

Ports and Maritime Transport

WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT
PLAN



HANGA-ARO-RAU
Manufacturing, Engineering
and Logistics
Workforce Development Council

REVISED EDITION JULY 2025



As an island nation, Aotearoa New Zealand is heavily dependent on the daily movement of domestic and imported cargo around our ports. Our major ports of Auckland, Tauranga, Napier, Wellington, and Lyttleton pump hundreds of millions of dollars through the economy daily and provide employment up and down the country. Ensuring that our ports run smoothly is critical to the efficient and prosperous running of the country, which is why maintaining a skilled port workforce is so important. The Ports sector employed 9,500 in 2024, with a highly diverse workforce. Forecasts show that the sector will need to fill over 3,563 job openings over the next five years, an average of 693 per year, to meet the industries' need to grow and ensure continued productivity (Infometrics 2024). Our industries face global talent competition, particularly in areas of technical skill.

This sector includes: Stevedoring; Ports; Water Freight and Passenger Transport

What matters to industry matters to us

Hanga-Aro-Rau engages with the sector through our Industry Stakeholder Group (ISG) and National Industry Advisory Group (NIAGs), composed of industry leaders from around the country. This is supported by regular site visits and engagements with sector associations, business owners and key stakeholders annually. We have heard what issues this sector is facing specifically and below have outlined our planned actions to address each priority.

Objective	Outcome	Hanga-Aro-Rau Actions	NIAG Actions	Timeline
Work with industry to support a sustainable, industry-led training option	Have a Provider that can deliver the quals and micros for industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with industry to find a solution for industry-led PTE and delivery of training Present and regularly update the Ports H&S Leadership Group, and the CE group on qualification work – to show importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working on Sub-contract arrangement between industry-led PTE and training provider as an option to deliver qualifications including micro-credentials for industry 	December 2025
<p>Shift the focus of current qualifications from solely recognizing prior learning to actively supporting ongoing training and career development for personnel</p> <p>Enhance the perceived value of qualifications for both employees and employers to increase motivation and commitment to completing training programmes</p>	Clear pathway for enrolment into fit for purpose quals valued by industry.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qualifications aligned that provide value to employees and employers throughout their career journey. Linking in with the Ports industry developed matrix. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure engagement and feedback in Port reviews and put forward those that can contribute to the discussion 	December 2025
Ensure the current qualifications are fit for purposes and aligned with the specific needs of Ports and Stevedoring companies	<p>Ensure qualifications aligned and agreed by industry.</p> <p>Micro-credential framework that recognises smaller skills packages.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During qualification review ensure industry is consulted Support the development of mandated industry standards for the high-risk sector working with Maritime NZ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure a voice around the table 	December 2025
No mandated industry standards for training around critical risks	Clearly defined industry standards for employee training on critical risk skills and knowledge development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with Industry and Maritime NZ, identify what good training looks like and how to support 		2026

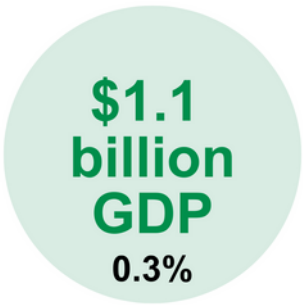
2024 WDP Action	What has been actioned over the last 12 months	What will be actioned to Dec 30 2025
L3 Ports qual review underway	Combilift standard updated to allow it to be used outside of a Port Environment	This will be submitted to NZQA for approval on changes
Identify a solution for Sub-Contracting and delivery of Ports Training	Working to find a solution for Sub-Contract arrangement	Discussions on going in this space

NIAGs tabled for the ISB to pick up post 31 December 2025

Engage industry groups, secure funding, and ensure alignment on qualifications, and micro-credential development	Pick this up from the WDCs
L3 has been mostly completed by the WDC, further work required to continue this and look at L4 and L5 (if required) Current L5 has never been used	Look to complete anything carrying over from L3 and pick and develop a L4 qualification. See if L5 is needed.
Provider Delivery	Work with Providers to ensure consistent delivery
Advocacy	NIAG to advocate for continuation of this group in an ISB setting

Ports sector snapshot

Size of the sector



GDP: In 2024, the sector contributed \$1.1 billion, which is 0.3% of the total economy.



