

# BUILDING TODAY



The official magazine of the Registered Master Builders Association

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February 2024

Volume 34 Number 1

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The MBIE's National  
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provides activity boost

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## PAYING THE PRICE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

What's fair when paying  
for significant  
infrastructure projects?

**ALSO INSIDE: HOW WILL GOVERNMENT POLICY AFFECT THE FORESTRY SECTOR?**



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# BUILDING TODAY

February 2024  
Volume 34 Number 1

## From the editor

According to recent surveys, business confidence is on the up, which might come as a shock to some given the state of the economy at present.

On one hand, business costs and pricing are still on the increase, and maintaining revenue remains difficult, with the shadow of recession still hanging over the country.

On the other hand, it appears that inflation is finally under control, and that interest rates could be on the way down soon. Record high net migration is increasing the country's population and economic activity along with it.

The MBIE's recently published National Construction Pipeline Report 2023 (see story, page 8) predicts that "residential building activity will return to levels that align with the sector's capacity to deliver buildings ready for occupation."

And more encouragingly, it forecasts strong growth in the infrastructure pipeline over the next few years, along with strong activity in the regions.

So the signs of recovery are there, although they may not become fully apparent until the second half of the year.

**Andrew Darlington**  
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1-year subscription (11 issues): **\$83.60**



# CRAFTING THE FUTURE

## ISAAC POSTHUMA

### SECOND PLACE AT THE REGISTERED MASTER BUILDERS CARTERS 2023 APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

### NORTHERN REGIONAL WINNER

Isaac Posthuma is employed by JR Build and his training provider was BCITO.



## SUCCESSES

Isaac, a North Shore native, was stoked to win second place at the 20th Registered Master Builders Apprentice of the Year competition.

“When I was young, I loved building stuff with my older brothers. My dad owns a cabinetry business, and we would use the off-cuts. Being a builder was something I knew was right for me. It was awesome to be recognised for my hard work,” Isaac says.

“The competition was lots of fun — I enjoyed challenging myself and doing something out of my comfort zone. It was great to meet the other apprentices, they are all awesome people,” Isaac says.



## CHALLENGES

The competition tested Isaac’s skills and resilience.

“It’s a lot of work, especially the submission process, so my advice for apprentices thinking of entering the competition is to start thinking about your submission a few months before it’s due. Take your time and put a lot of thought into it,” Isaac says.



## JUDGES’ COMMENTS

Isaac’s performance in the practical competition was most impressive, surpassing any performance witnessed by the judges in the practical component of the competition to date. Any bystander at the practical would agree with this statement.

Isaac is an excellent craftsman, and at the young age of 20, he has a bright and fulfilling career in construction ahead of him. With very few points between this year’s winners, Isaac should be especially proud of himself. Congratulations.



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## Schooling up



### About the build



### Judges' comments

## Hanleys Farm Primary School

#### CATEGORY

SpecAdvisor Education Project Award

#### ENTRANT

Southbase Construction

#### PROJECT PARTNERS

CO-STUDIO (Architect/Designer),  
Southbase Construction (Construction  
Company), The Building Intelligence  
Group (Engineer)



This community-focused initiative saw a new primary and intermediate school built in Queenstown, designed to accommodate 600 students. It was designed to be flexible, with a multi-purpose hall, administration block and separate teaching spaces for intermediate and primary students. The development reflects a concerted effort to integrate the school buildings within the social fabric of the community.

The project's success can be attributed to effective collaboration and meticulous planning. The topography required a month's worth of earthworks to level and prepare the building pads, resulting in the removal of over 12,000cu m of material from the site. Good teamwork allowed the project to be delivered within a tight deadline, adhering to the allocated budget, and without delays.

Built in a new settlement on the outskirts of Queenstown, this new primary and intermediate school acknowledges the community's vibrancy. Catering for 600 students, it also provides for the local community outside of school hours.

The site comprises a school hall, an administration block, an intermediate student teaching space, and a two-storey teaching space for primary students. A unique addition is the "hole in the wall" café with a barista on-site. This is open at school drop off, encouraging parents to mix and mingle.

Construction waste was reduced, and a third was recycled and repurposed. A large amount of excavated soil was removed and repurposed on an adjacent site. Good collaboration and planning with other trades enabled the project to be delivered to a tight deadline, on budget, and on time.

REGISTERED MASTER BUILDERS

# HOUSE OF THE YEAR

## EXCELLENCE FROM A TO Z

### JOHN CREIGHTON BUILDERS

National Supreme House of the Year over \$1 million and New Home over \$4 million winner



### Successes

John Creighton, director at John Creighton Builders, was honoured to receive the 2023 National Supreme House of the Year over \$1 million Award.

"I felt very proud of the team for all their hard work and dedication. It's great to receive the recognition amongst our peers, and it's a confidence boost for all our staff."

"The knowledge we gained from the project is invaluable, and the win lets our new and existing clients know that we deliver quality, state-of-the-art homes," John says.



### Challenges

The project was no small feat — John and the team's expertise can be seen in every corner of the build.

"Whilst the site was big, there was a large house that blocked access to the rear part of the site. It meant we built the house in three stages, with the middle area being joined to the two side wings when we didn't require access to the back of the house anymore," John says.

"I think the use of the insitu concrete work, and brick work were what made the build stand out from the competition. There were no second chances with this project, and there was pressure to get it perfect," John says.



### Judges' comments

This unique single-storey home in Fendalton captivates from every angle. The home sits on a flat site and rises out of the ground like a landmark, with its dominant vertical appearance.

The structure is cutting-edge, with three wings in the shape of a Z. The living and kitchen area make up one wing, bedrooms in the second wing, and garage, gym and wine cellar in the third. The high-end materials and fit-out leave you spellbound with the high level of specs and finish throughout.

Extensive in-built oak joinery has been meticulously installed with zero tolerances, and the craftsmanship throughout this home is of the highest quality.

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REGISTERED MASTER BUILDERS

# HOUSE OF THE YEAR

## UNEXPECTED OUTCOME

### FV DESIGN AND BUILD

National Supreme House of the Year under \$1 million and National Altus Window Systems New Home \$750,000 - \$1 million category winner



### Successes

Francis Van Den Einden, owner, and director of FV Design and Build was blown away when it was announced they had won the National Supreme House of the Year under \$1 million.

"To be honest it was a complete shock when we won the national category award. We were up against so many great projects, so we were so stoked to get the award. Then when they announced us as the Supreme Winner under \$1 million, I couldn't believe it. It was something that I hadn't really thought of winning, and I was just so taken aback that we had achieved it. It was just really special," Francis says.

"We worked really hard to get every little aspect as perfect as we could on this project. I'm sure everyone else did too. It's a tight competition at the national level. I'm just really happy with the attention to detail shown by all our tradespeople that worked on the project," Francis says.

### Challenges

There were a few setbacks that made the project a challenge, but that didn't stop Francis and the team from executing a stellar build.

"This was our Covid build, and our clients were based in Auckland during the extended lockdown so we weren't able to have site meetings. Materials were also a real stress, something that all builders had to deal with at the time," Francis says.

"Ultimately, it's a huge achievement for us, and it is still taking some time to sink in. We enter these awards to be measured against the country's best and to get better as a company and as builders. Winning this award is great recognition for the team and all the hard work we put in. I hope this award helps continue to build our reputation in our industry," Francis says.

### Judges' comments

Nestled between two large pohutukawa trees, this elegant holiday home is a true gem. Located on the edge of the Raglan harbour, it offers a north-west facing position to soak up the sun from all areas.

Despite its modest floor area, the home spans over three gently stepped levels, creating a sense of spaciousness. The expert craftsmanship is evident throughout, with concrete heated floors and plywood walls. The attention to detail in this build is truly remarkable.

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# Forecast says building activity to return to pre-Covid levels

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) published the National Construction Pipeline Report 2023 recently, providing a projection of national construction activity for the six years from December 2022 to December 2028.

