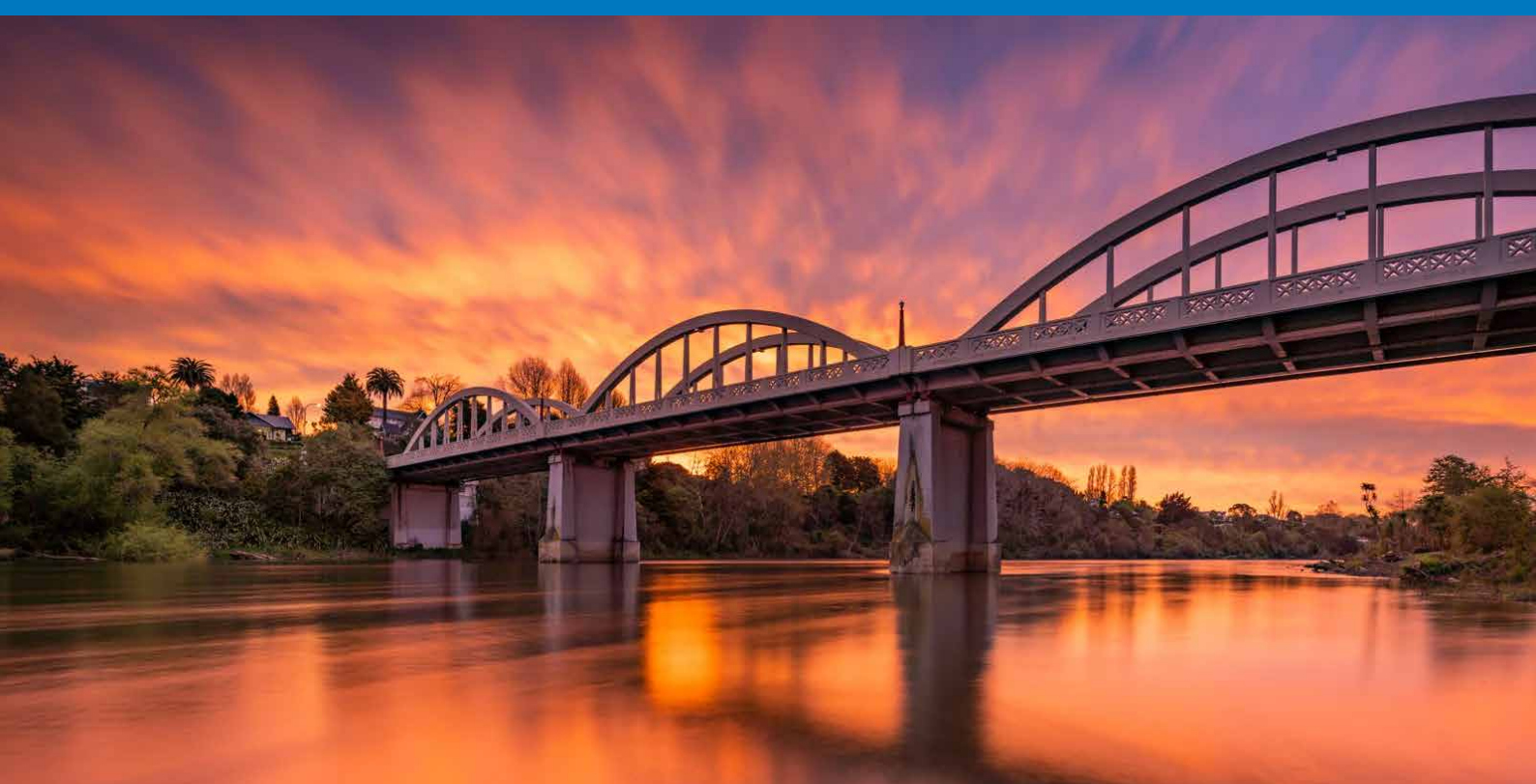




Building the Future:

National backs the Waikato



Building the Future: National backs the Waikato



Waikato is New Zealand's productive heartland.

It is where much of our food is grown, our energy is generated, our exports are made and our freight moves through. Hamilton and the surrounding towns are growing quickly, while rural and coastal communities depend on strong connections and reliable services.

National is backing that growth with the infrastructure Waikato needs for the future.

That investment is anchored by two major projects. National is extending the Waikato Expressway from Cambridge to Piarere with \$1.773 billion of funding, and building the new Waikato Medical School in Hamilton, which will provide 120 additional medical training places each year from 2028.

But the investment goes much further. We are progressing Hamilton Southern Links, expanding Hamilton Airport, strengthening transport resilience in the Coromandel, adding classrooms and specialist education capacity, increasing health capacity, supporting more housing, and backing major productive infrastructure across the region.

