

Kia ora koutou

Welcome to our second quarterly update for 2024 and our last report before we cease operating on 30 June 2024.

Thank you for your support of Te Waka over the years. We are proud of what we have achieved for the region during our tenure, and we are grateful for the messages of support received in the last few weeks.

We have wrapped up our work with a very busy quarter of activity focused on key industries and our four strategic pillars: insights and intelligence, industry growth, regional advocacy, and collaboration and partnerships.

In May, we released the results of the latest Waikato Business Sentiment Survey. Despite challenging economic conditions, the survey revealed that Waikato businesspeople are maintaining a pragmatic level of optimism. These results highlight the diversity and resilience of the Waikato business community.

Advocating for the region remained a core focus. We submitted responses to the Long Term Plan consultation processes for Thames-Coromandel District, Matamata-Piako District, Hamilton City, and Waikato Regional Council, and on the Ōtorohanga District Council's Draft Economic Wellbeing Strategy.

We believe strongly in the importance of council consultation processes. It is a key means to ensure community voices are heard and that people have an opportunity to have input on decisions that shape future economic development and prosperity in the region.

Another focus for Te Waka has been to support the growth of the Waikato's technology sector. A highlight was our role as the regional coordinator for Techweek24. We were pleased to promote and support the delivery of three major events in the region, providing a platform for tech innovators, entrepreneurs and enthusiasts to network and share ideas. The vibrant tech ecosystem is crucial for driving innovation and economic growth in Waikato, leveraging the region's skilled workforce, digital infrastructure, and supportive business environment.

Renewable energy is another sector with significant growth potential for our region and New Zealand as a whole. In April, we attended the opening of Hiringa Energy's Green Hydrogen Refuelling Network, the first commercial network of its kind in Australasia. Heavy freight is a significant contributor to our region's emissions profile and economy, with over a quarter of New Zealand's freight moving to and through the region. Green hydrogen initiatives will play an important role in fostering sustainable growth in a key Waikato industry and supporting our region's transition towards a clean energy-based economy.

Waikato's geographic location at the nexus between New Zealand's two major ports positions it as a vital hub for trade and logistics. The advantage of Waikato's location not only means enhanced supply chain efficiency, but it also attracts businesses looking to capitalise on the region's connectivity and accessibility. It also supports the growth of key industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology, providing opportunities for economic expansion and job creation.

The Waikato is one of the fastest growing regions in the country. As we look to the future, we see immense potential in leveraging the region's unique assets and strategic advantages to foster sustainable growth.

Thank you again for your continued support of our mahi and mission. We all remain passionate advocates for a cohesive regional approach to economic development and we look forward to supporting the continued prosperity of this incredible region, which we are all proud to call home.

Ngā mihi



Fiona Carrick | CEO

## A Snapshot of the Quarter

### Key Achievements

Below is a summary of Quarter 2'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"> <li>In Q2 Te Waka published the results of the latest Waikato Business Sentiment Survey, including a series of District-level and Sector-specific reports. Access the regional report <a href="#">here</a> and the District and Sector reports <a href="#">here</a>.</li> <li>We continued to update and evolve the range of economic data and insights we share, including updates to our <a href="#">regional economic dashboard</a>. We also shared regional and district analysis of the latest Census data published by Statistics NZ.</li> </ul>
Industry Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting development of the Waikato <b>Technology</b> sector, including regional coordination of Techweek24, supporting design of a tech apprenticeship model, and handing over the TechStep Te Kuiti event planning to Waitomo District Council. Te Waka was pleased to co-sponsor the Waikato Māori Digitech Networking event and moderate the panel session at LIC's Tech Waikato event during Techweek24.</li> <li>Advocacy in support of the <b>Renewable Energy</b> sector, including attending the grand opening of Hiringa Energy's Green Hydrogen Refuelling Network and making a <a href="#">submission</a> on the Electricity Authority's consultation on the Future Operation of New Zealand's Power System.</li> <li>Formally endorsing and promoting the Regional <b>Aquaculture</b> Strategy and Implementation Plan and providing feedback on the Draft Action Plan via our participation in the Waikato Regional Aquaculture Group.</li> <li>Celebrating local <b>Agriculture</b> innovators that were finalists at the 2024 Fieldays® Innovation Awards, including our local winner of the Young Innovator Award, St Peter's School for Mark-It.</li> <li>Hosting a delegation of <b>International Education</b> agents representing Thailand, Vietnam, and Latin America, showcasing the region's education institutions and local hospitality.</li> </ul>
Regional Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This quarter Te Waka lodged <b>submissions</b> on the Long Term Plan consultation processes for Thames-Coromandel District, Matamata-Piako District, Hamilton City, and Waikato Regional Council, and on the Ōtorohanga District Council's Draft Economic Wellbeing Strategy.</li> <li>Two new <b>stories</b> were published on Waikato.com this quarter, celebrating <a href="#">Feisst Group's</a> impressive expansion and Creative Waikato's <a href="#">Creativity Every Day</a> programme</li> <li>We were pleased to host <b>international delegations</b> during Q2 including a visit from Suva City Council hosted alongside the Waikato Pacific Business Network and a visit from the British High Commissioner to New Zealand, Iona Thomas OBE.</li> </ul>