“Several indicators show that the unprecedented post-covid demand for residential building, which saw record numbers of building consents issued, is alleviating and significantly reducing the demand on the sector,” says Micheal Warren, MBIE manager system strategy and performance.

“The overall activity forecast is positive, and short-term reductions across various measures in the report suggest activity fluctuations in the sector are being less affected by Covid-19 and returning to a more usual pattern.

“Residential building activity is forecast to return to levels that align with the sector’s capacity to deliver buildings ready for occupation, settling the sector into a more sustainable level where supply and demand is much closer than it has been in recent years,” Warren says.

“Recovery from the extreme weather events in early 2023 and works to increase New Zealand’s resilience to future weather events have resulted in a forecast for strong growth in the infrastructure pipeline over the next few years, and strong activity in the regions where we expect to see this building activity commence.

“There are strong non-residential and infrastructure pipelines of work, including works supporting education, health, fresh water, transport, and subdivisions, creating space for future residential and non-residential building activity.

“The aim of the report is to provide awareness of the expected pipeline of work to support the sector’s strategic planning, investment in skills and equipment, and co-ordination of construction procurement to meet the sector’s future needs.

“Having foresight into these areas could help mitigate uncertainty, and allow for better preparedness across the sector,” Warren says.

## The report’s four key findings . . .

There are four key findings in the 11th annual edition of the National Construction Pipeline Report this year:

- **Construction activity returns to 2020 levels:**

Overall activity in the sector is forecast to experience a short-term decrease, returning to levels similar to 2020, and remaining steady at that level before increasing from 2028.

- **New dwelling consents returning to more sustainable levels:**

The number of building consents issued in the past year suggests we have passed the unprecedented post-covid demand and are realigning with more usual levels of fluctuations.

- **Strong pipeline of work:**

The forecast value of non-residential building work remains steady over the reporting period. This is supported by recent increases and a projected value peak in 2023.

- **Strong infrastructure pipeline:**

Recovery from the extreme weather events in early 2023 and works to increase resilience throughout the country are key drivers in a projected increase in infrastructure works. The value of infrastructure work is expected to reach a new high in 2026 and remain steady from that point onward.

The report features breakdowns based on the type of building activity — residential, non-residential and infrastructure — as well as breakdowns by region: National, Auckland, Waikato/Bay of Plenty, Wellington, Canterbury, Otago and the Rest of New Zealand.

### Key points by activity type

#### Residential

- The report forecasts a reduction in residential building activity to a more sustainable level of demand that aligns with the sector’s capacity to deliver buildings ready for occupation.
- More than 200,000 homes are forecast to be consented over the next six years, almost half of which are expected to be multi-unit dwellings.

#### Non-residential

- The report forecasts the value of non-residential building activity to reach a modest high in 2024, and remain steady and consistent throughout the remainder of the forecast period.
- Commercial, education and health building activities make up three quarters of non-residential projects expected to start in the next 12 months.

#### Infrastructure

- The report forecasts the value of infrastructure building activity to steadily

increase to a new high in 2026 and remain steady at that new level, largely driven by the extreme weather rebuild and increasing resilience throughout the country.

- Nearly all of the infrastructure projects expected to start in the next 12 months are transport, water and subdivision activities.

### Key points by location

#### Auckland

- Almost half of the building consents in the forecast period are expected to be in Auckland. The region is forecast to experience a decrease in activity over the forecast period. However, it will remain the largest market for construction in the country.

#### Waikato/Bay of Plenty

- Overall building activity in Waikato and Bay of Plenty is expected to have small fluctuations. Non-residential activity is forecast to remain stable, and the decrease forecast in residential activity is expected to be offset overall by the increase in infrastructure activity.

#### Wellington

- Infrastructure building activity in Wellington is expected to see good growth over the forecast period. The increased value of infrastructure building work is forecast to support the decreased value in other areas, and allow the region to start and finish the forecast period with similar overall construction values.

#### Canterbury

- Residential and non-residential building activity has seen significant growth over the past few years in Canterbury. Expectations over this forecast period see the region decrease overall to levels similar to before this growth. Infrastructure and non-residential activity is expected to remain steady, with modest increases in infrastructure activity towards the end of the forecast period.

#### Otago

- Building activity in Otago has been strong and consistent since it was separated from the Rest of New Zealand reporting category in 2020. Short-term forecasts show a continued increase in non-residential and infrastructure building activity, and all areas are expected to decrease before moving back into growth towards the end of the forecast period.

#### Rest of New Zealand

- The 10 remaining regions in New Zealand are reported combined under the “Rest of New Zealand” reporting category. Infrastructure building activity, largely related to the extreme weather events recovery, and building resilience for future events, is expected to increase and support the regions overall, given an expected reduction in residential building activity.



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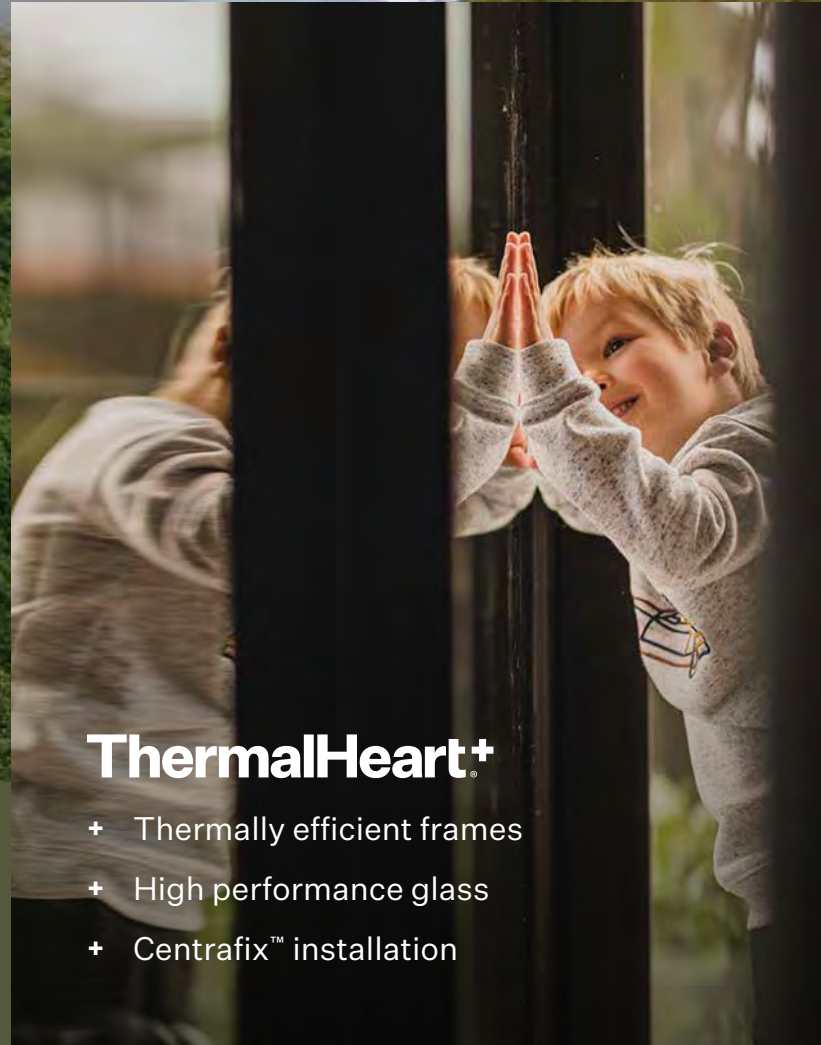
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# Precinct celebrates opening of the Deloitte Centre at Commercial Bay

Precinct Properties, the country's largest owner and developer of premium city centre real estate, has announced that One Queen (known as the Deloitte Centre) is officially open for business at Commercial Bay in the Auckland CBD.

Precinct chief executive Scott Pritchard says the opening marks the completion of the Commercial Bay development.

"It's a significant milestone for our business and for the ongoing transformation of Auckland's city centre," Pritchard says.

Precinct chair Anne Urlwin officiated the opening at a ribbon cutting ceremony recently, following a dawn blessing with Ngati Whatua Orakei.

