

Aviation Council

**Aviation Action Plan Annual
Progress Report**

October 2026

Contents

Introduction	3
Summary of achievements	4
Ambition: Our world-class aviation regulatory environment is robust, internationally credible, and nimble, allowing businesses and New Zealanders to thrive	5
Ambition: Aviation is a desirable career path; we have the talented and skilled people we need for the sector to grow	6
Ambition: The aviation system has grown and is thriving, connected, resilient and productive, and it adopts innovations readily	8
Ambition: Aviation infrastructure is well-planned and integrated, supports efficient and sustainable movement of people and goods and enables economic growth	10
Ambition: New Zealanders and visitors experience consistently accessible and efficient aviation services and are treated fairly	11
Ambition: We are reducing use of fossil fuels and transitioning to clean energy, in line with New Zealand's target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050	12

Aviation Action Plan Annual Progress Report

Introduction

On 16 September 2025, the Acting Minister of Transport, Hon James Meager, launched the Aviation Action Plan (the Plan). The Plan was developed in collaboration between industry and Government by the Interim Aviation Council.

The Plan contains 25 initial actions to grow and future-proof the aviation sector, ensuring it continues to deliver for all New Zealanders. These 25 actions advance six ambitions:

- Our world-class aviation regulatory environment is robust, internationally credible, and nimble, allowing businesses and New Zealanders to thrive
- Aviation is a desirable career path; we have the talented and skilled people we need for the sector to grow
- The aviation system has grown and is thriving, connected, resilient and productive, and it adopts innovations readily
- Aviation infrastructure is well-planned and integrated, supports efficient and sustainable movement of people and goods and enables economic growth
- New Zealanders and visitors experience consistently accessible and efficient aviation services and are treated fairly
- We are reducing use of fossil fuels and transitioning to clean energy, in line with New Zealand's target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Each year, the Aviation Council will report on the progress in delivering the actions. This is the first of the Aviation Council's Annual Progress Reports.

Strong progress has been made across the Aviation Action Plan during the first year. Of the 25 actions:

- 15 have been completed, although follow-up implementation may still be underway (blue)
- Eight are underway and on track for delivery (green)
- Two are underway but are delayed or at risk (amber).

Since the Plan's launch, the Ministry of Transport (MoT) joined the new Ministry for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT). Any reference to MoT in the Action Plan should be taken to now refer to MCERT.

Summary of achievements

This report reflects the first year of delivery on the Aviation Action Plan's initial actions. A lot has been achieved, and the Council is pleased to have led these first practical steps toward the Plan's six ambition statements.

The Council welcomes the significant work both achieved and underway towards achieving a world-class regulatory environment. One of the key highlights has been the launch of the Rules Update Programme that is jointly led by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and MCERT. This programme aims to update 24 civil aviation rules in two years. It will remove barriers to growth and enhance safety and security in aviation, including by better aligning rules with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards and reducing unnecessary regulatory burden. Outside of the Rules Update Programme, the Government has agreed to other important rule changes including introducing a rule to allow for regulatory sandboxes – controlled environments where new and innovative technology can be tested freely and safely. The Tāwhaki National Aerospace Centre in Canterbury has been approved to become the first sandbox.

The Council has overseen progress towards better understanding and responding to the sector's workforce needs. In late 2025, Ringa Hora Workforce Development Council presented its report on addressing aviation workforce needs to the Council. This report included a range of potential responses. Responsibility for taking this work forward sits with the industry, and the Council's Workforce Working Group is supporting industry-led efforts to identify priorities and actions.

Investing in Ohakea as a permanent alternative airport was a priority for the Council to strengthen New Zealand's aviation connectivity and resilience. In February 2026, the Government announced its decision to fund 24-hour air traffic control services at Ohakea. From mid-2027, airlines will be able to nominate Ohakea as an alternate airport when weather or other disruptions affect their destination. This will improve operational flexibility and support the commercial viability of long-haul services to New Zealand by reducing fuel carriage requirements and enabling fuller passenger and freight loads.

The Council has also welcomed Government investment in the regional aviation sector through the Regional Air Connectivity package of the Regional Infrastructure Fund. The Government has approved \$25.8 million to support regional airlines via concessionary loans. This funding is supporting regional airlines to manage debt, maintain aircraft and help stabilise the sector in the short to medium term. Additionally, Ministers have agreed that \$5.7 million from the Regional Infrastructure Fund will be made available for working capital grants for day-to-day costs such as fuel and wages to support regional airlines to maintain their current service levels.

