

# Quarterly Report 2025-26

## Quarter Two (October - December 2025)

**venture**  
TARANAKI  
Te Puna Umanga



*Venture Taranaki takes home three awards at the 2025 EDNZ Awards*



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# Message from the Chair

Tēnā koutou

While economic conditions across Taranaki remained constrained through Q2 there are early indications of easing pressure, however uncertainty remains, reinforcing the need for clear, strategic decision-making and future-focused investment to strengthen the region's long-term economic position. Supporting local enterprises to navigate this uncertainty in the here and now, while ensuring they are well positioned to adapt and succeed when confidence returns, is central to our role.

Over the last quarter, we've made great progress across our key strategic focus areas of food and fibre, tourism, new industry and investment, and energy. We firmly believe these areas hold the strongest opportunity to unlock growth and build long-term prosperity for our region. We continue to uphold a long-term strategic lens across each of these areas to identify challenges and emerging opportunities, and to bring coordinated leadership and action to deliver the greatest impact for our people and place.

The Branching Out land diversification programme is entering a critical phase, shifting from investigation to delivery, with a stronger focus on commercial outcomes. This work supports diversification within the food and fibre sector and strengthens the region's pathway toward a more sustainable, high-value economy.

Tourism remains a priority focus area, with the ability to deliver near-term economic gains, bolstering the economy through this transitional period.

The inaugural Taranaki Tourism Summit was a highlight of the quarter, aligning key stakeholders from across the local visitor economy, and I look forward to seeing momentum build in this space.

One of the most encouraging developments has been progress toward establishing the Taranaki Alliance. With \$500,000 committed by New Plymouth District Council and strong indicative participation from industry, the Alliance represents a deliberate step by Venture Taranaki and NPDC to act as a catalyst, bringing partners together to retain and grow regional capability in advanced engineering, manufacturing, and heavy industry. This positions local firms to secure large-scale, complex industrial contracts and capture greater economic value for the region.

Looking ahead we remain focused championing a thriving Taranaki for all, and we thank our shareholders and partners for their continued support and investment, which remains critical to delivering lasting outcomes for the region.

**Grant McQuoid**  
Chair, Te Puna Umanga  
Venture Taranaki



# Message from the CE

## Tēnā koutou

This has been a significant quarter, with strong progress made across our strategic focus areas as we continue to drive forward our vision of a thriving Taranaki, for all.

It was fantastic to see Venture Taranaki recognised nationally at the 2025 Economic Development Awards, taking home three accolades including the Primary Research Award for Phase 2 of Branching Out, our flagship land use diversification project, and the Excellence in Innovative Use of Technology Award for the development of an innovative 'Land Use Portal', due to launch later this year.

I was extremely proud to see Dr Anne Probert recognised with the Lifetime Distinguished Service Award, acknowledging over 25 years of leadership and the high-calibre expertise that Anne has contributed to shaping our region's economic landscape.

Momentum continues to build through the Branching Out programme, with our vision for a Taranaki Hemp Hub recently showcased nationally on Seven Sharp, highlighting the region's growing capability in hempcrete construction. With strong engagement from growers, builders, designers, and homeowners, Taranaki is well placed to translate early hemp growing trials into a viable new industry. The arrival of a pilot-scale hemp fibre processing unit in region is a significant milestone, with capacity to process up to 90 hectares annually and support the construction of more than 50 hempcrete homes.

The inaugural Taranaki Tourism Summit was another highlight this quarter, bringing the visitor sector together to explore how tourism can be a force for good while delivering economic benefits. It's encouraging to see the Government's Regional Tourism Boost Fund place a clear emphasis on regional dispersal, creating timely opportunities for Taranaki to capture a greater share of international arrivals.

Meanwhile as the energy landscape continues to evolve, the region's industrial capability must be supported. The Taranaki Alliance is progressing as a strategic response to this transition, providing an industry-led platform for local engineering and manufacturing firms to diversify into new markets and access large-scale opportunities, while protecting the region's highly skilled workforce. We acknowledge NPDC for their support in establishing this important regional platform.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to working alongside iwi, Council, local businesses, and our communities to unlock opportunities for long-term prosperity for our people and place.








**Kelvin Wright**  
CE, Te Puna Umanga  
Venture Taranaki



# Economic overview

The latest Quarterly Economic Monitor (Sep 2025) shows that economic conditions in Taranaki remain challenging, shaped by both broader national pressures and ongoing structural change within the region. Tight economic conditions, combined with the contracted gas supply situation, continue to weigh on activity across several key sectors.

Despite these pressures, some areas of the economy are showing resilience. Business numbers across the region have remained broadly stable, suggesting that while expansion is limited, many existing firms are adapting and continuing to operate under tighter conditions. The rural economy continues to provide an important buffer, with a period of strong, though slightly softening, dairy payout returns and potential, contributing to incomes and spending in provincial districts.

Annual Results <i>September 2024 - 2025</i>	New Zealand	Taranaki Region	New Plymouth District	Stratford District	South Taranaki District
 <b>Gross domestic product (provisional)</b>	-0.5% ▼	\$10,817m ▼ -2.3%	\$7,460m ▼ -3.1%	\$691m ► 0%	\$2,665m ▼ -0.7%
 <b>Business counts</b>	1.0% ▲	16,022 ▲ 0.1%	10,298 ▲ 0.1%	1,475 ▼ -0.3%	4,249 ▲ 0.1%
 <b>Tourism expenditure</b>	2% ▲	\$465m ▼ -1.9%	\$362m ▼ -3.2%	\$25m ▼ -3.8%	\$78m ▲ 6.8%
 <b>Residential consents (#)</b>	3.6% ▲	438 ▲ 0.7%	342 ▼ -0.6%	33 ▲ 57.1%	63 ▼ -10%
 <b>Non-residential consents (\$)</b>	-1.9% ▼	\$102.5m ▼ -15%	\$50.9m ▼ -43.1%	\$10m ▲ 122.2%	\$41.7m ▲ 81.5%
 <b>Employment</b>	-1.4% ▼	55,178 ▼ -1.8%	39,211 ▼ -1.7%	3,481 ▼ -1.6%	12,486 ▼ -2.1%
 <b>Housing Sales (#)</b>	14.2% ▲	1,882 ▲ 14.8%	1,325 ▲ 11.8%	134 ▲ 26.4%	423 ▲ 21.6%

*For each indicator, figures show annual levels, while percentages represent the average annual percentage change over the period September 2024 to September 2025.*

*Venture Taranaki – “Latest figures show economic pressures begin to ease in Taranaki, though challenges remain”*

*Source: Infometrics [Quarterly Economic Monitor](#).*

# Strategic focus areas update



# Initiatives Performance and Quarterly Summary

Events, programmes or initiatives to drive change and support regional strategy objectives such as Tapuae Roa and Taranaki 2050.

#	Focus area	Initiative	Project Description	Status
1	Energy	Sector development	Driving industry engagement, strategic decision-making, and energy workforce development through market intelligence, project leadership, and advocacy for supply chain and cluster growth.	On track
2	Energy	Renewables Accelerator	Develop a prospectus and lead initiatives to identify, package, promote and attract energy-generation and offtake opportunities, while investigating the establishment of a strategic energy zone.	On track
3	Food and Fibre	Branching Out	Phase two (2023 – 2025): Regional scale land diversification and scaleup of Food and Fibre value chains to generate economic, social and environmental outcomes. Phase three: (2026 – 2028):scale land-use trials into commercially viable, export-focused ventures by building value-chains, infrastructure and capability Better off Funding: Delivery of funding contract through DIA/NPDC for a Hemp Processor and Dryer in region, securing critical components of the value chain for the Branching Out program and commercialisation. Contract delivery 30 June 2027.	On track
4	Food and Fibre	Platform to Launch	Providing emerging food and beverage businesses the chance to test and refine their product, engage with customers, generate income and build capability and connection across the Food and Fibre value chain.	On track
5	Food and Fibre	Link Taranaki	Transport and logistics infrastructure Understanding the full role, value, and future of rail services and infrastructure in the region, and what impact it can have on enabling better connections and reducing emissions in our logistical system.	On track
6	Food and Fibre	Dairy and Agriculture	Support establishment of sustainable business models for future growth, ensuring retention of export market share and positioning the region as a leader in dairy and agriculture.	On track
7	Food and Fibre	Food & Fibre Sector Development	A coordinated programme to support the growth, resilience, and sustainability of the food and fibre sector through workforce development, sector partnerships, and increased sector visibility and opportunity.	On track
8	Destination	MEF	Facilitation of the Major Events fund to support and encourage out-of-region visitation, and the smoothing of seasonality via events.	On track
9	Destination	MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions)	Facilitation of the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions) sector to support and encourage out-of-region visitation, and the smoothing of seasonality via events.	On track
10	Destination	Visitor Trade	Continuing to develop and grow our visitor trade connections, working with trade-ready product to connect with international selling opportunity, and supporting trade-ready product development in partnership with the Enterprise team.	On track
11	Destination	Regional Film Office	Support a film-friendly region, liaising with stakeholders to streamline permitting and centralise film data. Providing reactive film support to productions on the ground and limited proactive business development of film opportunities for the region in line with budget.	On track
12	Destination	Product and Place. Sector Support and Development	Providing sector support in partnership with the Enterprise and Investment teams to catalyse and de-risk significant sector development opportunities through advice and support, funding and funding support, and cluster activities.	On track
13	Destination	Regional Promotion	Support a thriving visitor economy through the positioning of Taranaki as a must-visit NZ destination.	On track
14	Destination	International Education & Digital Nomads	Encouraging talent attraction, outward investment, regional growth and global connectedness.	On track

Traffic light criteria  Not started  On track  Under review  Cancelled / Off track

# Initiatives Performance and Quarterly Summary

Events, programmes or initiatives to drive change and support regional strategy objectives such as Tapuae Roa and Taranaki 2050.

