are starting to plan for the next event, hopefully later this year.

In addition to our student event, Te Waka helped to promote a further eight events that were held in the region during TechWeek, including supporting a 'Lego Serious Play' event sponsored by Caliber Design that brought together engineers from across the Waikato.



### Progressing the Freight Action Plan

We have continued our engagement with industry, local and central government to progress the Freight Action Plan, including establishing workstreams with industry representatives from our Steering Group and continuing to engage with the Future Proof Transport Working Group.

During the quarter we completed a survey of National Road Carriers Association members to identify priority stretches of road in the region for investment to improve capacity, safety and resilience. SH29 is the clear industry priority, with SH1 Cambridge to Piarere and SH2 Karangahake Gorge also raised as key pain points for commercial road transport operators in the region.

To support advocacy for transport infrastructure investment in the region, we published an [opinion piece](#) in the June edition of TransportTalk, calling for bi-partisan commitment to long-term investment in an integrated multi-modal strategic transport network for the region.

### Workforce Development

*Waikato Regional Skills Leadership Group (RSLG)*

We continue to be an active member of the Waikato RSLG, including encouraging the forum to consolidate its action list and get clear on priorities going into FY24. The Waikato Regional Workforce Plan (RWP) is currently being refreshed and is due for publication in July.

*Meeting Waikato’s workforce demands in the freight and logistics sector*

We continue to work closely with the commercial road transport sector to support its workforce development (particularly for truck drivers) in partnership with Hanga-Aro-Rau - the Manufacturing, Engineering and Logistics Workforce Development Council, Road to Success, and local training providers.

Te Waka and Hanga-Aro-Rau facilitated a workshop in April with key commercial road transport sector stakeholders. We explored strategies for talent attraction, retention, upskilling, and building strong community relationships and partnerships. A huge thank you to Schick Civil Construction, OTL Group and Inframax Construction who shared their innovative and community-minded approaches to developing and nurturing their workforces. Our current focus is supporting local road transport operators to upskill their mature staff to be certified assessors to help upskill their younger/less experienced drivers.



*Te Kūiti Mahi Expo*

Te Waka was pleased to attend the Te Kūiti Mahi Expo, a vibrant and interactive event which connected local rangatahi with regional opportunities. The one-day expo saw employers across a diverse range of industries offer hands-on experiences to attendees. The event was a fantastic example of community collaboration supported by the Waitomo District Council, the Ministry of Social Development, Aotahi, Number Twelve, and Mayors Taskforce for Jobs.



**Education**

We continue to engage with the education sector to support the growth of international education, providing advice and marketing materials to support offshore promotion activities through [Learn Waikato](#). Many Waikato schools are visiting Thailand to follow up on the foundational promotional activity that Te Waka has led on behalf of the region. Our Thailand marketing project, funded by Education New Zealand, has now formally closed, with a great success. We reached 868,394 people and had over 1.1 million post views. The campaign resulted in 164,640 engagements, 15,553 interactions, and 214,289 video views, showing its strong effect and audience resonance.

During the quarter we were also pleased to host the Ministry of Education’s Youth Advisory Group, Te Ara Tohu Pūmanawa Taiohi, at our offices in Perry House. This forum provides an opportunity for Waikato rangatahi aged 15-20 from diverse backgrounds to share their experiences and have a say about future educational pathways. We spoke to the forum about Te Waka’s role in supporting economic development in the Waikato region and shared some of our own education to employment experiences.

**Collaborations & Partnerships**

**Waikato Economic Development Forum**

Te Waka hosted the Waikato Regional Economic Development Forum during June, hosting district and regional economic development representatives from a range of iwi, local government and community

organisations. The forum provides an opportunity to discuss the wide range of development activities underway and planned across the region, and to identify new collaboration opportunities.

### Foodstuffs Emerging Supplier Forum

During May Te Waka partnered with Foodstuffs North Island and the New Zealand Food Innovation Network to host the Foodstuffs Emerging Suppliers Forum. The event provided local businesses with the opportunity to understand what it takes to become a Foodstuffs supplier partner.



### Waikato Offshore Wind

Supporting the development of renewable energy generation in the region remains a priority for Te Waka. We are partnering with BlueFloat Energy and Elemental Group for their upcoming information evening for future participants in the offshore wind supply chain. The event on 26th July is an opportunity for Waikato businesses to learn more about plans to provide the Waikato region with a new source of clean renewable energy and enduring employment opportunities for local people. Register for the event [here](#).



