

Kia ora koutou,

With the first quarter of 2023 behind us, we're reflecting on a period that has tested the resilience of many throughout the motu. The ongoing disruption wrought by Cyclones Hale and Gabrielle has highlighted risks and opportunity for the Waikato: connectivity and supply chain resilience for example are top of mind. Now more than ever, we know that maintaining a diversity of economic hubs throughout Aotearoa is crucial, and we feel a responsibility to build the resilience of our region for the benefit of Aotearoa at large.

Although the beginning of the year has been largely focused on the rebuild and recovery of those areas and businesses most affected by the storms, we have continued to make headway on our four priority areas: facilitation, connection, advocacy and data and insights.

This quarter we have progressed the Workforce Action Plan and the Waikato & Bay of Plenty Freight Action Plan, continued to deliver value through our international education initiative, and advocated for cyclone and flood recovery support across the region.

We also had the pleasure of partnering with Hamilton City Council to host a Growth Tour of Hamilton, attended the launch of Greengrower's new R&D programme, shared insights from the 2023 New Zealand Economics Forum and celebrated the completion of the Taupō Town Centre Transformation project.

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

Our first Business Sentiment Survey for 2023 is now open, and we look forward to sharing the results with you. These insights help us to understand business confidence and priorities which shape future decisions so we can continue driving towards economic prosperity.

In May, we'll welcome the highly anticipated Techweek23. The annual event celebrates and showcases the latest advancements and innovations in technology across Aotearoa, providing a platform for everyone to meet, share ideas and create connections. Waikato is an incubator for innovation and is one of the country's fastest growing tech hubs, and we're looking forward to this event. Check out the full programme below.

Fieldays, the Southern Hemisphere's largest agricultural event, is also just around the corner. Taking place from the 14th until the 17th of June at Mystery Creek, this annual event attracts over 100,000 attendees from all over the country and showcases the latest agricultural technology, products and services from Aotearoa and around the globe.

The next few months bring much to look forward to. We will continue to lift, strengthen and grow economic performance across the region, and look forward to working with you and keeping you updated as the year progresses.

Ngā mihi



Fiona Carrick | CEO

Industry Growth

Freight Action Plan

We have continued our engagement with industry, local and central government to progress the Freight Action Plan, including participating in the Future Proof Transport Working Group and chairing two meetings of the expanded freight industry Steering Group. The Steering Group, made up of senior freight industry leaders across multiple freight modes, is in the process of finalising the scope for its priority project. This project is expected to focus on providing clear direction on the priority actions and investments that are needed to improve the efficiency and resilience of freight infrastructure connecting to and through the Waikato (including north to Auckland, east to Bay of Plenty, and south to Taranaki and Manawatu).

Workforce Development

Meeting Waikato's workforce demands in the freight and logistics sector

In delivering against our Workforce Action Plan, we are prioritising engagement with the commercial road transport sector, meeting with employers to understand and help address their key workforce challenges and opportunities. We have been actively working to support employers, focusing on talent attraction, progression strategies, and retention approaches that foster a diverse and sustainable workforce.

We have identified the top five priorities for assistance, as expressed by employers:



1. Assessor training to utilise the skills of our mature workforce and equip them with the qualifications needed to mentor the younger workforce.
2. Strengthening school and community connections
3. Literacy and numeracy support
4. Pre-employment support and recruitment
5. Awareness of services and pathways development, and connection to specific programmes and services.

By connecting employers with relevant organisations and community resources in alignment with these five priorities, we aim to create a comprehensive support network that addresses employer needs and supports a thriving commercial road transport sector.

Education

Learn Waikato

Our international education initiative, Learn Waikato, continues to deliver value. We are proud to have more than 21 schools in our region welcoming international students in 2023. Our digital marketing campaign to promote the Waikato region as an education destination in Thailand has just concluded, with over 626,000 views in January and 23,000 shares/likes/reposts across December and January.



We are proud to report positive feedback from local educators about the increase in the number of students from Thailand. In March, our school leaders collaborated to ensure sustainable growth in our international education sector, and we agreed to continue our focus on Thailand. The international education engagement team has reported that 39 new students from Thailand are currently enrolled in schools, with 15+ students in tertiary study. These students, on average, contribute \$17,000 toward tuition fees and \$14,500 toward homestay or boarding options, directly boosting our regional economy and community.

