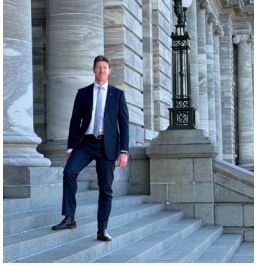


SAM UFFINDELL

MP for Tauranga

National

Winter 2026 Newsletter



It's been an exciting time as the Member of Parliament for Tauranga, a city that is a key strategic point in our Golden Triangle with Auckland and Hamilton. I was proud to join senior ministerial colleagues, Housing and Transport Minister Chris Bishop, and Local Government Minister Simon Watts, together with Deputy Prime Minister David Seymour, in Tauranga as they signed the Western Bay of Plenty City and Regional Deal.

A testament to the importance of our region, several other ministers have included Tauranga on their recent travel schedules, and I enjoyed hosting Mental Health Minister Matt Doocey, Education and Immigration Minister Erica Stanford, Associate Immigration Minister Cameron Brewer, Conservation and Associate Housing Minister Tama Potaka and Associate Transport Minister James Meager. Read on for more details about these visits, other local news and key government updates.

City and Regional Deal

Signed in May by Tauranga and Western Bay Mayors Mahé Drysdale and James Denyer and Regional Council Chair Matemoana McDonald, the Western Bay City and Regional Deal represented a proud moment for me as MP for Tauranga. The event at Bay Oval celebrated the culmination of many years of discussion between Government and the Tauranga City, Western Bay of Plenty District and Bay of Plenty Regional Councils, establishing a transformational partnership to unlock major housing, social and transport investments. It is expected to enable around 15,000 new homes, prioritise critical transport links like SH29 and SH2, and drive coordinated investment in key infrastructure such as Tauranga Hospital, schools and health facilities,

recognising the Western Bay of Plenty as one of New Zealand's most important economic regions and a vital gateway for national growth.

Chris Bishop and Simon Watts confirmed that we're forging ahead with Local Government reform. Regional council layers will disappear by 2028, and local councils will be given a fast-track chance to reorganise themselves in the next three months to take on those regional council functions.

I'll be encouraging all the councils in our region to take the opportunity for more localised control of regional functions. Shared services, reduced overheads and fewer layers are all potential benefits from these changes.

Budget 2026

Budget 2026 initiatives collectively aim to lift wages, support local infrastructure and support the continued growth of Tauranga's economy. There is a \$5.5 billion increase in funding for frontline health services. The government is spending more than any government ever on healthcare in NZ. Tauranga Hospital will be redeveloped, on top of last year's announcement of a new 24/7 urgent care service in Tauranga.

The Takitimu North Link continues and the Omanawa Bridge replacement continues and we will four lane SH1 from Cambridge to SH29, bringing a Tauranga better connected to the Golden Triangle even closer.

Significant funding is being put into doubling the number of Trades Academy places to 20,000. This will help build jobs and the future of our country. We are committed to lifting student achievement in schools and have made further contributions to uplifting the school curriculum and strengthening teacher training and learning. We need our children and grandchildren to be ready for what's in front of them and it hugely satisfying to see school achievement continue to lift under our government. We are giving children and young people a greater opportunity to reach their potential.

Sam Uffindell, MP for Tauranga

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Authorised by Sam Uffindell, Parliament Buildings, Wellington

Maritime Security

As part of Budget 2026, crucial funding will allow the replacement of our Navy's aging ANZAC-class frigates, with plans to select Mogami or Type 31 Frigate design. This will modernise our naval capabilities, ensuring our waters remain secure while supporting economic stability and maritime trade protection.

Rough Sleepers Support

The Government has announced Tauranga as one of six new locations to receive specialised support for rough sleepers, part of a \$15.4m funding package from Housing Ministers Chris Bishop and Tama Potaka.



This announcement follows local connections made in March, when I hosted Tama Potaka at a meeting with homeless network providers. It's great this meeting has led to this newly targeted Government funding to strengthen our critical frontline community services.



I donate blood and plasma so I appreciate the skilled needlework from the nurses at **NZ Blood Service** on Cameron Road.

Plasma is often called liquid gold because donations are used to create up to 12 life-saving medical products. It takes just over an hour in comfortable surroundings and there are delicious snacks for donors.

Mental Health Assistance

The **BeingWell** service is a highly successful mental health and addiction programme run by the Western Bay of Plenty Primary Health Organisation. Operating from within general practices, the service provides patients with locally-coordinated care from a dedicated team of health coaches and health improvement practitioners. If you're experiencing stress, anxiety, grief, chronic pain, lifestyle changes, or just feeling stuck, book an appointment for this free service via your GP Practice or the Western Bay PHO website: www.wboppho.org.nz.



- Tauranga Crisis Team: 0800 800 508 or 111 if there's immediate danger;
- Text 1737 for a trained counsellor;
- Lifeline 0800 543 354, or text 4357;
- Youthline: 0800 376 633;
- Samaritans: 0800 726 666.