The Deloitte Centre delivers seamless integration with the Commercial Bay lifestyle precinct and the existing retail and eateries, with covered access to the four other office towers — Jarden House, PwC Tower, Aon Centre and HSBC Tower.

The InterContinental Hotel will also provide direct access to the broader precinct through the lobby area.

This sustainably refurbished building stands as the physical and metaphorical gateway to Auckland city, offering a mix of premium commercial, hospitality, retail and hotel space, reconfirming Precinct's position as a true mixed-use developer.

"The influx of new tenants will bring a burst of new energy to Commercial Bay's retailers, restaurants and Harbour Eats," Pritchard says.

"We've estimated Deloitte Centre will bring over 1500 more people to Commercial Bay every day. We can't wait to welcome them all as they move into their new premises."

More than 600 staff from Deloitte have already begun moving into their new offices. Deloitte signed a 20-year lease to occupy a total of 7500sq m of office space



*One Queen Blessing, left to right: Renata Blair (Ngati Whatua Orakei), Anne Urlwin (Precinct chair), Scott Pritchard (Precinct chief executive), and Peter Gulliver (Deloitte chief operating officer).*

across six levels. Law firm Bell Gully has taken a 15-year lease across three levels.

Deloitte chief executive Mike Horne says the company is excited to be moving into a modern space that will not only enhance their people's working experience and interactions with each other, but also facilitate better connections with clients.

"Our new location at Commercial Bay promises to provide the perfect setting for our business and our people to make an impact."

## High level of demand

There's been a high level of demand for private offices by Precinct. Four of the seven luxury office suites at One Queen have already been leased, attracting the highest commercial rents per square metre in New Zealand.

Each suite ranges from 139 to 454sq m, and are available to lease inclusive of fit-out, designed by multidisciplinary architects Warren & Mahoney.

"Private Offices by Precinct meets the needs of sophisticated, high-net worth businesses that require premium,

A-grade office solutions in a prime location, without the traditionally large floor plan," Pritchard says.

Adding to the mixed-use precinct includes the integration of the flagship 139-room, luxury 5 Star InterContinental Hotel with harbour frontage and the main lobby entry from Quay Street.

The hotel occupies levels six to eleven of the building, with interiors also designed by Warren & Mahoney.

On the ground floor, the hotel restaurant Advieh will be helmed by renowned chef Gareth Stewart.

The hotel is targeting a 6-star Green Star rating, making it the first 6 Star Green Star rating of a mixed-use hotel and office in New Zealand.

## Significant reduction in embodied carbon

The Deloitte Centre is a refurbished building, so there is a significant reduction in embodied carbon throughout the development process.

"As city centre regeneration specialists, we are focused on ensuring the lifelong performance of our buildings is embedded into their design," Precinct head of sustainability Lisa Hinde says.

"At One Queen, attention has been given to operational carbon efficiencies, taking a whole-of-life cycle carbon approach."

The total waste diversion to date on the project has been 86.4%, with 5033 tonnes being diverted from landfill from a total of 5826 tonnes of waste.

The main materials that have been diverted from landfill include concrete, metals, timber, cardboard and cleanfill.



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# Public asked about what's fair when paying for infrastructure

The New Zealand Infrastructure Commission recently asked New Zealanders what they think is fair when it comes to paying for infrastructure services such as roads, drinking water and electricity.

This is part of the commission's research programme that is looking at what's fair when it comes to providing and paying for infrastructure in New Zealand.

A total of 3002 New Zealanders over the age of 18 took part in the research. The data was post-weighted, so the final sample is representative of New Zealanders aged 18-plus by age, gender, ethnicity and region.

Key findings were:

- Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) think it's fair that what households pay for water should be based on what a household uses.

Decision-makers have the opportunity to harness this broad support for use-based charging as a fair means of paying for water, and to adopt volumetric charging where it is not already in place.

This could be done by incorporating a low fixed charge for basic needs, and the discretion to have lower charges for some households.

- Despite most respondents (65%) not viewing congestion charging as a fair way of charging for road use at peak times, Aucklanders were more likely to think it was fair (31%) than those from elsewhere (22%).

This is comparable to the levels of public acceptance of time-of-use charging in cities overseas before congestion charging

was introduced.

- Over half (55% to 60%) of survey respondents did not think it was fair for households to pay for services based on the cost to supply.

New Zealand has a longstanding approach that everyone should have access to infrastructure services, regardless of where they live.

This includes rural and remote areas where the cost of supply is higher, or where the population is too small to meet the costs.

But there are some tough decisions for the future about who should bear the cost of, for example, rebuilding infrastructure in remote communities after damage from extreme weather events, or in adapting infrastructure to be resilient in the face of climate change.

- For more survey insights, visit <https://tewaihang.govt.nz/our-work/research-insights/new-zealanders-views-on-what-s-fair-when-it-comes-to-paying-for-infrastructure>.



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# Consultation opens on new dispute resolution scheme

Consultation opened recently on a new, independent dispute resolution scheme to support insured home owners disputing decisions about their natural hazards insurance claims under the new Natural Hazards Insurance Act 2023 (NHI Act) which will come into effect on July 1, 2024.

“We understand how important it is for anyone affected by a natural disaster to get their insurance claim settled in a timely and fair manner, and to have some certainty,” Toka Tu Ake EQC (the Commission) chief executive Tina Mitchell says.

“We understand that there will be times when people do not agree with the settlement they receive, and it’s important that they have an independent and easy way to raise and resolve their dispute,” Mitchell says.

“We encourage people to engage with internal complaints processes in the first instance to resolve their disputes.



They will also have the option to contact the external dispute resolution service provider.

“While there are existing external mechanisms for resolving disputes now, this new scheme will provide a simpler, easy-to-navigate pathway, with direct support to home owners right from the beginning of the dispute process,” Mitchell says.

The scheme will be available to help resolve disputes about decisions on whether a claim for natural hazard damage is valid, or the amount of the settlement.

Claims for damage caused by natural hazard events on or after July 1, 2024 will be eligible to use the dispute resolution scheme.

“Fair Way Resolution is our preferred provider to deliver the external dispute

resolution scheme. We’re keen to hear from insured home owners, as well as community members, groups and organisations,” Mitchell says.

“We are asking for feedback on the scheme rules and design, and whether there is anything else that needs to be included to ensure the process is fair and reasonable.”

All submissions will be considered, and will help inform the dispute resolution scheme.

Background information and consultation guidance, the draft scheme rules, and details on how to make a submission are available at [www.eqc.govt.nz/about-eqc/community-input/consultations/nhi-act-dispute-resolution-scheme](http://www.eqc.govt.nz/about-eqc/community-input/consultations/nhi-act-dispute-resolution-scheme).

Anyone can provide feedback by 5pm on Wednesday March 6, 2024, by using an online form, emailing, or posting a submission, or by phoning the Commission on 0800 DAMAGE.

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## Battery recycling company announces expansion

Following the launch of a nationwide battery recycling service in August last year, Phoenix Metalman Recycling (Phoenix) has announced the expansion of its battery recycling capability through the acquisition of E-Cycle's battery recycling business.

This represents the next step in the evolution of Phoenix's full circle battery recycling offering. Importantly, it facilitates a "milk run"-type concept in the battery recycling space as it allows efficient supply chain management of the company's commercial customers and consumers to easily dispose of their batteries and metals simultaneously.

In light of recent changes to national recycling regulations, the provision of such services is that much more significant.

Phoenix is professionalising battery recycling in New Zealand through the addition of fireproof receptacles, heat sensors and independent 24/7 monitoring where applicable.

### 233,729 kilograms of batteries recycled!

The company recycles more than 20 subtypes of domestic, commercial and industrial batteries.

To date, Phoenix has sorted, processed, packaged, transported and recycled 233,729 kilograms of batteries. This equates to approximately 10,162,130 AA-size batteries.

The company's battery "milk run" is facilitated by the company's Certified Dangerous Goods Transportation Team, enabling end-to-end battery recycling from



New Zealand to global battery recycling partners.

