TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION

Ia Ara Aotearoa Transporting NEW ZEALAND

Transporting News

SPRING 2026



THE FREIGHT VOTE: ELECTION 2026

+ THE COSTLY INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGE

AI AND EMPLOYMENT LAW



KEEPING OUR EYES ON THE PRIZE

Launching our Election Platform was a highlight of the quarter. It's one of the most important things we do because it puts the industry's priorities in front of every party before voters decide, and it shapes our advocacy with whoever forms the next Government.

Connecting people by getting them the goods they need in their lives is key to growing our economy and building our future economic prosperity.

I've seen huge amounts of change, particularly over the last decade or so. By and large these changes have been for the good, especially in the realm of technology. And our industry has adapted well. We are safer. Our members' businesses are more professional. Freight is moved more efficiently.

However, it is undeniable that the changes occurring around us also present many challenges, and some things are getting harder. It doesn't matter who you talk to – economists, business advisors, suppliers to our industry, or our regulators; there is more uncertainty and volatility than ever before.

We need to move with the times. If we don't change how we do things, we will not be able to meet the needs of our future prospering economy.

Transport businesses operate in a highly complex and heavily regulated system. That system is dependent on many things and many different parties. Therefore, despite our best efforts, we alone cannot deliver the system we need. We need systemic changes and whoever the governing parties are (and it will surely be another coalition), they will play a vital role in providing a transport system that is efficient, safe, and reliable.

There are no silver bullets, but we've identified actions in five priority areas, namely:

1. **Fuel and supply chain resilience**
2. **Infrastructure**
3. **Safer Roads**
4. **Future Workforce**
5. **Productivity and Lower Emission Freight.**

Equally important to taking action in these areas is how that action is taken. We must take an evidence-based, risk informed approach that ensures our spend provides good value for money and supports long term prosperity.

Furthermore, we need to focus on changes that address the substantive issues. In recent times there's been a tendency to tinker around at the edges, with recent VDAM changes being a good example. Making tiny tweaks so something can be held up as evidence of having taken action, or even worse, deciding to defer any meaningful action, are not helping our mid- or long-term future.

I often imagine the size and significance of the issues we face as a jar full of rocks and pebbles. The bigger the size, the bigger the problem. We need to focus our fixes on the rocks, not the pebbles. Or in other words, keep your eyes on the prize, and don't sweat the small stuff.

- Dom Kalasih, CEO
Ia Ara Aotearoa
Transporting New Zealand

bandag

BUSTED! MYTHS ABOUT RETREADS

MYTH 3:
THEY JUST DON'T PERFORM.

FACT:
Try telling that to the top competitors at major on-track and off-road races.

High-quality retreads have taken all the punishment that professional off-road races could dish out. They've also run gruelling 24 hour races and even cruised to over 240 kph on a heavy truck at the Bonneville Salt Flats in the US.



Learn more at: bridgestone.co.nz/tyres/commercial/bandag/why-retread



WHY BANDAG?

Bandag retreads keep your trucks moving efficiently while reducing costs and environmental impact.

Backed by Bridgestone's expertise, Bandag delivers durability, safety, and sustainability—reducing CO_2 emissions, extending casing life, and minimising waste.

With nationwide support and proven reliability, Bandag is the smart and sustainable choice.

BRIDGESTONE

360° visibility.
Fewer blind spots. Clear proof.

WITH CLARITY EDGE MULTICAM



ELECTION PLATFORM CALLS FOR SMARTER INVESTMENT, SAFER ROADS AND STRONGER SUPPLY CHAINS

Every supermarket shelf, export shipment, farm delivery and household supply depends on a freight system that is safe, resilient and productive. Transporting New Zealand's recently released Election Platform calls on political parties to back practical policies that strengthen freight, lift economic growth, improve road safety and keep New Zealand moving.

The election platform focuses on five priority areas where policy changes can improve our country's wellbeing through better transport productivity.

Fuel and supply chain resilience

This year's international fuel supply disruptions and price shocks showed how exposed New Zealand is when supply is interrupted. That's why we've called for a doubling of onshore diesel reserves to 60 days, formal contingency arrangements with countries that supply refined fuel to us, and resilient Cook Strait connections so trucks can keep moving when disruption hits.

