



EVENT BRIEFING

Attending the Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce 'Westpac Smarts Seminar', 10 June 2025

Date:	3 June 2025	Priority:	Medium
Security classification:	In Confidence	Tracking number:	REQ-0014196

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon James Meager Minister for the South Island	Attend and speak at the Westpac Smarts Seminar, hosted by Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce	10 June 2025

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Karl Woodhead	General Manager Strategy, Planning and Performance, Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit (Kānoa)	Privacy of natural persons	
Cory Hagenaars	South Island Lead Advisor, Kānoa	Privacy of natural persons	✓

The following departments/agencies have been consulted
Department of Internal Affairs

Minister's office to complete:

☐ Approved

☐ Declined

☐ Noted

☐ Needs change

☐ Seen

☐ Overtaken by Events

☐ See Minister's Notes

☐ Withdrawn

Comments



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Purpose

To provide background and supporting information for your attendance and speech at the Westpac Smarts Seminar, hosted by Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce on 10 June 2025, at Sofitel Hotel, 8 Duke Street, Queenstown.

Recommendations

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) recommend you:

- a **Note** the information in this briefing to support your attendance and speech at the Westpac Smarts Seminar, hosted by Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce.

Noted

Karl Woodhead
General Manager Strategy, Planning and Performance
Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit, MBIE

03/06/2025

Hon James Meager
Minister for the South Island

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Summary

1. On 10 June 2025, you will attend and speak at the Westpac Smarts Seminar (the Seminar) hosted by Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce (QBCC). This will be held at Sofitel Hotel, 8 Duke Street, Queenstown, from noon to 1.30pm.
2. The purpose of the Seminar is to bring together yourself and Queenstown business leaders to engage on the current business environment and your South Island portfolio.
3. A run-sheet for the Seminar is below:

Time	Duration	Session
Noon	5 mins	Opening address Sharon Fifield, Chief Executive, QBCC
12.05pm	2 mins	Welcome and introduction of Hon James Meager Tessa Sprosen, Area Manager Corporate Banking - Lower South Island, Westpac
12.07pm	28 mins	Ministerial address Hon James Meager
12.35pm	10 mins	Question and Answer (Q&A) session with Hon James Meager Facilitated by Sharon Fifield, Chief Executive, QBCC
12.45pm	5 mins	Concluding remarks Sharon Fifield, Chief Executive, QBCC
12.50pm	40 mins	Networking and refreshments
1.30pm	Seminar close	

4. Draft speech notes on your role as Minister for the South Island and your priorities and vision for the portfolio are attached at **Annex One**.
5. The audience will present questions for the Q&A session. Anticipated questions include:
 - What is your role in the Government?
 - Why is there now a Minister of the South Island?
 - How does the Minister for the South Island differ from our local Member of Parliament?
 - Do you see this portfolio continuing under another government?
 - How do you balance each region throughout the South Island?
 - What are the top issues you have identified thus far for the South Island?
 - What are your priorities for action as Minister of the South Island?
 - What are the key opportunities you are helping to elevate within our region?
 - What role do you have in relation to City and Regional Deals?

Background

6. The Seminar will be hosted by QBCC, a not-for-profit membership association. QBCC has over 1,800 members representing nearly 620 businesses¹.
7. QBCC's purpose is to support Queenstown businesses to grow and succeed sustainably and profitably. QBCC enables this growth through advocacy work, facilitating networking opportunities, and providing training, advice, information and support to businesses.
8. The Seminar is part of the Westpac Smarts speaker series, a programme of webinars and in person seminars delivered in partnership between Westpac New Zealand and various regional Chambers of Commerce. Running since October 2021, they are a national business education and networking initiative, with each seminar focused on a specific business topic with the aim to:
 - equip businesses with insights, tools, and strategies to support growth and innovation
 - bring together business leaders, entrepreneurs, and economists from Westpac and the wider business community.
9. The Seminar will discuss:
 - Regional opportunities for Queenstown and the South Island generally.
 - City and Regional Deals.
 - The South Island portfolio, including:
 - Why a Minister for the South Island was established.
 - Your role as Minister for the South Island.
 - Your portfolio priorities and focus areas.