**Collaborations  
& Partnerships**

- We were pleased to support the **Waikato Pacific Business Network's** networking event in June, with CEO Fiona Carrick speaking on the panel at the event about how we can enhance productivity for businesses in the region.
- In May Te Waka chaired the **Waikato Economic Development Forum**, bringing together economic development practitioners from across the region. The forum was hosted by South Waikato District Council.
- Te Waka has continued to participate in the **Future Proof** Transport Working Group (TWG), Senior Managers Steering Group (SMSG) and Chief Executives Advisory Group (CEAG) in support of spatial planning in the region that enables positive economic development outcomes.
- Te Waka's partnership with **Smart Waikato** has continued in Q2, focussed on supporting preparations for a summit to reinvigorate the [Secondary Schools Employer Partnerships](#) (SSEP) programme.

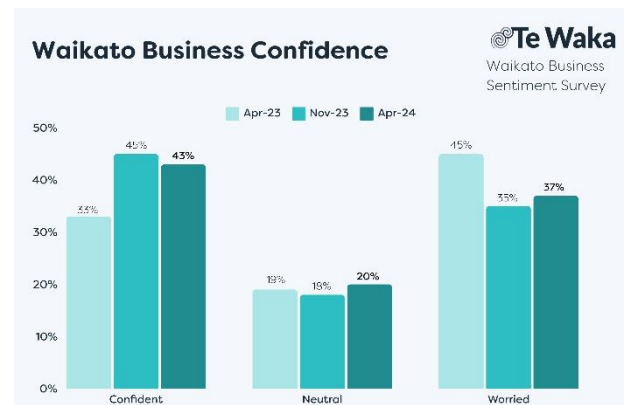
## APPENDIX – FULL UPDATE ON QUARTER 2 ACTIVITIES

### Insights & Intelligence

#### Waikato Business Sentiment Survey

In May Te Waka released the results of the latest Waikato Business Sentiment Survey. The results showed that Waikato businesspeople are maintaining a level of pragmatic optimism, despite tough economic conditions and the prospect of a continued recession.

Despite a slight decline in overall sentiment, businesses remain optimistic with 43% expressing confidence in their own performance and 48% anticipating an upturn in the regional economy over the next 12 months.



The full survey results are available on [Waikato.com](https://www.waikato.com), along with District-level and industry-specific insights, including confidence levels, the major barriers to growth, and regional infrastructure priorities. Te Waka was also interviewed for a Waikato Times article on the survey results, available [here](#).

#### Regional Economic Data and Insights

The team has continued to update the economic data and insights shared on [Waikato.com](https://www.waikato.com), including updates to our [Regional Economic Dashboard](#) to add Housing Affordability data for the Waikato region.

We also shared regional and district analysis of the first set of Census 2023 data published by Statistics NZ, looking at overall [population growth rates](#), the region's changing [ethnicity profile](#), and the [age profile](#) of the region. The Census results confirm the strong growth profile of the Waikato, reflecting our relatively young population and the attractiveness of our region for employment and lifestyle opportunities.

### Industry Growth

#### Technology

##### Techweek24

As the regional coordinator for Techweek24, Te Waka was pleased to promote and support delivery of three key events in the region:

- Waikato Māori Digitech Networking: Organised by local industry leader Lee Timutimu and hosted at the Te Wānanga o Aotearoa Glenview campus, the event was a valuable opportunity for the Māori tech community and supporters to kōrero, connect, and learn about the Takiāho movement and the mahi being led by Lee and Nikora Ngaropo to map the Waikato Digitech ecosystem. Te Waka was pleased to sponsor this event alongside Te Wānanga o Aotearoa.
- Engineering in Action Day: The Waikato Engineering Careers Association (WECA) and Wintec partnered to deliver the 2024 Engineering in Action Day which enabled ~100 senior secondary school students to visit local engineering businesses. The 12 businesses that participated provided tours of their workplaces, showing young people various engineering roles in action.



