

8 April 2026

Hon Cameron Brewer
Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs
Parliament Buildings
Wellington 6160

Email: Cameron.Brewer@parliament.govt.nz

Tēnā koe Minister Brewer

Requesting a meeting to discuss New Zealand's standards system and claims resolution service

Congratulations on your new appointments as Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs, Minister for Small Business and Manufacturing, and Associate Minister of Immigration. We look forward to working with you for the remainder of this term, supporting important work within your portfolios.

Engineering New Zealand Te Ao Rangahau is New Zealand's largest professional body for engineers, with more than 23,000 members dedicated to engineering better lives for the people of New Zealand. Engineering New Zealand also regulates the engineering profession as the Registration Authority for Chartered Professional Engineers, and accredits all tertiary engineering training in New Zealand.

Your Commerce and Consumer Affairs portfolio includes responsibility for New Zealand's standards system and the New Zealand Claims Resolution Service (NZCRS). We welcome an opportunity to meet to discuss both these systems with you.

New Zealand's standards system

The standards system underpins nearly every part of our daily lives – from everyday products to complex infrastructure – yet it is chronically underfunded, increasingly outdated, and out of step with international best practice. A reformed standards system is urgently needed to improve public safety, save time and cost for industry, and support construction of the infrastructure New Zealand needs most.

We acknowledge measures announced by this Government to improve the existing standards system, including:

- the recently announced agreement between Standards New Zealand and Standards Australia to help reduce barriers and support better outcomes within the standards system
- work underway, led by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) and Standards New Zealand, to explore a more sustainable, fit for purpose standards funding model.

While we strongly support these measures, much more needs to be done to deliver a modern standards system that meets the needs of industry, improves safety and delivers the productivity gains our economy desperately needs. This is a high priority for our members and the broader industrial sector – I attach a joint letter, dated 1 September 2025 and signed by 30 signatories, stressing the urgent need for reform.

New Zealand Claims Resolution Service

NZCRS is a government service that provides homeowners with free, independent support to resolve residential insurance issues resulting from natural disasters. It provides independent claims guidance, trusted engineering expertise, early dispute resolution, and wellbeing support for homeowners affected by major hazard events (including the Auckland Anniversary floods and Cyclone Gabrielle). This important service reduces escalation, improves consistency, shortens resolution timeframes, and protects the wellbeing of both homeowners and engineers in highly complex and stressful circumstances.

MBIE is currently reviewing the future role and funding of NZCRS. Engineering New Zealand would like to ensure that the service continues to be offered, and that any changes to its funding and governance arrangements preserve NZCRS's independence, retain access to trusted independent engineering expertise through the Natural Disaster Recovery Panel, and maintain the early wrap-around guidance that distinguishes NZCRS from formal dispute resolution schemes. Preserving this capability is essential to ensuring New Zealand is prepared for future natural hazard events and avoids repeating the costly failures of the past.

We are available at your convenience to meet with you to discuss these important matters.

Nāku iti nei, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Templer'.

Dr Richard Templer
Chief Executive

1 September 2025

Hon Scott Simpson
Minister of Commerce and Consumer Affairs
Parliament Buildings
Wellington, 6160

By email: S.Simpson@ministers.govt.nz

CC:

Hon David Seymour
Minister for Regulation

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister of Infrastructure & Transport

Hon Chris Penk
Minister for Building and Construction

Tēnā koe Minister Simpson

Recommendations to reform New Zealand's standards model

We would appreciate a meeting with you soon to discuss our collective recommendations to reform the current standards funding and development model.

Together the undersigned constitute a significant cross section of the engineering design, manufacturing, trade and construction representative bodies in New Zealand. We are calling for urgent reform to the standards system, starting with a review of the funding approach.

The Government needs to enable Standards New Zealand to provide a system that is fit for the 21st century. An effective system has standards that are up to date, accessible, affordable, modern, and technologically enabled. We appreciate the work MBIE and Standards New Zealand are doing in this space but more needs to be done at pace.

We are interested to note the recent announcement by Standards Australia on their advocacy for removing the paywall on their standards. They are advocating for a national standards access model for the construction sector to eliminate the cost and barriers to accessing standards mandated by laws. This sends a strong acknowledgement of the public good aspect to standards.

Requiring the industry to fund updates to standards (and volunteer their time to do it) and then having to buy the actual standards once they are developed is unreasonable. Our preference is for access to standards and system improvements to be publicly funded but the next best option is for existing industry levies to fund this system. We do acknowledge that the building levy pays for free access to some building and construction standards, but note this only applies to some NZ standards, and many commonly used standards are joint with Australia, requiring access fees.

We know you are fully across the challenges with the current system – so have focussed on recommendations for change, as discussed in the attached Appendix.

We would like to meet with you to help rapidly advance change to support the outcomes New Zealand needs. Improving the standards system will be vital to help realise the Government's reform agenda, particularly in improving New Zealand's infrastructure planning and delivery.

