



The Journal

NZIBS investigates building warranties

A comparative analysis of New Zealand's three principal residential building warranty shows some significant differences.

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Amendment Bill
introduced**



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DARRYL AUGUST NZIBS

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Three things worth noting

This issue marks a few things worth noting, so I will take a little more space than usual.

The first is the publication of the Institute's comparative analysis of New Zealand's residential building warranty products.

This has been a significant piece of work, led by Joshua August and me, with peer review by Philip O'Sullivan and Max Harlow.

The analysis compares the Master Build 10-Year Guarantee, the Halo 10-Year Residential Guarantee, and the Stamford Insurance-Backed 10-Year Building Warranty across structure, claims processes, defect definitions, cover limits, and financial protections.

The findings are not favourable or unfavourable to any single product.

They are what they are: a clear account of how the products differ, so that homeowners, builders, and the professionals advising them can make informed choices.

For NZIBS members, the article in this issue sets out the practical implications for how you prepare condition assessments and advise clients at the pre-contract stage.

I would encourage you to read it on our website: <https://buildingsurveyors.co.nz/assets/Uploads/NZIBS-Comparative-Analysis-of-Building-Warranties-260626.pdf>.

We undertook this work because no independent comparison existed.

Homeowners were making significant decisions based on incomplete information, and the profession was frequently called in after defects appeared without a clear picture of what the relevant warranty did or did not cover.

With legislative changes to the building warranty framework signalled for 2027, it felt like the right time for us to put something on the record.

The analysis was a substantial investment of time and expertise, and I want to acknowledge the work that went into it.

It is the kind of contribution that reflects well on the Institute and on our members.

The second thing to flag is our annual conference, coming up in Auckland from Thursday 17 to Saturday 19 September.

The theme this year is Navigating the Shift, and given what is covered



in this issue alone, the choice of theme feels well-timed.

The shifts we are navigating are real: the insurance market is repricing risk in ways that affect every building owner, climate adaptation decisions are landing at the level of individual properties, and the legislative landscape for building warranties is about to change.

These are not abstract trends; they are the conversations many of you are most likely having with clients.

The conference is a chance to share what we are learning and to hear how others are responding.

Details and registration are at buildingsurveyors.co.nz – Auckland in September is well worth the trip.

If you have not registered yet, I would encourage you to do so, because it is one of the best opportunities we have to connect as a profession, hear from people doing excellent work, and come back to our practices with something useful.

I look forward to seeing many of you there.

The third thing is more personal. This will be my last column as President of NZIBS.

It has been a privilege to serve in this role, and I am proud of what the Institute has achieved during this time.

The profession is in better shape, the membership is stronger, and NZIBS's voice in the sector carries more weight.

The profession is in better shape, the membership is stronger, and NZIBS's voice in the sector carries more weight.

None of that happens without the commitment of members, the Executive Committee, and everyone else who keeps the Institute running.

I am grateful to all of them.

But, as always, there is more to do. The profession faces a period of real opportunity if we are willing to take it.

Clients and markets are looking to Building Surveyors in ways they were not a decade ago, because the questions they are facing, about what their buildings are

worth, what they can be insured for, how they will perform over time, and what climate change means for them, are questions that require our expertise.

The Institute's job is to ensure our members are equipped and visible when those conversations happen.

I will remain on the council as Past President, so I am not going far.

And I know that whoever is elected to the role will bring the right qualities for this moment in the Institute's development, and I look forward to supporting them.

To the members who have engaged with us, attended events, contributed in small and large ways, and made the time to support the profession: thank you. It has been an honour. ■

**SARAH HOHAIA****EDITOR****marketing@buildingsurveyors.co.nz**

Reading the signs

This issue covers a lot of ground, but there is a common thread if you look for it.

Storm damage, insurance, deferred maintenance, climate adaptation, hidden moisture in apartments, buildings ageing faster than expected, building warranties.

They are each their own topic, but they all point at the same thing: building owners across New Zealand are dealing with more risk than they expected, and we are the people they are turn to when they need to understand what that risk actually means.

We open with the January and February storm events. What struck me reading that article is that it is not really about storms at all.

It is about what happens inside a building that looks fine from the outside, things like moisture in the framing, slow soil movement that started before the rain came.

Not to mention the foundations that do not match what the owner believes about their property; the storm just brought it forward.

The deferred maintenance piece covers similar territory from a different angle.

The story of a \$3,000 fix that becomes a \$40,000 remediation because it kept getting pushed to next year; I'm sure many members will have seen something like that up close.

The article is good on the why, but what I kept thinking about was the conversation you have to have with a client to actually change the outcome. That is harder than the inspection.

The insurance articles are worth reading back-to-back.



The climate adaptation piece is probably the most ambitious article in this issue.

The market is changing fast, and the connection between maintenance records, condition assessments, and what a building owner can actually get covered is more direct than it used to be.

This is practical information your clients need.

The climate adaptation piece is probably the most ambitious article in this issue. The South Dunedin and Hawke's Bay examples put real numbers and real decisions on what managed retreat actually involves. And then there is the warranty

analysis, which is something a bit different for NZIBS to publish, but still useful, nonetheless.

The article in this issue pulls out what it means for members day to day. The full report is on the website.

Finally, this is Darryl's last column as President. I will let him speak for himself on that, but it is worth saying here too: the Institute is in good shape, and a lot of that is down to him.

I hope you get something out of this one. ■

What your clients' building warranty actually covers, and what it doesn't

Not all building warranties are the same. For Building Surveyors advising clients on new builds, that distinction is worth understanding before a defect appears, not after.

NZIBS published a comparative analysis of New Zealand's three principal residential building warranty products in June 2026: the Master Build 10-Year Guarantee, the Halo 10-Year Residential Guarantee, and the Stamford Insurance-Backed 10-Year Building Warranty.

The analysis, authored by Darryl August and Joshua August and peer reviewed by Philip O'Sullivan and Max Harlow, identifies differences across product structure, claims processes, defect definitions, cover limits, and financial protections that have direct relevance for how Building Surveyors engage with clients at the pre-contract and post-defect stages.

Guarantees versus insurance: a structural difference

The most fundamental distinction in the analysis is product type.

Two of the three products, Master Build and Halo, are self-funded industry guarantees, not insurance policies.

They represent a contractual commitment by the relevant trade association to meet claims from dedicated financial reserves.

Stamford operates as a formal insurance policy underwritten by Lloyd's of London, with direct regulatory oversight and the financial backing that entails.



For most homeowners, this distinction is invisible at the point of signing.

For Building Surveyors, it is a useful piece of context when clients ask whether their warranty provides meaningful protection.

An insurance-backed product provides recourse to a regulated insurer. A guarantee provides recourse to an industry association.

Both can be effective, but they are different things, and their operation differs if the association faces financial difficulty.

How claims work

The claims process varies significantly between products. Master Build and Halo operate on a builder-first response model.