- **Tech Waikato:** Te Waka hosted the panel session of industry experts at LIC's 10<sup>th</sup> iteration of the popular Tech Waikato event. The 120+ attendees participated in an un-conference to start the event, followed by the interactive panel discussion moderated by Te Waka's Rosie Spragg, and a thought-provoking keynote from Gallagher's Lisbeth Jacobs.



### *Developing apprenticeship models*

During the quarter we continued 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 been supporting the design of the 'navigation' support framework and helping to prepare stakeholder surveys to capture detailed feedback on the design.

### *Tech Step Te Kuiti*

We were pleased to hand over lead coordination for the Te Kuiti TechStep event to Waitomo District Council. This event, scheduled for 7 August, will explore the possibilities of entering a career in technology by showcasing education pathways, earn as you learn programmes and businesses who offer entry-level opportunities available in the technology industry.



## **Renewable Energy**

### *Green Hydrogen Refuelling Network Launch*



In April Te Waka had the pleasure of attending the grand opening of Hiringa Energy's Green Hydrogen Refuelling Network, the first commercial network of its kind in Australasia. The event took place at the Wiri, Auckland refuelling station, a cornerstone of a strategic network that spans Hamilton, Tauranga, and Palmerston North, serving hydrogen trucks across the upper North Island.

Reflecting on our visit to the Waitomo Group Te Rapa site during its construction last year, it's fantastic to celebrate this important milestone in our journey towards decarbonising the freight industry. Speakers at the opening event highlighted the importance of partnership in delivering the network, and the opportunity for New Zealand to realise significant environmental and productivity gains as the green fuel industry scales.



## Regional Advocacy

### International Delegation: Suva City Council Visit



Alongside the Waikato Pacific Business Network, Te Waka hosted representatives from the Suva City Council on their visit to the Waikato region with PacificTA to exchange expertise and knowledge with councils in the Pacific Islands.

We provided a regional economic briefing, highlighting our region's growth priorities and approach to economic development in partnership with the Waikato region's various councils.

### International Delegation: British High Commissioner Visit

We had the privilege of supporting a visit to the region from the British High Commissioner to New Zealand, Iona Thomas OBE. Her visit included a tour of the Waitomo Caves, a place of reflection, meditation and renewal, connecting Mana Whenua to their identity, land and ancestors.

Continuing to strengthen ties between Waikato and the UK holds significant potential to bolster trade and investment, deepening our relationship and fostering economic prosperity. We are thankful for the support from Te Nehenehenui, Waitomo Mayor James Robertson and the Waitomo Caves team for a memorable experience.



### Submissions: Council Long Term Plans

In support of the Long Term Planning (LTP) processes across the region, Te Waka made formal submissions on the Long Term Plan consultation processes for Thames-Coromandel District, Matamata-Piako District, Hamilton City, and Waikato Regional Council, including a presentation at the hearings for the Waikato Regional Council LTP.

### Submission: Ōtorohanga District Council Draft Economic Wellbeing Strategy

Te Waka submitted on the Ōtorohanga District Council's Draft Economic Wellbeing Strategy, commenting on the strong alignment between the draft strategy and the region's agreed economic priorities. Te Waka provided specific feedback on the economic wellbeing challenges and actions identified in the draft strategy, drawing on district-levels insights from the Waikato Business Sentiment Survey.



### Sharing Waikato Stories



During the quarter we were pleased to share two new Waikato stories, profiling innovative local companies and initiatives from across the region, including celebrating [Feisst Group](#)'s impressive expansion and Creative Waikato's [Creativity Every Day](#) programme.



## Collaborations & Partnerships

### Waikato Pacific Business Network

Te Waka was pleased to support the Waikato Pacific Business Network's networking event in June. CEO Fiona Carrick was a panellist at the event, speaking about how we can enhance productivity for businesses in our region.

The panellists discussed the need for a holistic approach, combining strategic investment, data-driven decision-making, skills development, innovation, infrastructure development, and collaboration, to form the foundations for sustained productivity, economic growth and competitiveness in the region.



### Waikato Economic Development Forum

Te Waka chaired its final Waikato Economic Development Forum, hosted by South Waikato District Council in May. The forum brought together economic development practitioners from across the region, providing opportunities for knowledge sharing, collaboration and collective problem-solving.

### Future Proof

Te Waka has continued to participate in the Future Proof Transport Working Group (TWG), Senior Managers Steering Group (SMSG) and Chief Executives Advisory Group (CEAG) in support of spatial planning in the region that enables positive economic development outcomes.

### Smart Waikato

Te Waka's partnership with Smart Waikato has continued through the quarter, with a focus on supporting their preparations for a summit to be held in July that will bring together regional leaders across education, business, government and philanthropy to reinvigorate the [Secondary Schools Employer Partnerships](#) (SSEP) programme.