

# Briefing for the incoming Minister for Auckland

April 2026



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## 1. Auckland portfolio overview

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### Introduction

1. This briefing provides you with information about the Auckland portfolio. We would welcome an early discussion with you on your portfolio priorities and forward work programme. More detailed briefings can be provided on any aspects of this briefing.

### Responsibilities

2. The Auckland portfolio traverses other Ministerial portfolios and several key levers for change sit outside of Government. Achieving the Government's priorities in Auckland will require collaboration with your ministerial colleagues, with the Mayor and Auckland Council, and with stakeholders in Auckland.

### Department

3. The Auckland portfolio is supported by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). There is no appropriation for the Auckland portfolio and MBIE provides support to you within baselines. Key roles supporting the portfolio are:
  - Head of the Auckland Policy Office
  - Director Auckland
  - Private Secretary (part time)
4. The MBIE team works across other Ministerial portfolios and agencies to provide joined up advice on Auckland issues. In particular, the MBIE team works with the agencies of the government's Auckland Policy Office (APO) and the Auckland Regional Leadership Group to provide you with a Fortnightly Report for the Auckland portfolio.

### Legislation

5. The Auckland portfolio has no legislative responsibilities.

## 2. Auckland overview

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### Introduction

6. Auckland is New Zealand's largest city and economic centre, generating around 38 to 40 per cent of national GDP and home to over one third of the population. Its performance is central to national productivity, fiscal sustainability and long-term economic growth. Auckland's scale and concentration of high value and internationally connected activity mean its performance has an outsized influence on national economic outcomes.
7. Auckland is New Zealand's primary gateway to global markets, capital and talent. It also functions as a complex urban system where economic, social and infrastructure issues are closely interconnected and frequently span Ministerial portfolios.
8. Independent benchmarking, including the annual State of the City report, shows Auckland has strong underlying fundamentals but is not performing at the level of comparable international cities. The gap between potential and performance reflects persistent structural constraints rather than short term cyclical factors.

### Strategic overview of Auckland

9. As an Auckland-based Minister, you will already have a good overview of the main characteristics of the Auckland region and the role Auckland plays for New Zealand.
10. Auckland is a highly liveable, globally connected and culturally diverse city. It performs strongly on measures of quality of life, environmental amenity and openness, and continues to attract people, skills and investment.
11. The city has a broad and resilient economic base, with strengths across business services, construction and tourism, and a growing innovation ecosystem. There is increasing activity in higher value sectors including technology and knowledge intensive industries.
12. Auckland's scale and concentration of firms, skills and infrastructure generate agglomeration benefits that are not replicated elsewhere in New Zealand. Its city centre and key employment areas play a disproportionate role in driving national productivity and supporting international competitiveness.
13. Auckland's performance is shaped not only by its scale, but by the nature of its challenges. Many Auckland issues are cross agency and place based, requiring coordination, sequencing and judgement across portfolios, and sustained engagement with Auckland Council and regional stakeholders.
14. Auckland is also entering a delivery intensive phase. Major programmes across transport, land use, the City and Regional Deal and city centre development are progressing concurrently, increasing the importance of alignment across agencies and over time.
15. Despite its strengths, Auckland is not translating its scale into consistently strong economic performance. Its long-term trajectory is shaped by a set of structural challenges that have persisted over time and are now constraining growth.

### Strengths and challenges

16. Auckland combines strong global city attributes with persistent structural constraints. Its key strengths include its scale, diversity, global connectivity and quality of life, all of which support its role as New Zealand's primary economic hub.

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17. At the same time, Auckland faces a number of interrelated challenges. Productivity remains below that of comparable international cities, reflecting low capital intensity, uneven adoption of innovation and constraints in firm performance. Income growth and access to opportunity do not match what would be expected of a city of its size and economic weight.
18. Infrastructure and urban form continue to shape these outcomes. Transport, housing and land use inefficiencies limit access to jobs, increase costs for households and businesses and constrain the effective functioning of the labour market. Housing affordability pressures and infrastructure gaps further reduce labour mobility and access to opportunity.
19. Economic growth has not been evenly shared. Persistent disparities exist across communities, particularly for Māori and Pacific peoples and those in more deprived areas, affecting employment, income and wider wellbeing outcomes.
20. Auckland also faces increasing exposure to climate and resilience challenges, including extreme weather events.
21. These challenges are interdependent and reinforce each other. Transport and land use patterns affect access to jobs. Housing costs affect labour mobility. Weak productivity limits income growth. Together they contribute to a persistent gap between Auckland's potential and its current performance, and shape its position relative to comparable international cities.