E-Cycle has provided battery recycling solutions across New Zealand since 2018. Phoenix has worked with E-Cycle since 2019, primarily through the consolidation of battery exports.

Phoenix has also assisted E-Cycle with the development of sorting and packing solutions, and shared information on recycling processes, including best practice procedures and compliance.

In 2023, E-Cycle recognised the need for increased investment in order to remain compliant and keep pace with the increase in battery recycling volumes.

Phoenix is well placed to take E-Cycle's battery recycling business forward and meet the needs of the market as it evolves. As such, following the acquisition of the business, E-Cycle's battery recycling business will fall under the auspices of Phoenix.

The acquisition does not include E-Cycle's E-Waste business which will remain under E-Cycle's ownership.

## Cheshire recognised in New Year Honours List

Notable Auckland-based architect Phillip (Pip) Cheshire has been made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit (CNZM) for services to architecture.

The Order acknowledged Cheshire's transformative urban renewal, masterplanning and architectural work, as well as his impact as former president of Te Kahui Whaihanga, and his role as adjunct professor at the University of Auckland.

The CNZM web site notes that Cheshire is a distinguished architect who has demonstrated commitment to the betterment of New Zealand's built environment.

In 1984, Cheshire jointly founded



Jasmox Architects. Through this firm and, later, through Cheshire Architects, he led the transformation of the Britomart urban renewal project, creating a vibrant space in downtown Auckland and restoring part of the city's heritage.

He was one of three design team members for the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, and volunteered his time to document early explorers' huts in the Ross Sea region in Antarctica.

He also undertook the master planning and design of the University of Auckland's award-winning Leigh Marine Reserve campus at Goat Island.

In 2013, Cheshire was awarded the NZIA Gold Medal, the highest individual award an architect can receive in New Zealand.



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# Profitable resales rise for the first time in two years

The turnaround in the New Zealand housing market has led to the first rise in profitable resales in two years, CoreLogic's Q4 2023 Pain & Gain Report shows.

The proportion of properties being resold for more than the original purchase price rose to 93.3% in Q4 last year, up from 92.4% in the previous quarter.

That marks the first rise in profitable resales since Q4 2021, when it hit the peak of 99.3%.

The median gain also increased for the first time since the end of 2021, lifting to \$305,000 from \$297,000 in Q3.

Meanwhile, the median resale loss remained significantly smaller, at \$45,000 in Q4, smaller than \$50,000 in the three months prior.

CoreLogic chief property economist Kelvin Davidson says these latest figures signal that the trough for this measure of housing performance has probably passed.

"More than nine in ten properties are selling for a profit, although it must be



CoreLogic chief property economist Kelvin Davidson

noted this is still quite low compared to the longer-term average, and reflective of the fact that national values are still about 11% below their peak," Davidson says.

"However, the higher portion of profitable resales we're starting to see is consistent with the rise in property values themselves since September's trough, alongside wider market forces such as

the peak for mortgage rates, high net migration, a resilient labour market and easing credit conditions."

Davidson adds that hold period plays a vital role in these figures, with long ownership lengths almost inevitably resulting in a gross profit.

"It's also important to note that for owner-occupiers, these aren't necessarily cash windfalls, with the new equity often just recycled into the next purchase."

There was a mixed bag of results across the main centres. Auckland saw 90% of resales make a gross profit, up from 88.5% in Q3, breaking a run of weakening results that stretched back to late 2021.

Wellington also saw a rise in profitable resales, from 91.4% in Q3 to 93.8% in Q4, and likewise in Christchurch, where profitable resales lifted from 95.9% to 96.5% quarter-on-quarter.

However, Hamilton, Tauranga and Dunedin all saw their share of profitable resales decline a touch, reflecting the patchiness in the market overall.



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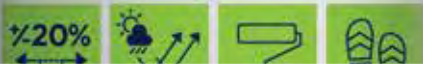
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# Setting up for success with a solid foundation for well-being

Creating a healthy workplace starts with a solid foundation for well-being — the overall physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social health of people.

In recent years, there has been acknowledgement from industry that healthy workplaces have benefits for health and safety, and business success.

Site Safe New Zealand is on a journey to work with the construction industry to shift the approach to well-being in the workplace, and set people up for success with the tools and resources they need to support well-being.

“We know how important it is to destigmatise the idea of looking after ourselves,” Site Safe New Zealand chief executive Brett Murray says.

“We already work with key partners like MATES in Construction and Hato Hone St John to provide mental health training courses and resources, but we knew there was more we could do in this space.”

This year, Site Safe has partnered with Ignite Aotearoa to give members free access to the Ignite Aotearoa



online platform, and a large range of mental health and well-being resources, information, and workshops.

Ignite Aotearoa is a social well-being enterprise backed by Emerge Aotearoa — one of New Zealand’s largest independent mental health and social service organisations.

Ignite Aotearoa’s offerings are evidence-

based, easy to access, flexible and affordable.

Site Safe is also investing in the well-being of the industry by sponsoring a number of one-on-one support sessions so members can try out one of the services offered by the platform.

“80% of our members are small businesses who may not have ready access to resources that support well-being,” Murray says.

“We want to support our members to create a solid foundation for well-being by giving them access to a wide range of well-being information and support that suits their needs.

“Both our organisations have strongly aligned values. Like us, Ignite Aotearoa believes New Zealanders should be able to access mental health and well-being support whenever they need it,” Murray says.

To learn more, visit [www.sitesafe.org.nz/news--events/news/new-member-benefit-ignite-aotearoa](http://www.sitesafe.org.nz/news--events/news/new-member-benefit-ignite-aotearoa).

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This has allowed the manufacturing team to deliver quality products with short lead times, and kept excellent on-time delivery records.

Established in 1966, the company has built an experienced team dedicated to the manual stapling industry.

Over time, the company has built a complete range of manual stapling products that few of its competitors can match.

Apex says it combines industry-leading craftsmanship with world-class manufacturing skills to deliver the best products to its customers, serving all stapling needs. Its motto? "Think of Stapling Tools, Think of Apex."

These trade-centric tools can be found at all leading trade hardware stores.



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We've got another great prize to give away to the lucky winner of this month's Building Today Trivia Question — a range of Apex staplers and tackers from Toolware Sales worth

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Visit [www.buildingtoday.co.nz](http://www.buildingtoday.co.nz), hit the Competitions link and correctly answer the Building Today Trivia Question to go into the draw to win this fantastic prize!

Congratulations go to Brad Fearless of Auckland, who won December's range of Swedish G-Man handsaws, worth \$460.

WITH **BUILDING TODAY**

# Forestry organisations sign accord to establish pan-sector body

Ten forest industry organisations have signed an accord establishing a pan-sector body.

Called the NZ Forest & Wood Sector Forum (NZFWSF), sector associations will engage on issues of common interest or concern to the national industry, and act as a spokesperson and point of contact for the industry with Government and other relevant bodies where appropriate.

The NZFWSF will improve communication throughout the forestry supply chain to pursue and ensure continued growth, and to manage issues with the interest of the whole sector in mind.

Forestry Industry Contractors Association chief executive and NZFWSF spokesperson Prue Younger says the NZFWSF's collective advocacy will be for policies that are socially responsible, environmentally

and ecologically sustainable, internationally competitive, and profitable.

"The greater and long-term goal for the pan sector initiative is the desire to improve the co-ordination and collaboration of the sector and make it communicate, promote, and improve the total value chain," Younger says.

"The benefit of a common and collective 'whole of industry' voice, with direction and future



*Forestry Industry Contractors Association chief executive and NZFWSF spokesperson Prue Younger.*

opportunities, stands to be shared with the industry and Government, providing credibility that the 'whole of industry' is backing the content," she says.

The pan sector group was an outcome of a Forestry Supply Chain – Pan Sector Meeting held in Rotorua in July 2023.

The meeting provided a shared understanding of the problems and opportunities the sector faced in a 15-year crisis for the forestry industry.