Improving the experience of air travellers remains a focus for the Council. Airlines are engaging with MCERT on the development of a voluntary Passenger Information Charter, which will improve the accessibility and transparency of information about passenger rights. The Charter contains a set of commitments regarding how and when information about passenger rights will be communicated by airlines. The Council is also considering options for taking forward the recommendations of its Accessibility Working Group on improving air travel for disabled people.

The Council was pleased to see New Zealand confirm its participation in Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) during a speech at the 2025 General Assembly of the International Civil Aviation Organisation. New Zealand is implementing CORSIA by requiring eligible international airlines to monitor, report and verify their carbon emissions.

Taken together, the completed actions show strong early delivery against the Plan's ambition statements and provide a good foundation for the next phase of implementation and the longer-term outcomes sought through the Plan.

Ambition: Our world-class aviation regulatory environment is robust, internationally credible, and nimble, allowing businesses and New Zealanders to thrive

Status of actions

CAA and MoT, with input from the sector	Rework specific rules to allow for safe innovation and growth in the advanced aviation sector, and contribute to improving the pace of regulatory decision-making, while continuously improving safety and security – to be implemented by the end of 2025.	Complete
MoT and CAA	By the end of 2025: - Develop a 2-year, prioritised rolling rule-making programme, tested with the sector, and focused on implementing ICAO recommendations, improving efficiency, safety and security and enabling innovation - Enhance the efficiency of rule-making.	Complete
CAA	Lift the quality of service and speed up certification decision-making by: - Improving resourcing and processes - Replacing paper-heavy processes with smarter, more accessible systems - Automating routine tasks. (Timing contingent on the outcome of the CAA funding review.)	Underway (ongoing)

Summary of progress over the last year

In November 2025, the Government introduced a new rule to allow regulatory sandboxes – controlled environments where new and innovative technology can be tested freely and safely. The Tāwhaki National Aerospace Centre in Canterbury has been approved to become the first sandbox. The Government also updated the drone rules to help reduce processing timeframes for Part 102 and make it much clearer when drones and other aviation technologies can be used and when they can't.

MCERT and the CAA are updating the Civil Aviation Rules. In April 2026, Acting Minister of Transport James Meager announced details of the Rules Update Programme (RUP) which aims to modernise New Zealand's Civil Aviation Rules, increase alignment with international standards, and be more responsive to the aviation sector's needs.

CAA has made good progress in implementing continuous improvement actions to lift the quality of service and speed up certification decision-making. The certification backlog was cleared in June 2026.

Future focus

Of the 24 RUP projects, four are already complete, with rules signed and in force, seven are underway and three more are scheduled to start by the end of 2026. CAA is continuing to improve certification decision-making and through its business transformation programme will invest in digital tools and systems to deliver cost efficiencies and make it easier for aviation participants to work with CAA.

Ambition: Aviation is a desirable career path; we have the talented and skilled people we need for the sector to grow

Status of actions

MoE	Provide advice to Ministers on issues related to training in the aviation sector and how they contribute to workforce challenges in civil aviation, and develop options for policy changes that address these issues.	Underway (ongoing)
Ringa Hora	Improve the relevance of the qualification for airlines by updating the pilot qualification, in consultation with the sector, by the end of 2025. This involves developing an airline-approved training programme that: - can be delivered over a shorter period - better aligns training to airlines' needs.	Complete
Ringa Hora	Work with industry partners, Aviation Council, and Transport, Immigration and Education officials to develop an aviation workforce package of options to address persistent challenges in the training and retention of aviation workforce – by end 2025.	Complete
Industry	- Collaborate on joint employment promotion activities to ensure aviation is seen as an attractive, diverse and rewarding sector for young people – by end 2026 - Report to the Council on options for the Council to help coordinate aviation graduates' placement and progression in the workforce – by end 2025.	Underway
MoT and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE)	Work with the advanced aviation industry to identify projected skill set needs for the next 10 years, and recommend next steps – by end 2025.	Complete
CAA	Progress potential opportunities with like-minded partners and other States, where appropriate, to put in place mutual recognition agreements for licensing systems, licences, and the movement of aviation personnel.	Underway (ongoing)

Summary of progress over the last year

Among the achievements under this ambition is Ringa Hora's report titled "Addressing the needs of the Aviation Workforce", which was shared with the Council in December 2025. The report is available on the Ringa Hora website. Responsibility for taking this work forward sits with industry, and the Council's Workforce Working Group is supporting industry-led efforts to identify priorities and actions.