When a defect arises, the homeowner must notify the builder and allow 90 days for a remedy before the guarantee provider steps in.

Stamford's insurer-first model allows homeowners to lodge a claim directly from the outset.

The practical implications of this difference are most visible in cases where a building surveyor is engaged following a defect, which is a common scenario.

If a client has a Master Build or Halo guarantee and the builder is insolvent, has ceased trading, or is disputing the defect, the homeowner may wait months before the guarantee provider intervenes.

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A well-documented building survey that clearly establishes the defect, its likely cause, and its extent gives the homeowner the strongest possible basis for escalating the claim when the builder-first period expires.

What counts as a defect

The Halo guarantee defines a defect by three criteria that must all be met: the work fails to comply with the Building Code, the work is not fit for its intended purpose, and the issue falls outside the Guide to Acceptable Tolerances.

All three are required. A problem that satisfies two of the three does not meet the definition.

This is worth understanding when preparing post-defect condition assessments for clients with Halo cover.

Framing findings explicitly against the Building Code and fitness-for-purpose standard, and referencing the Guide to Acceptable Tolerances, strengthens a claim.

Assessments that document defects in general terms without reference to the applicable standard may be less useful in the claims process than those that are structured with that standard in mind.

Cover limits and gaps

The analysis identifies several areas where cover is either limited or absent.

The Halo guarantee caps the maximum payout on any single claim at \$250,000 or 25 per cent of the contract value, whichever is lower. On a \$1.5 million build, that limit applies regardless of actual remediation costs.

For Building Surveyors advising on remediation scope and cost in the context of a warranty claim, knowing that cap exists before preparing a cost estimate allows it to be factored into the client's expectations.



Deposit and non-completion cover is not available under Stamford at all, is an optional add-on under Halo, and requires the premium option under Master Build.

Clients who paid a deposit before construction began and whose builder became insolvent before work started may have no cover for that loss under their current product.

Accommodation cover, for clients who cannot remain in their home during remediation, ranges from \$10,000 under Master Build to \$30,000 under Halo.

Where Building Surveyors are estimating remediation timeframes as part of a condition assessment, the accommodation cover limit is a relevant input to the client's financial planning.

The role of the building surveyor

One feature of the Stamford product is directly relevant to the profession.

Builders and developers seeking to offer the Stamford warranty are assessed against competency and credibility criteria through a formal technical assessment process carried out by an independent third party, specifically including a qualified Building Surveyor.

This is a professional service that members with relevant experience may be well placed to provide.

More broadly, the pre-contract stage is where Building Surveyors can add genuine value for clients navigating warranty selection.

Clients who understand the differences between products before signing are better placed to choose appropriate cover, ask the right questions of their builder, and avoid discovering the limits of their warranty when they most need it to work.

The full comparative analysis is available at <https://buildingsurveyors.co.nz/assets/Uploads/NZIBS-Comparative-Analysis-of-Building-Warranties-260626.pdf>.



The Building Amendment Bill introduced: What it means for the sector

The Government has now introduced the Building Amendment Bill to Parliament and completed its First Reading, marking the start of what could be one of the most significant overhauls of New Zealand's building system in a generation.

The Bill proposes major changes to liability settings, consumer protections, insurance requirements and consenting processes, with implications for builders, designers, councils, insurers and homeowners alike.

Much of the public discussion has focused on the proposed move from joint and several liability to a proportionate liability regime. The Bill also introduces proposals relating to home warranty schemes, professional indemnity

insurance and clearer allocation of responsibilities across the building process. These changes have the potential to reshape how risk, accountability and consumer protection are managed throughout the sector.

Alongside these reforms, the Bill proposes repealing the Building Research Levy Act and transferring all building research funding decisions to MBIE.

BRANZ does not support this proposal. We believe it would remove an important safeguard that has allowed New Zealand to maintain an independent, industry-backed building research capability for almost 60 years. The current levy model ensures research priorities are informed by both industry needs and government

priorities. Centralising all funding decisions within government risks weakening that independence and reducing the sector's influence over the research that underpins better building outcomes.

While this proposal has attracted less attention than the liability reforms, its implications for the future of New Zealand's building research system could be profound.

Our accompanying articles explore what's at stake, including growing concerns about concentrating research funding decisions within government, the role the Levy plays in supporting independent research, and why these issues matter to the future performance of New Zealand's building system. ■

Is an insurance squeeze making buildings harder to cover?

For most of New Zealand's history, building insurance was something you organised when you bought a property and renewed without much thought every year.

That era is ending.

Since Cyclone Gabrielle in 2023, insurers have been quietly repricing risk across flood-prone, earthquake-prone, and poorly maintained properties. The 2026 storm events have accelerated the process. For a growing number of New Zealand building owners, the question is no longer what their insurance costs — it is whether they can get it at all.

How the calculation changed

Insurance pricing is ultimately a prediction problem. Insurers price risk based on what they expect to pay out over time. For most of New Zealand's insurance history, that calculation was stable enough that premiums could be set, collected, and renewed without major disruption.

The combination of Canterbury earthquakes, Cyclone Gabrielle, and now back-to-back severe weather seasons has forced insurers to redo that calculation. Not just for individual properties, but for entire postcodes and exposure categories.

Flood-prone properties in low-lying coastal areas, hillside homes on areas with known geotechnical instability, and buildings with a history of moisture claims are all facing dramatically changed terms. Some are being offered cover with exclusion conditions that effectively remove protection for the most likely causes of loss. Others are facing excess structures that make the insurance economically



irrational for anything short of a catastrophic event.

For some commercial and multi-unit residential buildings, the situation is more acute. Older buildings without documentation of seismic upgrades, buildings with unresolved deferred maintenance, or those with facades and cladding systems that have a known failure history are now being treated by insurers as unacceptable risks at any commercially viable premium.

Where surveyors fit

Building surveyors are being drawn into this landscape in ways that were uncommon five years ago.

Pre-insurance condition assessments are now being requested by insurers, brokers, and prospective buyers as a condition of cover — especially for commercial properties, apartment buildings, and older residential stock. The purpose is

not remediation. It is underwriting information.

What an insurer wants to know from a condition assessment is straightforward: what is the current state of the asset, what maintenance has been deferred, and what risks exist that are not yet visible in the claims history? A well-documented building survey gives an insurer the information they need to price correctly. A building with no documentation creates uncertainty — and in the current market, uncertainty is priced at a premium.

For building owners, this produces an odd result. A thorough survey that identifies issues can, if those issues are then addressed, produce better insurance terms than a building with no assessment at all. Documentation of condition, maintenance history, and remediation work has become a commercial asset in its own right.

Post-Gabrielle repricing

The repricing that began after Cyclone Gabrielle is now working its way through the full property cycle. Buildings that were already insured before 2023 are encountering new terms at renewal. Properties that change hands are triggering fresh underwriting assessments. Commercial tenants in older buildings are finding that their landlords' insurance arrangements no longer cover their fit-out or contents at affordable rates.