Relevant topics that may be discussed

Government funding in Otago

10. As of 30 April 2025, Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit (Kānoa) manages \$183.30 million of approved funding across 174 projects in the Otago region and has paid \$154.60 million into these projects. These investments attracted a total of \$334.30 million in co-funding. A summary of Kānoa managed investments in the Otago region is attached at **Annex Two**.
11. In July 2024, round one of the Regional Events Promotional Fund (REPF) allocated \$2.38 million to 132 events nationwide². The REPF is a \$5.00 million initiative aimed at boosting domestic tourism by supporting regional event promotions over two years. Queenstown was ineligible to apply as it receives tourism services from its Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO), Destination Queenstown.
12. Other neighbouring regions and RTOs received funding through the REPF, including:
 - \$110,475 for 11 events managed by the Central Otago District Council.
 - \$79,000 for three events managed by Lake Wanaka Tourism.
 - \$137,500 for seven events managed by Great South.

¹ There are 30 chambers of commerce throughout New Zealand, comprised of over 22,000 members.

² [Round 1 REPF funding recipients - Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment](#)

Small businesses

13. Small businesses are the main component of regional economic activity in Otago. As of February 2024, 96 per cent of Otago businesses had less than 20 employees, and 31 per cent of Otago's workforce was employed by these businesses.
14. While small businesses can be flexible and innovative, their lack of scale creates productivity challenges. For example, they have limited:
 - networks to build their capability and grow
 - capacity to navigate central and local government's regulatory requirements
 - financial reserves and access to credit
 - digital capability and time to invest in this.
15. The Government has put in place various programmes targeted at small businesses, with the aim of supporting growth and productivity and making it easier to do business. These include:
 - The Regional Business Partner programme, which helps businesses to grow and improve management capability through subsidised training and other resources. Business South Inc is the Regional Business Partner in Otago.
 - Investment Boost, a new tax incentive for New Zealand businesses to invest in productive assets, such as machinery, tools and equipment. Businesses can deduct 20 per cent of the new asset's value from that year's taxable income, on top of normal depreciation. Investment Boost is expected to lift GDP by 1 per cent and wages by 1.5 per cent over the next 20 years.
 - Business.govt.nz, an online platform that provides businesses with information, guidance, tools, and resources which can help businesses succeed.
 - Business Connect, an online tool which connects the government and business customers. This platform includes the FormBuilder tool, which allows government agencies and councils to develop business-facing forms quickly, cheaply, and easily. In 2023, NZIER reported that these tools and services have potential benefits of between \$79.30 to \$135.50 million over the next three years.
 - Government Procurement Rules have been changed to require most agencies to pay invoices within 10 business days. Government agencies spend over \$50 billion each year, and paying invoices faster helps improve the cashflow of smaller government suppliers and sets a good example for private businesses to follow.
 - The New Zealand Business Number (NZBN), a verifiable digital credential which will allow businesses to digitally prove their identity across Government and private sectors. This is expected to save time, boost productivity, and reduce the potential for scams and fraud. A pilot will be launched later this year to test this opportunity further.
16. Other regulatory regimes are currently being reformed with the goal of reducing the compliance burden on businesses. These regimes include employment, health and safety, building and construction, anti-money laundering, and the Resource Management Act.

Other topical information

17. Further relevant topics may be raised by attendees at the Seminar, including:
 - Priorities and opportunities for Queenstown.
 - Recent changes to employment law.
 - City and Regional Deals.

- Local visitor user charge (LVUC).
 - Freedom camping.
18. Information on priorities and opportunities for Queenstown was provided to you previously (briefing REQ-0008746 refers).
 19. Information on recent changes to employment law was provided to you previously (briefing REQ-0013525 refers).

[CONFIDENTIAL] City and Regional Deals

20. Information on the City and Regional Deals process being led by the Ministers of/for Infrastructure and Local Government was provided to you previously (briefing REQ-0011634 refers). This paper provides you with a brief update on the City and Regional Deal proposal for the Otago Central Lakes region.
21. Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC), Central Otago District Council and Otago Regional Council have put forward a proposal for a City and Regional Deal for the Otago Central Lakes region. Confidential advice to Government

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Any questions relating to City and Regional Deals should be directed to the Minister of Local Government or Kānoa officials, to follow-up with the Department of Internal Affairs (the City and Regional Deals secretariat).

Local Visitor User Charge

27. Queenstown attracts a significant number of tourists in contrast to its small resident population³, and visitor numbers are projected to increase. Currently, the ratepayer base

³ Queenstown Lakes has just one per cent of New Zealand's population, however, the region hosts 11 per cent of all guest nights. In 2023, the peak day population of the Queenstown Lakes District was 99,220, of which 48 per cent were short term visitors.

funds the additional demand placed by visitors on infrastructure such as roads, water, and waste, however, the size of this investment is disproportionate to the size of the ratepayer population⁴.