We remain committed to leveraging collaboration with onshore and offshore stakeholders to maintain Waikato's position as a top destination for international education, and we look forward to continuing to promote the region's unique opportunities and attractions to students worldwide.

Collaborations & Partnerships

Waikato Economic Development Forum



We have refreshed and relaunched our Waikato Regional Economic Development Forum this quarter, 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.

Beyond Business as Usual in Waikato – B Corp Month

During B Corp Month (March), Te Waka partnered with B Lab Australia and New Zealand to host a breakfast panel event, Beyond Business as Usual. The event showcased organisations in the Waikato that are leading the way in impactful business, including representatives from Raglan Food Co, Moneyworks, and Waihikurangi. The panel discussion provided a range of unique perspectives on impactful business and the breadth of opportunity for businesses to enable greater prosperity in the Waikato.

This event was the first time a B Corp Month event has been held in the Waikato region and we look forward to partnering with B Lab Australia and New Zealand to support similar events in our region in future.



Techweek23



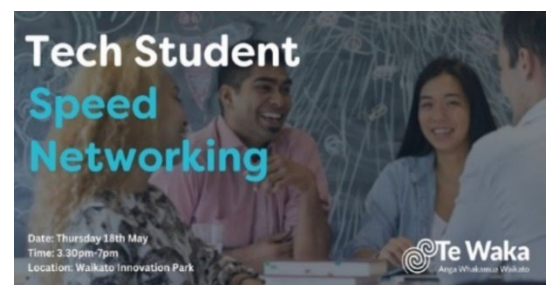
NZ Techweek23 is a highly anticipated annual event that celebrates and showcases the latest innovations and advancements in technology across New Zealand that will run from 13-20 May 2023. Waikato is an incubator for innovation and is one of New Zealand's fastest growing tech hubs.

[See what's happening in the Waikato for Techweek23 here.](#)

Waikato Tech Student Speed Networking

As part of Techweek23, Te Waka has partnered with the Waikato Tertiary Tech Alliance to host a Tech Student Speed Networking event on Thursday 18 May. The event will bring together local employers of technology talent with the Waikato's tertiary technology students and recent graduates.

With over 60 students and some of the Waikato's largest tech employers registered to participate, this event will help to retain great young tech talent in the Waikato and provide a safe and fun opportunity for students to practice their interviewing skills.



Advocacy

Cyclone Gabrielle and Flood Recovery

Te Waka is proud to be providing ongoing support to businesses and communities in their response to the summer's destructive weather events. We have witnessed the scale of the challenges faced by our communities and understand the key to steering the work needed to get the region back up and running is staying tuned in to business needs. We use on the ground insights such as our Business Sentiment Survey to understand businesses concern and priorities. This knowledge will support an effective recovery locally, to better contribute to our nation's resilience and long-term prosperity.

We welcomed the appointment of Nanaia Mahuta as the Ministerial lead for the Waikato region to help coordinate the Central Government's response to the impacts of the adverse weather events. We advocated for and were pleased to see eligibility for the recovery fund be extended to include businesses across the entire Waikato region. The Recovery Visa has also come into action to facilitate the availability of specialist migrant workers to help in the recovery efforts.

While there is still more work to be done, Te Waka will continue to listen and advocate for the region and its people. If you want your voice heard, please fill out our [Business Sentiment Survey here](#).

Growth Tour of Hamilton

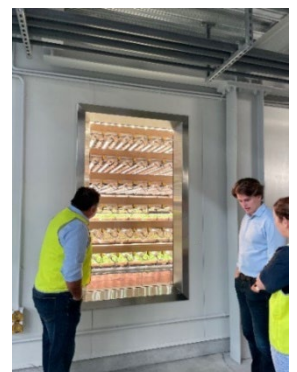
In partnership with Hamilton City Council, Te Waka co-hosted a Growth Tour of Hamilton attended by MPs Christopher Bishop, Louise Upston, Tama Potaka, David Bennett, the Hamilton East National Party Candidate Ryan Hamilton, Mayors Susan O'Regan, Paula Southgate and Jacqui Church JP, and Waikato Regional Council Chair Pamela Storey.