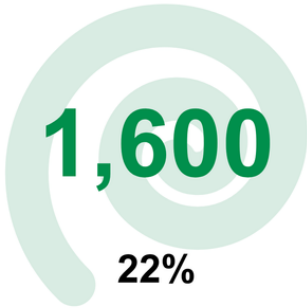
No. of businesses (2024): 435, up from 369 in 2013, but down from 441 in 2023.



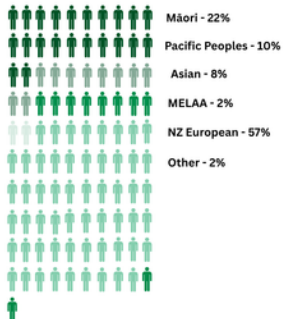
Māori-owned businesses (2021): The sector had 618 or 13% (in 1/3 where ownership data was available).



Employment: Continues to grow and is forecast to reach around 8,200 in 2030, around 1,000 more than 2024.

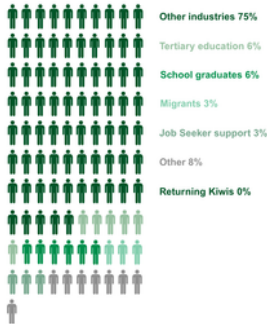


No. of Māori employed (2023).

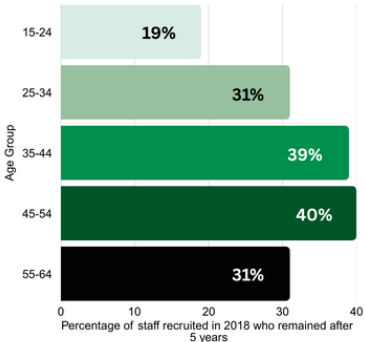


Ethnicity data for sector (2023). Total response ethnicity allows multiple ethnicities for each individual.

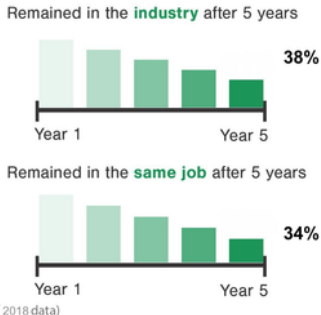
Trends and forecasts



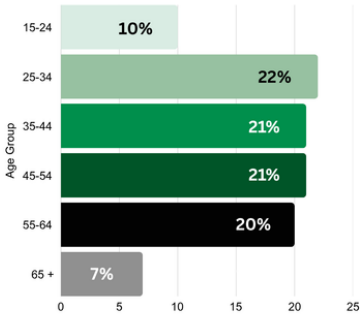
New entrants: From 1,100 to 1,700 between 2015 and 2023. Most from other industries, showing opportunity for attraction.



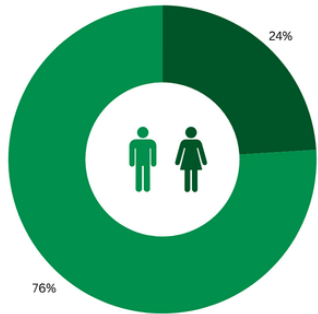
Retention of new entrants: Of the 2018 new entrants, the proportion of each age group who remained after 5 years.



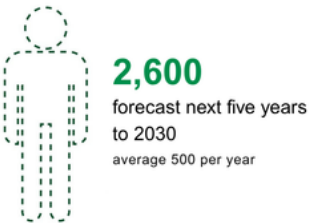
Overall retention: Of the 2018 workforce, 38% remained in the industry after 5 years and 34% were in the same job after 5 years.



Age breakdown: 15-24-year-olds increased from 8% to 10% (2015-2023), 55+ age group decreased from 30% to 27% over the same period.



Gender split (2024): 24% of the workforce is female, up from 20% in 2015.



Forecast: 2,600 openings over the next 5 years (average 500 p/a), 35% due to growth and 65% due to workers leaving/retiring.