#	Focus area	Initiative	Project Description	Status
15	New Industry and Investment	Prospectus and Promotion	Attraction of new businesses and investments to the region by creating a compelling destination proposition and addressing barriers, establishing competitive advantage, developing incentives and fostering an environment that is open for business and investment. <i>Develop a prospectus and lead initiatives to identify, package, promote and attract energy-generation and offtake opportunities—while investigating and advancing the establishment of a strategic energy zone.</i>	
16	New Industry and Investment	Taranaki Applied Innovation Centre	Establishment of regional science and innovation hub to connect, enhance, and elevate Taranaki's R&D activity. The Centre will establish services to support development of local IP, or attraction of external IP through piloting and scaling facilities. Initial research platforms are biotechnology, and integrated ecosystems. Alongside these services are initiatives to build regional science capabilities with coordinated education and outreach programmes.	
17	Foundations	Massey University Partnership and R&D Development	Partnership funding for an FTE located at Venture Taranaki to support R&D funding, food & fibre sector capability and students into Taranaki industries. Includes R&D for Grow Taranaki.	
18	Foundations	Skills and Talent	Ensure appropriate education pathways and in region training and skills development for school leavers and career transitions to support key regional sectors. Direct 'Talent & Skills' projects are delivered directly within each sector workstream.	
19	Foundations	Regional Data & Insights	This function ensures we have access to and development of the right data, dashboards and insights tailored to our unique region, which helps make informed decisions and capitalise on opportunities.	
20	Foundations	Tapuae Roa	Deliver a Regional Strategy function which includes ongoing maintenance and management of Tapuae Roa.	
21	Foundations	PowerUp	To foster, nurture, and grow the capability and confidence of start-ups and innovative enterprises ready to scale within the region by offering a range of support services and activities focused on the idea-to-maturity life cycle of an enterprise: PowerUp Business Ready, PowerUp Accelerator, PowerUp ScaleUp Grants, and PowerUp Supporting Activities.	
22	Foundations	Enterprise support - Regional Business Partners & Callaghan Innovation	Delivers tailored advisory and funding support to strengthen SME capability, innovation, and growth. Through MBIE's nationwide Regional Business Partner Network, businesses can access training, R&D grants (Callaghan Innovation), and connections that enable them to thrive.	
23	Foundations	Enterprise support - Business Mentor New Zealand (BMNZ)	Provides foundational mentoring support for SMEs by connecting them with experienced mentors who offer independent advice, fresh perspectives, and practical guidance to help them build confidence, capability, and long-term sustainability.	
24	Foundations	Enterprise support - Start up	Provides early-stage entrepreneurs with free, confidential one-on-one consultations focused on business planning, idea development, and access to advice and support networks. Includes: StartUp Clinincs, Start your own business (MSD) and Univentures 50+ Startup Programme	
25	Foundations	Emergent Opportunities	Keep sight of new regional opportunities, undertake due diligence and research, and maintain innovation ecosystem to support new opportunities to commercialise in Taranaki.	

Traffic light criteria  Not started  On track  Under review  Cancelled / Off track

# Performance reporting



# Enterprise support snapshot

venture  
TARANAKI

## District Council Quarterly Report Dashboard 2025/26



Venture Taranaki offers an interactive dashboard that provides a comprehensive overview of key performance metrics by district, month, and quarter. This live dashboard is able to be viewed here:

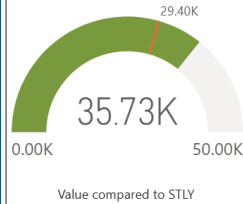
<https://www.venture.org.nz/regional-intelligence/performance-dashboard/>

Note: The dashboard is for internal use only and is not linked to the public website.

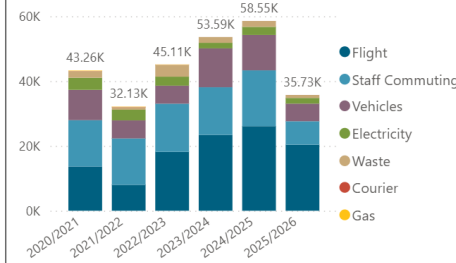
# Sustainability and Emissions Summary Report

## Venture Taranaki Carbon Emissions Footprint Dashboard

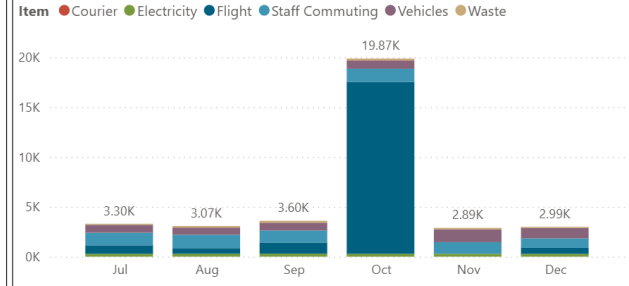
Emission Total 2025/26 (kg CO2e)



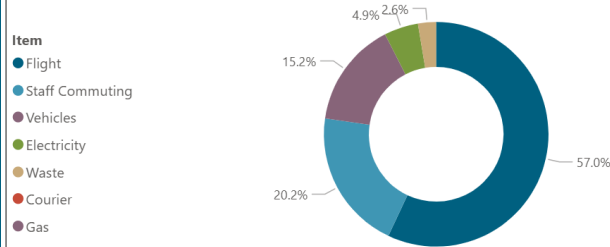
Overall Emissions by Financial Year Ongoing (kg CO2e)



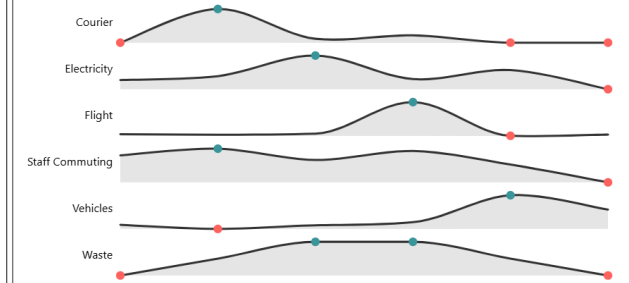
Emissions over Month 2025/26 (kg CO2e)



Overall Emissions by Category



Emissions category sparkling line by month



This live dashboard can be viewed here: [www.venture.org.nz/regional-intelligence/performance-dashboard/](http://www.venture.org.nz/regional-intelligence/performance-dashboard/)

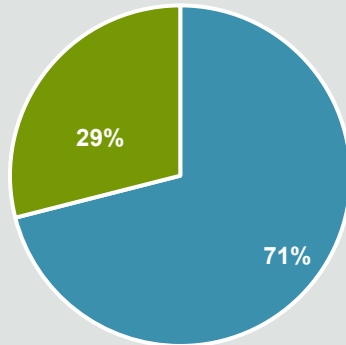
Note: The dashboard is for internal use only and is not linked to the public website.