We also recommend developing a nationally coordinated freight data platform to give decision-makers clearer real-time evidence on freight movements, network performance and where investment is most needed across road, rail and coastal shipping.

Infrastructure that supports growth

Speaking of investment, New Zealand spends heavily on infrastructure but too often gets poor returns. According to the OECD we rank in the top 10% for infrastructure investment, but our return on investment is in the bottom 10%. The core problem isn't a lack of spending but it's what we get for our money. Pouring cash into infrastructure means nothing if the delivery model doesn't return.

NZTA data shows average road maintenance costs have increased by about 36% per kilometre over the past five years. At the same time, the National Land Transport Programme forecasts a $6 billion annual funding gap through the 2030s between revenue from RUC and fuel tax, and planned expenditure.

Transporting New Zealand wants road maintenance made the top funding priority, backed by a stable long-term pipeline of nationally significant projects that survives changes of government. We're also calling for an Infrastructure Commission review of road maintenance delivery, network performance and value for money.

Safer roads through smarter enforcement

While road safety is improving, smarter enforcement can reduce harm on the road further, particularly from drug-impaired driving, seatbelt non-compliance and handheld cellphone use.

The recently introduced roadside drug impairment test aims to test 50,000 drivers a year – a fraction of the 4 million annual breath alcohol tests, despite drug-impaired drivers posing a comparable risk to alcohol-impaired drivers.

Incredibly, around 30% of road deaths involve people not wearing seatbelts, while some 5% of deaths and serious injuries are attributed to distraction from cellphone use – although this is likely to be under-reported if anecdotes from road users including truckies are anything to go by.

Our election platform calls for roadside drug tests to be expanded to 150,000 a year, in line with comparable Australian states, and to utilise the growing number of safety cameras to detect illegal mobile phone use and seatbelt non-compliance, as they also do in Australia.

Transporting New Zealand also wants tougher action on unsafe operators, including a review of the TSL scheme to ensure commercial transport businesses have the experience, facilities and technical expertise needed to operate safely and sustainably.

Supporting the future workforce

New Zealand's 33,000 truck drivers make up 1.2% of the workforce, yet



our industry is facing an existential crisis with one-third of transport businesses expecting up to a quarter of their workforce to retire or leave the industry in the next five years.

Meanwhile, more than a million New Zealanders aged 16 and over do not hold a full driver licence, and almost half have no licence at all – even though at least 70% of jobs require one.

That's why we're calling for funded driver licence training in schools and communities, immigration settings that help transport companies fill critical workforce gaps, and smoother progression from classes 2 to 5 through supervised work experience and competency-based assessment.

Productivity and lower-emission freight

With productivity slumping, New Zealand needs to move freight more efficiently across road, rail and coastal shipping while also supporting practical steps to reduce emissions.

So, we're calling for full capital expensing for high-productivity and low-emission heavy vehicles to accelerate fleet renewal and investment. We also want a review of EECA's Low Emission Heavy Vehicle Fund to increase uptake of lower-emission vehicles and energy-efficient technologies such as aerodynamic aids.

Crucially, Transporting New Zealand wants a comprehensive review of the Vehicle Dimensions and Mass Rule to increase the uptake of innovative, low emissions heavy vehicles, along with stronger bridges and culverts to allow more fuel-efficient, higher-capacity and zero-emission heavy vehicles to operate across more of the network.

We're also calling for the Commerce Commission to investigate competition and bargaining dynamics in freight supply chains, including whether market power imbalances are holding back productivity.

Building a better road ahead

Transporting New Zealand's Election Platform is a clear call to action. New Zealand cannot keep accepting poor infrastructure returns, fragile supply chains, unsafe roads, workforce shortages and policies that hold back freight productivity. Political parties should back practical reforms that make freight safer, more resilient, more efficient and ready for a lower-emission future.

• The full Election Platform 2026 is available on www.transporting.nz

THE DRIVERS OF OUR INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS

By Geoff Cooper, Chief Executive of Te Waihanga, the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission.