The Natural Hazards Commission's shift from EQC has also changed the landscape for residential claims. The interaction between NHC cover and private insurance for weather-related damage is not always straightforward, and owners whose properties have suffered damage in multiple events are navigating claims processes that were not designed for repeat exposure.

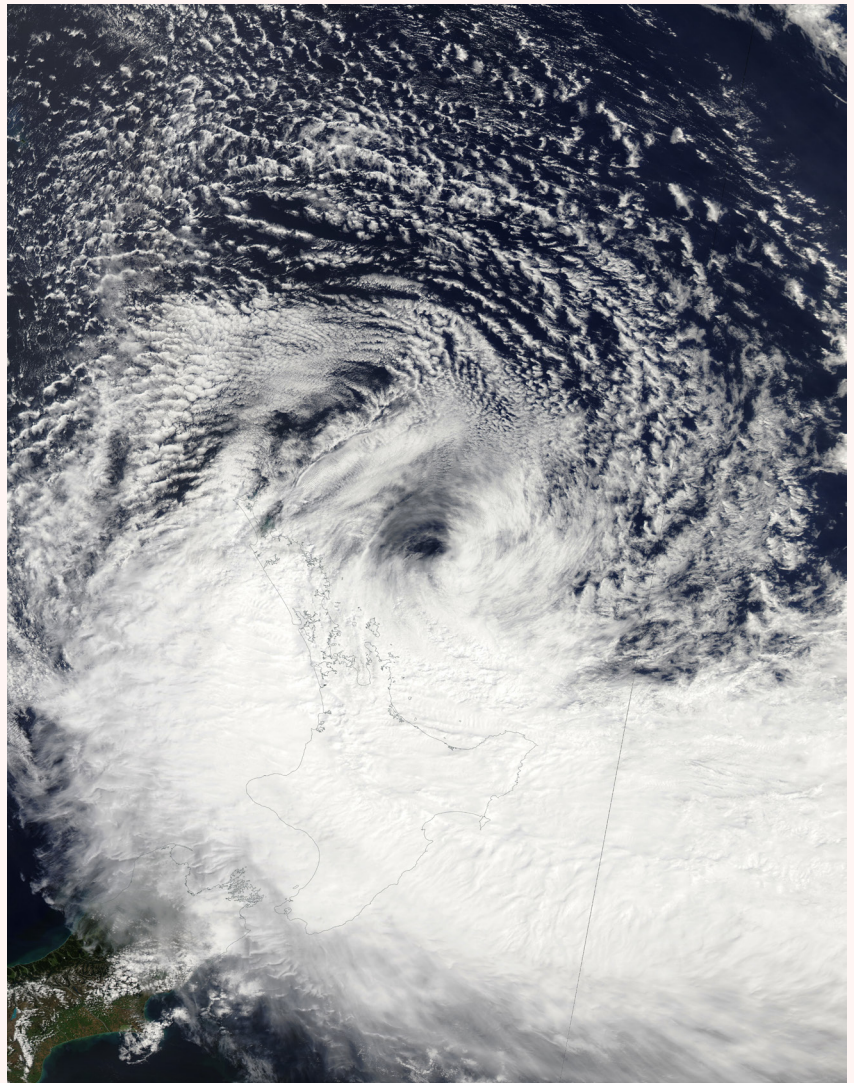
The maintenance premium

If there is one clear message from the insurance market, it is that maintenance matters — and its absence is now visibly priced.

Buildings with documented maintenance programmes, evidence of proactive condition monitoring, and clean claims histories are holding on to standard cover at standard terms. Buildings where maintenance has been deferred, where minor defects have been left to compound, or where there is no inspection record to speak of, are ending up in the high-excess, restricted-cover tier.

For building surveyors, this is a message worth delivering clearly to clients: the insurance conversation is no longer downstream of the maintenance conversation. It is the same conversation.

Owners who invest in knowing the condition of their buildings — and acting on what they find — are better placed in the insurance market. Those who do not are discovering that ignorance is no longer insured. ■



What are the floodwaters and storm events teaching us about building failure

The emergency phase ends quickly. The engineering phase does not.

When the states of emergency lifted across parts of Canterbury, Otago, and the lower North Island in early 2026, the television crews moved on. But for building surveyors, the real work was only beginning.

What followed the January and February storm events was a wave of post-event assessments unlike anything seen outside the Cyclone Gabrielle aftermath: red-stickered homes, saturated retaining systems, hillsides that had quietly shifted, and buildings whose foundations told a different story than their owners expected.

The damage was not always dramatic. That is precisely the problem.

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What surveyors are finding

The most consistent finding from post-event assessments is moisture that has moved further, and faster, than expected.

A flooded ground floor is visible. Water that has wicked into timber framing, migrated through cavity systems, or become trapped behind linings is not. In many cases, buildings that appeared structurally intact after the initial event are now presenting with concealed moisture damage that will compound over time if not identified and addressed.

Wall cavities in monolithic and direct-fix cladding systems are particularly vulnerable. Where drainage planes were already compromised before the event, even moderate flood ingress can create conditions for sustained timber decay, metal corrosion, and mould growth within building cavities — problems that will not become visible to owners until significant structural damage has already occurred.

Geotechnical movement is the other variable that continues to surprise. In hillside and coastal properties across Banks Peninsula and the Dunedin hinterland,

surveyors are finding evidence of slow soil creep and foundation displacement that predates the storm events but has been accelerated by ground saturation. For many of these properties, the storm was not the cause — it was the catalyst.

Insurance implications

For homeowners, the insurance conversation has got complicated fast. Insurers have been quietly repricing flood-exposed and slope-adjacent properties since Cyclone Gabrielle, and the 2026 storm events have accelerated that reassessment. Some properties that suffered damage this year are facing very different terms at renewal — or finding coverage conditions they did not previously need to satisfy.

This creates a new kind of brief for building surveyors. Clients are commissioning condition assessments not just to understand what needs repairing, but to understand what an insurer or loss adjuster is likely to accept as remediation — and what they will not. A well-documented assessment of post-event damage, with clear findings on moisture extent and structural integrity, gives the owner the clearest possible basis for a

claim. Inadequate documentation creates disputes.

The limits of the assessment

There is an uncomfortable reality in post-event surveying that the profession has to say clearly, more often now: a building can be safe to occupy today without being viable long-term.

Red and yellow sticker processes are designed to address immediate hazards. They are not lifecycle assessments. A property that passes habitability review in the weeks after a flood event may have concealed damage, ongoing drainage issues, or geotechnical conditions that will create serious problems within five to ten years.

The buildings most at risk are those where owners — understandably — want reassurance. A surveyor who provides that reassurance without caveating the limits of what a non-intrusive inspection can reveal is doing their client a disservice. The honest assessment is often the harder conversation.