# Leveraged Revenue Summary

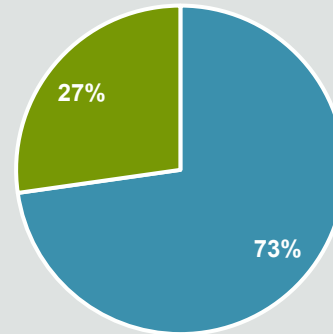
BUDGET SUMMARY	Q2 2025-2026 Year-to-date Actual					Q2 2025-2026 Year-to-date Budgeted				
	Revenue	NPDC Core Investment	NPDC other*	Leveraged Revenue	Expenditure	Revenue	NPDC Core Investment	NPDC other*	Leveraged Revenue	Expenditure
<b>Total</b>	\$3,477,611	\$1,969,699	\$704,680	\$803,232	\$3,212,311	\$3,341,997	\$1,969,699	\$634,646	\$737,653	\$3,253,370

\* "NPDC other" includes NPDC funding towards MEF and additional non-core projects (Branching out, Taranaki Innovation centre, Emergent opportunities)

Q2 2025 / 26  
Actuals



Q2 2025 / 26  
Budgeted



NPDC Core Investment    Leveraged Revenue

# Externally Funded Projects 2025–26

	Title	Cost Centre	Funder	Start Date	End Date	Traffic Light	Commentary	Description
1	Massey University Partnership	Regional Investment	Massey University	1/09/2012	30/06/2026		Partnership agreement for Massey Business Development role working within Venture Taranaki. Role 75% Massey Funded, 25% VT funded	Connection for Taranaki industry, businesses and organisations with Massey University expertise, knowledge and innovation to encourage greater development, innovation and growth.
2	BTAG	Economic Development	MSD	15/03/2021	N/A		Referral-based informal funding agreement. No formal contract in place for work ongoing.	To support emerging businesses with developing a business plan, training in business skills, advice and project reports.
3	Branching Out Phase 2	Regional Investment	NPDC, STDC	1/07/2022	1/2/2026			To diversify food and fibre value chains to generate better economic, social and environmental outcomes for Taranaki.
4	Branching Out Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures Grant	Regional Investment	MPI	16/12/2022	1/2/2026		Milestone 8 report completed 30 June 2025	To diversify food and fibre value chains to generate better economic, social and environmental outcomes for Taranaki.
5	Branching Out - Better Off Funding	Regional Investment	DIA via NPDC	5/05/2023	30/06/2027			Capital/operational grant for a dryer and hemp processing/manufacturing.
6	STDC Contract for Service	Economic Development	STDC	1/07/2024	30/06/2027		Funding amount reflects approximate total amount received over a three year period.	To provide regional development services to South Taranaki
7	SDC Contract for Service	Economic Development	SDC	1/07/2024	30/06/2027		Funding amount reflects approximate total amount received over a three year period.	To provide regional development services to Stratford District
8	Taranaki Applied Innovation Centre	Regional Investment	Toi Foundation	20/11/2024	20/11/2025			Establishment of an Applied Innovation Centre to connect, enable, develop and accelerate Taranaki's science and technology sector.
9	Taranaki Applied Innovation Centre	Regional Investment	NPDC	1/01/2025	31/12/2025			Establishment of an Applied Innovation Centre to connect, enable, develop and accelerate Taranaki's science and technology sector.
10	New Industry Acceleration - Applied BioTech	Regional Investment	NPDC	1/01/2025	31/12/2025			This project will assess Taranaki's existing capabilities for biotechnology industry while identifying essential steps to attract startups and established companies for scaling and commercialisation.
11	Taranaki Applied Innovation Centre	Regional Investment	Taranaki Regional Council	1/01/2025	30/06/2026			Establishment of an Applied Innovation Centre to connect, enable, develop and accelerate Taranaki's science and technology sector. Funding up to \$40,000
12	Branching Out	Regional Investment	AGMARDT	5/01/2025	30/06/2026		Contract in partnership with Northland Inc.	De-risking the process of introducing novel crops: A collaboration to develop a seed/propagation toolkit for Taranaki and Northland landowners
13	Branching Out Pivot Award Research Project	Regional Investment	Massey University	1/04/2025	1/4/2026		Project commenced in April 2025. Of the \$34,594, \$2,000 is in direct funding to VT.	Testing the power of sensory consumer science in distinguishing Taranaki crops and value-add products for market advantage. In partnership with Massey University (who will receive the funds) and Begin Distilling.

## Traffic light key

<span style="color: green;">■</span>	All KPIs met, contract complete or reporting period complete
<span style="color: yellow;">■</span>	All KPIs substantially met (within 90%), contract complete
<span style="color: lightblue;">■</span>	All KPIs on track to be substantially met by completion of contract
<span style="color: orange;">■</span>	Some KPIs not on track to be substantially met by completion of contract
<span style="color: red;">■</span>	Some or all KPIs not substantially met, contract complete
<span style="color: pink;">■</span>	Contract yet to commence

# External Project KPI 2025-26

	Title	Cost Centre	Funder	Start Date	End Date	Traffic Light	Commentary	Description
14	Central NZ	Destination	MBIE	28/04/2025	31/12/2025	Green	Total contract value of \$600k with MOU in place between Wellington and VT.	To attract visitor to Central NZ in shoulder and off-peak. Wellington is lead agency, receiving and managing funding of all activities in partnership with VT and other Central North RTO's.
15	Univentures 50+ Startup Programme Contract	Economic Development	MSD	6/05/2025	04/07/2025	Green	Three way contract for service between OFS, VT and Univentures.	The purpose of this contract is to engage Univentures to deliver a programme director role and integration support services as part of a pilot Hybrid Model business startup programme for individuals aged 50+ in Taranaki.
16	Regional Event Promotions Fund	Destination	MBIE	24/06/2025	24/06/2026	Blue		To support regional dispersal, visitor growth and attraction via major regional events.
17	Stratford Economic Development Strategy	Regional Investment	SDC	27/06/2025	31/03/2026	Blue		Develop a new Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan for Stratford District that will inform and guide Council's economic priorities, partnerships, and investments over the next 10+ years.
18	Regional Business Partnership Programme	Economic Development	MBIE	1/07/2025	30/06/2027	Blue		To support business growth by providing businesses with access to advisory services, training, and funding opportunities.
19	Business Mentors New Zealand	Economic Development	BMNZ	1/07/2025	30/06/2026	Blue		To facilitate delivery of the Business Mentors programme to mentors and mentees on behalf of BMNZ.
20	PKW Farms Branching Out Trial MOU	Regional Investment	PKW Farms LP	1/07/2025	31/12/2025	Blue	Funding to be put towards the cost of seed.	To support the optimisation of agronomic practices in preparation for a potential staged expansion of cultivation and processing operations.
21	Branching Out Phase Three	Regional Investment	NPDC	1/01/2026	31/12/2028	Pink	Phase three to begin on 1 January 2026.	Implementation of Branching Out Phase 3
22	Branching Out Phase Three	Regional Investment	STDC	1/01/2026	31/12/2027	Pink	Phase three to begin on 1 January 2026.	Implementation of Branching Out Phase 3

## Traffic light key

Green	All KPIs met, contract complete or reporting period complete
Yellow	All KPIs substantially met (within 90%), contract complete
Blue	All KPIs on track to be substantially met by completion of contract
Orange	Some KPIs not on track to be substantially met by completion of contract
Red	Some or all KPIs not substantially met, contract complete
Pink	Contract yet to commence

# Strategic Focus Areas Snapshot

Below is a snapshot of the work undertaken in Q2 across Venture Taranaki strategic focus areas.

ENERGY	FOOD AND FIBRE	DESTINATION	NEW INDUSTRY & INVESTMENT	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taranaki Energy Forum</li><li>• Low heat geothermal</li><li>• Biogas development</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AGMARDT</li><li>• Branching Out:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✓ Delivered Phase 2 of Project</li><li>✓ Hemp Fibre Processor and Botanicals Dryer</li><li>✓ Avocado Open day</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Industry support</li><li>• Visitor trade</li><li>• Business Events &amp; Conferences</li><li>• Regional Promotion</li><li>• Major Events</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• European Union (IURC)</li><li>• Taranaki Applied Innovation Centre</li></ul>	
FOUNDATIONS				
Skills and Talent	Massey University Partnership	Enterprise Support	Emergent	PowerUp
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hempcrete Construction Course</li><li>• Branching Out and Tupu ā Nuku</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• AgritechX</li><li>• Pivot funding</li><li>• Hemp Fibre for Construction</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• R&amp;D Support</li><li>• RPB – Rise Growth Lab</li><li>• Start up clinics</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taranaki Alliance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PowerUp Accelerator</li><li>• ScaleUp Grants</li><li>• Business Ready</li></ul>



**ENERGY**



# Energy

Sector development

During Q2, progress was made across a range of Tapuae Roa (TR) Energy Action deliverables:

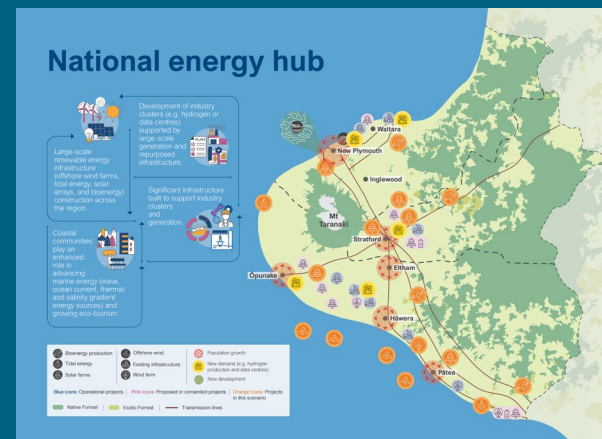
**Taranaki Energy Forum** was held on 5 December 2025 and hosted by Ara Ake. The half-day forum brought together industry and key stakeholders to consider the region's current and future energy landscape. Venture Taranaki provided an update on progress against the Tapuae Roa energy actions during 2025, alongside a series of energy-focused briefings. Taranaki Regional Council also presented the findings of its energy scenario work, which VT participated in during the year, connecting in with the Tapuae Roa Energy Action Plan.