The tour provided insight into the significant opportunity the wider Waikato region has to contribute to national economic growth during challenging times. In partnership with Tainui Group Holdings, the tour included a visit to the newly opened Ruakura Superhub which will improve the efficiency of freight movements across the upper North Island and create new growth, business and jobs.



Greengrower

Te Waka attended the launch of Greengrower's new R&D programme, supported by the Ministry for Primary Industries Sustainable Food and Fibre (SFF) Futures Fund. Greengrower is Aotearoa's first large-scale vertical farm and is based at the Waikato Innovation Park in Hamilton. The funding will support a programme focused on supporting proof-of-concept elements of its experimental farming facilities and undertaking ongoing research on new crop development over the next four years.



Taupō Town Centre Transformation

Completed with funds from and administered by Kānoa, the Taupō Town Centre Transformation project, a Taupō Airport terminal and the Eastern Arterial Shared Path, are now open. The new Taupō airport terminal, a gateway to the Central North Island, is now three times bigger than it was.

The town's lakefront has been redesigned to ensure the CBD is better connected to the lake, accessible, and pedestrian friendly, making the Taupō District even more of a destination. The new space is for everyone to connect to the surroundings and empowers Tūwharetoa people to come together to express their mana whenua.



Insights & Intelligence

Reflections from the 2023 New Zealand Economics Forum

We were pleased to attend and [share our insights](#) from the 2023 New Zealand Economics Forum, hosted by the University of Waikato. The forum brought together economists, business leaders and public sector officials, and zeroed in on how we can address major challenges being faced by our country today.



What stood out to the Te Waka team as critical was the importance of including human capital in conversations about long-term investment and resilience. Our workforce, education and training system, population size, demographics and wellbeing must all factor for Aotearoa to prosper long term. Te Waka's Workforce Action Plan and close engagement with the education sector reflect the priority we are placing on building human capital within the Waikato to support long-term growth and productivity.

Business Sentiment Survey

Te Waka's first Business Sentiment Survey of 2023 is now open: and what a start to the year it has been. We want to hear your views and experiences – share them by clicking through at the link below. With the most up-to-date local insights in hand, we'll continue to advocate on your behalf to drive economic performance across the Waikato region.



[Complete the Business Sentiment Survey here.](#)

Updates

Waikato Toolkit Update

Te Waka has been working on updating the Toolkit with refreshed assets for businesses to use to tell their Waikato Story. The toolkit helps promote accurate perceptions of Waikato by showcasing the collective values of the Waikato Story. We aim to continue to **sustain and grow the Waikato Story toolkit**, so that more people can benefit from this resource and help promote an accurate representation of the Waikato region. The new asset release includes a range of fresh images from the health, manufacturing, and technology sectors in our region, shot at Braemar Hospital and Longveld photoshoot locations.



[Access the Waikato Toolkit here.](#)

The Waikato Showcase



Te Waka hosted The Waikato Showcase alongside K'aute Pasifika earlier this year, a celebration of both Pasifika culture, community, and commerce and of the Waikato regions commercial and economic excellence. The formal gala dinner provided an opportunity for government, business and community leaders to connect with one another, and with those from outside the region looking to understand the opportunities to live, learn and invest in the vibrant Waikato.

Waikato Success Stories

[Saito](#)

Saito is one of the largest 100% New Zealand owned label and tag businesses in the country, providing its products and services across New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific Islands. Their newly built factory located at the Hauraki District Council's industrial park in Kerepehi is one of the most sustainable in New Zealand and demonstrates their commitment to the environment.





[Smart Waikato](#)

Smart Waikato creates change by influencing and shaping regional skills and employment initiatives to enable more equitable opportunities and outcomes for youth and employers. The Trust reduces the number of young people in the Waikato who are not in employment, education, or training and empowers them to take the next step in their career.

[The Good Day Matrix](#)

Launched in 2021, by entrepreneur Dairne Burnes, The Good Day Matrix is a platform offering free wellbeing services online and paid-for corporate wellbeing services for organisations in Aotearoa. The Good Matrix's goal is to be widely known in New Zealand as being an unbiased platform that shares what wellbeing can be for you.