For building owners waiting to hear that everything is fine: sometimes it is. But the only way to know with confidence is an assessment thorough enough to say so. ■

Retreat, relocate, reinforce?

How building surveyors are shaping New Zealand's adaptation decisions



Most climate adaptation conversations focus on policy, planning, and government response. The decisions that actually matter, though, happen at the level of individual buildings — and more often than not, they involve a building surveyor.

As New Zealand's climate adaptation framework develops, a new kind of work is emerging for the profession: not just assessing what a building is, but advising on what should happen to it. Whether a structure should be reinforced for resilience, relocated to a safer site, or abandoned and not replaced is a question that requires technical, economic, and professional judgement. Building surveyors are becoming central to that conversation.

A policy landscape in motion

Climate adaptation policy in New Zealand is moving faster than many building owners realise.

Government work on managed retreat, natural hazard exposure mapping, and resilience standards has been developing for several years. Local authorities are incorporating hazard overlays into district planning documents. Some coastal properties are already subject to rules that restrict redevelopment or require new construction to meet higher flood or wind resilience standards.

For buildings already sitting in hazard-exposed locations, the picture has got complicated. A building that met the standards of its era and has been adequately

maintained may now sit on land subject to new planning constraints, changed insurance conditions, or hazard designation that affects its future use and value.

This is where the building surveyor comes in — not as a climate planner, but as the professional who establishes the condition, value, and structural trajectory of the building at the centre of every adaptation decision.

Three paths, and how to choose between them

The practical framework for climate adaptation decisions comes down to three options: reinforce, relocate, or retreat.

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In practice, these are rarely clean choices, and the right answer depends on building condition, land risk, economic viability, and owner circumstances.

Reinforcement — upgrading a building's resilience in place — makes sense where the land risk is manageable, the building has sufficient remaining value and life to justify capital investment, and the compliance pathway for upgrade work is clear. For many commercial and institutional buildings, reinforcement is the default option, and it is building surveyors who identify which resilience upgrades are technically feasible and likely to pay off.

Relocation is rarely practical for residential buildings at scale, but has been considered for some community assets — marae, schools, and community facilities — where the cultural or social value of the facility justifies the investment. Condition assessment informs relocation decisions by establishing the cost of physically moving or rebuilding the asset, the remaining useful life of relocated components, and the maintenance implications of a new site.

Retreat — the decision to abandon a building and not replace it — is the most politically and emotionally difficult option, but for some properties it is the most rational one. Where land risk is high, building value is low, and the economics of remediation and ongoing insurance do not stack up, the honest advice is that the building has reached the end of its viable life. Communicating that clearly, with documented evidence, is a service to the owner even when it is not what they want to hear.

The Hawke's Bay response to Cyclone Gabrielle put this in sharp relief. Around 700 properties were categorised as Category 3 — too risky to rebuild. Of those, 167 were eligible for voluntary buyout, funded 50/50

by central government and local councils at a total cost of \$92.5 million. Buyouts were largely complete by early 2026. The Ombudsman confirmed in May 2026 that valuations were fair. But the process also illustrated the complications: two years of uncertainty for affected owners, difficult conversations about what "fair value" means for a property in a flood zone, and the question of what to do with the land once people have left.

The retreat path is not simple. It is, however, sometimes the only one that makes sense.

An emerging practice area

For building surveyors willing to develop expertise in this space, climate adaptation is a growing area of work.

The skills are largely those the profession already holds: condition assessment, lifecycle analysis, maintenance planning, and the ability to translate technical findings into practical recommendations. What climate adaptation adds is the need to place those findings in the broader context of land risk, planning rules, and insurance conditions — and to work alongside geotechnical engineers, climate risk consultants, and local government planners as part of a multidisciplinary team.

Professional development in this space is still catching up with demand. There is currently no single qualification or framework that covers all aspects of building-related climate adaptation assessment. But NZIBS members who invest in understanding how hazard mapping, resilience standards, and adaptation policy interact with their core practice will be better placed to serve clients facing these decisions.

Getting ahead of the decision

The most useful adaptation advice is given before a crisis

forces the issue. South Dunedin illustrates what happens when a community gets ahead of it — and what the alternatives look like.

Half of all buildings in South Dunedin are at risk of rainfall flooding today. That figure rises to nearly 70% by 2100. The Dunedin City Council and Otago Regional Council have spent years developing adaptation options rather than waiting for an event to force their hand. In June 2026, they released three possible futures for the area, including flood protection upgrades, partial retreat affecting around 1,100 households, and a hybrid approach. Public consultation opens in July. A final plan is expected by the end of the year.

The process is not without difficulty. Moving 1,100 households is not a simple proposition. But communities working through the options now, with professional advice and time to plan, are in a fundamentally different position from those that are forced into decisions by an event. The Hawke's Bay experience showed what the crisis-driven version looks like. South Dunedin is attempting the alternative.

A building owner whose property sits in South Dunedin — or in any of the other New Zealand communities facing similar assessments — needs to understand what the adaptation planning process means for their asset's future value, insurability, and development rights. That is not a question the council's consultation can answer for them. It is a question for their building surveyor.

Building surveyors who build climate resilience assessment into their regular practice — asking not just what condition a building is in, but how that condition interacts with its site risk and regulatory context — are giving clients something worth having: time to make a good decision rather than being forced into a bad one. ■

The cost of deferred maintenance

There is a pattern that building surveyors see repeatedly, across councils, schools, apartment blocks, and commercial buildings.



A minor defect is identified. A repair is quoted. The budget cycle closes, the repair is deferred, and the issue is quietly carried forward to the next year's maintenance register. The following year, competing priorities see it deferred again. By year three or four, what was a \$3,000 fix has become a \$40,000 remediation.

This is not a description of negligence. It is a description of how asset management decisions are routinely made across New Zealand — and it is creating a maintenance debt that is now becoming impossible to ignore.

The compounding problem

Buildings are not static. They age, absorb moisture, settle, corrode, and degrade in ways that are slow until they are sudden. Deferred maintenance does not pause at the point of deferral — it compounds.

A failed sealant joint allows moisture ingress into a wall cavity. Left unaddressed, the moisture softens the timber framing. The softened framing affects the structural performance of the facade. What began as a sealant

failure becomes a partial reclad. At each stage, the cost of intervention rises — and the window for a proportionate response narrows.

This dynamic is well understood by building surveyors and asset managers. It is less well understood by the boards, committees, and property owners who ultimately make maintenance budget decisions. The gap between professional advice and organisational decision-making is where deferred maintenance debt accumulates.

Where the problem is most acute

Three sectors stand out for the scale and visibility of deferred maintenance risk in New Zealand.

Local government property portfolios — civic buildings, community facilities, libraries, and pools — are frequently subject to constrained capital budgets and rolling deferrals. Many of these buildings are also ageing: constructed in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s with materials and systems that are now reaching or exceeding their design life.