**Low heat Geothermal** - exploring opportunities in geothermal for the region, including feasibility studies, is another action. During Q2, VT commenced a high level review of the region's low heat geothermal potential, which is now being advanced in conjunction with Ara Ake and the NZ Geothermal Association. This workstream is at an early stage, and will be evolved further in 2026.

**Biogas development** - building awareness and understanding of regional opportunities, roadmap development and catalysing potential projects is an integral part of the energy section of TR. During Q2, VT attended the Biogas modelling workshop hosted by Aka Ake and has continued to work across key industry and agency partners as well as the Councils, to support investigations into biogas production for Taranaki. Earlier in the year, the [Minister of Energy released a statement](#) - signalling their support for the development of the domestic biogas market. VT is a member of the Bioenergy Association of NZ, and has leveraged this channel to host local briefings, provide input on opportunities and challenges to biogas development, and discussed the leadership potential of Taranaki in biogas development with the Minister of Energy.



Anne Probert, presenting at the Taranaki Energy Forum 2025, focused on the region's energy transition and future opportunities.



"National energy hub" scenario presented during the Forum. To understand more about the different scenarios, refer to the [TRC-Taranaki-Energy-Scenarios-Final-Report-December-2025](#).



# FOOD AND FIBRE

*Branching Out Avocado Open Day in Brixton, showcasing large-scale horticulture opportunities in Taranaki.*



# Food and Fibre

AGMARDT Primary Sector EDA Exchange - Timaru

Members of the Investment team visited Timaru as part of an exchange programme funded by AGMARDT (the Agricultural and Marketing Research Development Trust). Delivered over the past two years, the programme was designed to showcase primary sector innovation and best practice, while exploring how EDAs across the country can collaborate more effectively to support growth in the food and fibre sector. Venture Taranaki participated alongside Northland Inc, CEDA (Central Economic Development Agency), Great South, and Venture Timaru.

While in Timaru, the team visited a range of inspiring, proactive, and ambitious local businesses, including Yap Apple Orchard, South Pacific Sera, Barkers of Geraldine, and Humdinger Gin. These visits provided valuable insights into project and market development, exporting products and services globally, and the benefits of collective action across regions and industries.

The Timaru exchange was the fourth and final exchange in the programme, following earlier famils in Northland, Southland, and Taranaki. Key takeaways from the programme included:

- Most regions face similar challenges in driving growth in a difficult economic environment.
- Regional funding models with less reliance on Central Government tend to be more resilient and reliable.
- EDAs are not competitors; strong inter-regional relationships are critical to the growth of NZ Inc.
- Venture Taranaki continues to be recognised as a leading example of best practice in EDA operations and stakeholder management.

Importantly, the programme has enabled Venture Taranaki to build much deeper operational relationships with other EDAs that share similar objectives. This includes the establishment of an MOU with Northland Inc focused on primary sector diversification, as well as a partnership with CEDA through Venture Taranaki's involvement in the EU-funded International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) programme.



*Hearing from the team at Yap Apple Orchard (near Temuka) where 70ha of Rockit Apple was planted in 2021*



*Visit to Humdinger Gin Distillery in Geraldine to learn about use of local botanicals in their gin production*



# Branching Out

Delivered Phase 2 of Project

Phase 2 of the Branching Out programme has been successfully completed, with all planned activities delivered and reporting finalised for MPI and other funders. This included developments in supply chain and infrastructure, investment model development, market validation, and product development using material grown, harvested, and processed during Year 2 trials, delivered across 13 trial sites in Taranaki. Blueprints 2.0 were delivered as Development Plans for Functional Botanicals (Medicinal Plants and Gin Botanicals), Hemp Fibre, and Kumara and Associated Rotational Crops. Phase 2 of Branching Out was also recognised with an EDNZ award for Primary Research.

Branching Out Phase 3 will commence 1 January 2026 for a 3-year period, and will focus on commercialisation, export readiness, infrastructure and supply chain, and broader horticultural opportunities. VT acknowledges the support of New Plymouth District Council, South Taranaki District Council and TOI in enabling Phase 3.

The Land Use Portal, (recognised with an EDNZ award for Innovation in Technology), was delivered following initial scoping. Developed in partnership with GroundTruth, the publicly accessible, GIS-enabled portal underpins a step-by-step diversification model that will be rolled out over Phase 3. It integrates datasets from NIWA, the Our Land and Water National Science Challenge Data Supermarket, crop suitability data generated by the Branching Out trials, and extended workforce modelling from the Workforce Requirements by Land Use Dashboard developed by Scarlatti.

The portal provides location-specific insights on crop suitability, infrastructure availability, indicative profitability, and workforce requirements through a simple interface. Landowners can explore and compare diversification opportunities at a paddock scale, generate downloadable reports, and undertake multi-property scenario analysis using consistent assumptions.

The portal supports informed decision-making for landowners, identifies opportunities for shared infrastructure or coordinated production, and enables Venture Taranaki to generate aggregated catchment and regional-level insights to support value-chain development, infrastructure investment, and investor engagement. The platform will be launched publicly in Q4.



*Michelle Bauer (Branching Out PM) receiving the Primary Research Award and the Innovative Use of Technology Award at the Economic Development New Zealand (EDNZ) Awards.*



*Hemp has grown 100cm in 6 weeks since being planted in December*



# Branching Out - Better Off Funding activities

## Hemp Fibre Processor

The hemp fibre processor has arrived in region, with final commissioning scheduled for completion by February 2026, using hemp grown under the current trial programme.

Initial customer orders have been received, indicating early commercial demand. The first hempcrete house using Taranaki-grown and processed fibre is expected to commence in mid-2026.

Planned scale-up to 15 hectares in 2025 was constrained by seed import challenges and the discontinuation of key cultivars by seed companies, resulting in 3.5 hectares under production. To support commissioning, approximately 10 hectares' worth of fibre material will be sourced from a grower in Levin. Future scale-up is contingent on access to higher-performing cultivars. Regulatory changes announced in December 2025 have expanded access to more productive cultivars, which will be trialled in Taranaki in 2026.

In parallel, demand-side de-risking for hempcrete has progressed through capability building, cost clarity, and performance transparency. Hempcrete courses delivered in partnership with Hemp Central in the South Island have established a core cohort of capable builders, supporting confidence among clients, designers, and consenting authorities.

In 2025, twenty-five building professionals completed hempcrete training, partly supported by the Branching Out project. A first cohort will travel in March 2026 for advanced training with Australian Hemp Masonry Company builders, before returning to deliver hempcrete builds in New Zealand. Ten builders have indicated interest in forming a hempcrete builders' group to share learnings and accelerate regional capability.

A technical evidence package has been developed to support adoption, including cost comparisons, energy efficiency analysis, and long-term performance assessment of the Burleigh-Low hempcrete home. Ongoing market validation indicates growing interest in multi-home hempcrete builds across the North Island.



*Seven Sharp feature on the Taranaki Hemp Hub, showcasing regional investment in hemp fibre processing and hempcrete construction. View the clip [here](#).*



# Branching Out - Better Off Funding activities

## Botanicals Dryer

The botanicals dryer has been received in the region and is currently housed at the hemp processor facility. The Branching Out team has completed manufacturer training in Tauranga, ensuring in-house capability to operate and troubleshoot the unit during the pilot phase.

Functional Botanicals trialists are progressing toward a co-operative operating model under the working name Functional Botanicals Taranaki, representing landowners and farmers across the region.

Subject to approval of the operating model, a final location and ownership structure for the dryer will be confirmed, and any required capital works will commence.

The dryer is expected to be operational from mid-2026. Market validation has informed a staged scale-up pathway:

- **2026:** 5 hectares targeting New Zealand and Australian customers, supported by a broker appointed to secure orders.
- **2028:** 20 hectares targeting New Zealand, Australia, and selected export markets, subject to further validation.
- **2028+:** 100 hectares supplying domestic and global markets, subject to successful progression through earlier stages.



