

Briefing for the Incoming Minister for Space

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**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**
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**Ministry for Cities, Environment,
Regions & Transport**

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

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1. Welcome to the Space portfolio

1. New Zealand has dynamic and commercially driven space and advanced aviation sectors. As Minister for Space, your role is to help ensure New Zealand has the conditions and regulator settings needed for commercial success in these sectors, including acting as the regulatory decision maker under the Outer Space and High-altitude Activities Act 2017 (OSHAA) to ensure space and high-altitude activities are conducted safely, securely and responsibly.

1.1 Portfolio scope

2. The Space portfolio covers both New Zealand's space and advanced aviation sectors. The space sector includes activities across the space value chain, including launch, operations, manufacturing, and the use of space-derived data and services.
3. Advanced aviation refers to any aviation capability that has not been certified or approved before, is novel and is not routine. It includes but is not limited to uncrewed aircraft. Many of the same companies, technologies, infrastructure, opportunities and challenges span both sectors.
4. MBIE supports the space policy and regulatory aspects of the portfolio through the New Zealand Space Agency, while the Ministry of Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport (MCERT) leads advanced aviation policy, with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) as the regulator.

1.2 Importance of space and advanced aviation

5. New Zealand is already recognised internationally as a credible aerospace nation. We are one of fewer than 15 countries with orbital launch capability, hosting the third most frequent orbital launches after the U.S. and China. New Zealand is also developing a reputation as a location for testing and deploying emerging aviation technologies.
6. These sectors are highly productive, export and R&D intensive, employ a highly skilled workforce, and operate in global markets experiencing strong growth, making them well placed to support the government's economic growth agenda.
7. New Zealand relies heavily on satellite-enabled services for communications, navigation, weather forecasting, environmental monitoring, disaster response, protecting our national security, and defence operations. Emerging aviation technologies are also expected to play an increasing role in logistics, emergency response, and national security. As reliance on these technologies grows, it becomes increasingly important to ensure they remain safe, secure and accessible.

2. Portfolio context

2.1 What government is trying to achieve

8. The New Zealand Space and Advanced Aviation Strategy 2024-2030 sets the government's ambition to double the size of New Zealand's space and advanced aviation sectors by 2030.
9. The Strategy recognises that government has a role in creating the conditions for sector growth. This includes maintaining effective regulatory settings, developing sovereign space capability (e.g. space capability for delivery of government functions), and supporting investment attraction, trade, innovation, and workforce development.

2.2 Links to government priorities

Going for Growth and export doubling

10. The space and advanced aviation sectors support the government's Going for Growth agenda by contributing to investment, innovation, productivity, and exports. Government activity is focused on ensuring New Zealand is an attractive place for aerospace firms to invest, develop and commercialise new technologies.
11. In 2024, the space sector contributed an estimated \$2.47 billion to New Zealand's economy and supported around 17,000 jobs, with revenue growth of 53% from 2019 to 2024. The advanced aviation sector, estimated for the first time in 2024, contributed approximately \$480 million and supported around 3,700 jobs (though with some overlap with space).

Foreign policy and international partnership

12. The portfolio supports New Zealand's foreign policy objectives by strengthening relationships with key international partners. Space cooperation has become an increasingly important component of New Zealand's relationships with some key partners including the U.S., Germany, and the UK.
13. The portfolio also supports New Zealand's interest in a stable, secure and rules-based international system through engagement in international forums and the development of international rules, norms and standards for the safe, secure and sustainable use of space.

National security

14. Space is identified as one of 12 Core Issues in New Zealand's National Security Strategy. New Zealand's economy, critical infrastructure, environmental management, emergency management, and national security increasingly rely on assured access to space-enabled services and data. This growing reliance creates vulnerabilities to disruption of important space services and infrastructure. MBIE, the Ministry of Defence and the New Zealand Defence Force share responsibility for management of this core issue.

2.3 Opportunities and challenges

15. The global space economy was valued at around USD 613 billion in 2024 and is expected to exceed USD 1 trillion by the mid-2030s, driven by satellite-enabled services and falling costs to access space. Space capabilities are increasingly critical to national security and

defence, with growing global defence spending driving increased investment in space technologies and services. Despite rising defence spending, governments are relying more on commercial providers for the actual delivery of critical space capabilities.