Compared with other high-income countries, New Zealand spends more on infrastructure but gets less value from that spend. At the same time, our population and infrastructure needs are changing, while much of what we already have requires ongoing investment.

Meeting our future needs won't be cheap. The National Infrastructure Plan estimates that annual infrastructure investment will need to grow from around $20 billion per year in real terms in 2025 to $40 billion in 2055.

But the challenge isn't only how much we invest. It's also what we get for our investment. If infrastructure becomes more expensive to deliver, each dollar buys less. This makes it harder to improve our infrastructure networks while keeping it affordable for New Zealanders.

To get better value for every dollar spent, we first need to understand what drives infrastructure costs.

What's making infrastructure more expensive?

The New Zealand Infrastructure Commission, Te Waihanga, recently published our latest research insights report, Making every dollar count: A review of the drivers of infrastructure costs in New Zealand.

The report brings together evidence previously published by Te Waihanga on the cost of infrastructure delivery. It examines three main factors that affect infrastructure costs: input costs such as materials and labour, construction productivity, and project scope and design.

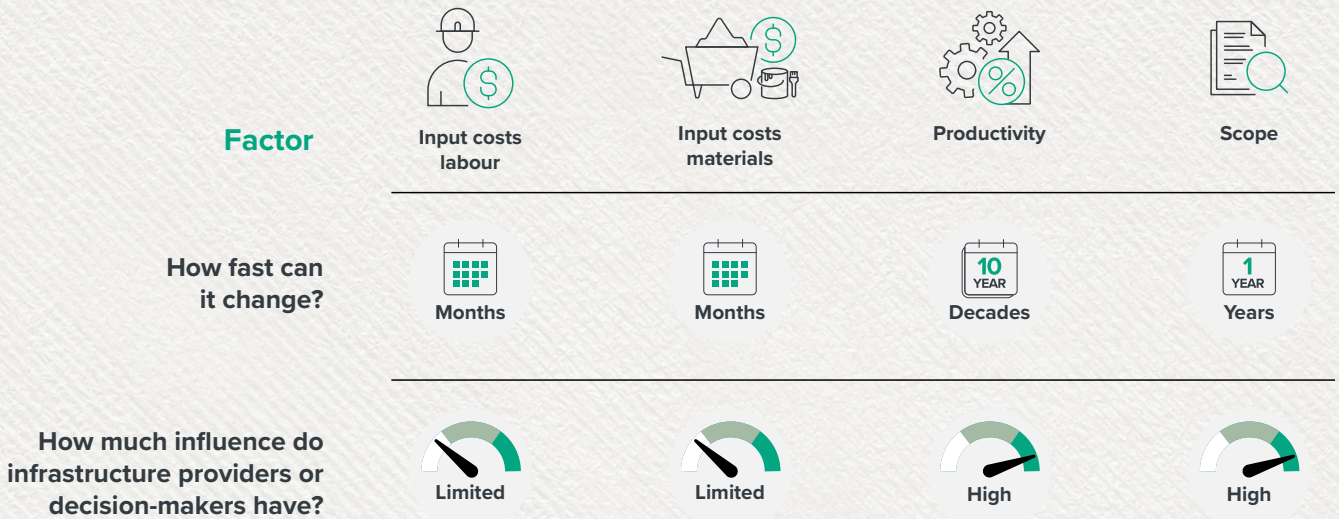
It shows for many key construction materials used in New Zealand, prices can move quickly and are largely a function of global prices. Construction labour costs tend to be closely linked to overall labour market dynamics. While productivity is more controllable, it can take several years or decades for sustained improvements to be realised.

The growing cost of complex projects

Infrastructure doesn't always become more expensive over time. Some types of infrastructure have gotten significantly cheaper. Between 1980 and 2012, the price of solar panels dropped over 90%. Wind turbine costs fell over 30% between 2005 and 2017, even after adjusting for inflation.

By contrast, for more complex projects like motorways, costs per lane kilometre more than tripled in real terms over the past two decades.

These findings matter for the road



"FOR MORE COMPLEX PROJECTS LIKE MOTORWAYS, COSTS PER LANE KILOMETRE MORE THAN TRIPLED IN REAL TERMS OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES."

freight sector. The cost of delivering transport infrastructure affects how much of the network New Zealand can afford to build, improve and renew. When individual projects become more expensive, the same level of funding buys less across the transport system.

