

Conference Keynote Speakers

Minister of Transport, Minister of Workplace Relations and Safety, Minister of Immigration, Minister for Auckland and Associate Minister of Finance

Minister Michael Wood

Michael was first elected to Parliament at the 2016 Mt Roskill by-election. In opposition he was Labour's spokesperson for Transport, Revenue, and Consumer Affairs, and after the election he had roles as Parliamentary Under-Secretary to the Minister for Ethnic Communities and Chair of the Finance & Expenditure Select Committee, before coming into the Chief Labour Whip role in mid-2019.



Following the 2020 General Election, Michael became a sworn Member of the Executive and was appointed by the Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern as the Minister of Transport and Minister of Workplace Relations and Safety. He was also given the role of Deputy Leader of the House. In June 2022 the Prime Minister announced a reshuffle of Cabinet portfolios and delegated added responsibilities to Michael. He has also taken up the role as the Minister of Immigration. The Rt Hon Chris Hipkins awarded Michael two extra portfolios in January 2023 giving him ministerial responsibilities as Minister for Auckland and Associate Minister of Finance.

Michael also continues a strong association with New Zealand's vibrant and growing Ethnic Communities owing to his previous role and the highly diverse nature of the Mt Roskill electorate he represents.

Prior to his parliamentary role Michael was an Auckland Council member in his community and has held roles providing advice to Habitat for Humanity and as a senior negotiator for the Finance Sector union Finsec.

Michael is driven by the core belief that all people deserve the opportunity to flourish and reach their potential regardless of background, and that this is most likely to occur when we build strong, fair, and supportive communities. He believes that an economy and public institutions that are focused on people's wellbeing will lead to a society that is both more prosperous and just.

Along with his wife Julie and their three young sons, Michael lives in Roskill South where he loves to tramp along the Waikowhai Coast, tends to a very neglected vegetable garden, and dreams of an alternative career as a roving international test cricket commentator.

Chief Executive, Waka Kotahi

Nicole Rosie

Nicole Rosie joined Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency as Chief Executive in February 2020.

Prior to her appointment, Nicole was the CE of Worksafe for three years. She has more than two decades of senior executive experience across the public and private sectors. This includes a range of industries and functions, such as transport and commercial firms including Toll NZ and Fonterra.



Nicole is passionate about making a difference and sees the land transport system and the critical roles Waka Kotahi plays across infrastructure, regulation and safety as being at the heart of a successful New Zealand.

GGM Transport Services, Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency, Waka Kotahi

Brett Gliddon

As a member of the Waka Kotahi Executive Leadership Team, Brett Gliddon is responsible for the Transport Services business group, overseeing the planning, design, delivery and maintenance of transport system operations and improvements. With a focus on developing an integrated multimodal transport system, Transport Services works alongside local and central government partners to ensure optimal investment that delivers the best long-term transport outcomes.



Brett has more than 20 years' experience working in and leading transport system improvements, having started his career in engineering and project management, and being involved in infrastructure such as the Northern Busway and stations, Te Ara I Whiti Lightpath walking and cycling link, Waterview Tunnel and Tauranga Eastern Link. As a result, he is committed to developing better outcomes for New Zealand through strong, collaborative relationships with Mana Whenua, local government partners and the supply chain.

Chief Executive, Civil Contractors New Zealand Inc

Alan Pollard

Alan commenced his role as Chief Executive of Civil Contractors NZ in January 2022, after 10 years leading the industry association representing New Zealand's apple and pear industry.

A Chartered Accountant and a member of the Institute of Directors, Alan has spent most of his career managing professional service firms. His experience with membership-based organisations includes a period as a director and then President of the Canterbury Employers Chamber of Commerce. He holds a Bachelor of Commerce and Administration degree from Victoria University of Wellington, majoring in accounting and economics.



Alan and his wife, Miranda, live in Havelock North, Hawkes Bay.

National Programme Manager and Standards, Waka Kotahi

Vanessa Browne

Vanessa is the National Manager Programme and Standards at Waka Kotahi, the New Zealand Transport Agency.

Part of the Transport Services business group, Programme and Standard's purpose is to enable Transport Services to invest wisely and deliver the right things. The team do this by ensuring there is clarity on the work that should be done (the TS portfolio of work), there is clarity on how the work is done (the TS standards and guidelines suite) and there is clarity that we are continuing to improve (via an internal assurance function).