Ringa Hora also provided recommendations to flight training providers to help better align training with industry needs and deliver training in a shorter timeframe. Flight schools are

responsible for deciding whether to redesign their programmes and take forward Ringa Hora's recommendations.

In April 2026, the Ministry of Education (MoE) advised tertiary Ministers on the key interactions between the aviation training pipeline and the outcomes for trained pilots. The advice also discussed better aligning aviation training provision with industry needs. The Minister agreed to prioritise an industry-led approach to resolving these issues. The industry-led Workforce Working Group is identifying next steps.

The Ministry's report into the workforce needs of the advanced aviation industry concluded that it is currently too nascent to determine its future needs, with businesses looking about six months ahead. The Ministry will keep monitoring the sector's development and revisit workforce planning once the industry is more established and businesses can plan further ahead.

Future focus

The industry-led Workforce Working Group will brief the Council in December 2026 on its shared priorities and how it proposes to progress them.

The CAA continues to engage with other States about opportunities for new mutual recognition agreements for licensing, or to extend existing agreements. Work has been completed on five key standards that will underpin a mutual medical certificate recognition framework between New Zealand and Australia which would reduce medical certificate duplication and make it easier for pilots and air traffic controllers to work across both countries. CAA expects to complete this work by mid-2027.

Ambition: The aviation system has grown and is thriving, connected, resilient and productive, and it adopts innovations readily

Status of actions

MoT	Document costs borne by the sector, such as fees and charges – by end 2025.	Complete
MoT	Develop an indicator framework to monitor the health of the aviation system by the end of 2025 and start collecting data in 2026.	Complete
CAA	To ensure that the aviation funding model drives efficiencies in the regulator and participants while maintaining current levels of safety and security – undertake a system-wide first principles funding review by end 2027.	Underway
Airways NZ	- Undertake a review of services and policy settings to ensure Airways' services are appropriate and can be efficiently delivered (end 2026). - Review Airways' pricing framework and consult with industry (mid 2027).	Underway
MoT and MBIE	Secure and support vulnerable regional routes by using the Regional Infrastructure Fund to: - support regional airlines with acquisition or lease of aircraft, the procurement of essential aircraft components, and debt refinancing on concessionary terms - support information technology investment to enable interlining arrangements between regional airlines, Air New Zealand, and other participants – from now until 2026.	Complete

Summary of progress over the last year

MCERT provided advice to the Minister on the cumulative costs facing the aviation sector and the transparency of fees and charges information provided by government agencies operating at the border. The Minister accepted this advice and requested that the Border Executive Board (BEB) coordinate a range of actions to improve transparency of fees and charges information. The BEB has published information on border-related fees and levies, government cost recovery, and a schedule of government border-related fee and levy reviews on its website (hosted by the New Zealand Customs Service).

MCERT has developed the Aviation Indicator Framework and will report on it to the Council every six months.

The Government has approved \$25.8 million out of the \$30 million Regional Infrastructure Fund to support regional airlines via concessionary loans and announced grant funding to support the Air Chathams and Air New Zealand interlining partnership. Additionally, Ministers have agreed that \$5.7 million from the Regional Infrastructure Fund will be made available for working capital

grants for day-to-day costs such as fuel and wages to support regional airlines to maintain their current service levels.

Future focus

The Airways Service Review will conclude with a report to the Airways Steering Committee in late 2026, outlining the key findings and recommendations. These findings are expected to inform industry consultation in 2027, which will help shape the future pricing framework and provide the foundation for the next pricing round.

CAA is working on the first principles funding review. It is rated as amber because the end of 2027 timeframe will no longer be met. The timeline has been reset to mid-2028 with the agreement of the Acting Minister of Transport so that public consultation could occur in mid-2027. This timing will allow for deeper sector engagement given other consultations occurring in 2026. Alongside this work, CAA is consulting on a proposal to reduce domestic and international passenger security levies by five percent after improvements in aviation security operations, financial management and security reserves.