16. Rocket Lab's success demonstrates the opportunity for New Zealand to develop globally competitive aerospace businesses that create high-skilled jobs, attract international investment and generate export revenue. Founded in New Zealand, Rocket Lab has grown into a globally significant space company with a market capitalisation of around NZ\$80 billion. Its success has helped catalyse a wider aerospace ecosystem, with companies including Dawn Aerospace, Outlier, SYOS Aerospace, Kea Aerospace and Zenno Astronautics attracting investment, creating high-value jobs and pursuing growth opportunities in international markets.
17. Recently, Dawn Aerospace closed a ~NZD 40 million Series B funding round, bringing its valuation to ~NZD 330 million. Kea Aerospace raised NZD 17.5 million in a recent capital raise, while new company Outlier secured NZD 10.5 million in pre-seed funding, marking one of New Zealand's largest-ever pre-seed raises.
18. However, our space and advanced aviation sectors face risks. Many countries are significantly increasing investment in aerospace, with particular interest in establishing domestic space capability for economic, national security and resilience reasons, through the use of subsidies, government procurement, tax incentives and public infrastructure. Several high-growth New Zealand companies are already expanding overseas and attracting interest from foreign governments seeking to build domestic aerospace capability, creating a risk that future investment, highly skilled jobs, intellectual property and economic activity could increasingly be located offshore.
19. While New Zealand has strong foundations, including a responsive regulatory regime, favourable geography, and clear skies; other jurisdictions ([international relations](#)) are becoming more attractive, and we cannot match the financial incentives seen in other countries. Without continued focus on maintaining and building on our advantages, there is a risk that launch activity and other high-value aerospace capabilities could shift offshore, eroding the sector over time.

3. Short-term priorities

20. While the Government's broader objectives for the space and advanced aviation sectors are set out in the New Zealand Space and Advanced Aviation Strategy, a small number of matters are likely to require Ministerial decisions before the election. These are outlined below, with further advice to be provided on each to support your decision making.

Tāwhaki National Aerospace Centre

21. Tāwhaki is a joint venture between the Crown and Te Taumutu Rūnanga and Wairewa Rūnanga. The joint venture has a dual purpose of restoring and protecting Kaitorete Spit and developing the Tāwhaki National Aerospace Centre as a nationally significant aerospace testing and innovation facility. You play a key role as the shareholding Minister.

Regulatory system improvements and implementation of a new authorisation type

22. The OSHAA is a key enabler of space and high-altitude activity in New Zealand. Officials are progressing targeted improvements to the OSHAA and related regulatory settings to ensure the regime remains effective, responsive and internationally competitive.

23. Recently a new regulatory authorisation was established under the OSHAA for ground-based space infrastructure (GBSI). GBSI refers to equipment located on Earth that communicates with, controls, or monitors space objects, such as satellite ground stations. It can pose national security and broader national interest risks. You may need to make decisions relating to the implementation of aspects of the regime. We will provide you with further advice on this soon.

Regulatory decision making

24. As Minister for Space, you are responsible for making decisions on licence, permit and authorisation applications under the Outer Space and High-altitude Activities Act 2017. Depending on timing and application volumes, you may receive decisions for consideration prior to the election as well as time-sensitive regulatory policy decisions. More information about your legislative responsibilities and the decision-making process is provided in Annex Two.

25. MBIE is currently aware of the following applications that are likely to require your decision before the election and will provide you with written briefings for each of these decisions:

- Confidential advice to Government
- Two GBSI authorisations
- Confidential advice to Government

Annex One: How MBIE and MCERT assist you

We engage with you primarily through the following mechanisms:

- a. Meetings between you, MBIE and MCERT officials, based on your preference.
- b. Weekly update reports on key policy and operational issues in the portfolio.
- c. Regular briefings providing you with advice, including on regulatory decisions.

We are happy to adjust any of these based on your preferred ways of working.

Key MBIE officials

The New Zealand Space Agency is a business unit within MBIE that serves as the government lead for space policy, regulation and sector development. The table below sets out the key MBIE officials who will support you in this portfolio.

Contact	Role	Contact details
Nic Blakeley 	Chief Executive and Secretary for Economic Growth	Privacy of natural persons
Anna Clark 	Deputy Secretary, Labour, Science and Enterprise	Privacy of natural persons
Andrew Johnson 	General Manager, Space (acting)	Privacy of natural persons

Key MCERT officials

MCERT is the government lead for aviation policy. The table below sets out the key MCERT officials who will support you in this portfolio.

Contact	Role	Contact details
Jeremy Lightfoot 	Chief Executive and Secretary for Cities, Environment, Regions and Transport	Privacy of natural persons
Ruth Fairhall 	Executive Leader, Policy	Privacy of natural persons
Chris Nees 	Deputy Executive Leader, Policy	Privacy of natural persons
Siobhan Routledge 	Director, Aviation	Privacy of natural persons

Annex Two: Legislative responsibilities

As the Minister for Space, you are the decision maker for applications under the Outer Space and High-Altitude Activities Act 2017. The table below sets out the types of licences and permits under OSHAA.

