

WORK WITH US TO ENHANCE NEW ZEALAND'S CONFORMITY ASSESSMENTS

Conformance Policy and Infrastructure Review 2018:
Public Consultation Summary

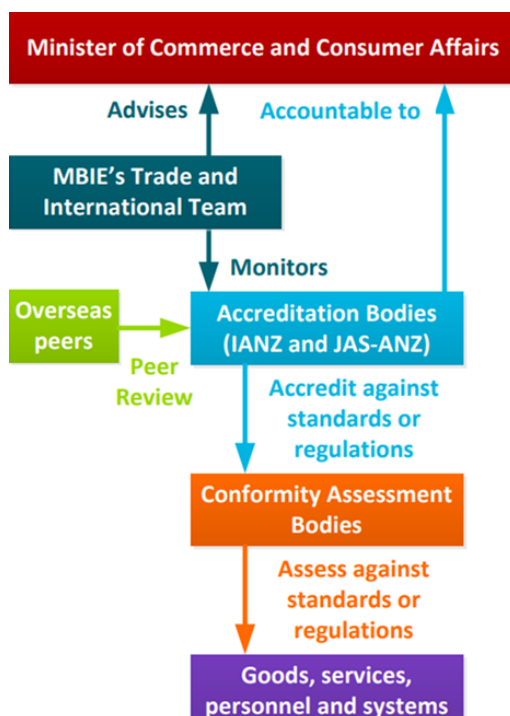
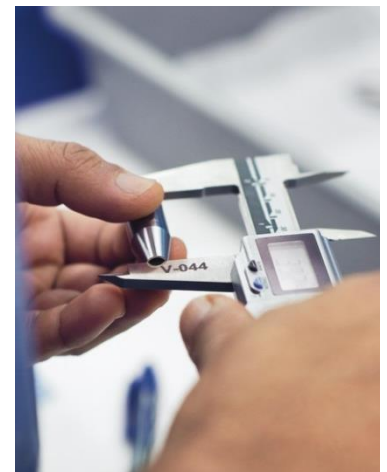
The review by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) of the conformance infrastructure has found that it is fit for purpose but there are areas for improvement.

This public consultation summary highlights the areas for improvement and asks a series of questions. Your responses will help the Government to make changes to lift the overall performance of these important services.

In December 2017, the Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs instructed MBIE to check that the conformance infrastructure is effectively supporting the economy, the wellbeing of people and the environment.

MBIE completed the first part of the review and reported to the Minister on 16 August 2018. This work included conversations with a range of people, businesses and agencies involved in New Zealand's conformance infrastructure. The findings in this summary bring together these different perspectives.

The scope excluded reviewing individual regulations that include conformity assessments, eg building product assurance regulations. We are working with other agencies to draw on their experiences and discuss improvements.



Our conformance infrastructure helps make New Zealand a great place to live and do business

The conformance infrastructure includes the regulations, institutions and arrangements for carrying out conformity assessments.

Conformity assessments check that goods, services, personnel and systems meet standards or comply with regulations.

- Businesses use conformity assessment services to improve their sustainability, lift productivity or increase consumer confidence.
- The infrastructure provides impartial information to consumers that helps them choose the goods or services that best fit their needs.
- Regulators rely on the experience and skills of conformance experts to check that goods, services and practices are safe and sustainable.

To read the full Issues and Opportunities Paper or make an online submission, go to [www.mbie.govt.nz] or email us at: conformancereview@mbie.govt.nz.

INCREASING THE VALUE AND EFFICIENCY OF ACCREDITATION PROCESSES

Findings, opportunities and consultation questions

Accreditation bodies check that conformity assessment bodies (CABs) have adequate expertise and systems in place to carry out conformity assessments.

There are two national accreditation bodies in New Zealand: International Accreditation New Zealand (IANZ) and Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ). Additionally, the International Society for Quality in Health Care Incorporated (ISQua) has a mandate to provide accreditations in the health sector.

