

AVIATION NEWS

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Govt releases first aviation sector action plan

Interim Aviation Council's report seeks to spur action on regulatory change, decarbonisation, infrastructure development, and workforce training.

Aviation infrastructure needs to adapt to transformative change in the industry.

[Will Mace](#)

Tue, 16 Sep 2025



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A Government-led aviation council has released the country's first industry plan, seeking to alleviate cost-related issues and promote opportunities for growth and innovation in the advanced aviation sector.

The Interim Aviation Council was established after an independent review into the Air Navigation System said in 2023 that improving system leadership was a critical priority for the sector.

The council's participants include government ministries, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Airways Corporation, Air New Zealand, the Defence Force, as well as associations representing airlines, airports, and pilots, among others.

As part of several actions recommended by the council, the CAA is expected to "lift the quality of service and speed up certification decision-making" through "improving resourcing and processes" and "automating routine tasks".

However, the timing of the CAA improvements will be dependent on the outcome of a CAA funding review.

The plan expects the CAA and Ministry of Transport – with industry input – to "rework" specific rules to allow for safe innovation and growth in advanced aviation and "contribute to improving the pace of regulatory decision-making, while continuously improving safety and security". This is all to be implemented by the end of 2025.

The ministry and regulator are also expected to develop a two-year, "prioritised rolling rule-making programme", which is tested with the sector and focused on implementing International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) recommendations, improving efficiency, safety and security, and enabling innovation.

The plan also seeks to grow the aviation sector workforce by updating pilot qualifications to make training programmes shorter and more aligned with airlines' needs.



Auckland Airport construction.

Resilience

In terms of the industry's resilience, the plan asks the Ministry of Transport to document the costs borne by the sector, such as fees and charges, by the end of this year, and develop an "indicator framework to monitor the health of the aviation system".

Air traffic control provider Airways NZ's services and policy settings will undergo a review to ensure they are "appropriate and can be efficiently delivered", and its pricing will be reviewed by mid-2027.

As announced earlier, the Ministry of Transport had agreed to address vulnerable regional routes by using the Regional Infrastructure Fund to support regional airlines with acquisition or lease of aircraft, procurement of components, and debt refinancing on concessionary terms.

The plan also calls for coordinated infrastructure planning, including via Air New Zealand's fleet expansion and jet fuel demands, as well as electricity and transmission requirements for next generation aircraft.

In that vein, reducing fossil fuels and transitioning to clean energy should be pursued through the Government's 2+2 Climate and Finance dialogue with Australia, and an affirmation of New Zealand's voluntary participation in Carbon Offsetting Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (Corsia) at the 2025 ICAO General Assembly.

The Ministry of Transport should also participate in the Bioenergy Australia-led process on regional sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) strategy and develop advice to the Jet Zero Council.



AIANZ CEO Simon Wallace.

Transformative decade

“The next decade in air transport is poised to be transformative,” Associate Transport Minister James Meager wrote in the report’s foreword. “This will be driven in no small measure by technological advances, sustainability goals, and new, more efficient ways of moving people and goods.

“Drones and uncrewed aircraft, for example, will create new economic opportunities, particularly in sectors like agriculture and forestry, and increasingly change the way passengers and freight move, requiring the sector to innovate and adapt.”

The NZ Airports Association and Aviation Industry Association (AIANZ) welcomed the plan, with the latter saying it was “a long-awaited, clear, and collaborative pathway to growth and transformation of New Zealand’s vital aviation industry.

AIANZ CEO Simon Wallace said there was still work to be done, but the plan acknowledged core concerns across workforce, the regulatory environment and infrastructure, and involves industry and government working together for accountability.

“Given that workforce is one of the industry’s biggest challenges, we are pleased to see that the plan has a set of actions aligned with and partly informed by AIANZ’s research and advocacy work highlighting the dire pilot and engineer shortages we face and underpinning causes.

“Especially encouraging is the promise of policy change to address systemic issues with pilot training that are contributing to pilot shortages. We hope this will lead to lifting the outdated student loan cap that is the main barrier to aspiring young New Zealanders entering the workforce as they are unable to borrow to cover their tuition fees.”

A permanent Aviation Council will be formed to report to the minister annually on progress against the actions, and the plan will be reviewed every three years.

Will Mace
Tue, 16 Sep 2025

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