*Michelle Bauer (Branching Out PM) and trialist Janet Fleming at the Natural Health Products NZ Innovation Expo in Auckland, showcasing Taranaki-grown botanicals to potential buyers..*



*Taranaki-grown ashwagandha being showcased at the Expo. Going forward, botanicals will be dried in region using the botanicals dryer.*



# Branching Out

## Avocado Open day

More than 50 landowners, growers, and rural professionals gathered for an Avocado Open Day hosted by Venture Taranaki and local landowner Matt Hareb at his property in Brixton. Hareb has planted 6,000 avocado trees across 16 hectares since 2021, and attendees were shown how avocados could be grown at commercial scale, including practical considerations such as site selection, soil health, and long-term market opportunity.

Hareb explained that he had planted the orchard to diversify his income, reported plans to plant another 6,000 trees, and said he was in discussions with packhouses out of region while planning to develop his own facility to support scaling by smaller growers.

The event was part of the Branching Out programme's ongoing work to derisk land use diversification and help build more resilient food and fibre systems. Branching Out Project Lead Michelle Bauer said interest in the open day reflected a broader appetite among local landowners to look beyond traditional systems, recognising that large-scale horticulture could play a major role in shaping the region's food and fibre future.



*Branching Out Avocado Open Day in Brixton, showcasing large-scale horticulture opportunities in Taranaki.*



# DESTINATION

*Taranaki Tourism Summit event Panel 1, facilitated by Kylie Ruwhiu-Karawana, with Andrew Wilson (Regional Tourism NZ), Gareth Hopkins (Chair, Department of Conservation Ngāmotu), Karl Burrows (Tourism NZ), and Matt Ammunson-Fyall (Māori Tourism NZ).*



# Destination

*Industry support capability and connectivity*

## Taranaki Tourism Summit

The first Taranaki Tourism Summit took place on 2 December in partnership with He Toronga Pakihi ki Taranaki at Novotel New Plymouth. The event attracted 150 attendees including operators, iwi, and regional leaders to explore the potential of tourism in Taranaki.

The summit reinforced three key themes shaping regional opportunity: the value of authentic local storytelling, growing market demand for cultural, agri- and regenerative tourism, and the critical role of iwi- and hapū-led experiences will play in in shaping a visitor offering that is truly Taranaki.

The renowned line up of speakers joined the packed programme of keynotes and interactive panel sessions, including Tara Howell (Blue Derby Pods, Tasmania), Gabby Lawton (Zealandia), Kylie Ruwhiu-Karawana (TRC Tourism), Marijke Dunselman (Agritourism New Zealand), Jolanda Cave (Ngāi Tahu Tourism), Karl Burrows (Māori Tourism New Zealand), alongside additional regional and sector contributors.

Early in 2026 we will bring the industry back together to workshop and prioritise actions to progress shared priorities, and collaborate on product development and capability building.



*MC Dinnie Moeahu opening the Tourism Summit at Novotel*



*Tara Howell (Blue Derby Pods, Tasmania) sharing insights into her regenerative tourism business, highlighting social, environmental, and economic impact.*



# Destination

Visitor trade

## Visitor Industry Hui

Our Q2 Visitor Industry Hui was held in November at Te Whare Hononga. The hui provided operators with the opportunity to hear from Erin from Taranaki Cathedral, who shared the history of St Mary's, the site, Te Whare Hononga, and the reconciliation journey between the church and Ngāti Te Whiti. Attendees also took part in a guided tour to experience first-hand how this visitor experience is delivered.

## Australian agent famil (Kiwi North Trade Show follow-up)

Following the Kiwi North Trade Show earlier this year, eight Australian agents participated in a famil programme across Wellington, Wairarapa, Whanganui, and Taranaki. The agents spent three days and two nights in the region exploring trade-ready accommodation and activities. Feedback indicated that Taranaki was the highlight of their time in the lower North Island.

## TRENZ pre famil – Whanganui and Waitomo

With TRENZ taking place in May, we have partnered again with Whanganui, and now also with selected Waitomo operators, to bring agents on a pre-famil journey along the west coast of the North Island. Planning for this famil is currently underway. In December, we visited Waitomo operators to experience and strengthen our relationship with them as we work more in partnership to bring visitors down the northern route through Waitomo and into Taranaki.

## Cruise sector engagement – IDNZ visit

IDNZ visited Taranaki in October. IDNZ are a ground handler for cruise vessels, focusing on managing passenger logistics, and designing and delivering shore excursions and tours. They manage the entire onshore experience for cruise passengers, from welcome to departure, working closely with cruise lines and local operators. IDNZ are the ground handler for the vessel scheduled to visit Taranaki in February. The purpose of the visit was to showcase existing product offerings alongside potential new products for upcoming seasons.



*Erin Morales-Ruka guiding visitor industry operators through Te Whare Hononga and Taranaki Cathedral*



*Group of 10 Australian travel buyers on the Kiwi North famil.*



# Destination

*Business Events & Conferences*

Business events and conferences continue to bring high-value visitors to region mid-week and off-peak.

In October, Taranaki hosted the Inaugural National Māori Energy Summit 2025 over 2 days, attracting 270 delegates. Taranaki event venues continue to host conferences and business events with an increase in some of the bigger conferences choosing to select smaller regions over larger centres which is positive. We have worked on two regional proposals this quarter to host national conferences in Taranaki in 2027. One will bring 450 delegates over 5 days, whilst the other will bring 200 delegates over two days.

The NZ Business Events Expo took place in Auckland on 25 November. This event is relaxed style with buyers having the option to have meetings or walk the floor interacting with sellers they are genuinely interested in. This event was a great opportunity to reconnect and meet with Professional Conference Organisers (PCOs) who have an interest in Taranaki. Follow-ups have been sent to leads.

The night before this event, a Regional Showcase event was held where we partnered with other smaller regions to showcase the benefits of holding conferences and business events outside of the main cities. The feedback was very positive, and we will look to build on this in the future.



*National Māori Energy Summit 2025, hosted in Taranaki.  
Image credit: Ngaru Wave Energy (LinkedIn)*



*Melissa Devine promoting the Taranaki region at the NZ Business Events Expo, Auckland*



# Destination

Regional Promotion

## Coastal Five Influencer Campaigns (November)

This quarter we supported Coastal Five to showcase the running festival like no other to new, high-reach audiences. In partnership with Tourism New Zealand, we hosted global influencers Max Haase (4M followers) and Jess Wandering (913k followers), helping to position Taranaki as a vibrant running destination. We also hosted NZ broadcaster Matty McLean (78k followers) in region to help inspire our domestic market to take on the challenge.

*Matty McLean at the Coastal Five running festival, supporting the promotion of Taranaki as a vibrant running destination.*



## Merch competition and launch

In December, we launched the new Taranaki Like No Other limited-edition merchandise range, featuring a design by local artist Morgan Paige Taitoko. The design competition attracted 15 high-quality entries, with the winning artwork debuting in Mood Magazine. The range is now available online via Game Changer, with in-store roll-out to i-SITes and Novotel New Plymouth underway. A portion of each sale is reinvested into our regional promotion efforts, allowing us to further strengthen the regional economy.

*Local artist, Morgan Paige Taitoko designs new limited-edition "Taranaki Like No Other" merchandise for summer.*



# Destination

Regional Promotion

## Regional Boost Fund Campaign – Find Your North

Taranaki is part of a successful joint bid for a new 'Kiwi North Collective' campaign, that has secured funding from Government's Regional Tourism Boost Fund.

Led by RotoruaNZ, this new campaign aims to drive short term arrivals from Australian travellers in early 2026, encouraging them to discover the North Island, with the campaign rolling out from November 2025 – June 2026. More detail is yet to be announced.

## Social Media Engagement

**Taranaki Summer Events Carousel:** Paid promotion for bumper series of summer events in Taranaki: 1,833 web page views, 113,518 impressions, 57,732 reach, \$500 spent across 2 weeks on Meta.

**Taranaki Summer Guide:** Organic post (16.8K views on FB, 7.9K views on IG), drawing 267 views to the blog web page.

**Taranaki - like no other** Published by Aynsle Harper · 1 December at 17:00 ·

There's magic in a Taranaki summer ✨

Family-friendly and good-vibes events, splash-worthy swimming spots, laid-back coastal days, and hikes with views for miles.

Our Taranaki Summer Guide is here to ignite your next Taranaki adventure, with ideas on where to swim, sip, explore and make the most of long summer days.

Read the guide and start planning a summer like no other - link in comments

Boost

160 6 8

**Taranaki - like no other** Sponsored ·

Experience a summer event line-up like no other in Taranaki. Wander through the dazzling, free TSB Festival of Lights, catch big-name concerts, watch live street art unfold, and soak up the excitement of the iconic AmeriCARna festival. Come for the events and stay a little longer to enjoy our stunning outdoor adventures, decadent dining and vibrant arts scene.