We found that having two major accreditation bodies works well for New Zealand and is widely accepted. In general, the accreditation bodies are effectively helping CABs to improve their conformity assessment services. The accreditation bodies have positive international reputations which help exporters to have their New Zealand assessments accepted overseas.

Opportunity: MBIE's Trade and International team could provide more coordination and guidance to the sector.

Q1 Let us know: where should MBIE focus its coordination and guidance efforts?

Opportunity: accreditation processes could be more consistent. Some CABs said that accreditation processes vary by assessor, and others said that they vary across their sector.

Q2 Let us know: what do you think could be done to make accreditation processes more consistent?

Opportunity: accreditation processes could be more responsive to the needs of different CABs.

Q3 Let us know: what could be done to make accreditation work better for different types and sizes of CABs without making the accreditation process less effective?



THE AVAILABILITY AND VALUE OF CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT SERVICES

Findings, opportunities and consultation questions



Conformity assessment bodies (CABs) judge whether goods, services, personnel or systems meet standards or comply with a regulatory requirement.

Conformity assessment services are often used voluntarily by businesses seeking to make improvements in quality, compatibility, and consistency, or to get independent verification. Organisations also use conformity assessments to demonstrate compliance with laws or regulations.

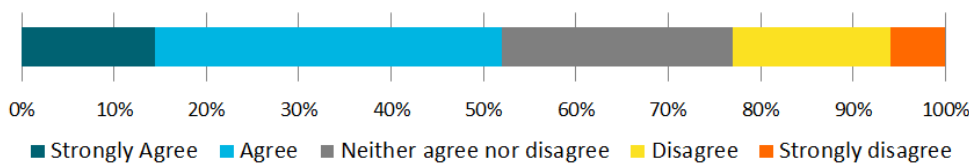
CABs in some sectors are required to be accredited under the law or regulations, other CABs get accreditation to improve their services, and some CABs are not accredited.

We found that organisations do find value in the conformity assessment process, particularly in the feedback provided and how assessments help improve the quality of goods, services and systems.

Organisations mainly undertake conformity assessments to meet regulatory requirements or improve the quality of their goods, systems or services.

Opportunity: Conformity assessments are perceived to cause significant delays for some businesses (small businesses in particular).

Conformity assessments do not cause significant delays for your organisation (n153)

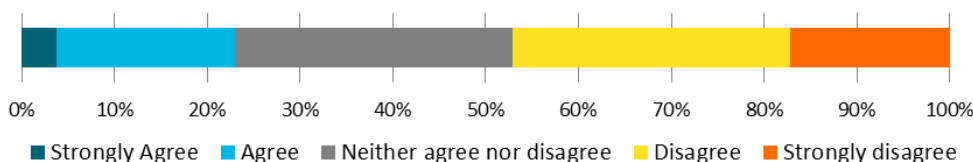


Q4 Let us know: what is causing delays (eg is it a lack of available CABs or inefficient processes)?

How can the speed and efficiency be improved?

Opportunity: There is potentially limited supply of or unmet demand for some conformity assessment services.

There are enough conformity assessment bodies for you business to choose from in New Zealand (n157)



Q5 Let us know: how can the supply of services be improved? What assessment services would you like to have more readily available in New Zealand?