We also invested a record \$1.9 billion into the Waikato's roads through the 2024-27 National Land Transport Fund, ensuring the region's roads are up to standard. Construction has also begun on replacing the SH25 Pepe Stream bridge, the SH25 Ramarama Stream Bridge and the SH27 Ohinekaia Stream bridge – improving the resilience of the wider Waikato state highway network and keeping local communities, freight and emergency services moving.

We are building the housing our most vulnerable in the Waikato needs, with more than 900 additional social houses being delivered in the Waikato under National.

We are also working to make Waikato communities safer. Ram raids have fallen sharply from their peak, theft and robbery are down, Police foot patrols have more than doubled, and tougher laws are giving Police stronger tools to target gangs and repeat offenders.

There is more to do. National will keep building the infrastructure Waikato needs to grow, while making sure families, businesses and communities can share in the benefits..

A re-elected National Government will:

- **Deliver Cambridge to Piarere**, creating a safer, faster and more reliable connection through one of New Zealand's most important economic corridors.
- **Continue to progress Hamilton Southern Links**, and further explore options for a staged delivery of this important project, so some of the benefits can be felt, sooner.
- **Deliver the Waikato Medical School**, building a stronger pipeline of doctors for rural and regional New Zealand.
- **Keep investing across the region**, in transport, health, education, housing and productive infrastructure.
- **Keep Waikato communities safer**, with visible Police, tougher consequences for repeat offenders and continued pressure on gangs and retail crime.





Two big builds for Waikato's future

Waikato is growing, and National is investing in the infrastructure the region needs for decades to come.

At the heart of that programme are two major projects: extending the Waikato Expressway from Cambridge to Piarere and building New Zealand's new medical school in Hamilton.

Together, they will strengthen the connections and workforce that underpin Waikato's future growth.

Extending the Waikato Expressway

National is getting on with the next major extension of the Waikato Expressway.

Budget 2026 invested \$1.773 billion in the Cambridge to Piarere Road of National Significance, a new 16-kilometre, four-lane expressway from the end of the existing Waikato Expressway to the SH1/SH29 intersection at Piarere.

This is one of New Zealand's most important freight and economic corridors, connecting Auckland, Waikato and the Bay of Plenty with the central and lower North Island.

Early works for the project began in January, both major construction contracts are now in procurement, and the first phase of construction is expected to begin in early 2027.

For Waikato families this means safer, faster, and more reliable journeys. For farmers, manufacturers and exporters it means a stronger connection to ports, markets and customers.

Building New Zealand's new medical school

National is also making one of the biggest investments in New Zealand's rural and regional health workforce in a generation.

National campaigned on the Waikato Medical School in 2023, after the previous Labour Government dismissed the project. Now, National is delivering it in Government. Construction is underway on the New Zealand Graduate School of Medicine at the

University of Waikato, backed by \$82.85 million from the Government and more than \$150 million from the University and philanthropic partners.

From 2028, the school will provide 120 additional medical training places every year, with a strong focus on primary care and rural health. Students will spend their first year studying in Hamilton before undertaking three years of clinical training across regional and rural communities.

In Waikato, that training will stretch from Waikato Hospital to North Waikato, Hauraki and Thames-Coromandel, South Waikato, Waipā and the King Country. That means more doctors training in the communities that need them, helping build a stronger pipeline of GPs and frontline clinicians for rural and regional New Zealand.

National is also planning ahead for the wider region's future health needs. A 13-hectare site has now been secured at Drury for a future major health facility, following work specifically identifying the rapid growth of South Auckland and north Waikato.

Combined with the new Medical School, this is about building health capacity ahead of growth rather than waiting for existing services to come under even more pressure.

What National is delivering:

- **\$1.773 billion for Cambridge to Piarere**, extending the Waikato Expressway with 16 kilometres of safer, four-lane highway.
- **Construction underway on the Waikato Medical School**, creating 120 additional doctor training places every year from 2028.
- **A stronger rural health workforce**, with medical students training throughout Waikato, and rural and regional New Zealand.
- **Planning ahead for future hospital capacity**, with land secured at Drury to support the long-term health needs of South Auckland and north Waikato.

Building across Waikato

A productive region needs infrastructure that can keep up.

Across Waikato, National is upgrading key transport links, expanding health and education capacity, and backing the infrastructure that supports more homes, jobs and investment. From Hamilton to the Coromandel and the King Country, we are making sure the region has what it needs to keep moving forward.

Connecting the region

- **Progressing Hamilton Southern Links**, a major future transport connection linking the Waikato Expressway at Tamahere with western Hamilton and opening up access to new housing, businesses and Hamilton Airport. The route has been designated, the investment case was endorsed by the new NZTA board in 2025, and initial site investigations have been completed.
- **Expanding Hamilton Airport**, supporting a 255-metre runway extension, apron and turning-bay expansion and upgraded lighting, strengthening Waikato's ability to move people and freight.
- **Began construction of bridge replacements:** SH25 Pepe Stream bridge, the SH25 Ramarama Stream Bridge and the SH27 Ohinekaia Stream bridge, supporting a more resilient transport network for Waikato.
- **Delivered a new Road of Regional significance** in the Waikato, improving safety and reliability at the State Highway 1 and State Highway 29 intersection, building a new roundabout to replace the former T-intersection.