### 3. Portfolio responsibilities

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#### Your role as Minister for Auckland

22. As Minister for Auckland, you hold a system leadership role in ensuring Auckland is functioning effectively and contributing to national economic performance. Many of the key levers sit across other Ministerial portfolios and outside central government. Delivering outcomes in Auckland therefore depends on alignment across Ministers, agencies, Auckland Council and key stakeholders.
23. The combination of your Ministerial responsibilities for Auckland and Local Government, and your role on the City and Regional Deal governance structure (detailed below), places you in a central position in shaping how government engages with Auckland and how that engagement evolves over time.
24. We believe there are three specific areas you could lead:
- acting as the focal point for the Government's relationship with Auckland
  - shaping alignment across Ministerial portfolios
  - bringing an Auckland perspective into national policy settings
25. These are outlined in greater detail below.

#### The focal point for the government's relationship with Auckland

##### Being the focal point for Auckland stakeholders

26. The Minister for Auckland provides a clear point of reference for Auckland stakeholders engaging with central government. This supports more coherent engagement and provides greater visibility of the Government's priorities in the region. It also provides a channel through which stakeholder perspectives can be surfaced and reflected in wider Government decision making.

##### Channelling the Government's engagement with Auckland through you

27. The role also supports greater consistency in how government engages with Auckland on cross portfolio issues, particularly where multiple Ministers and agencies are involved or where decisions have cumulative effects across the system.

##### Being the key relationship holder with Auckland Council

28. A central dimension of the role is the relationship with Auckland Council. As New Zealand's largest local authority and a key delivery partner, the Council has a strong interest in the quality and clarity of its engagement with central government. Strengthening this relationship is important given the scale of joint work programmes and the level of interdependence between central and local government in Auckland.
29. The City and Regional Deal establishes a more structured joint platform for central government and Auckland Council to align priorities, sequence investment and coordinate delivery. Your roles as Minister for Auckland and Local Government, and your position on the Deal's governance structure, place you at the centre of this engagement model and provide a point of continuity across portfolios and over time.

##### Helping the rest of New Zealand understand the Government's focus on Auckland.

30. This also creates an opportunity to shape how Auckland is positioned within a national context. Auckland plays a disproportionate role in the national economy and as the country's primary international gateway. At the same time, its scale and visibility can create sensitivities across other regions, reinforcing the importance of clearly situating Auckland's role within the wider national system.

## **Providing coordination across Ministerial portfolios**

31. Auckland's performance reflects the interaction of multiple systems, including transport, housing, land use, infrastructure, labour markets and economic development. Decisions in one area frequently have implications across others.
32. The Minister for Auckland plays a role in shaping alignment across these portfolios, particularly where issues are cross cutting or where there are cumulative impacts over time. This includes ensuring Auckland implications are visible and considered in Ministerial discussions, supporting alignment where it adds value, and maintaining a shared understanding of how different programmes interact in practice.
33. The City and Regional Deal provides a mechanism to strengthen this coordination by bringing together Ministers with relevant portfolios into a shared governance setting. This supports more consistent alignment and greater continuity across programmes that have historically been managed separately.

## **Bringing an Auckland perspective into national policy settings**

34. Given Auckland's scale and economic role, national policy decisions often have disproportionate effects in the region or vice versa. In some cases, policy settings that are appropriate at a national level may have different impacts in Auckland due to its size, density and complexity.
35. The Minister for Auckland plays a role in ensuring these impacts are understood and considered in policy development and decision making. This includes identifying where Auckland's scale or characteristics are material to policy effectiveness and where there may be opportunities to leverage Auckland's strengths for national benefit.
36. Over time, this contributes to a clearer articulation of Auckland's role within the national system and supports more consistent and informed decision making across government.

## 4. Auckland specific work programme

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37. The government's work programme in Auckland is significant for the future development of the region and of material interest to Auckland Council, the business community and other regional stakeholders. Several major initiatives now underway will shape Auckland's transport system, land use patterns, economic performance and the central–local relationship for decades.
38. These programmes vary in how they are led and governed. Some are primarily owned by a single agency but have clear cross-portfolio implications. Others are genuinely multi-agency in nature, requiring sustained coordination, sequencing and shared judgement across portfolios. In practice, both place demands on the wider system and on the quality of engagement with Auckland Council and local stakeholders.
39. Among the most consequential initiatives for the region are reforms to Auckland's transport governance and long-term planning, changes to land use and housing settings, the development and implementation of the Auckland City and Regional Deal, and a growing focus on Auckland's city centre. Together, these initiatives illustrate the scale, complexity and interdependence of the current programme.
40. The City and Regional Deal has the potential to reshape how central government and Auckland Council work together on shared priorities. Alongside the transport reforms, it points toward a more joint approach in areas of mutual interest, including governance, planning and the sequencing of investment. The establishment of new regional transport governance arrangements, the development of the first thirty-year regional transport strategy, and work on the Auckland spatial plan will all require sustained collaboration between central and local government.