TSB FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

taranaki.co.nz Experience a summer event... Learn more

You and 463 others 21 comments

Like Comment Share

Social media content driving awareness and engagement around Taranaki's summer events and experiences.



# Destination

Regional Promotion

## Remix Magazine Summer issue

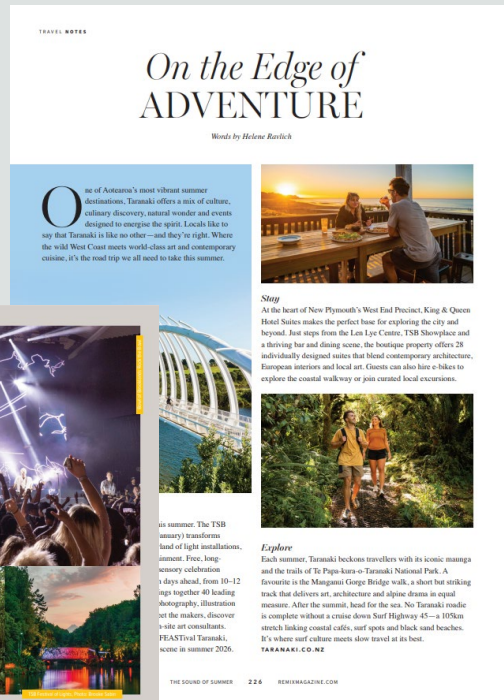
This quarter we've secured full-page feature and full-page brand advertisement in Remix Magazine's summer issue, reaching a print readership of 120,000.

The feature was brought to life in partnership with some of our major event owners and local operators, including TSB Festival of Lights, The Art Show, Festival, and King & Queen Hotel Suites.

## Waitomo influencer partnership agreement

This quarter we have also secured a new partnership with THL Group/Discover Waitomo, to deliver a joint summer campaign featuring travel content creators Lost with Liam (70k followers) and Roady (250k followers).

The campaign will showcase a seamless itinerary from Waitomo through to Taranaki, positioning the west coast route to visitors and highlighting experiences along the way. Both Liam and Roady are expected in region during Q3.



**A TARANAKI SUMMER LIKE NO OTHER**

Where world-class surf breaks and black-sand beaches meet the majestic Taranaki Maunga. Glowing nights, live music under the stars, awe-inspiring hikes, and a vibrant arts and culture scene await. Come for the festival and stay for the unique maunga-to-moana experience, where nature and creativity collide.

Start planning your ultimate summer escape at [taranaki.co.nz](http://taranaki.co.nz)

**WHAT'S ON**

- TSB Festival of Lights: 20 December 2025 – 24 January 2026
- Rock The Bowl: 29 December 2025
- Kingston Calling ft. UB40: 14 February 2026
- Anniversary: 25-28 February 2026
- Festival Summer: March 2026
- Taranaki Art Show: 10-12 April 2026

**TARANAKI**  
The art of life

Make a weekend of it!

Facebook, Instagram, Twitter icons @Taranaki\_NZ



# Major Events

Events contracted this quarter:

No.	Event Name	Contract Date	Event Date
4	Full Metal Orchestra	9 Dec 2025	7 March 2026

## Event spotlight – Centuria Taranaki Garden Festival



**43**

Gardens in 2025 edition



**71,652**

Total garden visits



**54%**

Out-of-region share



**\$9.2m**

Total Expenditure

**\$4.7**

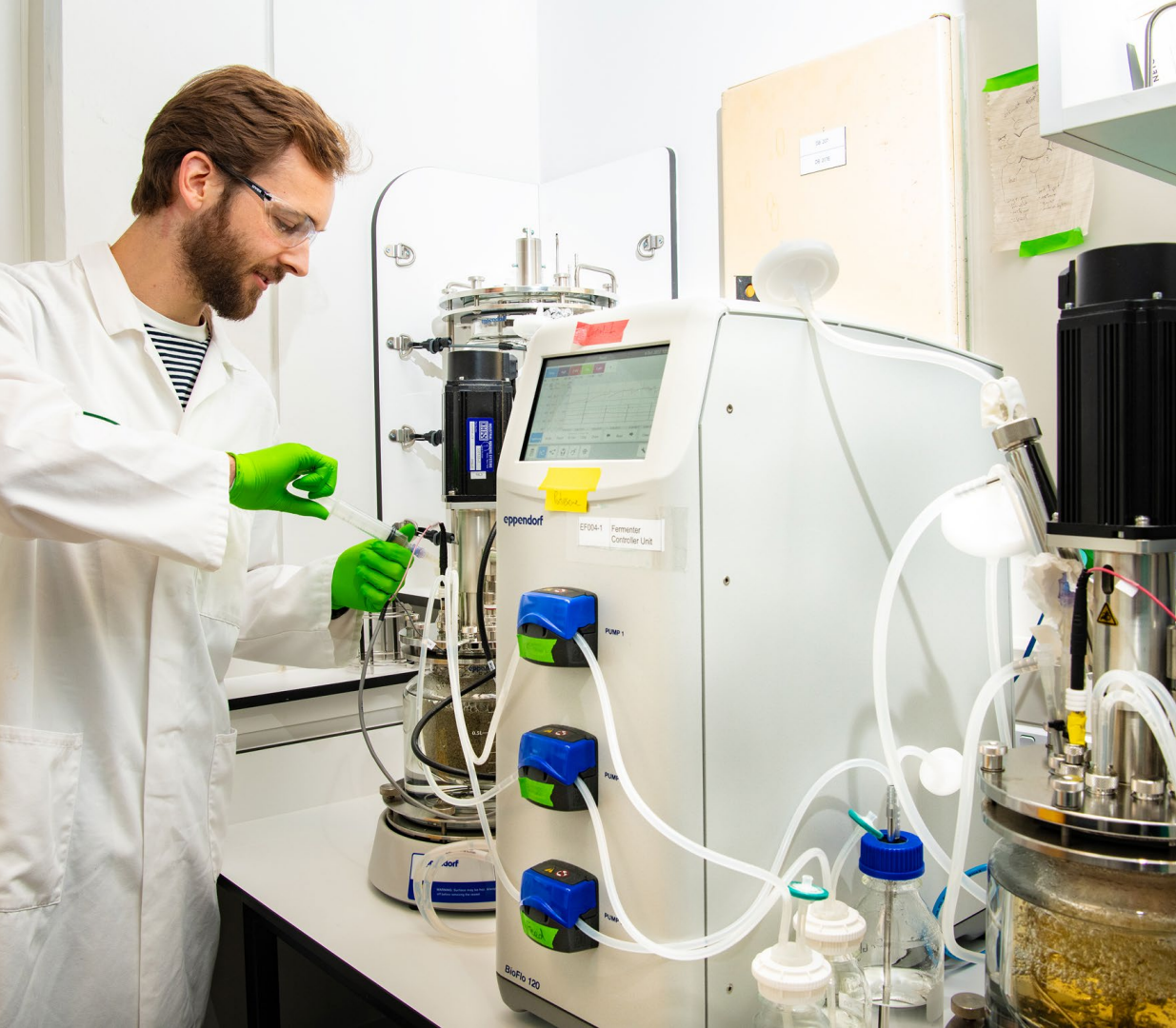
GDP contribution



**54**

full-time equivalent employees.





# NEW INDUSTRY AND INVESTMENT

*Applied biotechnology enabling innovation in Taranaki.*



# New Industry and Investment

## *Prospectus and Promotion*

### European Union International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC)

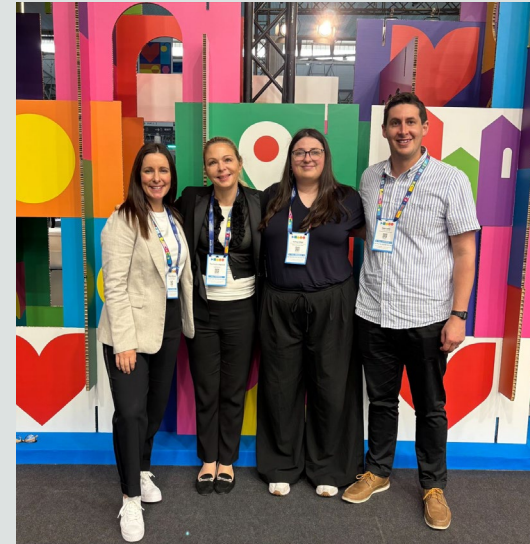
During Q2, Venture Taranaki was invited to participate in the European Union International Urban and Regional Cooperation (IURC) programme. Taranaki was selected alongside Manawatū and Christchurch, with additional participants from Japan, South Korea, and Australia within the Asia–Australasia cohort.