28. A LVUC was proposed as part of Queenstown's City and Regional Deal. This would require short term visitors to pay a fee, which would contribute to the cost of infrastructure required to support tourists. In a 2019 local referendum, 81 per cent of voters supported a LVUC.

Freedom camping

29. Freedom camping⁵ is an issue in Queenstown, with a significant number of freedom campers in the area, antisocial behaviours from campers⁶, and complaints from local residents and business owners. Research also indicates freedom campers spend on average half as much per day when compared to other visitors⁷.
30. Freedom camping is regulated by the Freedom Camping Act 2011 (the Act)⁸. Section 11 of the Act allows local authorities to make bylaws which define where in its district or region freedom camping is permitted or restricted, if necessary and appropriate.
31. In December 2021, QLDC enacted the QLDC Freedom Camping Bylaw 2021 (the Bylaw) to mitigate these issues, which effectively restricted freedom camping in the Queenstown Lakes District to one site. However, in September 2024, the High Court ruled that the Bylaw was invalid and subsequently issues have reoccurred. QLDC is developing a new freedom camping bylaw, with public consultation expected to begin in July 2025, and the Bylaw anticipated to take effect in late 2025.

About the audience

32. Approximately 40 QBCC members are expected to attend the Seminar. Joseph Mooney, Member of Parliament for Southland, has been invited and may be in attendance.
33. Biographies of key attendees and speakers are below:



Sharon Fifield, Chief Executive, QBCC

Sharon was appointed Chief Executive of QBCC in March 2023, after acting as Chief Executive since December 2022.

Prior to this, she worked as a Senior Economic Development Advisor at Queenstown Lakes District Council from 2019 to 2022.

Sharon is a Board Member at New Zealand Chambers of Commerce Incorporated.





⁴ QLDC's 2024-34 long term plan attributes \$756.00 million of expenditure to visitors, a 105 per cent increase from QLDC's 2018 long term plan.

⁵ Freedom camping is defined as camping within 200 metres of a road, ocean or Great Walks Track using a tent and/or a self-contained motor vehicle.

⁶ Antisocial behaviours from freedom campers include dumping rubbish, camping on reserve land, creating fires, blocking paths and camping in non-self-contained vehicles.

⁷ [Freedom camping by international visitors in New Zealand | Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment](#).

⁸ [Freedom Camping Act 2011 No 61 \(as at 13 July 2023\) – New Zealand Legislation](#).

	<p>Angela Spackman, Chair, QBCC</p> <p>Angela was appointed Chair of QBCC in May 2021. She was also a Board Member at QBCC from December 2017 to June 2023.</p> <p>Angela is a Director and owner of Formatt Bespoke Joinery, a mid-sized industrial manufacturing facility. She has been running businesses in the construction, health, and real estate industries for over 14 years.</p> <p>Angela is also a current member of the New Zealand Institute of Directors and serves as a Trustee on the Board of the Winter Games NZ.</p>
	<p>Rachel Clifford, Events and Marketing Manager, QBCC</p> <p>Rachel was appointed Events and Marketing Manager at QBCC in March 2022.</p> <p>She has a background in events, working at various companies in the Otago region as an Events Manager since 2011.</p> <p>Rachel is also a Committee Member for Skål International Queenstown.</p>
	<p>Tessa Sprosen, Area Manager Corporate Banking - Lower South Island, Westpac</p> <p>Tessa was appointed Area Manager Corporate Banking - Lower South Island in February 2024. Prior to her appointment she worked in various roles at Westpac over a six-year period, including as a Senior Credit Analyst and a Portfolio Manager.</p>
	<p>Kelly McAteer, Membership and Development Manager, QBCC</p> <p>Kelly was appointed Membership and Development Manager at QBCC in December 2022.</p> <p>She has a tourism background, working as Hospitality Internship Manager, and Business Development Manager at Queenstown Resort College from 2019 to 2022.</p>

Logistics

34. You will be met on arrival by Kelly McAteer, Membership and Development Manager at QBCC. Her contact details are below:

Name	Position / organisation	Telephone
Kelly McAteer	Membership and Development Manager, QBCC	Privacy of natural persons

35. The dress code for the Seminar is smart casual.
36. The room will be set up theatre style. During your speech and Q&A session, you will stand facing the audience.