THE PERFORMANCE OF GOVERNMENT REGULATION INVOLVING CONFORMITY ASSESSMENTS

Findings, opportunities and consultation questions

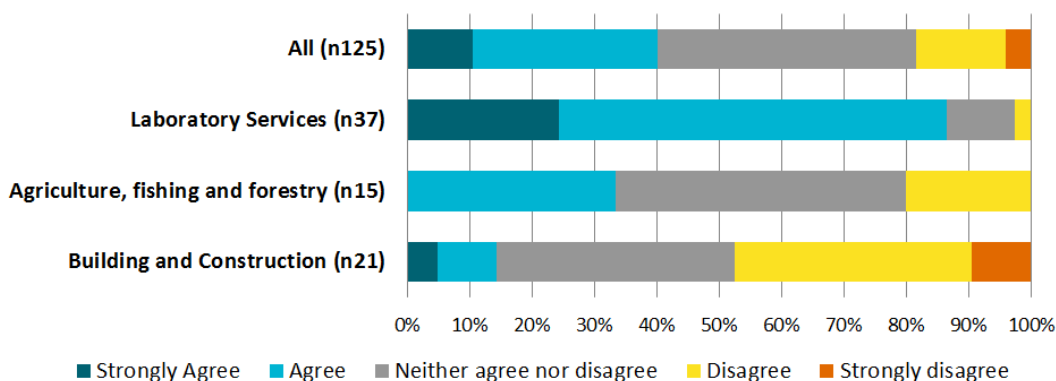
Government regulators use the conformance infrastructure and the expertise of assessors to improve both their efficiency and the robustness of checks.

Accreditation and conformity assessments are often required in higher risk regulatory schemes, where there are risks to human health and safety; for example, adventure activities, building, health care and drinking water. Regulators and regulations require some organisations acting in these sectors to show that they have passed a conformity assessment.

We found that the conformance infrastructure is being used effectively by many regulators to help meet their regulatory objectives and improve the quality of conformity assessments. CABs are generally confident about their roles and responsibilities, and they have clear standards to assess against.

Opportunity: some regulators are working effectively with CABs, while others could improve their coordination with CABs. There is an opportunity to lift the understanding and capability of some regulators in respect of the conformance infrastructure, and MBIE could provide more high-level conformance-specific support. There is merit in regulators checking regulations to avoid unnecessary duplication of assessments.

The regulator works with conformity assessment bodies effectively



Q6 Let us know: how could regulators work with conformity assessments bodies more effectively? How could regulators work with CABs to avoid duplicating assessments?

Opportunity: regulators can establish information sharing arrangements that automatically provide them with timely information that they can use to fulfil their regulatory obligations.

Q7 Let us know: how do we ensure that information flows in regulatory schemes to the organisations which need it?



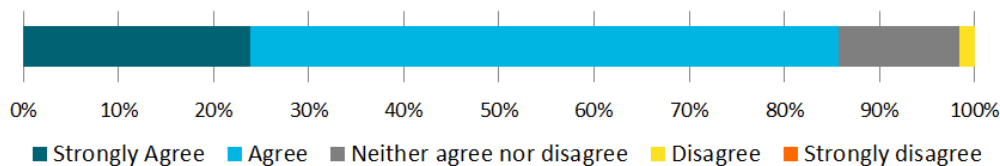
THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CONFORMITY ASSESSMENTS FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Findings, opportunities and consultation questions

The conformance infrastructure supports exporters to get their goods into overseas markets and gain the trust of overseas consumers by independently verifying exporters' claims. It also provides an important check on the quality of imported goods.

Opportunity: conformity assessments are helping exporters to get their goods and services into overseas markets and to improve their attractiveness for consumers overseas. Exporters said that New Zealand's conformance infrastructure is respected overseas.

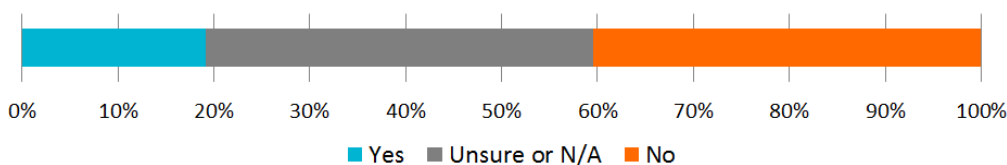
The conformity assessment of your organisation is respected overseas (n63)