Employment: History and forecast



Maritime Transport Actions

Objective	Outcome	Hanga-Aro-Rau Actions	NIAG Actions	Timeline
Addressing challenges in the current funding model and the duration of training to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of vocational education	A different funding approach focused on completion of competencies not time spent getting there.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with industry to see what is working 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback on upcoming survey 	December 2025
Review all training pathways and ensure they align with career progression in the sector	Develop a clear pathway.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matrix completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Feedback from NIAG and support 	December 2025
Lack of alternative pathway – no earn while you learn option	<p>Clear progression strategy while working.</p> <p>Increasing interest in the industry, a clear pathway will increase numbers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete industry survey for feedback on VE system in the sector This will also feed into the current qualification review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing interest in the industry, a clear pathway will increase numbers 	December 2025
Too difficult to get into industry – Australia is an easier option, better quality training	<p>Aligning to Australian model.</p> <p>Changing operating limits.</p> <p>Practical skills vs theory – needs to be both.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize WDC's influence and data insights alongside Maritime New Zealand's regulatory power to support industry and identify the gaps. To ensure the sector is current and up to date with other countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Qual reviews underway 	2026

Maritime Transport Progress

2024 WDP Action	What has been actioned over the last 12 months	What will be actioned to Dec 30 2025
Industry survey getting developed	Working internally to get survey developed for industry	Feedback for the survey will help shape what the qualification will look like
Qual review identifying current issues	Industry/Operators feedback getting heard in the review	Ensuring a fit for purpose product reflecting industries voice

NIAGs tabled for the ISB to pick up post 31 December 2025

Collaborate with schools to develop aspirational training opportunities that attract new talent to the industry	Industry and stakeholders and ISB working together to develop something here, this will be taken into the ISB
Advocacy	NIAG to advocate for continuation of this group in an ISB setting

Maritime Transport sector snapshot

Size of the sector



GDP: In 2024, the sector contributed \$310 million, which is 0.1% of the total economy.



No. of businesses (2024): 216, with water freight and passenger transport 100%



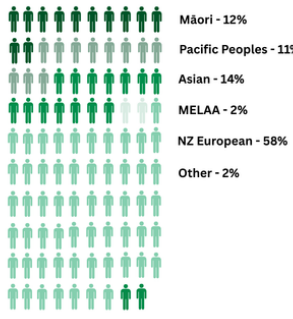
Māori-owned businesses (2021).



Employment: Continues to grow and is forecast to reach around 2,800 in 2030, around 500 more than 2024.

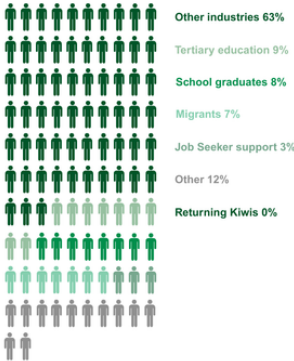


No. of Māori employed (2023).

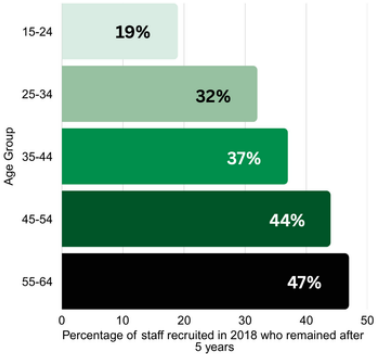


Ethnicity data for sector (2023). Total response ethnicity allows multiple ethnicities for each individual.

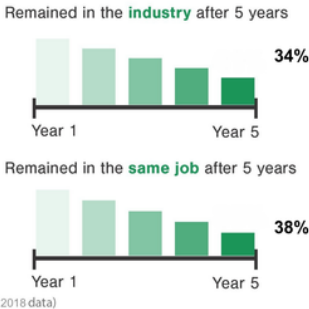
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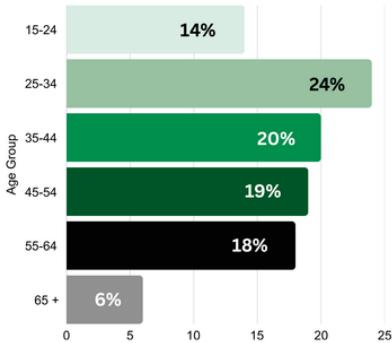
New entrants: From 500 to 800 between 2015 and 2023. Most from other industries, showing opportunity for attraction.