More bespoke and complex infrastructure, including transport projects, tends to experience greater cost growth than infrastructure that can use standardised, repeatable designs. Our research found statistically significant cost premiums relative to other high-income countries for four types of infrastructure projects: urban and rural motorways, road tunnels, and underground rail tunnels.

But complexity isn't the only cause of higher costs. The choices made when defining a problem, considering different solutions, and designing a project can have a significant effect on its final cost.

Understanding what sits behind these figures is a key focus for Te Waihanga. The Minister for Infrastructure has asked the Commission to examine what drives costs for road and public transport infrastructure. The findings from our published research provide context for that work.

Where can we make a difference?

There is no single cause of rising infrastructure costs and no single solution. Improving affordability will require a combination of actions across the infrastructure system.

In the short to medium term, project scope and design are particularly important levers. Stronger client-side capability, better planning and sequencing, and a disciplined approach to scope and design can all help keep costs down.

New Zealand faces significant future infrastructure demands. Without improvements in productivity and the way we plan and deliver infrastructure, meeting those needs could require an increasing share of our resources and place greater strain on New Zealanders' wallets. Understanding where we can influence costs will help us make better choices and get more from every dollar we invest.





Paul Fincham

TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION

Paul Fincham started his career in transport as a dispatcher almost 30 years ago. While "trainer" has never been in his official title, over the years it's become a fundamental part of his role.

So much so, he's the most recent winner of the MITO Outstanding Contribution to Training Award, announced at Transporting New Zealand's June conference.

"It was just an honour to be nominated, let alone to win it," he said later in his office at KAM's first depot in Wellington.

"I love the transport industry, which is why I've been in it so long."

One perk of the job is seeing younger people progress in their career too, especially when it's clear they really enjoy the job.

Before his tenure at KAM began seven years ago, Paul spent 21 years at Mainfreight.

He started out "sweeping the floors" but gradually worked his way up into management positions.

During that time, Paul taught local students who came straight to the depot from school or rugby how to stack and unpack pallets and operate forklifts.

KAM Transport credits its status as an entry point into the transport industry to Paul's leadership. By retaining smaller trucks within the fleet, Paul has created opportunities for people to gain employment while progressively working through the licence classes required to operate bigger trucks and trailers.

In the last few years, Paul has secured financial support for three drivers to progress through to their Class 5 licences. He also supported multiple employees through formal industry training programmes, including MITO's Commercial Road Transport micro-credentials and Heavy Vehicle Operator Level 3 qualifications.

His commitment to professional development goes beyond driving, too, having supported a coolstore staff member through their Certificate in Business Communications.

He's passionate about developing people and sharing what is now a huge amount of experience and





Paul, pictured with Jess (left) and Paora (right) regularly celebrates the professional achievements of KAM's staff.

knowledge in the field. Both his sons have chosen to be in the industry, one at KAM's Wellington branch too as Operations Manager and one at Mainfreight.

Paul says you can tell when someone's got a real love for the industry like he does - "whether it's driving the trucks, getting their licenses all the way up to Class 5 and doing linehaul, or a different pathway through operations or through dispatch."

The importance of team culture

KAM's General Manager, Bill Bamber says their parent company, the Preston Corp Group, is very good at seeing the potential in people and giving them the right opportunities. "They know that their people are what makes the business; that's why they've been around for over 120 years."

For example, KAM engages workers through the Release to Work programme, helping people to gain valuable skills and experience, and better enabling them to reintegrate into society.

The Preston Corp Group's impressive retention rates are also testament to the benefit of investing in your people. Thirty-nine per cent of staff across the four brands have been on board for five years or longer; and 17% have stayed for between 10-26 years. In fact, one



Richie (right) is KAM's longest serving employee, pictured here marking 25 years with General Manager, Bill Bamber.

driver recently celebrated 25 years with the company.

Richie is KAM's longest serving employee, pictured here marking 25 years with General Manager, Bill Bamber.

