

Round about.

LOCAL BUSINESS IS OUR BUSINESS

Issue 223. October 2025

Kitchen Mania:

Cooking Up Your Perfect Kitchen

Investing in People

Why L & D Matters

George Walkers

RBA September Hosting



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Cover: George Walkers team - Serena Maitland, Fleur Evans, Michelle Maitland and Mel Kemp

With thanks to our partners ...



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From My Perspective

Phil Clode, Business Development Manager, phil@rosebankbusiness.co.nz



AGM

October is our reporting month. We have spent the last few weeks gathering all the information required to report on last year's outcomes, and we look forward to presenting the results in detail at our AGM this month.

While the economy has been in recession, we as an organisation have enjoyed positive outcomes from the work done here in Rosebank. While we haven't grown, we have held our own. Membership in the RBA has stayed strong. Our Partners have continued to support us and our Member businesses, and advertisers have kept on spending with us.

We have been prudent with our budgets in every area while still delivering high-



quality programmes and events.

As either a BID member, property owner, or business owner in Rosebank, you have the right to attend and vote at our AGM. The AGM will be held at our RBA offices on the 16th of October at 5.00pm. All are welcome.

Kitchen Mania

In this issue, we profile family-owned kitchen manufacturing company Kitchen Mania.

Founder and Managing Director Carl Arnold tells us about the business he has built and what makes Kitchen Mania different. Kitchen Mania proudly takes the hassle out of kitchen renovation, taking care of everything from the removal of the old kitchen to the design, build, and installation of your new kitchen (including plumbing and electrical). The business is New Zealand-owned and has three

showrooms in Auckland, the largest of which is here in Rosebank. So if you're looking at putting in a new kitchen, get down to Jomac Place or contact Carl and his team - you'll receive a free install with your RBA Rewards card.

Business Directory

October is the month when we publish our printed Business Directory for the next year. We do an audit of who has moved into the area and update our online directory, then we use this data for our physical copy. Once again this year, we have hit our budget before printing.

We can always fit more advertising into the publication; if you would like to advertise, please contact me for details before 15 October.

Regards,
Phil Clode,
Business Development Manager

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Rosebank Advocates

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Dr Grant Hewison

Health of Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland's Natural Environment in 2025

Auckland Council's 2025 The Health of Tāmaki Makaurau / Auckland's Natural Environment report offers the most comprehensive assessment since the first such report in 1999.

Drawing on two decades of long-term monitoring, it reviews air, land, and freshwater and coastal systems and examines how population growth, land-use change, and climate pressures are reshaping the region's natural environment.

Key findings

Air and climate: Regional air quality remains good by international standards. Nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) concentrations, largely from traffic, have fallen about 5% per year, and in the past five years, dropped nearly 20% in the central city. Greenhouse gas emissions declined 9.5% (gross) and 8.3% (net) from 2016 to 2023, though particulate matter (PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5}) levels have stabilised, and in some places worsened slightly. Non-tailpipe sources, such as brake and tyre wear, are becoming relatively more important.

Land and biodiversity: Indigenous forest and shrubland now cover 27% of the region, an increase of 5,550 hectares since 2018. Native bird abundance and richness are increasing in forest and wetland sites, particularly where pest control is sustained. Yet soil quality remains poor in horticultural and agricultural areas. Since the 1970s, over a third of Auckland's highly productive land has been lost to development, with much of what remains fragmented.

Freshwater: Freshwater health is mixed. While extreme rainfall

events recently masked longer-term drying trends, lake water quality continues to decline from already poor conditions. Widespread are high nutrients, faecal contamination, and in urban areas, heavy metals. Stream ecological health ranges from excellent in forested catchments to poor in intensive rural and urban streams.

Coasts and marine: Coastal water quality is generally good to excellent at estuary mouths but deteriorates inland toward upper estuaries and tidal creeks. Marine sediment contamination has stabilised despite increased urbanisation, but ecological health in estuaries is declining because of sedimentation. Subtidal reefs show widespread stress from marine heatwaves and extreme weather. Long-term beach erosion remains a challenge, with impacts varying across sites.

Broader reflections

The report highlights both progress and persistent challenges.

Long-term monitoring - some records date back to the mid-19th century - confirms that targeted pest control and ecological restoration can yield real biodiversity gains. At the same time, the impacts of climate change are unmistakable: a 1.7 °C rise in mean annual temperature over the past century, accelerating sea level rise (1.6 mm per year since 1899), and more frequent extreme weather events.

While not a policy document, the synthesis reinforces the need for integrated responses: continued investment in pest management and habitat connectivity, stronger freshwater protection, and robust adaptation planning to address flooding, coastal erosion, and marine heat stress.



Perspectives from Rosebank

For the Rosebank Business Association, whose industrial area sits on the Whau River and within a sensitive coastal environment, the report highlights that freight and heavy-transport traffic produce high particulate levels, which may mean tighter air-quality management and possible future regulation of non-tailpipe emissions. Investment in low-emission vehicle fleets, dust suppression practices, and greener logistics will future-proof operations.