- **Fixing the roads Waikato already has**, including the accelerated SH1 maintenance programme between Tirau and Waiouru, which has rebuilt or resurfaced more than 120 lane kilometres of state highway.
- **Extended rail connectivity** from Hamilton to Auckland, with NZTA extending the Te Huia trial by 12 months until June 2027.

Infrastructure for growing communities

- **Delivering more social homes**, with 929 net new social homes added across Waikato since November 2023.
- **Fewer Waikato families are living in emergency housing**, with the number of households falling from 564 in November 2023 to 120 in September 2026, a 79 per cent reduction.
- **Unlocking new housing in Hamilton**, by approving an Infrastructure Funding and Financing levy for Te Awa Lakes, helping to deliver the water and roading infrastructure needed for 1,500 new homes.
- **Building more classrooms where rolls are growing**, including four new classrooms at Hamilton East School, two at Te Wharekura o Kirikiriroa and four more at Berkley Normal Middle School.
- **Expanding specialist education**, with four new classrooms at Hamilton North School and new satellite classrooms at Te Aroha College and Fairfield Intermediate, giving more students with high and complex needs access to purpose-built learning spaces closer to home.



- **Adding health capacity**, with a new 28-bed assessment ward being built next to Waikato Hospital's emergency department and due for completion in 2027, Hospital in the Home being expanded to support up to 40 patients receiving hospital-level care in their own homes, 10 new forensic mental health beds opened at Waikato Hospital alongside eight community step-down beds, a new 64-bed acute mental health facility due to open shortly, and extra security staff in Waikato Hospital's emergency department around the clock.
- **Bringing specialist care closer to rural communities**, with a new infusion service at Te Kūiti Hospital reducing the need for King Country patients to travel to Hamilton for cancer treatment, and the new Waikato Regional Renal Centre at Waikato Hospital, 70 per cent larger than the old centre, providing 53 dialysis chairs for kidney patients across the region centre, providing 53 dialysis chairs for kidney patients across the region.

Infrastructure that grows the economy

- **Backing local manufacturing**, with Green Steel at Hampton Downs approved through Fast-track. The new plant will process around 200,000 tonnes of recycled steel each year, strengthening New Zealand's domestic infrastructure supply chain.
- **Unlocking billions in future exports at Waihi**, with the Waihi North project extending mining operations and supporting significant new investment and economic activity in the region.

- **Future-proofing Mystery Creek**, upgrading its ageing water network to support Fieldays, which attracts more than 110,000 visitors and generates an estimated \$213 million in Waikato each year.
- **Supporting Ruakura's growth**, by progressing the consenting and detailed design of a new four-lane road at Ruakura, helping complete the Ruakura Inland Port and opening up land for new homes and businesses in Hamilton's east.

Next, National will:

- **Keep building the transport connections Waikato needs**, progressing Southern Links and investing in safer, more resilient roads across the region.
- **Keep infrastructure ahead of growth**, delivering more classrooms, health capacity, housing and essential services as Hamilton and Waikato's fastest-growing communities expand.
- **Keep unlocking productive infrastructure**, getting worthwhile manufacturing, energy, mining and development projects moving faster.
- **Keep investing across the whole region**, from Hamilton and the Waikato growth corridor to rural communities and the Coromandel.





Law and order: safer Waikato communities

Waikato businesses and communities were hit hard by the surge in ram raids, retail crime and gang offending.

National has focused on restoring consequences and putting Police back into communities. Ram raids in the Waikato Police District have fallen 79 per cent from their 2022 peak, while between 2023 and 2025 theft across the Waikato region fell 11 per cent, robbery, blackmail and extortion fell 6 per cent, and burglary fell 2 per cent. Police foot patrols have increased 106 per cent.

Retailers are also getting a more targeted response. Waikato's dedicated Retail Crime Teams laid 172 charges in their first six weeks, targeting prolific offenders responsible for repeated harm to local shops and businesses.

National has also banned gang patches in public, introduced dispersal notices and non-consorting orders, toughened sentencing for gang offenders, and put nearly 1000 additional gang members behind bars.

National will

- **Keep driving down ram raids and retail crime**, targeting the repeat offenders causing the most harm to local businesses.
- **Keep Police visible in Waikato communities**, building on the 106 per cent increase in foot patrols.
- **Keep the pressure on gangs**, enforcing the gang patch ban, dispersal notices and non-consorting orders, and putting more serious gang offenders behind bars.