Paul himself implemented the "Wall of Legends" initiative at his branch, displaying employees' long service certificates and professional accomplishments. It's just one example of how he consistently celebrates staff achievements and shares these successes both internally and externally. The success of this initiative has seen the Wall of Legends rolled out in KAM depots nationwide.

Paul's top piece of advice for those entering the sector was to "stick with it."

"The transport industry will always be around, so make a career out of it." Truer words!

TNZ'S CAPABILITY INCREASES WITH TEAM GROWTH

We're pleased to be introducing our members to four friendly new faces who've joined the Transporting New Zealand team over the last few months.







James McDevitt

James McDevitt joins us from the Ministry of Transport where he worked across transport policy, regulation and legislative reform. He'll now be leading our Policy and Advocacy efforts with members, sector groups, government and industry stakeholders.

Most recently, he has led initiatives on RUC, transport funding and Time of Use charging, working closely with Ministers, government agencies, industry and local government.

Through his work at the Ministry, James is already familiar with Transporting New Zealand and many of the issues facing the road freight industry. He has been involved in reviewing and analysing our submissions on transport policy and regulatory matters, giving him an understanding of the issues we have been advocating on. Building on that, he's looking forward to getting to know members and learning more about the issues that most matter to them.

Darryn Faulkner

Based in Tauranga, Darryn Faulkner works with members across the upper North Island as well as looking after our logging sector.

Darryn brings more than 20 years of commercial and strategic relationship management experience, much of it within the transport and technology sectors. His recent experience includes senior roles with EROAD, where he worked closely with fleet and transport customers, as well as earlier roles with Teletrac Navman.

He also has strong personal ties to the road transport industry. His father was an owner-driver in Auckland, and Darryn worked for Mainstream and Roadfreighters earlier in his career. He jokes that driving trucks helped pay his way through university.

Jade Piper

Jade Piper brings years of experience across industry organisations to her role as our Events & Marketing Manager.

Originally from the UK, Jade moved to New Zealand in 2022 and has since worked with organisations supporting the mining, quarrying, and workplace health and safety sectors. Her experience includes delivering conferences and events, developing marketing campaigns, and creating content that keeps members informed and engaged.

Jade enjoys the variety of working across events and marketing and is looking forward to supporting members and helping share the stories of New Zealand's road freight industry.

Outside of work, Jade enjoys exploring New Zealand, spending time outdoors, and making the most of everything the country has to offer.



Zach Brown

Zach Brown joins our Membership Team as Membership Manager for the Upper South Island, where he'll be getting out and about meeting members, understanding what's happening in their businesses and helping ensure their issues and priorities are heard.

Based in Christchurch, Zach brings strong experience in account and relationship management, including several years with EROAD working with transport operators across the South Island. His previous portfolio included Nelson, Marlborough and the West Coast, so he already knows his way around much of the patch he'll now be looking after.

Outside of work, Zach enjoys CrossFit, getting out for walks, catching up with friends and spending time with his partner, Cam. He's also kept busy by his pug, Tucker, who is likely to have little interest in transport policy but strong opinions about snacks.

If you'd like to contact any of our new (or old) team, go to transporting.nz/about-us/our-people/



CAN YOU TRUST ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WITH EMPLOYMENT LAW?

Globally, generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT and Claude have transformed how people work, research and communicate. In both small and large organisations, AI has made visible changes to the workplace including improved efficiency and reduced administrative workloads.

For employers in New Zealand, AI has proven useful in many different ways; it is able to draft emails, prepare rosters and job advertisements, and summarise complex documents at a much more efficient speed than any human being. However, there are wide-reaching implications for both employees and employers who are reliant on information and material produced by AI. This article discusses the implications of AI in the employment sphere and the associated risk of relying on it as a replacement for legal advice.

Implications

Over the past couple of years, there has been an increasing number of cases heard in the Employment Relations Authority (Authority) and Employment Court (Court). Specifically, between 2024 and 2025 there was an 11.84% increase in applications received by the Authority, some of which can be attributed to the increased usage of AI.