Education sector properties face a related problem. School buildings are heavily used, subject to ongoing wear, and managed by boards whose primary expertise is governance, not asset management. Maintenance programmes that exist on paper are frequently deprioritised against operational costs, staffing, and curriculum spending.

Body corporate and apartment building management is the third area of concentrated risk. Reserve fund planning — the mechanism by which bodies corporate accumulate funds for future capital maintenance — is chronically underfunded relative to actual lifecycle costs. Many apartment buildings currently carrying deferred maintenance were built in the 1990s and 2000s at a time when long-term maintenance costs were poorly understood by developers, purchasers, and bodies corporate alike.

The reserve fund problem

Reserve fund planning failures deserve attention.

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A well-structured reserve fund study forecasts capital maintenance requirements across a 10, 20, or 30-year horizon and calculates the annual contributions required to fund them without special levies or debt.

In practice, many bodies corporate operate with reserve funds that are structurally underfunded — either because the original fund study was too conservative, because contributions have not kept pace with inflation, or because major capital maintenance has been deferred beyond the fund's planning horizon.

When the bill arrives — and for many apartment buildings constructed in the late 1990s and 2000s, it is arriving now — owners face the choice of special levies, body corporate debt, or deferred remediation. None of these options is good. All of them are more expensive than adequate reserve fund contributions would have been.

What a building surveyor can do

The building surveyor's role in deferred maintenance is preventative. A thorough condition assessment, carried out at regular intervals, provides the factual basis for maintenance prioritisation. It converts a vague sense that a building is ageing into a documented register of defects, their severity, and their likely progression if unaddressed.

That documentation serves multiple purposes. It informs maintenance budgeting. It supports reserve fund planning. It provides evidence for insurance purposes. And it creates an audit trail that demonstrates due diligence — important for trustees, directors, and body corporate committee members who carry personal liability for the decisions they make on behalf of building owners.

The most expensive defects always start as small maintenance issues. The question is whether they are identified and addressed while they are still small. ■



RICHARD CAKAR

The problems buildings can't hide

Richard Cakar has spent eleven years in New Zealand explaining what a building surveyor actually does. He still doesn't have a neat answer.

He arrived in New Zealand from the UK with a job already lined up and a five-year, RICS-accredited degree from Northumbria University behind him.

Eleven years on, he's served four years on the NZIBS Executive, built a varied practice, and is still wrestling with the same question he tried to answer on the Institute's own website: what is a Building Surveyor?

"A Building Surveyor can be lots of different things. I know Building Surveyors that would work very much on projects, far more heavily involved in contract administration roles and engineer-to-the-contract roles than others.

"Then on the flip side, I know Building Surveyors that mostly deal with building pathology and dispute work."

He was part of the team that redeveloped the NZIBS website and tried to solve the definition problem then, landing on the idea that a Building Surveyor means something different depending on who's asking.

"What a Building Surveyor is to a lawyer might be very different to what a Building Surveyor is doing for a commercial developer.

"It's a really tricky one, and I don't think there's an easy way to describe what we do."

His own shorthand, worked out over years of trying to cut through the confusion: "Very broadly speaking, we do two things: we deal with problems with buildings, and we advise proactively to avoid future problems with buildings."

Reactive and proactive: the two halves of the job, and the tension that runs through his entire career.



Richard grew up in Bristol to a Turkish father and an English mother. He studied Building Surveying in Newcastle, worked in London, and was weighing up a trip to Australia or New Zealand when a few Kiwi colleagues talked him into choosing the latter.

He landed a job before he'd even arrived, and getting involved with the Institute came soon after.

"It was really helpful in terms of adapting to New Zealand and learning the New Zealand-specific context that you need.

"You don't typically deal with as much timber frame construction back in the UK as you do here."

He joined the Executive in around 2018 and served for four years "for a challenge, to be honest".

"I'm quite passionate about what I do, and I think the industry as a whole needs Building Surveyors."

There was another motivation too, one he says still sits a little oddly with him: he'd come from the UK to do a job that plenty of capable people in New Zealand could have done.

Part of his time on the Exec went into raising the profile of the profession and encouraging junior people and students onto that path.

Ask Richard what he specialises in and the honest answer is: not much (or a lot depending on how you look at it), on purpose

His work spans expert witness and litigation, forward maintenance planning, remediation projects and

quality assurance on new-build developments.

"One of the key drivers to getting into the profession is not to be too pigeonholed into one area and to be able to do a few different things and keep things interesting."

The clearest shift he's watched over 11 years is the slow move from reactive to proactive work. When he arrived, he estimates 90-95% of engagements came in after something had already gone wrong.

Now it's closer to two-thirds reactive, one-third proactive.

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"The calls more often than not still come in when there's a problem and there's something that needs fixing. But there is a little bit more of a shift in terms of the proactive side of things."

One example he comes back to often is premises condition reports at the start of a commercial lease.

It's still common, he says, for a new tenant to take on a lease with no real record of the building's condition at the outset, maybe a couple of photos that don't tell much of a story.

That gap becomes a problem the moment the lease ends and there's a dispute over what state the tenant should hand the building back in.

"When you've got no line in the sand at the start, it's really difficult to establish that.

"One thing that I'm really promoting at the moment is having a good quality record when a new lease is taken on, done by a Building Surveyor."

Getting that advice at the right time, he says, often comes down to who's in the room: a property manager, or a lawyer pushing it while contracts are being signed.

Why does reactive still dominate, when the case for proactive is so clear? Richard puts it down to human nature.

"You risk the bank, you push things a little bit, and if you've never been burnt in the past, you probably think, yeah, it's probably a good idea... but you don't act upon it."

A problem caught early costs a fraction of what it costs once it's been left to fester into "significant remedial works".

Richard is careful not to overreach when asked whether the definition of what a Building Surveyor does might change in the years ahead.

Five years ago, he says, he'd have said no: the profession is too broad, too shaped by context, to pin down differently. But he's less certain now, largely because of AI.



"There is the potential for the role to come together as AI develops. It might be the case in the future that the Building Surveying role does become more of a recognisable, tight-knit role, because there are AI functions that can do other parts. Unknown at this stage."

For now, he's settled on the closest thing to a final word on

the profession he's spent over a decade inside: "There are always buildings that need looking after, problems, issues, and then also the opportunity to really promote and be proactive in terms of how we look after the built environment. I think it's a really important profession, not just in New Zealand, but everywhere." ■



Behind the cladding: Hidden moisture in mid- 2000s apartment buildings

New Zealand's leaky building crisis is officially over. The most acute remediation work — the multi-storey reclads, the body corporate litigation, the EQC claims — belongs to a chapter the industry has spent two decades trying to close.

But there is a cohort of apartment buildings constructed after the peak of the leaky building era that is beginning to show a different kind of problem. Not the dramatic facade failures of the worst 1990s construction. Something quieter, and in some ways harder to detect.