"Collective discussions were had around what change would look like to generate a sustainable operating model that we don't currently have," Younger says.

"This collective direction setting can better guide decisions for the future and define what can be done more effectively, more efficiently and, potentially, what can be rationalised or minimised."

## ATFA navigating a tricky harvesting dilemma

Australia is home to vast natural resources, including 134 million hectares of forests, which cover approximately 17% of the country's land area.

Within these forests, an estimated 10.5 billion tonnes of carbon are stored, with 98.8% held in native forests, primarily dominated by hardwood species.

Of the 132 million hectares of native forest, 2 million is plantation and only 5 million hectares are accessible for timber harvesting, accounting for a mere 3.7%.

Each year, a nominal 78,000 hectares are carefully harvested, representing just six in every 10,000 trees. This selective harvesting occurs exclusively in approved areas, and is followed by meticulous regeneration efforts, often involving replanting native species in much higher numbers than was removed.

The Australasian Timber and Flooring Association (ATFA) is actively addressing the complex challenges posed by the timber harvesting dilemma across multiple fronts in Victoria and New South Wales.

This encompassed the permanent closure of forestry operations in Victoria on January 1, 2024, and the suspension of forestry operations to establish 106 Koala Parks in New South Wales.

The ATFA has been actively engaged, supporting submissions from entities such as Timber NSW and VicForests, contributing to the critical dialogue around native forestry's economic, social and environmental importance.

This proactive stance aims to counter misinformation while advocating for

responsible forest management.

The ATFA says environmental groups have propagated misleading narratives surrounding native timber harvesting, prompting the ATFA to respond with factual information.

This includes clarifying aspects such as wildlife protection, carbon sequestration, and the sustainability of timber products. Specifically, timber is an exceptional carbon sequester, maintaining carbon storage in products such as timber flooring and furniture throughout their life span.

With careful canopy management and forest renewal practices, younger trees thrive, contributing to healthy microclimates and stronger habitats.

Native timber, a renewable resource, contrasts starkly with non-renewable alternatives such as concrete, bricks, and steel. Collaborating with many other forestry and timber associations, the ATFA seeks to counter misleading claims, and to advocate for responsible forestry practices.

The native timber industry is a significant economic contributor, generating \$2.9 billion in gross revenue in New South Wales alone. The industry plays a pivotal role in job creation, supporting regional communities and bolstering Australian sovereignty in timber supply.

The timber harvesting dilemma necessitates a nuanced understanding. Native timber harvesting plays a pivotal role in Australia's sustainable forestry practices, effectively harmonising economic development with environmental preservation.

The ATFA urges stakeholders and policymakers to consider the multifaceted dimensions of this issue, ensuring a balanced approach that safeguards the environment and the livelihoods of many Australians dependent on this industry.

Over the next four years, Federal and State Governments are allocating more than \$300 million to support the country's forest industries, underlining their significance.

This unified release encapsulates the diverse facets of the timber harvesting dilemma, emphasising the ATFA's proactive involvement in addressing misconceptions, engaging with authorities, and advocating for balanced and sustainable forestry practices in Victoria and New South Wales.

The ATFA asserts that the native timber industry is a responsible, sustainable and essential part of Australia's ecosystem and economy.

Understanding these facts is crucial to fostering informed decisions and preserving the country's natural heritage.

The ATFA stands as a beacon of sustainable forestry practices and environmental stewardship in Australia, passionately navigating the complexities of Australia's timber harvesting dilemma.

Its initiatives not only preserve natural heritage but also inspire innovation in these diverse sectors, fostering a harmonious balance between economic growth and ecological responsibility.

• For more information, visit [www.atfa.com.au/consumer-services/species](http://www.atfa.com.au/consumer-services/species).

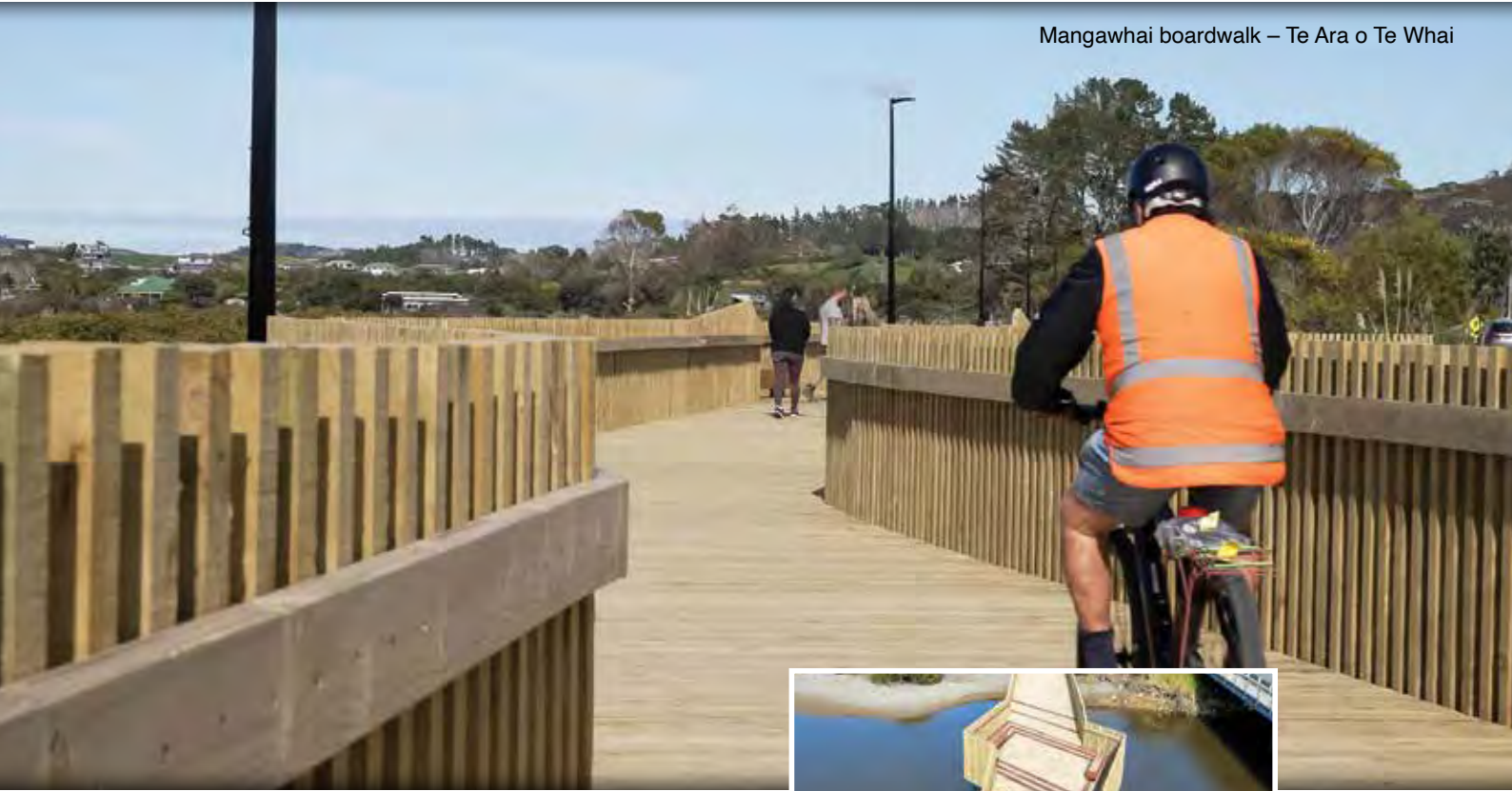




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# NZTIF president: Does this government have

New Zealand Timber Industry Federation president Bruce Larsen outlines his views on how the change of Government could impact the forestry and timber manufacturing sector.

The new Government is bedding in its position and has started with some significant cost reductions — gone are the new Cook Strait ferries, light rail for Auckland, and Industry Transformation Plans.

The Labour Government's RMA 2.0 laws and Fair Pay Agreements have been or will be repealed; legislation is imminent to re-establish 90-day employment trials and disestablish the Maori Health Authority.