Type of authorisation	Definition
Launch facility licence	A licence to operate a launch facility, which is a facility or place from which launch vehicles are intended to launch.
Launch licence	A licence to launch a vehicle, the whole or any part of which reaches or is intended to reach outer space or carries and supports the launch of (or intends to support the launch of) a payload.
High-altitude licence	A licence to fly any aircraft or any other vehicle that travels, is intended to travel, or is capable of travelling to higher than flight level 600 (around 60,000 feet) or the highest upper limit of controlled airspace under the Civil Aviation Act 2023.
Payload permit	A permit for an object to be carried or placed, or that is intended to be carried or placed, into outer space.
Ground-based space infrastructure authorisation	An authorisation for the operation of equipment located on Earth that communicates with, controls, or monitors space objects.

Regulatory decision-making processes

Overview of payload permitting

Under the OSHAA, you are the decision maker for all permits, licences, and authorisations, with payload permits making up the bulk of your regulatory workload. To date, 154 payload permits have been granted - some covering multiple payloads - with most launched from Mahia, although OSHAA also regulates payloads launched overseas by New Zealanders. As payload permits are the most common regulatory decision under the OSHAA, we have provided more detail about the process below.

MBIE aims to assess payload permit applications as quickly as possible while ensuring risks are well-managed. We have approximately halved processing times by streamlining our processes, resulting in an average timeframe of about five weeks over the last 12 months. This compares well internationally. Applications involving novel technologies, complex policy issues, or delays in receiving orbital debris mitigation information can take longer.

The process MBIE follows is to assess an application for completeness, accept it when complete, request any further information needed, and refer it to the GCSB/NZSIS for a national security assessment, as required under OSHAA. MBIE then assesses the application against the statutory criteria, consults MFAT on national interest and international obligations considerations where necessary, and briefs you with a recommendation and any proposed

conditions. Following consultation with the Minister responsible for the NZSIS and GCSB (as you hold both portfolios, you will receive separate briefings from MBIE and the NZSIS/GCSB), you make the final decision, and MBIE communicates the outcome to the applicant.

MBIE publishes quarterly summaries of approved licences and permits.

Overview of ground-based space infrastructure authorisations

New regulations for ground-based space infrastructure came into force on 29 July 2026. Applicants must provide basic information on their equipment, activities, and partners and must make declarations that they have protective security and due diligence arrangements in place.

Upon receipt of a complete application, MBIE shares the application with the GCSB/NZSIS. ■

International relations

MBIE consults MFAT on national interest and international obligations considerations where necessary and briefs you with a recommendation and any proposed conditions.

Authorisations have been granted to 33 GBSI operators to date.

Other licences

Launch, high-altitude activities and facility licence applications are less frequent. Previous Ministers have granted two launch licences, both to Rocket Lab, and nine high-altitude licences and one facility licence. We will provide you with further information on these licence types if needed.

Aircraft regulated by the Civil Aviation Authority

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is responsible for the safety of all aircraft, including high-altitude vehicles that are also aircraft, meaning these activities fall under both CAA and MBIE oversight. As the sector grows, more activities will require coordinated regulation. Under the OSHAA, you must receive confirmation from the Director of Civil Aviation that any aircraft seeking a high-altitude licence holds all appropriate permits, and you must consider any safety advice the Director provides. MBIE's high-altitude licence briefings cover these points.

Annex Three: Funding for the Space Portfolio

The New Zealand Space Agency was established within MBIE in 2016 to lead on space regulation, policy and sector development. The \$3.75 million departmental baseline allocated for Space functions remains unchanged from 2016.

The Government established a standalone Space portfolio in 2023, and soon after, a small amount of one-off non-departmental funding (\$4.423 million) was secured through reprioritisation. In June 2025, Cabinet agreed to reprioritise a further \$5.85 million in funding spread across three years (2025/26 to 2027/28) to cover operating funding for the Tāwhaki Joint Venture.

The table below sets out the allocation of the remaining non-departmental funding in the Space portfolio.

	2026/27 FY \$millions	2027/28 FY \$millions	Total \$ millions
2026 Prime Minister's Space Prizes*	0.190	Confidential advice to Government	
Kiwi Space Activator*	1.061		
Tāwhaki JV – operating funding	1.675		
Confidential advice to Government			

* Prime Minister's Space Prizes: Annual awards recognising excellence and achievement in New Zealand's space sector. Kiwi Space Activator: Contestable funding pilot programme to support New Zealand organisations to demonstrate space technologies in space or high-altitude.

A separate appropriation of \$508,000 was established in 2024 through reprioritisation for spending related to regulatory development. A one-off transfer was made into this in 2024/25. The appropriation has been used to commission advice from The Aerospace Corporation, a U.S. Federally Funded Research and Development Centre, on the design of a new launch licensing system for non-U.S. launchers that, unlike Rocket Lab, do not have a U.S. licence New Zealand can recognise.

The Catalyst Fund, a Science, Innovation and Technology portfolio fund has funded international space research partnerships. Current Catalyst funded space partnerships are a \$9 million partnership with NASA, announced in August 2022 and a \$6 million partnership with Australia's SmartSat Cooperative Research Centre, now the Australasian Space Innovation Institute, announced in January 2024.