The post-leaky era problem

Buildings constructed between approximately 2004 and 2014

occupy odd ground in the building stock. They were built after the code changes that addressed the most serious deficiencies of the leaky building era — mandatory cavities, revised cladding requirements, changes to untreated timber use. But they were built in a period of rapid construction activity, with supply chain pressures, skills shortages, and a cladding market

that was still evolving to meet new requirements.

The result is a generation of apartment buildings where the intent of the code changes was present but the execution was inconsistent. Cavity systems were installed but not always detailed correctly at interfaces and penetrations.

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Flashings were specified but sometimes poorly fitted or left to subcontractors with limited experience in the new systems. Drainage paths were designed but not always clear in practice.

For the first decade after construction, many of these buildings performed adequately. The cavity systems provided enough drainage to prevent the catastrophic saturation seen in monolithic cladding failures. Minor moisture ingress dried out. Small defects at penetrations were slow to manifest.

Now, as these buildings pass the fifteen to twenty year mark, the consequences of sub-optimal detailing are beginning to emerge.

What investigation reveals

The characteristics of moisture damage in this cohort are different from the leaky building era, but no less concerning.

Rather than saturated framing across large wall areas, surveyors are finding localised moisture concentrations at predictable locations: window head flashings, balcony junction details, penetration flashings around pipes and services, and junctions between different cladding systems. These are the locations where the detailing was most complex and where installer errors were most likely.

Because the damage is localised, it often presents differently in condition assessments. A non-intrusive survey — thermal imaging, moisture meter readings, visual inspection — may not reveal the extent of the problem without targeted intrusive investigation at high-risk locations.

This is an important distinction for building surveyors to communicate to clients. A clean non-intrusive assessment of a post-2004 apartment building does not confirm that no concealed moisture damage exists. It confirms that no damage was detected at the level of inspection conducted. For bodies



corporate considering a reserve fund study or major maintenance programme, that distinction matters.

Intrusive investigation methodology

The case for targeted intrusive investigation in this building cohort is growing.

A well-designed intrusive investigation programme opens limited areas of cladding at statistically representative and high-risk locations, allowing direct visual inspection of framing, cavity performance, and drainage paths. The cost of this investigation — relative to the cost of discovering the same damage in the context of a major maintenance project or at the point of sale — pays for itself against the alternative.

Surveyors with experience in building envelope pathology can design investigation programmes that give bodies corporate meaningful information without requiring full facade access. The key is knowing where to look: which details are most likely to have been incorrectly executed, and which locations carry the highest moisture exposure.

The body corporate conversation

For bodies corporate in mid-2000s apartment buildings, the message is straightforward: this is the right time to look.

Buildings at the fifteen to twenty year mark are approaching the point where the first major facade maintenance cycle is due regardless of moisture issues — repainting, reseal, cavity inspection. Incorporating a targeted moisture assessment into that programme costs little relative to the total maintenance spend and has the potential to identify problems while they are still manageable.

Waiting until damage becomes visible — until a wall is soft, until internal linings show staining, until owners begin reporting condensation and odour — is waiting until the repair bill is substantially higher than it needed to be.

The leaky building era taught New Zealand that concealed moisture damage, left undetected, compounds in ways that cost real money. The generation of buildings that came after it may be about to teach us the same lesson. ■

When buildings age faster than expected

Every building has a design life. In practice, many buildings have a different one.

The gap between what a building was intended to do and what it actually does over time is one of the more persistent challenges in building surveying. And across multiple sectors of the New Zealand building stock, that gap is becoming visible in ways that are creating real problems for owners, managers, and the professionals advising them.

Premature deterioration in buildings rarely has a single cause. It is almost always a combination of factors that interact in ways that individual tradespeople, designers, or building owners did not anticipate at the time of construction.

Material performance is the starting point. Building materials are specified with expected service lives, but those lives assume installation conditions, maintenance regimes, and environmental exposures that do not always match reality. A cladding system specified for a coastal environment and correctly installed performs differently from the same system installed by an inexperienced trade in a different configuration. A coating rated for ten years of service before reapplication degrades in five if the building faces a prevailing westerly and is never cleaned.

Founding director of Sustainable Engineering Jason Quinn says retrofitting for performance only makes sense financially, at least when you're already renewing a building element. Ripping off perfectly good cladding to add insulation is a tough sell, but doing it when the cladding has failed?



"Now you're only paying for the insulation, as the cladding and scaffold are 'anyway' costs. Even then, these upgrades are hard to justify if you're using a tiny five-year ROI window. That's nonsense.

"If a home lasts nearly a century, a five-year return ignores the

massive residual benefit left on the table. To calculate that value, we need to know how long homes actually last."

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So, what is that lifespan? Ivan Macandrew Johnstone (1994 found – in his PhD Thesis *The Mortality of NZ Housing Stock Vol 1* – that “the period over which 50% of dwellings are lost from each dwelling cohort, is estimated to be about 90 years” (p. 184.

Detailing failures accelerate deterioration at the micro-level. Water finds the path of least resistance, and in buildings where that path leads into the structure — because a flashing was installed incorrectly, because a junction between materials was not adequately sealed, because a cavity was bridged — the consequences compound over years without being visible from the outside.

Maintenance gaps are the third factor. Buildings that are maintained on a defined schedule, where defects are identified and addressed proportionately, age at something close to their design rate. Buildings where maintenance is deferred, sporadic, or reactive age much faster than owners expect.

Where it shows up

The sectors where premature building deterioration is most concentrated reflect the conditions described above.

Commercial buildings constructed in the 1990s and early 2000s are a consistent source of condition assessment findings. Many were built during a period of high construction activity, with performance-based building code requirements that left significant discretion to designers and contractors. Material choices that seemed adequate at the time have, in some cases, performed poorly under New Zealand’s UV intensity,

coastal salt loading, and high rainfall in some regions.

Apartment buildings across the 2000s cohort — discussed in this issue in the context of moisture and cladding — also present with accelerated facade deterioration where maintenance cycles have been missed. Body corporate governance structures that prioritise short-term levy minimisation over long-term asset management create buildings that age faster than they should.



Industrial buildings are a less visible but significant part of the picture. Older industrial stock — portal frame structures with profiled metal cladding — deteriorates at rates that can surprise owners who have not had recent professional assessments. Roof sheets, ridge cappings, and roof penetration flashings are particularly vulnerable, and failures that appear minor from the ground can allow sustained water ingress into structures that have limited tolerance for moisture.

For building surveyors, premature deterioration creates a challenge in lifecycle forecasting.

A reserve fund study or long-term maintenance plan that uses standard design life assumptions for building components will underestimate the capital replacement costs for buildings

that have been poorly maintained or where material performance has been sub-optimal. The result is maintenance plans that look adequate on paper but leave owners short of funds when major capital replacements fall due.

The answer is condition-based forecasting rather than assumption-based forecasting. Where a building’s components are assessed directly — rather than life remaining being calculated from the year of installation — the forecast reflects what is actually happening to the building rather than what should be happening to it.