So what does this reset mean for the forestry and timber manufacturing sector?

As a major export earner, employer and deliverer of solutions for meeting New Zealand's carbon emissions reduction targets, it is vitally important that our wood products and forestry sectors remain supported by government to enable future growth — especially in timber manufacturing.

Market volatility (domestic and export), inflation, high interest rates and staff shortages have been plaguing the industry over the past few years. Does this government have solutions?

Respondents to a study of 200 senior business leaders carried out by Curia Market Research for Datacom (and published in the *New Zealand Herald*) seem to think so:

"Off the back of both the change in government and after a challenging few years with Covid, businesses are getting back into a growth mindset."

Respondents rated the top business priorities as growth (35%), staff retention and recruitment (24%), and workplace productivity (19%).

I'm not sure how many timber manufacturers are looking at "growth" as a major priority, but certainly staff management and productivity are common themes I hear frequently.

Often, the answer to the second and third issues is to implement mechanisation and technology projects to reduce the reliance on people, drive down production costs and increase productivity.

All very fine, but it becomes



problematic in a "down" domestic market with limited export opportunities.

There was also some good news recently in the form of a further slowdown for the CPI, which eased from 5.6% in Q3/23 to 4.7% in Q4/23 — still above the Reserve Bank's target range of 1 to 3% but moving in the right direction.

However, house building activity is currently very slow, and has been for more than a year.

New Zealand structural timber manufacturers have had a very difficult 12 to 18 months with an oversupply of timber, resulting in a sluggish market and significant price reductions.

While many mills have been looking offshore, export markets are also under pressure, and the cost of shipping bulk materials such as timber, especially to Australia (our closest and natural market), remains high.

So, what is the outlook for housing and, therefore, timber? Although I don't anticipate a flood of investor activity in 2024, things might look a little more tempting for rental house investors, with rising rents, easing deposit rates, and mortgage interest deductibility likely to go back to 80% during 2024.

Timber manufacturers I have spoken with expect 2024 will be an improvement on last year, but it is likely to be at least next spring before the industry sees any real benefits.

## Pan Sector Accord

Subsequently, in response to the poor market conditions right throughout the forest industry supply chain — from silviculture to harvesting to cartage and shipping and on to timber manufacturing — the industry recently signed a Pan Sector Accord, establishing a new body called the NZ Forest & Wood Sector Forum (NZFWFS, see story, page 22).

The Forum's collective advocacy will be for policies that are socially responsible, environmentally and ecologically sustainable, internationally competitive, and profitable.

Foundation signatories include:

- New Zealand Institute of Forestry (NZIF),
- New Zealand Forest Owners Association (NZFOA),
- Forest Industry Contractors Association (FICA),
- New Zealand Farm Forestry Association (NZFFA),
- Wood Processing and Manufacturers Association (WPMA),
- Nga Pou a Tane (NPOT),
- Log Transport Safety Council (LTSC),
- New Zealand Timber Industry Federation (NZTIF),
- Forest Industry Safety Council (FISC), and
- Bioenergy Association.

On a darker note, we are increasingly hearing of the financial stress city and district councils are under, leading to a significant and rapid reduction in project





# the solutions to stabilise the sector?

commitment, many of which use timber.

Councils are critically short of money, and this disturbing trend comes on top of some major projects being cancelled or paused.

While there may be a case for optimism in the medium term because of the sheer amount of work that needs to be done, the immediate situation is very difficult for many businesses in the construction industry.

The forest growing sector is also facing extremely difficult times, dealing with market issues and proposed new rules.

While no one likes to see the devastation caused on the East Coast, we should remember that while these events are likely to occur more frequently, similar issues have arisen in the past.

## Destroyed infrastructure

Much of the forest land was established after Cyclone Bola (1988) in an attempt to reduce land erosion and, undoubtedly, forest land holds together better than farmland.

However, the sea of logs, forest residue and other plant material along with soil

and silt that swamped large areas of farmland and destroyed infrastructure has significantly damaged the forest industry's public credibility.

In response, councils are now bringing in new rules around Highly Erodible Land (HEL).

While there is no doubt the causes of the damage need to be identified and rules changed to improve safety and resilience, some knee-jerk reactions will significantly impact the forest industry and the whole sector.

One example I am aware of is in Northland, where the regional council is proposing to significantly limit the area that can be harvested from HEL on any property.

A theoretical case study on one significant forest with about a third of its productive area classed as HEL will now take around 36 years to harvest the existing crop — ie, if they started logging at age 25 the crop would be aged 61 before it was completed.

Normally a forest is harvested between the ages of 26 and 32 to ensure economic viability.

This proposed rule would therefore also potentially impact associated businesses.

There would be decreased harvesting and cartage work, fewer logs for domestic processing, and less work for businesses associated with Northport.

And this requirement is projected to start in 2027, when Northland is already forecast to have a major reduction in log availability due to the forest age class structure!

Yes, rules need to be reviewed, but it is at the catchment and sub-catchment level that management needs to be applied, with foresters and councillors looking at the risk as well as the likelihood and consequences of various events.

In many forests there are also significant areas of native forest and riparian areas along streams which also mitigate consequences.

So there is potential for well-intentioned but blunt changes to plans and regulations significantly impacting businesses and employment well downstream from the intended target — the law of unintended consequences.

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# From Lego to learning legend: Ben Sellwood shows why building is for everyone

For as long as he can remember, Ben Sellwood has wanted to be a builder. He'd always loved creating things, from constructing Lego masterpieces to projects in woodwork class.

And in the five and a half years since he started his apprenticeship straight out of high school, his love for the industry has only grown.

"I could go on and on about my love for building, I'm so passionate about it.

"There's not a single part of building that I don't love. I even love when things aren't going right, I love the pressure and challenges," Sellwood says.

## From pricing jobs to running a team

He has worked with boss Mitchell Hewetson for his entire career, following him when he set up his company Right Eye Building. Now, as second in charge, he has learnt skills from pricing jobs to running a team, work vehicle and site.

"I worked hard, I was determined to succeed, and while I had a few setbacks, I'm proud of how far I've come. But this is just the start for me. I want to learn, improve and grow as much as possible," Sellwood says.

After completing his level four carpentry qualification with the BCITO, he enrolled in the Level 5 supervisors' qualification. He's keen to tell anyone thinking about a career in the trades to give a BCITO apprenticeship a go.

"My training advisor, David MacDonald, or Doogie as we call him, was brilliant. He was so clued in, and was great with any questions I had.

"He signed off my work straight away and always put in 100% effort. The practical side of the training was so great, and I still keep in contact with him."

For Sellwood, one of the most crucial

parts of his training was the bookwork. He found it to be one of the most important parts of being a good builder.

"The books and the online platform were brilliant, and I learnt so much. Everything was straightforward and clear, and the quizzes were super helpful too.

"When you're on site, you're taught how to do something, but you don't know the why.

"I think the why is so important — it helps everything click into place," he explains.

Sellwood acknowledges that sometimes apprentices struggle with the bookwork, but says the support is there for whoever needs it, taking out so much of the stress.

"The BCITO has made it so easy nowadays — some guys at work have learning difficulties and struggle with words, but David put in so much extra time to help. He provided alternatives and was so accommodating.

"Building is a career for anyone — there is always a way around any issue," he says.

Sellwood himself is one of the people keen to help others along the way — he's as passionate about building teams and confidence as he is about getting on the tools.

"I help all the guys at work. I'll invite them over to my place and we'll go through the books together or I'll give



BCITO training advisor David "Doogie" MacDonald (left) with Ben Sellwood.

them lessons on how to use the online programme.

"Once you know how to master it, and know the skills on how best to study, you're good to go."

New Zealand needs more people to upskill and grow their knowledge to create much-needed quality homes and infrastructure.

To learn more about how the BCITO can help with a rewarding apprenticeship, visit <https://bcito.org.nz>.

## Letters of intent

From page 29

One of the dangers of letters of intent is that work continues outside the authorised scope or expiry date in order to keep things moving while the formal contract is negotiated.