Vanessa is very proud of the Programme and Standards team, with more than 100 incredible people who bring their expertise and know how to make things better for Transport Services, for our Council partners, for our transport asset and ultimately for the outcomes we create for New Zealanders.

Chief Advisor, Waka Kotahi

Kevin Reid

Kevin is a Chief Advisor at Waka Kotahi, a Director of the National Transport Research Organisation (formally ARRB) and a Fellow of Engineering New Zealand. Kevin has spent his working life in transport in both private and public sector roles.

For the last 17 years Kevin has been at Waka Kotahi and has had the privilege of working across most aspects of the business. Amongst other things he has recently become sponsor of Waka Kotahi's Pavement Delivery System Programme.



Lead Advisor State Highway Strategy, Waka Kotahi

David Darwin

David Darwin is the Lead Advisor State Highway Strategy for the Transport Services group in Waka Kotahi, the New Zealand Transport Agency. He is a Chartered Professional civil engineer who has worked in the Infrastructure Asset Management field for 30 years.



Lead Advisor Environmental Sustainability, Waka Kotahi

Natalie Rowe

Natalie is a Lead Technical Advisor, Environmental Sustainability at Waka Kotahi, NZ Transport Agency. Prior to joining Waka Kotahi, Natalie was an Associate Director in the Geoscience and Remediation Services team at a leading international engineering consultancy. She has over 20 years of experience working on environmental projects in New Zealand, Australia and the Pacific Islands.



Natalie is an experienced environmental practitioner who assists in the proactive and practical management of environment risk, providing for improved environmental and sustainability outcomes.

AA

Simon Douglas

Simon has been leading the AA's Transport Policy & Advocacy team for the past year and was previously second-in-charge and Manager of the AA Research Foundation. His team closely follows the work of Government departments involved in transport policy and has relationships with key Government Ministers, other Members of Parliament and senior officials working in transport. Simon's team also supports AA National Council, and the 18 AA District Councils in their local advocacy work throughout New Zealand. Representing the views of AA Members is an important part of the team's work, captured through the Member survey programme. This information complements the team's own policy work as well as research undertaken via the AA Research Foundation.



Chief Executive, Whanganui District Council

David Langford

David Langford was appointed chief executive at Whanganui District Council in December 2021. Langford's previous role was group manager for planning and infrastructure with the New Plymouth District Council, where he was responsible for parks and reserves, development planning, and essential infrastructure.

David brings a unique mix of public and private sector experience having started his career in civil engineering working for large national construction contractors both here in NZ and in the UK.



Systems Manager BOP, Waka Kotahi

Roger Brady

Roger has a passion for activity management and empowering people. He has over 40 years of industry experience consulting, contracting and project managing civil engineering projects.

Roger joined Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency as the Bay of Plenty System Manager in September 2021. This change from Ōtorohanga District Council has enabled him to return to an operational role where he can work directly mentoring people for better community outcomes.



Roger is an enthusiastic member of the Te Ringa Maimoa Transport Excellence Partnership whānau and is chair of the Sector Excellence working group.

The continued impact of climate change and associated climate adaptation, combined with the ongoing constrained operational environment presents a huge challenge – one that Roger is dedicated to help overcome.

Chief Executive Officer, Suncorp New Zealand

Jimmy Higgins

Jimmy is the CEO for Suncorp NZ, which includes the Vero, Asteron Life and AA Life brands, and is responsible for the strategy and operational delivery. Jimmy is also a Director of Vero Liability, AA Insurance and AA Money.

Jimmy joined the Suncorp Group in 2008, following 20 years as a Chartered Accountant in organisations in Qld and NSW. Jimmy has worked in both the general insurance and life insurance businesses, delivering customer outcomes across the many Suncorp brands and portfolios. At Suncorp, he held executive roles in both Life and General insurance across portfolio management, strategy, claims and insurance investigations. He became the CFO for Suncorp NZ in 2019 and later became the CEO where he led the organisation through the disruption and dislocation created by the COVID pandemic.



He is leading transformational change at Suncorp NZ through its Scaled Agile delivery approach that is not only improving customer experiences but also delivering increased employee engagement. He credits this success to promoting and reinforcing transformational and adaptive leadership across all employees in the organisation.

Jimmy is now focused on taking elements of the Agile approach and applying them to every aspect of business transformation, creating great customer outcomes and enabling Suncorp to play a powerful role in supporting community resilience in New Zealand.