Often, when an employee finds themself in a difficult situation in the workplace, their first step now tends to be to seek advice from AI tools, as opposed to engaging an employment lawyer or advocate. The advice sought often includes:

- requesting assistance with determining whether the employee has grounds to raise a personal grievance;
- the quantum of any award that might result; or
- requesting that the tool drafts pleadings and submissions for the Authority and Court.

While this is understandable, AI often gets it wrong. Generative AI generally provides users with the information that they want (regardless of accuracy) and presents



information confidently, which can result in employees having unrealistic expectations and a misunderstanding of the law. Employees are more frequently relying on cases and legal principles that do not exist. They are also submitting documents that are much higher in volume than would be recommended (with little to no understanding of the law) which in many cases, reduces the effectiveness of any argument that is made. Similarly, for employers, AI may state that there is little or no liability, when that may not be the case.

Below are a number of recent decisions that illustrate the potential consequences of relying on AI during a dispute as well as during the employment relationship.

LMN v STC (No 2) [2025] NZEmpC 46

In 2025, a self-represented litigant cited a case (namely, Fowlie v Stonex (No 2) [2015] NZEmpC 94) that did not exist, in support of a procedural argument that the Court will take financial constraints into account when making procedural rulings. The Court found that no such case existed and made it clear to the employee that information provided by generative AI ought to be checked before it is relied on in documents filed in court proceedings.

O'Driscoll v Rehab Co Mobile Limited [2026] NZERA 106

In this decision, a self-represented party raised a personal grievance for unjustified dismissal and was unsuccessful. His employer, Rehab Co Mobile Limited, later argued that there were factors in the case which justified an increase in costs, including that final submissions referred to cases that were unable to be located. The Authority held that providing references in oral submissions to cases that did not exist or could not be found increased costs for the employer.

At the investigation meeting (which occurred prior), attention was drawn to the Guidelines for Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence in Courts and Tribunals as additional references to cases that did not exist were made in further written submissions. The Authority considered that this resulted in further costs to the employer. The employee was directed to pay a total of $6,500 as a contribution towards costs, although noting that other factors also contributed to the employer's costs.

As noted above, the courts have published guidance, which is aimed at assisting non-lawyers who represent themselves or others. The guidance specifically outlines that GenAI chatbots are not a substitute for a qualified lawyer and cannot give legal advice. The courts' decision to publish this guidance is reflective of the increased usage of AI tools in assisting with the resolution of disputes.

Rennie v DJ Auto Vehicle Importer Ltd [2026] NZERA 27

In this recent case, Mr Rennie applied for a job with DJ Auto Vehicle Importer Ltd (DJ Auto) and provided it with a CV drafted by ChatGPT during the recruitment process. Mr Rennie failed to review the CV that AI had produced however, and it contained a number of inaccuracies including:

- that he had been employed by Hertz (when he had only been employed by a contractor to Hertz); and
- a failure to record his period of employment at RV Super Centre in 2023 which resulted in his dismissal a few months later.

DJ Auto argued that the inaccuracies were material as (i) the claim that Mr Rennie had been employed by Hertz was a key aspect in DJ Auto deciding to offer him the role, and (ii) it would not have offered him a role if it had known that he was dismissed from RV Super Centre.

The Authority held that the inaccuracies amounted to a breach of his employment agreement and the inaccuracy stating that Mr Rennie was employed by Hertz amounted to a misrepresentation (although no penalties were awarded).

Summary

AI is now a permanent feature of the modern workplace and the key takeaway is not to avoid it but rather, be cautious in its use. As the decisions above highlight, generative AI often presents material as authoritative whether or not it is accurate, and the consequences of any inaccuracy falls on the user rather than the tool.

For both employees and employers, it is important to verify any material that is produced by AI before it is relied upon and be cognisant of the fact that although it might be of assistance, it is not a substitute for legal advice.

If you are a member of Ia Ara Aotearoa Transporting New Zealand and would like to discuss the implications of this article on your business, or have an employment, health and safety related or other legal question, please get in touch with the Wynn Williams Employment Team, **kathryn.evans@wynnwilliams.co.nz** with the subject line: Transporting NZ Ask a Lawyer. Feel free to also make use of Wynn Williams' Legal Helpline, in which the first 15 minutes are free for Transporting NZ members, by calling Kathryn on **03 379 7622**.