The purpose of the IURC programme is to connect regions facing similar economic and structural challenges, enabling the exchange of knowledge and the co-development of action plans that deliver mutual benefit. Programme delivery has included a series of facilitated online workshops, culminating in an EU-funded thematic networking event in Barcelona.

In collaboration with Manawatū, Venture Taranaki is now progressing partnership discussions with Ljubljana and developing a draft action plan focused on enabling diversification within the agri-food sector, with particular emphasis on investment models and traceability systems. This work has relevance to existing regional diversification priorities and is being advanced as a foundation for future collaboration.

Engagement through the IURC programme provides a recognised pathway toward potential participation in future EU Horizon Europe funding opportunities, supporting longer-term international collaboration, applied research, and innovation activity.

This work is ongoing, with action plans expected to be finalised by March 2026.



Stacey Hitchcock and Matt Lamb (VT) with Tina (Ljubljana, left) and Ashley (Manawatu, right) at the networking event in Barcelona.  
Matt Lamb (VT) engaging in the thematic networking



discussions



# Taranaki Applied Innovation Centre

## Taranaki Labs / BioActives Hub - Business Case

With support from New Plymouth District Council (NPDC), TRC and TOI, Venture Taranaki has undertaken feasibility analysis and business case development to assess the opportunity for biotechnology to emerge as a new economic driver in Taranaki.

This work has focused on the establishment of a commercially viable innovation and biotechnology facility (Taranaki Labs / Bioactives Hub) that addresses a critical gap in regional scientific infrastructure, while creating the conditions to attract, retain, and scale new high-value enterprises in the region. The business case confirms strong demand for local analytical services, shared laboratory space, and applied research capability, particularly within bioactives, functional foods, fermentation, and related biotechnology applications.

The business case outlines a staged, commercially grounded model for an innovation and biotechnology centre that lowers barriers to entry for startups and scale-ups, strengthens regional science capability, and positions Taranaki as a credible location for national and international investment. The project has secured a property partner who is highly motivated to provide attractive rates to incentivise companies to relocate.

The proposed model supports a mix of revenue streams, including analytical services, tenancy, project-based R&D, and partnerships, while enabling pathways into international funding programmes and applied innovation activity. In 2026, further work will focus on advancing this concept into a defined investment opportunity, including exploration of public-private partnership models and engagement with potential anchor tenants, investors, and funding partners to support implementation.



# Taranaki Applied Innovation Centre

## Callaghan Innovation Biotechnologies Group MoU

An MoU has been signed with the Callaghan Innovation Biotechnologies Group to foster collaboration and accelerate biotechnology development in Taranaki. We are actively engaging with the organisation and central government to identify ways to participate in the newly announced [Biodiscovery Platform](#).

## Sector Engagement

TAIC is actively in discussions with sector representatives and biotechnology startups to facilitate their entry into Taranaki. Current areas of engagement are:

- Cosmetics and nutraceuticals
- Precision fermentation and synthetic biology

## STEMFest Show

Venture Taranaki was a sponsor of the STEMFest science fair, with Thom Adams, Innovation Lead at VT, presenting an exciting science show for the prize giving.

Aimed at encouraging rangatahi to pursue their passions for STEM fields, the show included liquid nitrogen demonstrations and an explosive Elephant's Toothpaste.



*Innovation Lead Thom Adams engaging students with hands-on science demonstrations, helping spark curiosity and excitement for STEM among the next generation.*



# FOUNDATIONS

*Participants actively engaging in hands-on hempcrete construction training in Taranaki.*

# Skills and Talent

## Hempcrete Construction Course

Venture Taranaki supported the delivery of a subsidised hempcrete construction course in Taranaki to strengthen regional capability in low-carbon construction.

Delivered in partnership with the Australian Hemp Masonry Company and Hemp Central Ltd (Central Otago), and hosted at the Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki (WITT), the programme combined online theory with hands-on practical training delivered in October and early November by experienced Australian industry practitioners.

The course attracted strong interest, with 40 expressions of interest and 22 participants completing the practical training, including four out-of-region participants paying full fees. Participants included licensed builders, architects, draughtspeople, engineers, and a New Plymouth District Council sustainable design adviser, supporting cross-sector knowledge transfer.

Participants identified clear application opportunities, including multi-home developments and papakāinga builds, with several builders actively exploring hempcrete projects from 2026 as local supply chains mature.

The training also supported the establishment of a regional Hempcrete Action Group, enabling ongoing technical knowledge-sharing, peer support, and coordination of future capability-building activities.

Following the course, discussions have been held with WITT to explore opportunities to build regional capability in sustainable construction, with further engagement to be progressed in 2026.

## Branching Out and Tupu ā Nuku: Supporting Rangatahi Pathways

In September (Q1), engagement was undertaken with Tupu ā Nuku – Ngāti Maru to align the Branching Out programme with rangatahi cadet learning opportunities.

Since then, two rangatahi have been participating in weekly on-site work alongside the Branching Out Field Technician, gaining practical experience in propagation, potting, planting, and site maintenance across a range of land-diversification crops.

This engagement provides mutual benefit, supporting the Field Technician to act as a referee while enabling rangatahi to build practical skills, employer connections, and pathways toward future employment.



*Participants actively engaging in hands-on hempcrete construction training in Taranaki.*

# Tapuae Roa

## Stratford District Council (SDC) - Economic Development Strategy



*Participants and one of the engagement workshops discussing the future of Stratford District.*

Venture Taranaki is supporting SDC in the development of a new District Economic Development Strategy. The strategy is intended to reflect the needs, aspirations, and context of the Stratford community and Council and align with the priorities of Tapuae Roa.

During the quarter, Venture Taranaki presented the proposed approach to SDC elected members, worked with Council staff to develop terms of reference for an ongoing partnership with iwi, and facilitated a workshop with SDC staff to build a shared understanding of economic development and identify how council processes and actions influence economic outcomes.

Two business engagement sessions were also delivered in partnership with the Stratford Business Association to gather input on the strengths, needs, and priorities of the local business community.

This work is ongoing, with final approval of the strategy anticipated by newly elected members by the end of the current financial year.

# Emergent

## Taranaki Alliance

Against a backdrop of ongoing economic headwinds and structural change affecting the region's industrial and energy sectors, Venture Taranaki initiated work in October following discussions with Latent Services on emerging large-scale contract opportunities in New Zealand. These discussions highlighted both the urgent need to retain highly skilled talent and the opportunity to strengthen and grow the region's engineering and manufacturing base by better coordinating its exceptional concentration of capability. This work has now progressed into the Taranaki Alliance, a coordinated, industry-led platform intended to protect, grow, and future-proof regional industrial capability while positioning local firms to compete collectively for larger and more complex opportunities. [New Plymouth District Council has funded this work through the Economic Development Reserve](#) to support establishment and delivery over the next two years.

An initial industry workshop in October, attended by more than 60 companies, was followed by targeted workshops and discussions with industry leaders, reinforcing the urgency of coordinated action and strong support for a unified approach. Phase One activity has focused on engagement with regional industry and international companies to test demand, capability alignment, and delivery potential.

An Industry Advisory Group has been established to provide strategic guidance and ensure the Alliance remains industry-led. International engagement is already underway with confirmed visits to region, including direct engagement with Tasmania, which has successfully operated a comparable model for more than a decade. The programme will transition into Phase Two in early 2026, focusing on completion of a full business case, continued regional industry engagement, and progression of a Regional Infrastructure Fund (RIF) application to enable delivery and scale.



*Venture Taranaki team alongside industry experts participating in early engagement for the establishment of the Taranaki Alliance*

# Massey University Partnership

## Q2 Highlights in Taranaki region

During Q2, the Massey University and Venture Taranaki partnership progressed a wide range of initiatives supporting regional innovation, capability development, and industry engagement.

### Key highlights included:

- Continued support for the AgritechX initiative, including a visit to Massey's Palmerston North campus and the Whenua Haumanu research project. The end-of-year review for AgritechX summarised 10 disclosures, with two progressing to literature review and one to the active project phase.
- Pivot Award funding round recipients were announced, with two projects funded for 2026 at \$35,000 apiece.
- Significant support was provided to the Branching Out project, particularly within the 'Hemp Fibre for Construction' workstream, with multiple sub-projects advanced and/or completed.
- Year to date, Massey has worked with 43 organisations, of whom 25 (58%) received some form of R&D or resource or advisory assistance from Massey across projects and developments.