### Fieldays 2023

The Te Waka team were active participants and supporters at Fieldays 2023, focussing on agribusiness, innovation and careers. Our GM Economic Development, Rosie Spragg, was an Innovation Awards judge this year and we were pleased to celebrate two Waikato-based winners of Innovation Awards along with seven finalists. Congratulations again to our local award winners, St Paul's Collegiate School and Waikato Milking Systems.



## Advocacy

### A Regional Approach to Infrastructure

Following our attendance at the Building Nations conference in June, we published an [opinion piece](#) outlining Te Waka's views on the need to consider our approach to planning and funding investment in regional infrastructure, to ensure we keep pace with growth. The opinion piece calls for funding options to be broadened alongside clearly defined regional infrastructure priorities that deliver national scale benefits.



## UK Trade Envoy

After an initial meeting at the Building Nations conference, we welcomed the UK Trade Envoy, the Rt Hon David Mundell MP, to the Waikato region.

The event was well attended by local business and community leaders, providing an opportunity to raise awareness of the opportunities presented by the NZ-UK FTA, as well as showcasing the Waikato as one of the most productive regions in the country.



## Regional Development Funding

During the quarter we welcomed government announcements for Kānoa regional development funding of three projects in the Waikato:

- Tnue's project focused on developing clean and sustainable technologies for the fertiliser industry.
- The development and construction of He Ahi, an industrial park with geothermal process heat options.
- South Waikato District Council's Maraetai Road Intermodal Business Park, a development which will enable increased freight volumes and connectivity.

These investments support key growth sectors in the Waikato, recognising the region's potential as a thriving economic and innovation hub.

## Submissions

During the quarter Te Waka made several submissions, providing a Waikato regional economic development perspective on:

- MBIE's discussion document on Enabling Investment in Offshore Renewable Energy.
- The Productivity Commission's Issues Paper on Improving Economic Resilience.
- The Ministry of Transport's EV Charging Strategy (in collaboration with the Waikato Regional Council).

## Insights & Intelligence

### Business Sentiment Survey

We have published our first [Waikato business sentiment survey results](#) for the year. The April 2023 survey reflects a business community whose confidence has fallen significantly since our November 2022 survey, in a challenging business environment that continues to be marked by cost pressures, the impact of severe weather events, and significant concerns about the delivery of core government services.



## Post-Budget Stakeholder Event

Following the release of the Government's budget, we hosted regional business and political leaders to hear the perspectives of Cameron Bagrie (Te Waka Board member) and Nick Leggett (CE Infrastructure NZ) on the implications of the budget for the Waikato region. The event was well attended, with rich discussion following the formal presentations.



## Updates

### Website Updates

We have been working behind the scenes to improve our website, [www.waikato.com](http://www.waikato.com), to make it easier for you to navigate and find relevant information. We will continue to make updates to the website in the coming months, including launching a regional economic data dashboard, and welcome suggestions for further improvements.

## Waikato Success Stories

### Bo Studio

This Ngāruawāhia studio helps agriculture businesses design better customer experiences. [Bo Studio](#) specialises in user and customer experience design and collaborates with agriculture businesses to design digital and service-based experiences that promote technology adoption and efficient work practices.



### EC8

A Hamilton startup, [EC8](#), has created a world first in the building industry by developing automation technology to measure and cut plasterboard. It is now making its technology available to builders, so they can cut down building times, have accurate plasterboard cuts, and decrease waste.

### Otorohanga Transport Limited (OTL)

Since its inception, [OTL](#) has diversified operations and developed into a nationwide transport group. With their head office being based in Ōtorohanga, the company also has branches in Kaikohe, Dargaville, Wellsford and Te Kūiti, making it one of the largest transport groups in the North Island.



### Duck Island

Known for its unconventional flavours such as lollycake and fairy bread, [Duck Island](#) has been a popular dessert choice since its beginnings in 2015. The company is headquartered in Hamilton, where it all began. The founders, as well as the factory and offices, are based there, and Hamiltonians take pride in the company's roots.

### Rüdi's

Something exciting is coming to the food scene in Hamilton. [Rüdi's](#), a micro-bakery which specialises in sourdough bread and artisan pastry will open the doors to its first permanent flagship bakery and retail space this winter. Be sure to stop by for one of their mouth-watering cinnamon swirls.



### First Watch

Bob praises the Waikato region as an ideal location for [First Watch](#) to provide industrial cybersecurity solutions for many reasons. With the Waikato region being home to a diverse range of industries, including agriculture, manufacturing, and energy. These industries are crucial to the region's economy, and the need for robust cybersecurity measures is more critical than ever.