### Areas of immediate focus

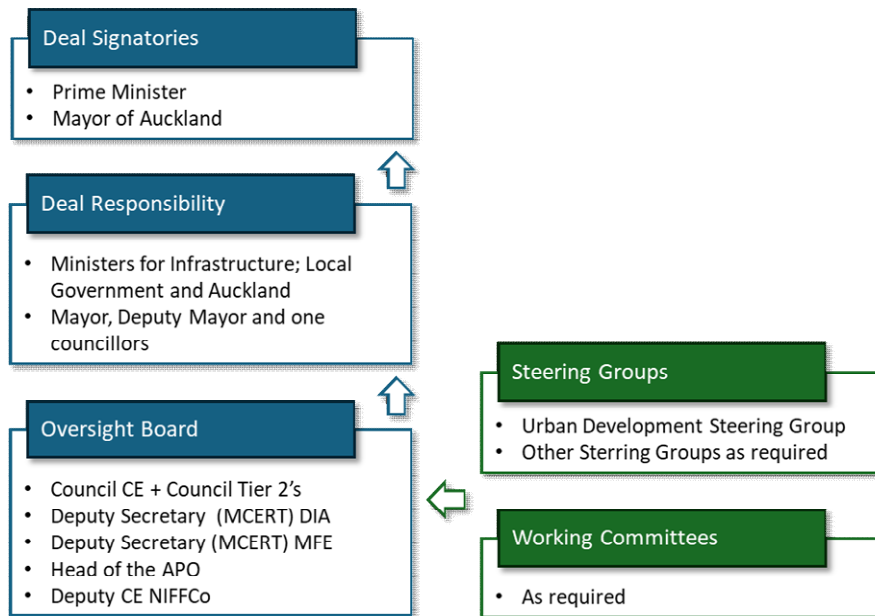
41. There are four work programmes initiated by the previous Minister for Auckland that will require your immediate attention.

#### Auckland City and Regional Deal

42. The Auckland City and Regional Deal is expected to be signed by the Prime Minister and the Mayor of Auckland on Friday 10 April 2026. This will mark the transition from development to implementation.
43. Signing the Deal will initiate the next phase of work. This includes establishing the Oversight Board within 30 business days, preparing a detailed implementation plan within six months and putting in place supporting steering groups and working committees for priority initiatives.
44. The governance model places formal responsibility for the Deal with Ministers and Auckland Council elected members. This brings together the Ministerial portfolios of Infrastructure, Local Government and Auckland, alongside the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and a councillor.
45. An Oversight Board will support this governance arrangement at officials' level and provide continuity across the programme. It will comprise senior leaders from Auckland Council and central government agencies, including Deputy Secretaries from MCERT for DIA and MfE, alongside the Head of the APO and the Deputy Chief Executive of NIFFCo. Supporting governance arrangements beneath this level will be established as required to progress priority workstreams.
46. The Deal establishes a more structured joint platform between central government and Auckland Council to align priorities, sequence investment and coordinate delivery. It represents a shift in how central and local government work together in Auckland.

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47. As Minister for Auckland and Minister for Local Government, you will sit within the central governance arrangement for the Deal. The initial phase of implementation will shape how the platform operates in practice, including how priorities are set, how trade-offs are managed and how alignment is maintained across portfolios and programmes.
48. The Deal will also need to connect with a significant programme of work already underway in Auckland, including transport reforms, spatial planning and precinct initiatives. Ensuring these are brought together coherently will be an important focus as implementation begins.



### Thriving City Centre

49. In October 2025, the previous Minister for Auckland convened a meeting of relevant Ministers to discuss concerns that an increasing presence of rough sleepers and incidences of antisocial behaviour were having a chilling effect on economic activity in the Auckland city centre.
50. Concerns about the condition of Auckland's city centre are significant because of the unique role the area plays in New Zealand's economy and identity. The city centre is the country's largest concentration of employment, business activity, higher education and visitor movement. It serves as the gateway to international investment, tourism and migration, and it shapes national and global perceptions of New Zealand as a place to live and do business. A decline in safety or amenity can reduce activity, deter investment and damage Auckland's and therefore New Zealand's economic performance and reputation.
51. As a result, Ministers agreed that coordinated attention across multiple agencies was warranted to address these safety and amenity concerns.
52. Auckland officials convened a cross-agency working group to develop and implement an action plan to focus and coordinate local and central government services to reducing the numbers of rough sleepers and the incidence of anti-social behaviour in the city centre. Metrics to monitor progress are regularly collated and a stakeholder reference group was established with meetings held every 4-6 weeks, chaired by the Minister for Auckland.
53. The most recent Stakeholder meeting was held on 2 April 2026. At that meeting, Minister Brown reflected on the solid progress that had been made. He indicated that, while agencies would continue to focus on city centre safety, there would be a broadening of scope to include activation activities to maximise the economic opportunities provided by the recent opening of the International Convention Centre and the opening of the City Rail Link later in 2026.