Noho ora mai

Richard Templer
Chief Executive



Troy Coyle
CEO



Bryan King
Executive Director



Jo Duggan
Chief Executive



Murray Pugh
Chief Executive



Keryn Davis
Chief Executive



Nick Leggett
Chief Executive



Helen Davidson
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Carol Speirs
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Brett Francis
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Lisa Oliver
President



Tommy Honey
Executive Director



Katherine Rich
Chief Executive



Nick Hill
Chief Executive



Simon Hall
Chair



Chris Lambell
Deputy Chair



Scott Lanauze
President, IFE NZ Branch



Rob Gaimster
Chief Executive



Malcom Arnold
Executive Committee - Technical Chair



Malcolm Fleming
Chief Executive



Stuart Oliver
President



Alex Vranjac-Wheeler
Chief Executive



Mark Abbot
Chief Executive



Greg Wallace
Chief Executive



Pamela Bell
CEO



Appendix

To reform the standards system, we recommend the following should occur

Prioritise reform by:

- Providing an actionable reform plan, with project scope, timeframes and consultation steps.
 - For some time, we have heard the Government is exploring a more sustainable and effective system, but there is no specificity or urgency.
- Organising workshops as soon as possible so that volunteers and industry groups with expert knowledge of the system can help Government officials expedite and shape the reform.
- Starting the reform with improving the funding model as soon as possible.
 - The preferred option is public funding to recognise the public good element to standards, with industry levies being an effective alternative/supplementary option – noting that levies may not work for all sectors.
 - This funding should be used to improve the system, remove cost burdens for access and reduce the reliance on volunteers (or at least fairly compensate them for their time).

Review access arrangements by:

- Making the access scheme fit for purpose by enabling purchase and access at an organisational level clear and effective.
- Improving use of standards through less expensive access arrangements.
 - The current expensive system has public safety risks – through adhoc use of free international standards, use of old standards or individual modification of international standards.
 - Make more or all standards free or heavily subsidised, especially essential construction ones and those cited in primary or secondary legislation.

Have a clear direction by:

- Providing a forward vision and work plan for standards use in New Zealand.
 - This should prioritise missing and outdated standards where risk is highest or innovation is needed most, fix the misalignment with the law and ensure updates are aligned with international best practice.
 - For example, there are over 140 standards related to water infrastructure. These standards are gradually lapsing into obsolescence or becoming disjointed from Australian standards due to lack of funding.

Make it easier to volunteer by:

- Reimbursing travel & accommodation costs for the essential technical volunteers.
 - By way of example, HERA has advised that their in-kind contribution from member's volunteer work (if charged at consulting rates)– is estimated as \$870,998 + GST annually, excluding any commissioning or purchasing fees
 - As a benchmark, Standards Australia reimburses 50% of IEC and ISO international travel costs for all Australian participants.
- Finding ways to make it easier and more accessible to volunteer.
 - Reduce or break up the time commitment required, utilise online platforms wherever possible and enable the ability to volunteer for set periods of time rather than requiring commitment across the full process which can take years.
 - Develop guidance to support volunteers through the development process, particularly international standards development.

Use international standards where it makes sense by:

- Adopting and integrating international standards more widely, where they reflect best practice and meet local needs.
- Having a clear system to test how international standards perform in the New Zealand environment.
- Clarifying the New Zealand/Australia alliance.
 - The abrupt de-jointing of standards with Australia has huge costs and is highly disruptive.

- Better balance the representation between New Zealand and Australia in joint standard development-ensuring balance in process, representation and costs for development.
- Better enabling access to international standards to support the changes to the Building Product Specifications changes.

Modernise and improve the system by:

- Supporting and enabling the use of AI.
 - On the job workers need real time answers to their questions, which technology can provide. This supports access and compliance and should be encouraged – not prevented by restrictive regulatory practices.
- Allowing previews or search functions to permit users to assess the relevance of a standard prior to purchasing it.
- Speeding up the standards ratification process.
- Exploring ways to reduce standards referring to other standards.
 - This practice creates a complex chain of required documents. Instances of this can be seen in NZS 1170.5:2004, NZS 3605:2001, and NZS 3404:1997.

Improve regulatory stewardship by:

- Establishing a formal process to keep legislative references current and improve transparency across government agencies.
 - Noting this will now be even harder for building standards with the three yearly building code updates.
- Exploring ways to update references outside of a formal legislative or regulatory process.
- Improving transparency by providing more information on what levies are spent on.

Better support government reforms by:

- Contributing to the success of wider Government reform (particularly resource management), which is moving towards greater use of national standards. Success will require a functioning standards system.
 - We think it is unlikely that central government agencies will have the capacity and capability to develop, maintain and update the increase of national standards arising from many Government reform programmes.