Risks and mitigations

37. No risks identified.

Communications / Media

38. No media will be present at the Seminar.

Annexes

Annex One: Draft speech notes

Annex Two: Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit managed investments in Otago

Annex One: Draft speech notes

Attached separate to this briefing.

Annex One: Draft speech notes

You will be introduced by Angela Spackman- Board Chair

Your allocated speaking slot is 15 minutes, with an additional 15-minutes Q&A session.

INTRODUCTION

- Good afternoon, everyone, and thank you for the warm welcome.
- It's a pleasure to be speaking here as Minister for the South Island, at today's Westpac Smarts Seminar, an event that provides a valuable platform for sharing insights, strengthening connections and exploring the opportunities and challenges facing our regional economies.
- I'd like to start by acknowledging the Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce for hosting this event, and to Westpac for continuing to invest in conversations that matter to regions. Seminars such as this are critical for equipping businesses with insights, tools, and strategies to support growth and innovation.
- I'd also like to acknowledge Joseph Mooney, local MP for Southland, Angela Spackman - Board Chair, Sharon Fifield, CEO of Queenstown Chamber of Commerce: and of course, all the attendees here today – the business leaders, entrepreneurs and community champions who drive the local economy, and help to shape the identity and future of this region.
- Whether it's through creating jobs, innovating, or building partnerships – your contribution is what keeps places like Queenstown thriving.
- Queenstown continues to stand out as one of the South Island's most dynamic and prosperous regional economies. Westpac's latest 'Regional Roundup' shows that the district is seeing strong demand, especially in tourism – with international visitor numbers continuing to grow.
- High spending markets like the United States of America are returning stronger and bringing momentum to local markets.
- While the district is one of the nation's best performing areas, I know it's not without its own challenges, with many local businesses feeling the pressure of rising costs, workforce shortages, housing, and the ongoing balance between growth and affordability.
- What stands out, though, is Queenstown's resilience and adaptability. You continue to innovate, invest, and leverage your strengths – setting an example for the rest of the country.
- Today, I'll discuss how the recently introduced "*Going For Growth*" approach as a starting point for us – in particular the pillar that is most relevant to the seminar this morning – my role as the Minister for the South Island, and my portfolio priorities for economic growth.
- In my role, I want to make sure that the South Island economy gets its fair share of growth and job creation so that we can all benefit from the opportunities and prosperity that this provides us.
- My primary objective is to advocate and coordinate policies which will stimulate economic

growth in the South Island, ensuring we're making the substantial contribution to New Zealand's overall success that we are capable of.

- There is a raft of untapped potential across all our regions. This has been highlighted over the years, including in Westpac's Regional Roundup which have consistently shown our strong economic performance.

GOING FOR GROWTH

- As I mentioned, this Government is working hard to unlock New Zealand's potential and make our economy grow faster.
- We are working within a challenging international backdrop, with trade tensions overseas seeing growth forecasts revised down across the world, as both exporters and consumers coming under sustained pressures.
- For a small, open economy like ours, the international environment clearly matters a lot, but this Government remains confident about our financial recovery.
- Many of you will be aware that in February of this year, the Government published our *Going For Growth* approach, released by the Honourable Nicola Willis in the newly created role of Minister for Economic Growth.
- *Going for Growth* outlines a range of actions we are taking to get the economy moving, and to realise its vast potential. Each of those actions fits into one of five pillars critical to drive our push for growth – **developing talent; competitive business settings; promoting global trade and investment; innovation, technology and science; and infrastructure for growth.**
- Our nation's economic growth is key to raising living standards, creating higher-paying jobs and delivering the vital infrastructure and public services Kiwi's want and deserve, as well as supporting businesses to thrive across the country. That's why earlier this year this Government created the Economic Growth portfolio and the *Going For Growth* approach.
- Our economic potential will be unleashed by focusing on the five pillars and fostering investment, innovation and taking calculated risks. Removing barriers and creating incentives, empowering businesses to drive growth, ensuring market forces fuel prosperity.

Businesses are the engine room of our economy

- I do want to mention briefly, the businesses that make up the engine room of our economy, which is the small and medium enterprises (SMEs). You'll all be familiar with the statistics, but it's worth repeating them here again. **SMEs make up 97% of all New Zealand businesses that contribute more than 40% of our GDP.**
- SMEs are part of our economy, they deserve celebration, and they deserve support. What they don't deserve is increasing loads of bureaucracy and regulation, because as a small business owner, we know that they are the ones that are most affected by heavy handed Government rules and regulation, and they are the ones that are less capable of being able to respond to sudden and dramatic shifts in policy.