This requires more thorough condition assessment but produces much more reliable maintenance planning. For bodies corporate, trustees, and property managers who carry responsibility for multi-million dollar assets, the difference in forecast accuracy justifies the investment.

The professional role

There is a version of building surveying that tells clients what they want to hear: that their building is fine, that the remaining life estimates are adequate, that the reserve fund is sufficient.

And there is a version that tells them what they need to hear.

The value of independent professional advice is precisely that it is not contingent on the client’s preferred answer. Owners and managers whose buildings are ageing faster than expected are best served by surveyors who identify that clearly, document it rigorously, and help them understand their options — while there are still good options available. ■

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Heroes of Aotearoa's built environment recognised at landmark 10th FMANZ Awards

The people powering the places New Zealanders rely on every day have been recognised at the 2026 Ngā Tohu a FMANZ Awards, marking a decade of celebrating the FM industry's best and brightest.

Held before a packed audience at Q Theatre in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, the awards honoured the professionals, teams and organisations that help keep Aotearoa's built environment, and the people within it, safe, sustainable and thriving.

Presented by the Facilities Management Association of New Zealand (FMANZ), the Ngā Tohu

a FMANZ Awards are now in their 10th year and have become the profession's premier celebration, shining a spotlight on the people responsible for the performance and care of the spaces and places where New Zealanders work, learn, connect and gather.

From hospitals and schools to airports, civic facilities and commercial hubs, facilities

management professionals oversee billions of dollars' worth of assets and support the smooth operation of the spaces used by millions of people every day.

Often working behind the scenes, they play a critical role in keeping communities functioning, resilient and future focused. This year's winners represent the very best of that contribution. ■



The invisible system behind building safety — and what's at risk

It sits behind the scenes — in the evidence, testing and long-term data that underpins the decisions builders, designers and regulators rely on every day.

For more than 60 years, BRANZ has played that role. Not by writing the rules, but by providing the independent research and technical insight that sits beneath them, helping ensure buildings perform as intended in New Zealand conditions.

That independence is not incidental. It is enabled by the Building Research Levy, a dedicated funding mechanism that allows BRANZ to generate evidence for the system without having to compete for it.

It is largely unseen work, and often commercially unattractive. But it forms a critical part of the system that supports the Building Code and the standards the industry depends on.

That role is now under pressure, as the government moves to repeal the Building Research Levy Act — the mechanism that has funded this independent research for decades.

Without it, organisations like BRANZ would need to compete for government contracts - relying on the regulator to also fund the evidence that supports those regulations. For many in the sector, that raises concerns about independence.

"Placing research prioritisation within a government department creates inherent tension between long-term industry needs and shorter-term policy priorities, a tension that independent industry

bodies like BRANZ are specifically designed to avoid," says Building Industry Federation Chief Executive Julien Leys.

For designers and regulators, that independence also matters. BRANZ does not set regulations, but it plays a vital role in building safety by providing the robust, locally grounded evidence, testing and long-term data that give those regulations credibility.

helps deliver healthier, safer and more resilient communities for future generations," she said.

Nick Hill, CEO of the Building Officials Institute (BOINZ) concurred: "BRANZ has been the backbone of independent building research. What it looks like we'll have is a fractured and uncoordinated research approach. We're no longer going to have a backbone," he said.



We depend on independent, evidence-based research to support innovation, improve building performance, and inform better design and product decisions.



Keryn Davis, CEO of Architectural Designers New Zealand believes that for a country the size of New Zealand, the risk posed by the repeal deserves very careful consideration.

"We depend on independent, evidence-based research to support innovation, improve building performance, and inform better design and product decisions. The buildings we live, learn, work and gather in are all stronger because of that knowledge.

"Ultimately, this is not simply a discussion about research funding; it's about wellbeing. It's about safeguarding the capability that

Long-term data is a critical part of that building "backbone". Through sustained investment, BRANZ tracks how New Zealand buildings are designed, built and perform over time — creating a national evidence base linking materials, design choices and real-world implications.

Studies on weathertightness, seismic resilience and fire safety rely on decades of consistent data collection, testing and refinement to remain credible and relevant.

Richard Templer, CEO of Engineering New Zealand, highlights BRANZ's global standing in this area. "BRANZ does genuine world-leading work on fire, waterproofing, and



earthquake proofing. The facilities are unmatched in New Zealand and would not – or should not need to – be replicated.”

New Zealand’s Building Code is performance based, relying on strong, local evidence to ensure buildings perform as intended in our challenging natural environment. BRANZ provides much of this technical foundation — from testing materials and validating methods to assessing how standards work in New Zealand conditions.

This long-term evidence gives industry greater confidence in design and consenting decisions, reducing unintended consequences.

Consistent standards

In the last year, BRANZ contributed more than 670 hours of expert input across New Zealand, Australian and international committees — helping ensure standards are clear, consistent and grounded in local conditions.

Because standards development relies heavily on voluntary input,

commercial interests can shape involvement. The Building Research Levy supports BRANZ’s contribution — ensuring the sector has an independent, technically grounded voice in these decisions.

As one builder put it:

“If you go out to any building site, I know who they’re going to talk to and who they’re going to believe ... It’s BRANZ.”

That trust is echoed by Wendy Turvey, National Manager Research for global engineering and professional services firm WSP. She sees BRANZ as the industry’s nexus, bringing together research, standards and practical application.

“There’s a huge amount of institutional knowledge within BRANZ... and one of its strengths is the crossover between research, commercial understanding and industry relationships. It’s a very holistic system.”

Beyond research

Chief Executive of New Zealand Certified Builders, Malcolm

Fleming, says BRANZ’s ‘industry good’ role is as critical as its research.

“BRANZ provides considerable ‘industry good’ support beyond its research function. From a project perspective, the H1 Hub was a great example. Then there are the free helplines, technical bulletins and guidance notes they provide.

“Throughout my years co-owning a firm of architects, and now representing builders, I’ve seen first-hand the value BRANZ provides in so many ways. ‘Let’s check that with BRANZ’ is a commonly used phrase in our industry. Any future state needs to include the continuation of BRANZ’s critical industry good function,” he says.

Trusted industry advice

That deep trust and connection with industry ensures BRANZ’s research has practical and joined-up application across the sector. Some of our country’s leading suppliers are now concerned about a fragmented future.

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Not a Building Surveyor? You can still be part of the Institute

NZIBS membership isn't only for building surveyors.



"We want and need better homes in New Zealand. It sounds simple, but my concern is that that won't happen if we lose the sharp, practical and cohesive focus of BRANZ's research," says Sara Johnson, CEO of ITM.

Mitre 10's Head of Sustainability, Julie Roberts, has underlined what could be lost.

"BRANZ have been incredibly helpful. Their level of expertise is first rate ... it would have been far more challenging if we didn't have them to go to," she says.