*Hempcrete Construction Course (Cohort 2) with Massey University PhD student Aviral Upadhayay, supporting applied research projects.*



*Bio-concrete trials at Waihone Farm, Pihama, delivered in collaboration with Massey University researchers and regional partners as part of the Hemp Fibre for Construction workstream.*

# ENTERPRISE SUPPORT



# Enterprise support

## Research and Development Support – MBIE Innovation RDTI PowerUp Masterclass

Callaghan Innovation formally transferred research and development (R&D) and innovation grant operations to MBIE Innovation Services on 1 December 2025. Going forward, new R&D-related grant initiatives will be delivered via MBIE Innovation Services.

During this time, grant activity in Taranaki has been more subdued than normal, as the number of available R&D funding products and services has been reduced. Some grant co-funding programmes were closed while Taranaki businesses had applications underway. To compensate, Venture Taranaki has put more effort into improving local access to specialist funds such as on-farm solar initiatives from EECA, the Wood Processing Growth Fund, and MBIE's Kiwi Space Activator.

There has been a focus on the Research and Development Tax Incentive (RDTI) and the Research and Development Tax Loss Credit. Venture Taranaki invited Matthew Webber, Director RDTI at MBIE, to speak to R&D companies in November (“Unlock funding for R&D success” – PowerUp Masterclass) to describe the benefits of the scheme and to explain the process for making a successful application. The event also served as a forum for local businesses to give feedback directly to senior management on the scheme.

The result was a sharp increase in referrals to the scheme in November, the highest for any month since its start.

*“Thank you for organising this event and inviting us along. We did find the session helpful thank you and it was a good opportunity to have some of our questions answered”*

*“Event was well organised and introduced by VT staff. Presenter was well prepared, presented the information clearly and connected well with the audience in Q&A”*

*Masterclass participant feedback*

*“ Thanks for having me in Taranaki. I really valued your help in deciding which messages to bring to your customers.”*

*Matthew Webber, Director RDTI at MBIE*

# Enterprise support

## Regional Business Partners (RBP)

In response to growing demand from local food businesses for strategic support, Venture Taranaki brought a cohort together with a focus on planning for 2026. The One-to-Some Fund was used to bring Rebecca from Rise Growth Lab (Auckland) to Taranaki to deliver a practical and affordable workshop.

The session provided practical tools to help businesses identify their most profitable markets, develop clear marketing and operational strategies, and prepare robust financial plans, including revenue forecasting, cost management, and contingency planning.

Participants also explored opportunities to network, collaborate, innovate, adapt to changing consumer trends, and strengthen resilience in a competitive environment. This initiative supports local food businesses by providing expert, tailored guidance, helping them plan confidently for growth and contribute to the Taranaki food sector in 2026.

*Photo shows Taranaki food and beverage business owners at the Planning for 2026 workshop*



*"Thank you for on-going support and the opportunity to attend the planning session with Rise Growth Lab. I feel more confident about my plans for next year. I have clear priorities and will be engaging in further support to ensure I have accountability for this plan".*

*"The workshop also gave me the opportunity to work with other food producers on some collaborations which is really exciting". **Andrea from The Fine Lime Company***

*"I feel closer to our ultimate goal , to scale the business to a level where we can justify bringing on additional help for operations on the farm, which will be crucial for sustained growth. I came away with some goals and more ideas about how our marketing strategy can increase sales." **Julia Collier, Bee and Flow***

*It was great to have the opportunity to work together with other food producers, to develop my plan for 2026. The training helped to focus on where to put my energy in the business. I have booked in follow up training with Rebecca Rise Growth lab to focus on my consumer acquisition and retention strategy to build a successful and sustainable business. It is so good to have access to this expertise. Also note that Rooted Harmony are using Taranaki grown Ashwaghandha in their products. We can showcase this as the business progresses to showcase the link between Branching Out and Business Support (Enterprise)." **Shivani at Rooted Harmony** -*

# Enterprise support

## Start up clinics

Start up clinics remain popular in the second quarter.

Business ideas coming through in Q2 include coffee carts, glamping accommodation, cheese making, tourism, property care, online education, surf schools, art, retail, and construction.

**Success story:** Lester Ransfield is a contemporary Māori art designer. He creates work that stands apart from traditional Māori art, offering a unique and innovative perspective that reimagines cultural expression.

Inspired by passion and creativity, he crafts original pieces that reflect a deep connection to his heritage while pushing artistic boundaries. He first attended a start-up clinic in 2019 and is now exhibiting overseas (Germany, Italy, and London).

*“Venture Taranaki has been instrumental in giving me the confidence to move ahead to exhibit my work and progress the business.” Lester Ransfield*

*Lester Ransfield art designs.  
Images sourced from the [Taranaki Arts Trail 2025 artist profile](#)*



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# PowerUp

## PowerUp Accelerator

Five startups were selected in early December for the 2026 PowerUp Accelerator programme, spanning food & fibre, SaaS, sustainability and consumer goods.

Meanwhile Alumni from the 2025 Accelerator have been making great progress:

**Rockpool Collective** [opened in Taranaki](#) in Q2 after gaining traction in Wellington

**BO TALLOW** received a 2025 ScaleUp Grant to support their manufacturing growth, as well as Callaghan Innovation grant support. *More about Bo tallow* [here](#).

## ScaleUp Grants

Fifty six ScaleUp Grant applications were received and six grants were awarded (\$5000 each) in Q2, including one South Taranaki business and one Māori business. Sectors range from SaaS, clean energy, manufacturing and food. These small grants are designed to remove barriers to growth, enabling enterprises to achieve growth faster.

## Success stories

*"Receiving the grant validated our plans and has helped us to take a big step up in our production and output. Overall, it gave us continued confidence to further grow and invest into our business." Meat to You, ScaleUp Grant recipient featured on [Country Calendar](#)*



*Shane and Kylie McDonald, founders of Meat to You, have farmed in Taranaki for many years and were featured on Country Calendar.*



*Ben Collier, co-founder of Bush Flat Bees, showcasing Bee & Flow products.*



*"So far the result of the Grant has been that it has allowed us greater clarity of what the customer thinks of the new product and how they would use this product. This has given us great insight into where the product should be shelved at retailers and what label to use depending on the distribution channel". Bush Flat Bees, ScaleUp Grant recipient awarded [Farro Earth Gold Medals - Honey](#)*

# PowerUp

## Business Ready

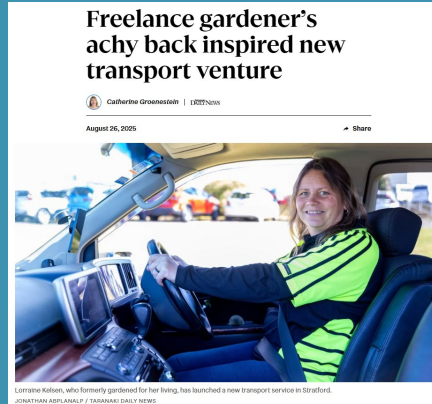
Business Ready wrapped up in Q2, with 14 participants pitching their business ideas and putting into practice what they learned throughout the 8-week business capability-building programme.



*“I’ve gained some really valuable insights into running things more efficiently and managing the business overall. It’s already helped me make a few changes with my processes and financial planning. Thanks again” – Participant feedback*

*“I really enjoyed the relaxed but intensive approach. The facilitators covered a lot and I feel I have an excellent foundation and course material resource to come back to.” – Participant feedback*

## Success stories



*Lorraine Kelsen from Stratford 2025 Business ready participant.*

*She is gaining early traction and momentum with her business. See note [here](#).*



*LastMyle - 2024 Business Ready Alumni*

*LastMyle has continued to make strong progress in 2025, including a partnership with Ara Ake focused on energy innovation for schools. See more [here](#).*



# Coming up next quarter

## January 2026

- 13 - 17 Jan - Get Lost with Liam (content creator)
- 20 January - Major Event Fund Applications Open

## February 2026

- 02 - 23 February - Power Up Accelerator: mentor matching and participant onboarding
- 03-08 – VT/Taranaki Alliance representatives at Singapore Airshow
- 19 February – STDC and Venture Taranaki BA5 in Hāwera
- 23 February – Release of the Re-Energize Report and Action Plan
- 26 February - Food for Thought, Food Network Event
- 25 February - International Media Marketplace, Sydney
- 25 February - Q3 Visitor Industry Hui, Port Taranaki
- 25 February - Coral Princess Cruise Ship arrives
- 27 February - Major Event Fund applications close
- Taranaki Alliance - Summit 1

## March 2026

- 6 March - Powerup Masterclass *Women in Entrepreneurship*
- 10 March - PowerUp Accelerator - kick off
- 11 March - Rural Energy On farm event
- 11 March, 8 April, 6 May - Icehouse Business Owner Programme
- 24 March - VT Economic Update Event - Positioning for the Future
- Taranaki Connect - Launch of regional transport hub partnership
- PowerUp Podcast - Season 6 release
- Major Event Fund Applicants notified if successful or not
- Shoulder season campaign filming