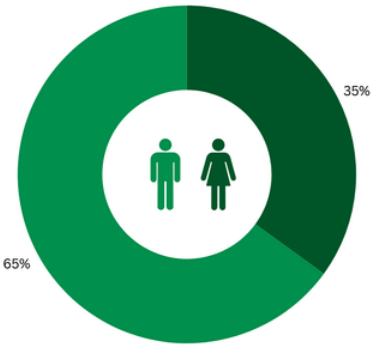
Retention of new entrants: Of the 2018 new entrants, the proportion of each age group who remained after 5 years.



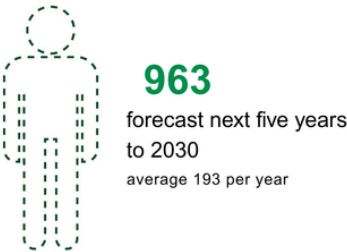
Overall retention: Of the 2018 workforce, 34% remained in the industry after 5 years and 38% were in the same job after 5 years.



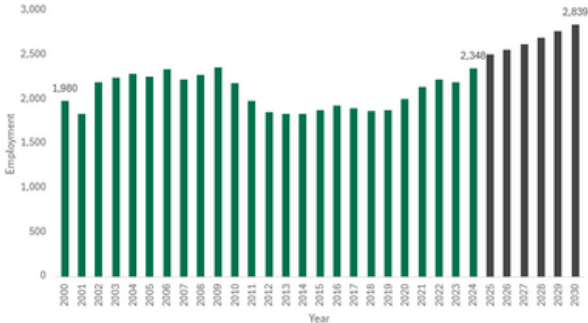
Age breakdown: 15-24-year-olds decreased from 15% to 14% (2015-2023), 55+ age group decreased from 25% to 24% over the same period.



Gender split (2024): 35% of the workforce is female, up from 34% in 2015.



Forecast: 963 openings over the next 5 years (average 193 p/a), 35% due to growth and 65% due to workers leaving/retiring.



Employment: History and forecast



Cross-Sector Action Plan

The below forms part of HAR actions until 31 December 2025 and will be tabled to the new ISB for future actions

Objective	Outcome	Hanga-Aro-Rau Actions	NIAG Actions	Timeline
Qualifications and Recognition To address challenges with Recognition of Prior Learning, current skills and experience in our sectors	<p>The vocational education system effectively recognises and validates prior learning and experience, enhancing upward mobility, transferability, and transparency of current skills.</p> <p>The result will be formalising skills and knowledge through qualifications.</p>	<p>Actively advocate for Recognition of prior learning as a programme of work/conversations all WDCs are having with NZQA and providers.</p>	<p>Support and endorse actions taken by Hanga Aro Rau to address objective.</p>	<p>31 December</p>
Advocate for funding gaps to recognise Prior Learning in Manufacturing, Engineering and Logistics (MEL)	<p>Adequate funding is secured for the formal recognition of prior learning and experience in manufacturing, engineering and logistics for the benefit of employers and learners to help alleviate financial burden.</p>	<p>HAR has responded through our Advice to TEC function.</p>	<p>Support and endorse actions taken by Hanga Aro Rau to address objective.</p>	<p>31 December</p>
Better streamline qualification development to address delays in sector training	<p>The development and implementation process for qualifications, programmes, and unit standards in the MEL sectors is expedited and efficient.</p>	<p>HAR have worked across the vocational education system with TEC, NZQA, and Providers to address the systemic challenges that slow things down by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early signalling to providers by giving early notice of upcoming reviews • Tighter project management • Shared language and expectations • Proactive engagement with system agencies • Early and deep industry involvement • Expanding our provider network. 	<p>Support and endorse actions taken by Hanga Aro Rau to address objectives.</p>	<p>31 December</p>