### Queens Wharf and the Cloud

54. The Crown partnered with Auckland Council to purchase Queens Wharf and build infrastructure to support the delivery of the 2011 Rugby World Cup. The Crown has retained a 50 per cent share of Queens Wharf and 100 per cent share of the Cloud function centre. The purchase was intended primarily to secure Queens Wharf for use as a 'fan zone' during the Rugby World Cup. In addition, it recognised the need for an international cruise terminal and provide public access to the waterfront.

Confidential advice to Government

56. As Minister for Auckland, you have Ministerial responsibility for Queens Wharf and the Cloud, Confidential

Confidential advice to Government

### Cabinet mandate and the consolidated Auckland work programme

57. In June 2024, Hon Simeon Brown took a paper to Cabinet that explained the role of the Minister for Auckland as:

- Providing an advocacy and coordination function for central government in Auckland;
- Having responsibility for providing oversight and ensuring a whole-of government approach is taken to matters that have a significant or disproportionate impact for Auckland;
- Liaising closely with Auckland local government representatives (including the Mayor of Auckland, Auckland Council's Governing Body and the leadership of the Council Controlled Organisations) on behalf of the Coalition Government.

58. At that time, the CabGuide was updated to include a section reminding Ministers and agencies of expectations regarding consultation with the Minister for Auckland on matters requiring Cabinet approval that will have a significant or disproportionate impact for Auckland. Consultation is coordinated by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, working through the multi-agency Auckland Policy Office.

59. Minister Brown also undertook to provide a report back every 6 months to his Cabinet colleagues on the consolidated central government work programme planned and underway in Auckland.

60. Officials are in the process of collating the next update for the period 31 July – 30 December 2025. Previous updates are available at [Auckland Consolidated Central Government Work Programme – 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2026](#)

## 5. How MBIE and other agencies assist you

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### You have a MBIE team to support your work

61. MBIE services the Minister for Auckland portfolio with resources primarily located in Auckland. This enables an on the ground presence in the region to ensure close connection with decision makers, stakeholders and issues.

### The Auckland Policy Office can coordinate across portfolios and can be a base for you in Auckland

62. The *Auckland* Policy Office provides a shared cross agency platform in central Auckland that supports coordination, engagement and delivery on Auckland related issues. It brings together agencies, senior officials from across government and enables more integrated advice on matters that span portfolios.

63. For you, the APO provides a practical base when in Auckland, with direct access to *officials*, meeting facilities and support for engagement with Auckland Council, business and regional stakeholders. Its Auckland presence and cross agency network help ensure that Auckland issues are visible across government and that advice reflects on the ground conditions and interdependencies across portfolios.

### The Auckland Regional Public Service Commissioner and Auckland Regional Leadership Group

64. The Public Service Act 2020 established a Regional System Leadership Framework (RSLF) to enable a locally led, regionally enabled and nationally supported approach to improving wellbeing outcomes for all New Zealanders. Under the RSLF, the Regional Public Service Commissioner for Auckland convenes the Auckland Regional Leadership Group (RLG) to progress regional priority work through sub-working groups and agreed RSLF national priorities.

### Specific MBIE groups also support your portfolio

65. The following MBIE groups play specific roles in relation to Auckland:

- MBIE's Chief Executive is the Chair of the Auckland Policy Office Chief Executive's Governance Group. The APO CE's Governance Group consists of the Chief Executives of the Department of Internal Affairs, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Ministry for the Environment, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, Ministry of Transport, Treasury and MBIE.
- The Head of the APO helps to coordinate government policy across agencies and acts as a system lead on behalf of the approximate 18 agencies that are part of the APO.
- MBIE's Building, Resources and Markets Group provides support through the Head of the Auckland Policy Office and Director Auckland positions and can coordinate MBIE policy input, where relevant across all MBIE branches.

66. Other government agencies have senior leadership based in Auckland who will be relevant to your portfolio and priority areas. We can provide access to the senior leaders via the APO and Auckland Regional Leadership Group.

## 6. Key MBIE officials

67. The table below sets out the key MBIE officials who will support you in this portfolio.

**Table 1: Key MBIE officials**

	Name	Role	Contact details
	Nic Blakeley	Chief Executive Secretary for Economic Growth  Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE)	Privacy of natural persons
	James Hartley	Deputy Secretary Building, Resources and Markets  Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE)	Privacy of natural persons
	Michael Quinn	Head of the APO Auckland Policy Office	Privacy of natural persons
	Andy Hill	Director Auckland  Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment (MBIE)	Privacy of natural persons