Ambition: Aviation infrastructure is well-planned and integrated, supports efficient and sustainable movement of people and goods and enables economic growth

Status of actions

Air NZ	To support future-focused investment decisions across the aviation system Air New Zealand will continue to assess future infrastructure needs, including support for fleet expansion, jet fuel demand (both Jet A-1 and Sustainable Aviation Fuel) and electricity and transmission requirements for next generation aircraft, and convene with the energy sector for specific discussion - by December 2025.	Complete
Aviation Council	To support future-focused investment decisions - outline infrastructure requirements for emerging technologies - by June 2026.	Complete
MoT	Building on the above actions, map out the aviation infrastructure we need to support economic growth (including through tourism and trade opportunities), focusing on the must-haves for safety, security, and resilience - by end 2026.	Underway
MoT, Airways, New Zealand Defence Force, MBIE	To ensure that New Zealand can remain “open for business” at all times - make Ohakea available on a permanent basis as an alternate runway – by December 2026.	Complete
MoT with input from CAA and Airways	To enable the efficient, safe and secure use of airspace by more users - develop a future airspace and traffic management integration approach - by December 2027.	Underway
NZ Airports	Give input on minimum operating network requirements for air transport into the Infrastructure Commission’s considerations for the National Infrastructure Plan – by December 2025.	Complete

Summary of progress over the last year

On 26 February 2026, the Government announced that it had approved funding for Airways New Zealand to offer round-the-clock air traffic control at RNZAF Base Ohakea, to make it available as an alternate runway 24/7 from mid-2027, strengthening New Zealand’s operational resilience. The focus has shifted to implementation, including recruiting and training additional staff.

The Infrastructure Commission released the National Infrastructure Plan in February 2026. The Plan includes a section on airport infrastructure.

Future focus

MCERT is scoping work to deliver on the action to map infrastructure needs, and is on track to deliver this by the end of 2026. MCERT is preparing a programme plan for the airspace integration work and will establish a cross-government governance group to oversee the work.

Ambition: New Zealanders and visitors experience consistently accessible and efficient aviation services and are treated fairly

Status of actions

Aviation Council	To help ensure that disabled people enjoy accessible and efficient air travel services throughout their journey – identify quick wins to improve air travel for disabled people by early 2026, in consultation with disabled people and the broader sector, and then implement them.	Underway
MoT	Provide advice to the Minister responsible for aviation about what other countries require airlines to disclose to passengers about their rights, taking into account information that airlines already provide – by early 2026.	Complete

Summary of progress over the last year

MCERT provided a briefing to the Minister about what other countries require airlines to disclose to passengers about their rights. Following this advice, the Minister directed officials to develop a voluntary Charter in consultation with airlines, outlining a set of commitments regarding the information airlines provide to customers on their rights.

The Council formed an Accessibility Working Group to provide advice on quick wins that would improve accessibility. The Working Group provided that advice to the Council in March 2026.

Future focus

Further work on the voluntary Passenger Information Charter is ongoing.

Sector partners have engaged on progressing the accessibility quick wins identified by the Accessibility Working Group. There is support for a collaborative, sector-wide training that helps frontline aviation staff develop the skills, knowledge and awareness needed to better support disabled passengers. Work is underway to explore delivery options for this training.

Ambition: We are reducing use of fossil fuels and transitioning to clean energy, in line with New Zealand's target of net zero carbon emissions by 2050

Status of actions

MoT and industry	Commence work in 2025 with Australian Ministerial counterparts on the 2+2 Climate and Finance dialogue to develop regional collaboration on SAF uptake and supply.	Complete
Industry	Participate in Bioenergy Australia-led process on regional sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) strategy and develop advice to the Jet Zero Council - 2025 and first half 2026.	Underway
MoT	Affirm our voluntary participation in Carbon Offsetting Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA) at the 2025 ICAO General Assembly.	Complete

Summary of progress over the last year

New Zealand has confirmed its participation in CORSIA. Eligible airlines will report their emissions to MCERT annually for the calendar year, which will then be audited by an independent verification body.

The 2+2 meeting took place on 5 December 2025 in Auckland. This was a meeting between the Ministers of Finance and Climate Change from Australia and New Zealand. As agreed at the meeting, officials are continuing to engage at the working level on SAF policy developments and monitor progress on the trans-Tasman SAF strategy to identify any implications or opportunities for New Zealand. However, to date, Bioenergy Australia's focus has been on Australia's domestic policy settings to help grow its low-carbon liquid fuel industry, including SAF. This has been prioritised over advice on a regional SAF strategy, such as a trans-Tasman strategy. The advice to the Jet Zero Council is therefore not progressing within the timeframe specified in this action.

Future focus

Air New Zealand, together with the New Zealand SAF Industry Roundtable, will continue to monitor developments, particularly the recent "Securing Australia's Cleaner Fuels Industry: Consultation on a demand mechanism" and the Australia New Zealand Leadership Forum's focus on trans-Tasman fuel and supply chain resilience.