Driving progress in innovation and quality

BRANZ's work is not just about practical, science-backed advice — it also enables innovation that requires long-term commitment and investment.

"...a good example is the resilience work we've been doing with BRANZ around wind — understanding what climate change means for New Zealand's housing stock. That could be a multi-billion-dollar problem if we don't get ahead of it," says Wendy Turvey.

Grant Fraser, Chief Legal and Sustainability Officer at Mitre10, warns of the risks of losing that capability:

"If we're losing a mechanism that clearly supports innovation, we risk falling behind. Innovation in construction doesn't happen overnight — it requires consistent investment in R&D, the kind BRANZ's model has enabled for many years."

Nick Hill adds that New Zealand cannot afford to lose its edge in areas such as sustainable building, seismic resilience and fire safety — where it has been internationally recognised.

"BRANZ's stable funding model allows for long-term thinking, ensuring the sector remains competitive, adaptive and forward-looking," he says.

A forward-looking foundation worth protecting. ■

Affiliate Membership is open to construction professionals working alongside the profession (architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, construction managers, and specialists in building sciences) who want closer ties to NZIBS without holding a building surveying qualification themselves.

Who it's for

Affiliate Membership suits professionals who belong to their own professional body, have solid experience in construction, and want to stay connected to the building surveying sector. Applicants need to be in good standing with their profession, meet their own body's continuing professional development requirements, and commit to the Institute's code of ethics.

What you get

Affiliate members can:

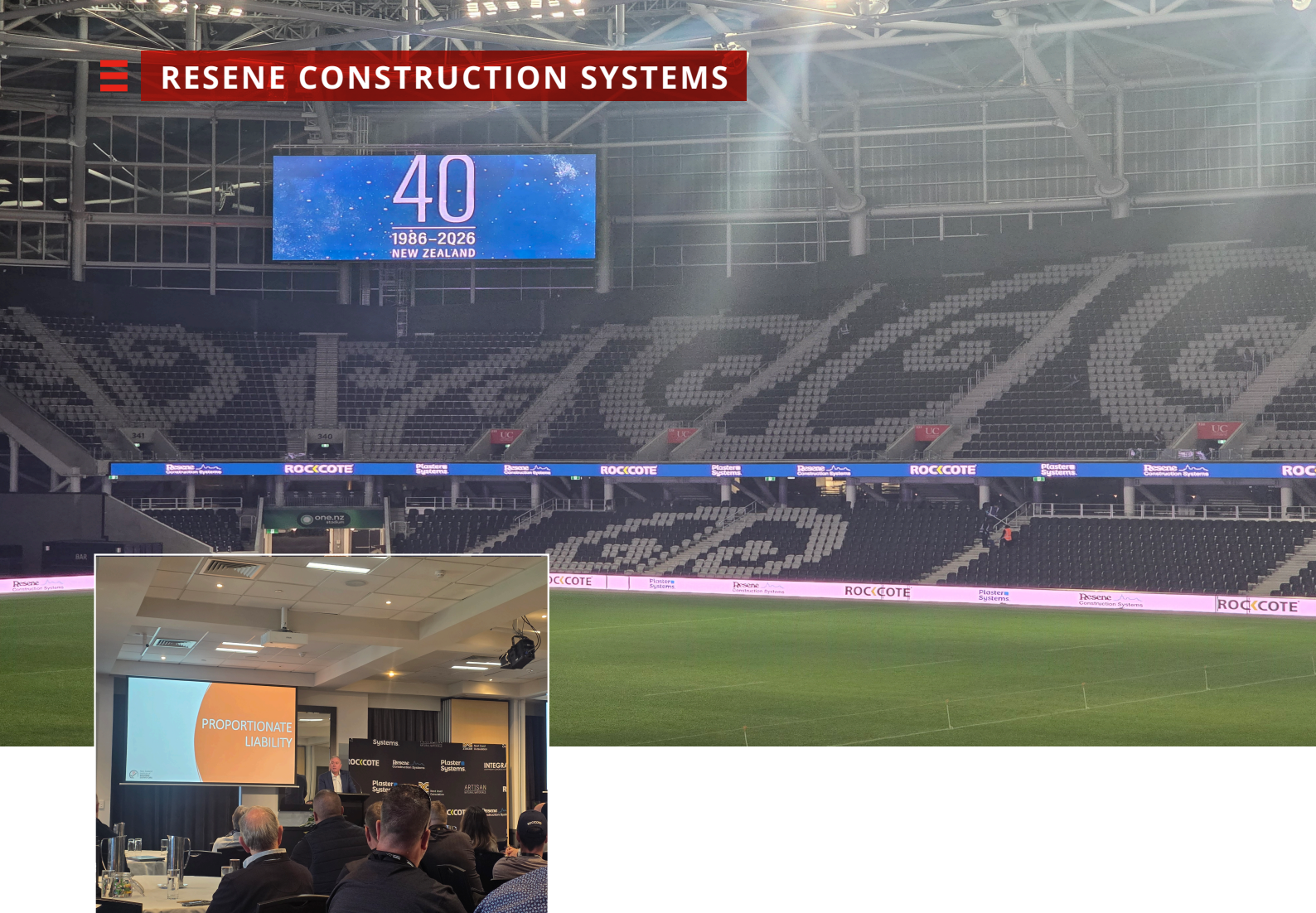
- Attend Institute events at member rates
- Receive Institute publications, including *The Journal*
- Access the members' area of the NZIBS website
- Use the designation Affil.NZIBS after their name

Affiliate Membership doesn't come with voting rights, and affiliates can't use the full NZIBS logo or accreditation, as that stays reserved for Registered Members. Think of it as a way to stay informed and connected, not a substitute for full membership.

Cost and how to apply

There's a one-off application fee of \$99 plus GST, and annual membership is \$320 plus GST. Applications go through the online portal at buildingsurveyors.co.nz/membership.

If you work alongside building surveyors and want to be part of the Institute's community, Affiliate Membership is worth a look.



40 years of craftsmanship, community and innovation in New Zealand

The recent Resene Construction Systems National Conference brought together the people behind the plastering and construction industry across New Zealand — a chance to connect, celebrate achievements and recognise the incredible standard of work happening across the country.

Held in Christchurch at One New Zealand Stadium, the conference was a fitting way to mark Rockcote's 40th anniversary milestone in New Zealand.

A proud achievement reflecting decades of innovation, collaboration and shared commitment to the industry.

NZIBS President Darryl August had the distinct honour of speaking at the conference, sharing insights with an industry Resene has long championed.

Resene has been a proud sponsor of NZIBS for many years, and that support means a lot to us.

It helps us keep doing the work we do for Building Surveyors across the country, and we're grateful for it.

Congratulations to all the award winners recognised throughout the night, and to the wider Resene Construction Systems network for putting together such a memorable event.

A special mention as well to the Australian team who travelled across to attend — Paul Eveleigh, Bob Cameron and Fraser King.



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