Health Updates



Regional health boosts in Budget 2026 include plans to redevelop Tauranga Hospital and a funding boost for ambulance services with increased staffing to manage growing demand. Ambulance personnel can now provide key emergency medicine via new Pharmac funding.

A \$26.6m (3.16%) funding uplift for pharmacy services, which includes \$11.9m a year for expanded clinical services. Together with the pharmacist role expansion that began in June 2026, this makes it easier to get funded medicines and treatment for common conditions directly from your local pharmacist.

Increased support for new mothers includes funding rolling out over three years to expand maternal care and enhance postnatal services, ensuring every baby has the best possible start in life.

Free screening for bowel cancer will start at 56 and breast screening has been extended to 74 year olds.

Tauranga is confirmed as a major training hub for the new University of Waikato Medical School from 2028.

Education



The Government is investing \$40 million over four years to deliver House of Science kits into year 0-8 schools, a move set to enable a generation of Kiwi kids to explore and excel in STEM subjects. This incredible initiative delivers a social impact of \$21.90 for every single dollar invested. Huge congratulations to Chris Duggan and the volunteers, funders, and supporters who are making this dream come true.

The Minister of Education visited Tauranga to announce a \$30 million investment through the Drinking Water in Schools programme to upgrade water infrastructure. Every student and teacher deserves access to safe, clean, and reliable drinking water, and this initiative allows the Ministry to be proactive, upgrading systems for nearly 100 schools by the middle of next year.

Government is delivering the next phase of the Teaching the Basics Brilliantly programme to place literacy and mathematics achievement at the forefront of school investments. This targeted funding provides teachers with structured literacy resources, updated mathematics guides, and evidence-based professional development tools. By focusing on these core competencies from an early age, the initiative ensures every child builds the essential skills needed to achieve higher learning outcomes.

111 Co-Response Update



It was a pleasure to host Mental Health Minister Matt Doocey as we met with senior Police and Health NZ officials for an update on the new **111 Co-response Team**. This specialised team of crisis clinicians and police officers responds to calls involving people in mental distress, providing a health response rather than a justice one.

Horticulture



Congratulations to all local growers, especially 2026 Bay of Plenty Young Grower, William Kenna. It is inspiring discussing technology and traditional knowledge with this next generation. Horticulture export revenue reached a phenomenal \$9.5 billion. Our government will back our growers all the way to ensure continued future success.



I really enjoyed my visit to the Harvest Market in Te Puna. Such a fun community event with crafts, food and lovely people. The giant pumpkin contest was a highlight - I saw a 90.4g pumpkin - well done Pat, and thank you Sue for your hard work running this annual fundraising event for the folks in Te Puna and the Western Bay.

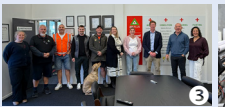
Business Support

A new loan programme to help local businesses transition away from gas and reduce their energy costs will provide accessible financial support for companies to replace outdated gas infrastructure with efficient, sustainable alternatives.

The programme helps businesses modernise their operations and shield themselves against global energy volatility, while the wider region remains economically competitive.

Bay Business Connections

It's a key part of my role as MP to keep connected with local business owners. Hearing employers' feedback on the economy and listening to their wins and successes helps me advocate for them at Parliament. Here are some I visited recently.



1. Eru and his team at **Acon Industries** in Tauriko have grown their family business into a highly capable operation focused on sustainability in the asphalt and bitumen industry, while creating pathways from school into meaningful employment for our local youth.

2. I invited local house builders for smoko at **Neck of the Woods** to share their perspectives with Housing and Infrastructure Minister, Hon Chris Bishop.

3. **AR Plus** is a long-term family business in Tauriko where Jarrod, Amy, and their crew expertly remove asbestos and mould, while highlighting how essential proper home ventilation is for preventing everyday moisture accumulation.

4. Great to connect with Mark and his team at **DB Signs** in Tauriko, who are busy with print and signage jobs throughout the Bay, with high-tech printing and lamination systems.

5. **Ignite Architects** in Tauranga have worked on some big local projects like the Elizabeth Towers, Panorama Tower and further afield, Nelson Hospital. Great people doing great things.

If you'd like me to visit your Tauranga business, I'd love to hear from you.

Tourism Growth



I enjoyed visiting Waimarino Water Park for a chat with owner Blair whose family developed the park in 1975. Tourism is New Zealand's second-largest export earner. In June, international visitors were up about 8 % on last year and we're now at 94 % of pre-pandemic levels. MBIE data also shows that, from March 2024 to March 2026, overseas visitor spend increased by \$2.5 billion to \$13.7 billion, including by \$215 million by making travel faster and cheaper for eligible Chinese and Pacific visitors coming from Australia.

Launched in November 2025, the initiative replaces a costly visitor visa with a streamlined ETA, reducing processing times and cutting costs significantly, already driving a 40 % increase in Chinese visitor arrivals. For regions like Tauranga, these tourism dollars flow directly into local businesses, helping to fill hotel rooms, cafes, and shops, which supports local jobs and economic growth.