Low productivity is a challenge to New Zealand and hinders growth

- We're very much aware of that, and let's be honest **about the big challenge that we have**

here in New Zealand, is the productivity challenge.

- We've been talking about it for years and years and years, and I'll put a statistic out there for you. I think **annual labour productivity growth over the past decade has been 0.3%** and we simply can't continue on like that, because despite our hard-working labour force - all our hard working Kiwi's are doing is continuing to work harder and work longer hours without getting more productivity out of it.
- And the challenge isn't just academic. That translates into lower wages, fewer opportunities for our kids and reduced ability for the Government to invest in public services.
- **Improving productivity is not just a business imperative, it is a national imperative, and one that I'm very much focused on.**
- And if you look at what Treasury says in this space, they identify three main factors for our low productivity: low capital intensity, low export intensity, and limited foreign investment. And we need to address all three.
- And we talked before about some of the tools we can do to open up more direct foreign investment.
- We need to do better about incentivising uptake in machinery and plant through our tax settings, through faster depreciation schedules, and you've seen a bit of talk about that news over the past few days as well.
- We're consistently pursuing new trade agreements. I know that the Honourable Minister Todd McClay, Minister for Trade and Investment, is working tirelessly to open up more opportunities for New Zealand exporters and strengthen international partnerships.
- There is a strong focus on increasing our market access, having better, stronger, more reliable trade deals, particularly in an environment that we face at the moment before the global uncertainty.
- And of course, we, as mentioned before, we're refining the Overseas Investment Act to make sure that we welcome increased productive, direct foreign investment. And there are other things around the margins, like doubling our efforts through the venture capital funds and maybe some tax changes in their space too.

THE SOUTH ISLAND

- Let's talk very quickly about why I'm here, and zoom in on the South Island. So again, a few statistics. The South Island makes up around about a quarter of New Zealand's population but makes up slightly less than a quarter of GDP. That shows that there is room for improvement in the South Island and when you talk about the economic growth story for the whole country, the South Island not only has its role to play, it has potential to play a disproportionate part of that role as well.
- My primary objective is to advocate for and coordinate policies which will stimulate our economic growth, and ensure we have a substantial contribution to New Zealand's overall success.
- For this, I have three key areas to focus on for this portfolio, which are directly linked to *Going For Growth*. These are:

- **Aiming to double our exports and lift the contribution to GDP:** This means not only increasing the amount we export but increasing the value of our exports.
- By increasing productivity, expanding market access, and enhancing global competitiveness by strengthening key industry, the South Island can be a real driver for economic growth in Aotearoa.
- **Investing in resilient, reliable infrastructure which supports growth:** Like the rest of the nation, we have an infrastructure deficit which is constraining our productivity and development. The South Island's infrastructure is vulnerable to natural disasters and disruptions, so it is key that we ensure our infrastructure is resilient and future-focused in order to drive long-term economic growth, support communities, and mitigate the impacts of natural disaster.
- And lastly, **Enhancing and improving delivery of core public services:** It is critical that the South Island has improved core public services, including healthcare access and workforce retention, and enhanced law and order services.

INVESTING IN BUSINESS/ECONOMY

- Returning to my earlier points about how the Government is investing in growing the New Zealand economy, for two reasons – the importance for getting us on track, and that this is an event hosted by the Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce, who collectively represent and supports many of the businesses in the district.
- I see the great work being undertaken by your organisation to champion and advocate for businesses in the area, helping them to connect and thrive across our regions.
- But despite this local success, businesses across our regions continue to face market headwinds. Businesses can only go so far without the right foundations.
- For example, New Zealand's infrastructure deficit is limiting productivity and higher living standards. According to the International Monetary Fund, closing our infrastructure gap could increase real GDP by as much as 0.8 per cent in the long term.
- We face several challenges in delivering world-class infrastructure. It has become too difficult to build and develop here, with complex and inefficient resource management and regulatory processes having slowed down project approvals and delivery.
- The affordability of large-scale infrastructure projects remains a key issue, necessitating innovative funding and financing solutions.
- We in the south face our own funding challenges, including for our large roading network and its community infrastructure which is managed and delivered by local councils.
- Additional infrastructure is also needed to support the resilience of key sectors, such as tourism, to back high visitor numbers in places like Queenstown, as one of our most popular tourist destinations, and water infrastructure for our agriculture sector.
- To help address this, the Government has set up and is delivering the \$1.2 billion Regional Infrastructure Fund (the RIF) to invest in regional growth initiatives to grow local economies and create jobs, and passed the Fast-track Approvals Act to speed up consenting decisions of projects with significant regional or national benefits.