This can be problematic because if the contract is never agreed or signed, arguments arise, typically about the applicable terms and extra payment.

In those circumstances, contractors and subcontractors cannot be sure of additional payment where the expenditure cap has been exceeded, even if they have done extra work.

### Takeaways

Letters of intent are commonly used in the construction

industry, yet they are not always a prudent idea.

A formal contract is always a more certain way to ensure the parties receive and pay the compensation agreed, and that a contract won't come into existence on terms some parties may not agree on.

Once works are underway, competitive tension and commercial leverage may be lost, and it can become harder to negotiate the contract if risks or problems have already arisen, as each side will attempt to contract its way out of the issues.

Therefore, you should lock in as many key terms as possible before you commit to a letter of intent.

Where possible, complete the contract rather than enter into a letter of intent.

This enables the contract to be finalised while there remains goodwill and commercial leverage, and enables a project to begin with clarity.



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# The Boss Checklist: How do you stack up?

Tradie HR director Leigh Olsen presents the “Boss Checklist” to help identify just how effective you are as a boss, and to identify areas to develop in 2024.



Being a boss of tradies — such a great job, but it comes with a unique set of challenges. You have to have your wits about you, coping with supply issues, market competition, regulatory compliance, and skills shortages.

The key to nailing all of this and being the best possible boss you can be is effective leadership.

When I talk to many of my tradie bosses about this type of leadership, they often think it's all about being a good bugger.

However, effective leadership is more than just being a friendly person-in-charge. It's about developing your effective leadership toolkit for long-term success.

To help assess your current leadership ability, take a moment to measure yourself against Tradie HR's Boss Checklist to identify just how effective you are as a boss, and to identify areas to develop for 2024.

## • Clear communication:

As a leader, your ability to communicate effectively is the most important thing. Are your instructions clear and concise, and do your team members understand their roles?

Being open, honest, and straightforward is so important to creating a positive work site and reducing any misunderstandings.

One client, the nicest guy, often over communicates. An idea will pop into his head, leading him to rush to his staff saying that this is what they're now going to do. Then the following week, a new idea emerges, and he changes his mind again.

Here's where he enters dangerous territory by communicating big decisions without thinking it all through first — and then changing his mind. The result? His team do nothing because they know he'll change his mind again and again.

I am currently working with this business owner, and encouraging him to “press pause” — pressing “pause” before he responds and pressing “pause” before he makes a decision and communicates.

It's a valuable habit that he is learning to cultivate, with outstanding results, leading to much clearer communication.

## • Team empowerment:

Successful leaders empower their teams. Are you fostering a collaborative culture where everyone's input is valued? Encourage team members to contribute ideas and take ownership of their work.

Research shows that if you do this, you'll see increased productivity and job satisfaction.

Ensure you listen to their ideas and treat their input respectfully. If you criticise them, then don't be surprised if it's crickets at toolbox meetings.

## • Safety first:

In the trades, safety should be a top priority. Are you promoting and enforcing safety protocols on the job site? A leader who prioritises the well-being of their team demonstrates responsibility and professionalism.

A couple of years ago, I was asked to do a staff survey for a company, and it came out in the results that staff were actively encouraged not to report any near misses or accidents because top management did not want to do all the compliance that went with that.

This was the thing that bothered the staff the most — not the pay, but health and safety (or lack of it).

## • Problem-solving skills:

Challenges are inevitable in the trades. How adept are you at solving problems

effectively? A strong leader identifies issues early on and implements strategic solutions to keep the project on track. They are also not afraid to ask their staff “what do you think?”

Remember, your experts are often your employees on the job site, not the expensive consultants.

## • Relationship building:

Building strong relationships with clients, suppliers, and team members is crucial. How well do you work on having positive relationships in your network? How is the experience for others in dealing with you?

One of my favourite quotes is the following: “Your smile is your logo, your personality is your business card, and the experience people have with you becomes your trademark.” Says it all really.

## • Accountability:

Do you take responsibility for successes and failures? A strong leader holds themselves and their team members accountable for their actions, fostering a culture of accountability and trust, without blame and fear.

Sadly, I've seen too many examples of bosses blaming others. Remember, words are weapons. Are you using yours to build your people up or to break them down?

## • Inspiration:

Finally, do you inspire your team to do their best work? People want to work for people who are inspiring and motivating, and who lead from the front.

What activities do you do daily, weekly and monthly to guide, support and align your people? Are you proud of your employees' successes, and are you committed to helping them shine?

The journey to becoming an effective leader in the trades industry is ongoing, and regularly assessing your skills and how you are going as a boss is crucial towards your continued success. In 2024, aim to go beyond being a good bugger!

If you would like help with doing so then please reach out to me, in confidence, to see how we can elevate your leadership presence in the trades, and help you stand out as a true industry leader!

**Note:** This article is not intended to be a replacement for legal advice.

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# Dangerous intent – unwanted consequences of letters of intent

Vimal Nair and Callum McKenzie of Auckland legal firm Greenwood Roche outline the problems that letters of intent can cause further down the track – and how to avoid those complications.

Letters of intent are commonly used in the construction industry as a way of starting work (such as procuring materials, preparing the site and, in some cases, commencing work) before a formal construction contract is entered into.

The purpose of these letters is to enable a contractor/subcontractor to commence an aspect of the works with some assurance that they will get paid and be in line for the “formal” contract, while preserving the ability of the principal/contractor to limit its commitments early on.

Letters of intent seem like a sensible way of allowing work to commence while negotiations continue. However, there are situations where such letters can cause problems in the future.

Letters of intent do not typically have any standard format, meaning the precise effect can vary widely from a letter which expresses a party’s intention to enter into a contract but which creates no liability in regard to that future contract, to a binding contract that ends up governing the whole of the works.

Lawyers typically advise parties to enter into a formal contract rather than commence work under a letter of intent, but this is not always practical.

Letters of intent should be approached as an interim measure only, while the parties finalise the subsequent contract once all the commercial and technical details are agreed. They should not be viewed as a replacement for the main contract.

If you must use a letter of intent, try to keep in mind some of the following tips.

## The perils with letters of intent

Letters of intent can create confusion about pricing and who is doing what. This was well highlighted in *Electrix Ltd v The Fletcher Construction Company Ltd*.

Fletcher engaged Electrix as its subcontractor for electrical services on the Christchurch Justice and Emergency Services Precinct project. To keep things moving while the contract was negotiated, the parties agreed a series of nine letters of intent.

Ultimately, however, the parties failed to agree on a contract, leaving the letters of intent as the formal record of the relationship between them.



Vimal Nair



Callum McKenzie

By the time the project was finished, there were letters of intent for \$14 million, Fletcher had paid \$21.6 million, and Electrix had issued payment claims for \$28 million.

Fletcher claimed the letters of intent formed a contract that set the price at around \$14 million, and sought a refund of the difference.

Electrix argued there was no contract so it was entitled to be paid a reasonable price for the services actually provided. The court agreed with Electrix, and Fletcher was ordered to pay a further \$7.4 million plus interest at 5% per annum.

In the UK case of *RTS Flexible Systems Ltd v Molkerei Alois Muller GmbH & Co, KG*, the employer, sent a letter of intent containing a draft contract and a clause that stated the terms would not be binding until signed by both parties.

While the formal contract was never signed, the court decided that, following the letter of intent, the actions of the parties (such as carrying out works and varying the delivery programme) created a binding contract.

This was despite the fact the letter of intent did not contain many of the detailed provisions that would be expected in a contract.

## Be clear about which letter of intent applies

By their nature, letters of intent can be informal, and can arise through correspondence between the parties. Where proposals have been sent back and forth, it is vital that the parties are clear, before work starts, as to which letter is “the” letter of intent.

The UK case of *Arcadis Consulting (UK) Ltd v AMEC (BCS) Ltd* shows the pitfalls of competing letters of intent. In that

case, the court had to choose from three competing sets of terms.

One of the biggest differences between the various terms was a liability cap which, if incorporated, limited the subcontractor’s liability to £610,000 (in a claim for more than £40 million).