The landmark Free Trade Agreement with India marks a transformative milestone for the economic future of New Zealand, providing an ideal introduction to this feature on the critical importance of the export sector. By slashing tariffs on ninety-five per cent of exports to an expanding market of 1.4 billion consumers, this comprehensive deal delivers an immediate boost to vital industries and reinforces why trade serves as the engine room of the economy, supporting one in four jobs. As businesses capitalise on these unprecedented global opportunities to help achieve the national goal of doubling export value over the next decade, this agreement serves as a powerful reminder of how international trade drives long-term prosperity.

Trains



Recently the Glenbrook Vintage Railway put on train rides for Tauranga residents, including a trip from the Strand to Mount Maunganui and another through the Kaimai Tunnel.

It was such a popular activity that it was booked up soon after tickets went on sale.

The passenger trips have brought up the topic of local commuter trains and since we have the lines, we have the possibility of local train travel – business case and fiscals pending.

Let me know your thoughts on local trains; if they're positive, I'll work to build local consensus and put this before key people in Wellington.

Senior News



To help manage the cost of living, New Zealand Superannuation payments increased from 1 April 2026. Since the current Government came into office, payments have risen by more than \$180 per fortnight for a married couple and by almost \$120 for a single person living alone. The income threshold for the Rates Rebate Scheme has also been lifted, helping more SuperGold Cardholders access the maximum rebate.

Budget 2026 includes over \$42 million to modernise the SuperGold Card, including a free upgrade to a secure version with a photograph that can be used as primary identification. The SuperGold app is also being improved with location based features and a central information hub.

In healthcare, twelve month prescriptions are now available for patients with stable long term conditions, reducing doctor visits. The Government has also committed to redeveloping Tauranga Hospital.

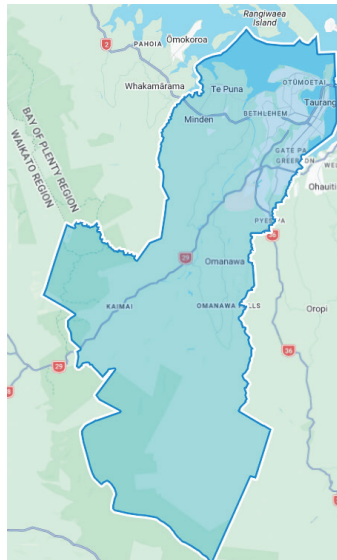
Protections for retirement village residents will be strengthened, with clearer contracts, fairer exit terms, and improved safeguards. The Better Later Life Action Plan and City and Regional Deals will improve services and support regional growth.

Stalking as a Crime

The Government is making stalking a standalone criminal offence to better protect victims of this devastating behaviour.

Recognising the psychological and emotional harm caused by persistent, unwanted harassment, new legal mechanisms will empower police to intervene earlier and hold offenders accountable. This law change represents a vital step forward in strengthening safety, particularly for women and vulnerable New Zealanders.

New Zealand General Election: 7 November 2026



New Zealand's General Election has been set for Saturday 7 November 2026. You can register for the electoral roll or update your details at www.vote.nz.

With new boundaries announced last year, you may be in a different electorate from last time you voted.



The new Tauranga electorate boundary will encompass a greater area from last election, taking in Lower Kaimai and Te Puna. To explore the changes, scan the QR code to view the interactive map.

For Tauranga Constituents

If you live in, or run a business in, the Tauranga electorate, my team and I are here to support you. The 14 Grey Street electorate office is open Monday to Friday from 10 am to 4 pm. I hold regular constituent clinics - to arrange an appointment, please email or call me.

Our office provides a wide range of practical assistance. We can help connect you with government agencies, including MSD, Health NZ, Immigration New Zealand, Police and DIA.

My office also helps with Justice of the Peace applications, with Parliamentary Library requests, and with presenting petitions directly to Parliament.

If you are planning a trip to Wellington, we can help book Parliament tours or school visits.

We can also coordinate official congratulatory messages for major milestone birthdays and wedding anniversaries.

Transport



Budget 2026 provided \$1.77 billion to extend the Waikato Expressway, improving freight efficiency and reducing congestion between Karapiro and Piarere, a key route in the Golden Triangle.

NZTA's work is transforming transport in the Western Bay of Plenty, creating a safer and more efficient connection for our growing region and strengthening links between Auckland, Hamilton and Tauranga.

Stage 1 of the Takitimu North Link continues to make strong progress. Contractors are in their fifth year, nearing completion of a three million cubic metre earthworks programme and ten bridge structures. A key milestone is expected in

late July, when traffic shifts onto the new 363 metre northbound flyover on Takitimu Drive.

Following this, crews will upgrade the existing road and construct a new roundabout linking to the future expressway. This project will ease congestion and support more reliable journeys between Tauranga and Te Puna.