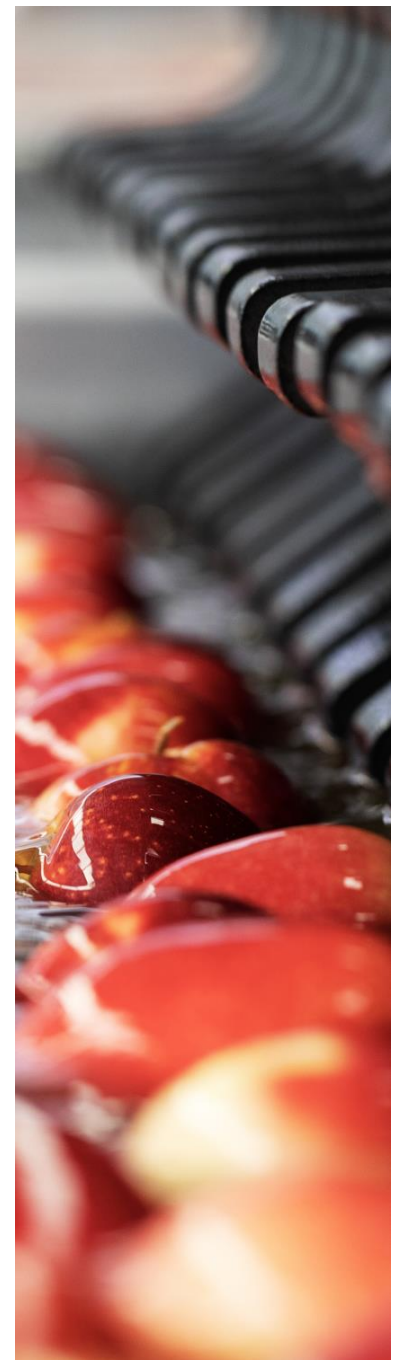
Q8 Let us know: based on your experience, could the conformance infrastructure provide better support for exporters?

Opportunity: a number of stakeholders are not confident in overseas conformity assessments of products imported into New Zealand. This is particularly true for the manufacturing, building and construction industries.

Do you have confidence in overseas conformity assessments of products imported into New Zealand? (n136)



Q9 Let us know: why do you think people are not confident in overseas assessments? What do you think can be done to improve confidence in these assessments?



SUSTAINABILITY OF THE WORKFORCE AND ADAPTABILITY TO CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY

Findings, opportunities and consultation questions

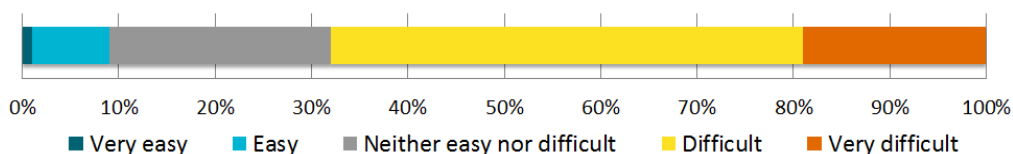
New Zealand's size and location means there is a limited supply of technical experts in many fields, and this can limit the availability of suitable staff or services. The conformance sector is highly technical and must be able to provide services to the latest technologies and ways of working so that New Zealand businesses remain competitive and consumers continue to have high-levels of protection.

We found that a key sustainability issue for the conformance sector is the difficulty faced by CABs in finding and retaining suitable staff.

There is confidence in the system generally, but there is a risk that a loss of confidence in conformity assessments in one sector may spill over to other sectors and the broader infrastructure.

Opportunity: attracting, training and retaining conformance experts will continue to be important to ensure the availability of high quality services into the future.

How easy is it for your organisation to find staff with suitable technical capabilities in New Zealand? (n100)



Q10 Let us know: what can be done to attract, train and retain skilled people to work in the conformance sector?

Opportunity: increasing the visibility and understanding of conformance will help make the infrastructure more sustainable and support more informed decisions and choices.

Q11 Let us know: how could MBIE work with other government agencies the sector to increase the visibility and understanding about the value of conformity assessments and accreditation?

Opportunity: people involved in conformity assessments need to remain agile and responsive to social, technological and economic change.

Q12 Let us know: what are your ideas for ensuring New Zealand's conformance sector remains responsive to change?