## Have a clearly stated letter of intent

If the parties agree that a letter of intent is the only way forward then, generally speaking, it is prudent for such a letter to be prepared on the basis that a formal contract may never be finalised.

It is important to fully consider the terms of a letter of intent even though many view it as a mechanism to get things moving, and expect it to be replaced with the formal contract.

It is important to clearly define and incorporate:

- matters unique to the letter of intent, ie the parties, the scope of the works and services authorised, price or payment limits, and start and “drop-dead” dates,
- as many of the key and undisputed contract terms as possible, such as insurance, limits on liability, and payment provisions (including GST),
- matters to be resolved before the formal contract can be entered into, and record that the parties intend to immediately be bound by the letter of intent, and
- what happens if the formal contract is entered into or, alternatively, if the contract is never finalised.

It is just as important to stick to the agreed limitations (or formally record any changes) because it is easy for lines to become blurred once work has commenced.

*Continued page 26*

# Employee disengagement — and how to address it



Andy Burrows — The Trades Coach — says the key drivers to improving team engagement are still as relevant now as they were more than a decade ago.

A new phrase has entered the vernacular over the past two to three years — “quiet quitting”.

It’s become a term used for team members just going through the motions at work, giving the bare minimum of effort they can get away with, and maximising their downtime at home.

Whether this is due to concerns brought about during the Covid pandemic, increased specialisation leading to boredom, or other factors is not certain.

But a worrying statistic in a Gallup’s State of the Workplace study for 2021 (considered to be the gold standard for employee engagement research) found that a paltry 15% of team members are actively engaged with their work.

Even more worrying is that a similar percentage of team members are actively disengaged.

These are the ones who are Health & Safety nightmares on site, deliberately make mistakes, and who will try and drag the rest of the team down to their level.

## A new problem or more of the same?

Despite the new buzzword “quiet quitting” being talked about, this is not a new problem. I recently re-read a 2011 report on the subject from Australasian HR consultancy JRA Associates, which noted that employee engagement was an issue for employers back then too.

Back then they reported around 32% of employees were “engaged”, so the issue has become worse, but it is not a new thing.

The causes may have changed and perhaps become more compelling, but the suggestions to improve team engagement are as relevant now as they were 13 years ago.

## Improving team engagement

The JRA report made some good suggestions on what is important to maximise staff engagement — and the graphic accompanying this article below summarises their recommendations. In summary it states:

“Naturally what engages people within a given industry sector or even job role will vary, as does the economic climate of the day.

Nonetheless, we see that drivers of employee engagement tend to centre around four primary aspects of an employee’s experience in an organisation.

Specifically, employees are engaged by strong leaders who can align people to the organisation’s vision and values, working in an organisation that values and recognises good performance, where fun and community are strong, and by jobs that are not only inherently rewarding but which provide people with the opportunity to learn and grow.”

nevertheless, some specific things you can do to keep your own engagement numbers high. Recommendations include:

- **Conduct surveys.** How big is the problem? Interviews and anonymous surveys offer a couple of benefits. One, you can gain a better understanding of how engaged your employees are and what specific issues need to be addressed. And two, it helps your employees know that you actually care about them and want to hear what they think.
- **Host team-building events.** With more and more employees feeling disconnected from one another, planning some hangouts or bonding activities (ideally during normal work hours) can be helpful.
- **Celebrate successes.** Try to include small wins in your weekly toolbox meetings. If a team member has made a specific contribution to it (or had their own personal win) then share it with the wider team.
- **Provide cross-training opportunities.** If possible, allow employees to experience some variety in their day-to-day work,

rather than feeling like they’re just repeating the same basic tasks day in and day out. It has the added benefit of providing skills cover when one team member is away.

- **Focus on professional development.** Training, education and skills formation are all great ways to engage your employees.
- **Schedule regular 1-on-1 reviews.** As part of this process, be clear in saying that you genuinely want to hear feedback and constructive criticism, and that employees can voice concerns to you without fear of retribution.
- **Document your agreed core values.** Seek input from the team

and come up with an agreed culture definition that will help guide the balance of enjoyment and performance in day-to-day actions.

The bottom line? Employee engagement is an ongoing issue, and has a major impact on the bottom line profit of your company. But even if the macro-economic news is concerning, there are simple and practical ways for your business to engage better with team members.

Ensure this is in your plan for the year, and you will reap the benefits in the long run.

Contact me at [andy@tradescoach.co.nz](mailto:andy@tradescoach.co.nz) if you want help to develop a plan to improve team engagement levels.



The key drivers above explained 77% of the variance across staff members’ engagement levels, so they are fundamental drivers you need to be aware of and put some day-to-day actions around.

You cannot single-handedly reverse the age-old issue of disengaged staff, but there are,



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# Building Consents Information

For all authorisations, December 2023

Dwellings	\$1,266,312,387	Total All Buildings	\$1,929,859,259
Domestic Outbuildings	\$16,407,395	Non-building Construction	\$30,744,585
Total Residential	\$1,282,719,782		
Non-residential	\$647,139,477	<b>Total Authorisations</b>	<b>\$1,960,603,844</b>

## Number of new dwellings consented

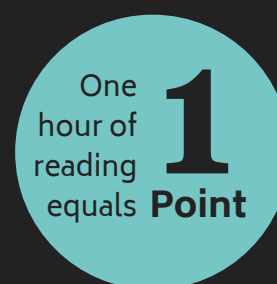
	Dec 2023	Nov 2023	Dec 2022		Dec 2023	Nov 2023	Dec 2022
Far North District	12	33	47	Palmerston North City	43	23	23
Whangarei District	51	37	32	Tararua District	1	3	7
Kaipara District	7	17	12	Horowhenua District	8	17	40
Rodney District	58	80	63	Kapiti Coast District	67	32	39
North Shore/Albany Wards	146	148	140	Porirua City	4	3	5
Waitakere Ward	124	198	168	Upper Hutt City	7	15	43
Auckland Wards	181	239	391	Lower Hutt City	50	48	169
Manukau/Howick Wards	233	241	315	Wellington City	14	33	192
Manurewa-Papakura Ward	132	171	165	Masterton District	10	16	8
Franklin Ward	44	87	60	Carterton District	7	6	9
Thames-Coromandel District	12	16	25	South Wairarapa District	1	3	11
Hauraki District	11	5	9	Tasman District	14	30	30
Waikato District	51	48	52	Nelson City	13	23	25
Matamata-Piako District	26	24	26	Marlborough District	8	15	30
Hamilton City	127	70	110	Kaikoura District	1	2	0
Waipa District	20	32	60	Buller District	15	3	6
Otorohanga District	2	1	3	Grey District	2	2	6
South Waikato District	3	11	1	Westland District	10	3	6
Waitomo District	2	1	1	Hurunui District	6	9	22
Taupo District	25	50	33	Waimakariri District	63	66	80
Western Bay of Plenty District	24	30	27	Christchurch City	345	402	436
Tauranga City	22	48	53	Selwyn District	60	148	136
Rotorua District	30	39	31	Ashburton District	19	39	31
Whakatane District	7	8	5	Timaru District	16	13	4
Opotiki District	8	1	7	Mackenzie District	2	3	2
Gisborne District	6	11	8	Waimate District	1	1	1
Hastings District	26	18	25	Waitaki District	5	12	12
Napier City	105	28	15	Central Otago District	15	23	17
Central Hawke's Bay District	4	8	7	Queenstown-Lakes District	64	110	76
New Plymouth District	24	23	16	Dunedin City	32	49	22
Stratford District	3	4	6	Clutha District	2	3	5
South Taranaki District	3	8	5	Southland District	8	21	13
Ruapehu District	2	7	0	Gore	0	2	2
Whanganui District	12	11	9	Invercargill City	12	14	1189
Rangitikei District	2	2	3	Area Outside TA	0	0	0
Manawatu District	17	10	9	<b>Total</b>	<b>2487</b>	<b>2958</b>	<b>3457</b>

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