NZMOA Chairperson's report 2026

A challenging operating environment

For the first time, I thought I would try AI to write my 2026 report. But I found it difficult to do so, as the personal connection didn't seem to come through, and it was just not me!

The year introduced a number of events that could not have been anticipated and that created another layer of complexity for the industry and our wider economy. Most of these were overseas events, such as the additional conflict in Iran and the implications this has had for fuel supply. This had a direct effect on our core customers but also flowed through to general operational and development costs.

It seems to be the norm these days that you need to expect the unexpected!

Members have had to endure another year in which demand has stalled due to economic conditions, and austerity has been the prevailing mode for all. As a result, we have probably seen less on-water activity from our customers and, therefore, falling revenues. If you are one of those members who has managed to hold their own, then you have done well.

Marina and boatyard development

Development has largely been constrained to the refurbishment of existing infrastructure. New projects have been shelved to some extent, again because of external factors. Boards have rightfully questioned the viability of some projects and are cautious about committing funds.

Having said that, we have also seen substantial work being done on business cases and resource consent planning for some exciting developments. Hobbs Bay and Waipiro Bay have seen marina developments proposed, and both were successfully referred to the Fast-track consenting process.

There have been large boatyard developments in Nelson, along with wider port developments. Tauranga Bridge Marina has completed its long-awaited wave attenuator. Whangārei has seen the opening of the first pier in the new Okara Marina development.

Westhaven berth licence reversion

Much of the sector has been holding its breath over the outcome of the berth licence reversion at Westhaven Marina. Never has there been a single event with such significance for the marina sector in the top half of the North Island.

What the outcome means for the sector is still to be seen, but there has been plenty of speculation about berth licence values and rental rates throughout Auckland and beyond.

The decision to move the berths to a rental model has called into question previously held models for marina development, under which capital investment is recovered as quickly as possible. There will be more to observe here over the coming year.

Resource management and biosecurity

The other significant issue has been the RMA reform process and a clear indication from the current Government that the legislation must be changed to facilitate investment decisions and provide greater certainty for development, particularly to encourage and enable private equity investment.

For us, the proposed reform legislation cannot come quickly enough. Your Association has invested in the review process and the proposed new legislation on your behalf. There is plenty more to do, and your Association will continue to invest in this area to ensure we achieve the best possible outcome.

While the bones are well sketched out, there are important national policy statements that must be amended to enable waterfront development to take place.

In addition, a great deal of work has been undertaken on marine biosecurity standards and regional and national policy positions. These are all works in progress. Antifoul painting systems and the declining effectiveness of traditional paint systems have heightened our interest in seeking solutions to higher boat maintenance costs.

Qualifications and workforce development

Work on NZQA-endorsed qualifications has advanced, with our education subcommittee doing the heavy lifting. This covers both our marina and boatyard operators' courses. These are well advanced and will enter formal assessment by NZQA in the new year.

Your Executive's work

On your behalf, the Executive has been working hard to progress initiatives that will improve the sector and our overall performance. A huge effort has gone into significant foundational work that will deliver long-term value to members:

- Skills-based training and development, working with the membership and MAST to develop industry-based qualifications for our people
- Submissions on the Biosecurity Act review

- Submissions on the RMA reform legislation and processes
- Antifoul paint performance
- Clean Hull programmes, marine biosecurity, CRMS and Regional Management Pathway Plans
- Health of the Marina and Boatyard Sector survey
- Training Grant Programme

I continue to see many marinas and boatyards evolving operationally, with a number advancing in areas including environmental quality management, security and access, training and professional development, database system implementation and customer service delivery.

Where demand has been flat, members' investment in social media and promotional work has been huge. Collectively, we have strengthened our connections with the boating community.

Investment and future demand

Specific Government support for our sector has been on the wane for the past two years as regional investment priorities have shifted. Perhaps the coming election will provide a new window of opportunity to promote our sector as worthy of regional investment. Whatever form this may take, through the PGF, RIF or otherwise, your Executive will be well placed to influence support.

I am hopeful that private and local government investment will continue to support growth and the opportunities the sector brings to the lives of people in our communities.

I will repeat my message from last year and raise awareness of the future of demand, where we see it now and where it is going. We have been blessed by the fact that boating is New Zealand's biggest recreational pursuit. However, there are threats to this being sustained into the future.

For our new generation of boaties, the availability of time and the affordability of boating need careful consideration. Maintaining and growing demand in our sector requires the attention of us all.

As you can see, there remains more work for your Executive to do on your behalf.

Thanks and financial position

I want to thank the team for its hard work over the past year. A special thank you goes to our hard-working administrative team, Phil Wardale and Zoe Hawkins.

I am pleased with the continued growth of our membership, among both full and associate members. We stand at record numbers again.

I can report a healthy financial position, with member equity of **$334,832**, following a small operating loss of **$16,318**. This loss is largely attributable to an agreed strategy of investing in legal submissions on the RMA reform and in our qualifications and skills development work with Government and MAST.

Thank you all for your support, especially our associate members and sponsors.

Looking ahead

I remain very positive about the future of our sector. We cannot, however, ignore the challenges emerging from various points around the compass.

We must look forward with confidence and embrace challenges, as we have in recent years.

We are an outstanding Association, with almost 100% marina membership. This is very rare for a trade organisation, and I am immensely proud of our Association.

As this is my last Chair's report, I would like to thank you all for your support over the years and wish you well for the future.

Fair winds!

Chris Galbraith CMM
Chair, NZ