- We've already announced \$79.3 million RIF funding for the South Island, including funding for projects that will increase productivity and connectivity for businesses and communities in the regions. This includes:
 - \$8.2 million in RIF funding to Southern Link Logistics Park – Rail Siding project, announced by Minister Jones at the Otago Regional Growth Summit recently.
 - And, \$2.2 million in RIF funding to improve the infrastructure capacity at Ocean Beach in Southland - supporting several commercial aquaculture companies.
- We've also provided funding through the Major Events Fund to support the Natural Selection Tour for mountain biking, here in the Queenstown Lakes District.
- Investments of these types reflect this Government's targets to increase tourism, exports, and infrastructure. We are targeting investment into our regions and projects that can support our primary sector businesses to diversify and grow, and to make the most of our *Going For Growth* approach to promote global trade here in New Zealand.

Budget 2025

- The Government's commitment growth and development has been echoed in Budget 2025, where the Minister of Finance has reinforced the Government's promise to supporting our businesses and promoting the conditions that help our markets thrive.
- As Minister for the South Island, I'm proud to stand behind a Budget that delivers for our businesses, regions, supports local enterprise, and restores economic credibility.
- The Government is backing our businesses with practical tools to grow. Through the new investment boost, our businesses will benefit from an immediate 20 per cent tax deduction on new assets, on top of normal depreciation. It means lower tax bills, stronger cashflow, and faster growth.
- We've cut the operating allowance to the lowest in a decade, reprioritising \$5.3 billion in annual savings, and are on track to eliminate the structural deficit our country is in.
- In addition to that, Treasury is forecasting that the economy will grow by 1.7 per cent next year, and inflation is tracking down from 3.4 per cent this year and is forecast at 2.2 per cent next year.
- This is all good news for business. It points to stable growth, lower inflation and more support for regional development – all of which creates a more certain environment for investment, hiring, and long-term planning.

City and Regional Deals

- As many of you will be aware the Government is also progressing City and Regional Deals (Deals), which are a National Party/ACT Party Coalition Government commitment.
- The Deals will be based on a 30-year vision with a ten-year strategic plan for a region to deliver shared objectives and outcomes between local and central Governments.
- These Deals will be a vehicle for greater regional collaboration and coordination, improved certainty in Local Government decision-making, funding, and financing, promoting innovative and collaborative ways of working between central and Local Government, and ensuring resilient cities and regions.

- They will seek to promote economic growth and productivity, delivering connected and resilient infrastructure, and improving the supply of affordable, quality housing.
- By the end of 2025 we intend to have completed a 30-year National Infrastructure Plan and finalised the first City and Regional Deal between central and Local Government to support collaboration for long-term infrastructure investment – and I understand that Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago has submitted a proposal.
- Right now, we're nearing the end of the assessment phase for light-touch proposals. We've begun the initial discussions with some regions, and intend to sign memorandum of understandings (MOUs) with regions that have demonstrated, through their proposals, strategic alignment, potential for economic growth, and readiness to deliver on a Deal.
- This Government is looking forward to partnering with regions to deliver on the shared agenda of delivering economic growth both regionally and nationally and ensuring that both parties benefit from this.
- We understand that as a Government, we can't do this on our own. We need to lean on the experience and expertise and voice of organisations such as this, with its networks spanning industry association, regional business groups, and employers.
- You provide a valuable link between the private sector and policy makers – helping to ensure that decisions reflect the realities that businesses are facing in your region.
- For too long the focus has been on delivering highly bespoke projects in small Southern regions where reinventing the wheel seemed like the only option. If we are to get serious about growing productivity in our country, and we are, we need to focus on solutions that are developed at the national level but optimised and delivered at the local level. That's where we need to work in partnership with each other.

THANKS/CONCLUSION

- I've said a lot today, but **the one message in terms of a takeaway is that the Government can't do it and will never do it alone.** It is up to business to drive this economic growth story with the support and partnership with Government that is an enabler.
- Thank you again for the opportunity to talk to you today. I look forward to working across central and Local Government and with our Chambers of Commerce to ensure the huge potential of the South Island is realised.
- Now I'm keen to hear your ideas, your feedback, and any questions you have.

Annex Two: Kānoa – Regional Economic Development & Investment Unit managed investments in Otago