Cross-Sector Action Plan

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Objective	Outcome	Hanga-Aro-Rau Actions	NIAG Actions	Timeline
Ageing Workforce Providing Transition support for retaining the older workforce in Hanga-Aro-Rau Industries	<p>Transition support is provided to experienced older workers to move into less physically demanding positions and to transition and retain senior workers into leadership and training roles.</p> <p>Employers will be able to develop and maintain succession planning and attract and retain talent.</p>	<p>We keep industry updated on quantifiable data and new research on the ageing workforce giving industries the opportunity to respond.</p>	<p>Support and endorse actions taken by Hanga Aro Rau to address objective.</p>	<p>31 December</p>
Acknowledging the skills gap for older workers in a rapidly evolving technological environment	<p>Older workers receive the necessary training and support to adapt to new technologies and processes, ensuring they can effectively keep pace with rapidly evolving sector advancements.</p> <p>Industry retains the skills and knowledge of older workers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote the Level 3 digital skills qualification and the development of a Level 4 qualification. Incorporation of new technology skills into our qualification reviews. 	<p>Support and endorse actions taken by Hanga Aro Rau to address objective.</p>	<p>31 December</p>

Cross-Sector Action Plan

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Objective	Outcome	Hanga-Aro-Rau Actions	NIAG Actions	Timeline
Stronger Workforce Pipeline Attracting young talent and improving the industry profile	<p>Improved visibility of MEL sectors to attract younger talent, ensuring they are well-informed about the career opportunities available within the MEL sectors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAR has delivered the TEC Inspiring the Future (ITF) programme and continues to support the development of the Tāhātu Career Navigator website. ITF events seek to break down barriers and stereotypes, especially for young Māori and Pacific students. HAR works with other organisations like Chambers of Commerce, Economic Development agencies and AMA to promote and attract talent. HAR will develop and publish qualification pathways. Communicate and publish case studies. 	<p>Support and endorse actions taken by Hanga Aro Rau to address objective.</p>	<p>31 December</p>
Overcoming Literacy and Numeracy Barriers: Enhancing Training and Advancement Opportunities	<p>Industry is more aware and has better access to literacy and numeracy support, ensuring that all individuals could receive future training and advancement.</p> <p>This approach promotes equitable access to education and career growth, enabling a more skilled and capable workforce.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HAR advocate in this space through our TEC advice and by advising employers of the various literacy and numeracy programmes to engage. Supporting digital literacy awareness by promoting Level 3 digital skills qualification and the development of a Level 4 qualification. Broker introductions between industry and providers for specialist support. 	<p>Support and endorse actions taken by Hanga Aro Rau to address objective.</p>	<p>31 December</p>

Cross-Sector Action Plan

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Objective	Outcome	Hanga-Aro-Rau Actions	NIAG Actions	Timeline
<p>Enabling a strong economy, including a strong Māori economy</p>	<p>Employers successfully engage, attract, and retain a diverse workforce, including Māori, Pacific, Women, and Disabled Peoples, by looking beyond traditional employment pools. This approach addresses labour shortages and fosters an inclusive, dynamic, and skilled workforce that meets the evolving needs of the sector.</p> <p>Industry successfully embeds Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles and embraces Te Reo Māori, creating a supportive environment for the growing Māori workforce.</p> <p>This approach enables the estimated 50,000 Māori entering the workforce over the next five years are well-supported, helping to address labour shortages and fostering a more inclusive and culturally aware industry.</p>	<p>HAR advocate the importance of the growing Māori workforce.</p> <p>We're identifying workforce gaps and leveraging opportunities to enhance access for Pacific Peoples within MEL sectors. Through engagement of Lumana'i o Tangata Moana, Hanga-Aro-Rau Pacific Peoples Workforce Development Action Plan, we're working to ensure strengthened outcomes within the vocational education system, empowering Pacific learners and workers to thrive.</p> <p>Empowering Disabled Individuals: Our Disability Research Project Report, informed by extensive engagement and research, identified barriers and opportunities to enhance support for disabled individuals in training and employment. Let's level up disability project launched to promote potential of disabled workforce to meet skill needs of the sector.</p>	<p>Support and endorse actions taken by Hanga Aro Rau to address objective.</p>	<p>31 December</p> <p>White Paper: Unlocking the potential of Māori and the Māori economy</p> <p>Mahere Whanake Māori Plan</p> <p>White Paper: Unlocking the potential of Pacific Peoples</p> <p>Lumana'i o Tangata Moana</p> <p>White Paper: Unlocking the potential of the disabled workforce</p> <p>Let's level up</p>

We want to hear from you

These Workforce Development Plans are our functions in action and remain agile to changing Industry and VET sector needs. We encourage and seek continual feedback, so if you would like to contact our team, please email info@hangaarorau.nz