The Whau River and Motu Manawa marine reserve are part of our immediate backyard. The report's warnings about declining estuarine health and the impact of storm-driven sediment loads reinforce the need for robust stormwater management across the Rosebank peninsula. Business property owners should engage with Auckland Council's water quality monitoring measures. The documented increase in extreme rainfall events, coupled with sea level rise of 1.6 mm per year since 1899 (and accelerating), raises questions of resilience for our low-lying industrial land. The RBA must continue to advocate for inclusion of commercial and industrial assets in adaptation and flood-protection planning.



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Kimmy's Korner

Kim Watts RBA Executive Engagement Manager
Phone: 021 639 509, kim@rosebankbusiness.co.nz



Ssshhh.... Can You Keep a Secret?

The Rosebank Business Association recently rolled out a heartwarming initiative called Ssshhh... Can You Keep a Secret?, a campaign designed to remind us that even our bosses need care, attention, and wellbeing

Leaders could choose from four themes: Sleep Well, Eat Well, Think Well, and Move Well. These bundles offered convenient, value-packed support in the form of customised advice, answers to health questions, education, and bite-sized tips designed to help people improve just 1% at a time. When the RBA team delivered the bundles, the reactions were priceless – leaders were shocked and touched, while employees beamed with pride as they showed appreciation for the care their bosses give daily.

The initiative highlighted an often overlooked truth: leaders need looking after, too.

Why bosses need support

Business owners and managers carry heavy responsibility – balancing finances, teams, customers, and constant decisions, often while serving as mentors and motivators. But this weight can strain wellbeing if overlooked. Too often,

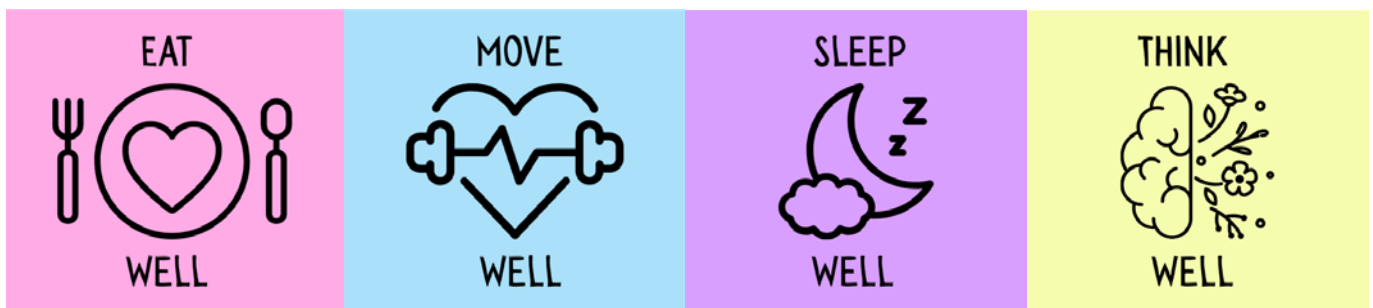
to follow suit.

Leaders who consistently show up with patience and empathy are invaluable – but sustaining this requires intentional effort. Initiatives like the RBA's Ssshhh... Can You Keep a Secret? remind us that bosses also benefit from encouragement, tools, and structured support.

The ripple effect in the workplace

When leaders feel supported, the impact spreads. A healthier, more energised boss creates a more positive workplace for everyone. Teams feel valued, secure, and motivated. Productivity rises – not through pressure or longer hours, but through trust, balance, and a culture of care.

The employees who nominated their managers understood this. Their secret submissions weren't just about winning a prize – they were about recognising the importance of looking after the people



support. Employees were invited to secretly nominate their managers by answering: "Do you have a boss who's been under pressure, but still shows up with kindness? Someone who listens, supports, and leads with care?"

The response was overwhelming. Many nominations poured in, reflecting the gratitude employees felt toward their leaders. From these submissions, 15 bosses were selected to receive an Imago Wellness bundle, a package of six online coaching sessions that offered practical, individualised strategies to boost health and resilience.

Each bundle provided six 20-minute sessions with a qualified expert coach.

leaders neglect self-care, believing they must always project strength and control. The result is stress, fatigue, and potential burnout, which doesn't stay at the top; it filters down, affecting morale, productivity, and workplace culture. An overwhelmed manager may struggle to listen, encourage, or connect with their team.

Wellbeing as a leadership strength

Wellbeing isn't just self-care – it's essential to effective leadership. Leaders who prioritise their health build resilience, focus, and energy, enabling better decisions and steadier management. When employees see their boss value balance and wellness, they're more likely

who look after us.

The priceless gift of care

The RBA's initiative was more than a giveaway; it was a reminder of the human side of business. Watching bosses' surprise and pride, paired with employees' joy, revealed the true value of the initiative. It wasn't only about the 15 wellness bundles, but about the message: leaders deserve wellbeing, too.

In business, success is often measured in profits or growth, but sometimes, the greatest return comes from kindness, gratitude, and care. Supporting our bosses isn't just good for them – it strengthens the entire workplace.

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Rosebank News & Events

News, views and any other tidbits from the Rosebank Business Community.

Rise and Protect: Cyber Liability Seminar



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Join **Abbott Insurance Brokers** and DTSL Group for an exclusive breakfast seminar designed to help you protect your business from cyber threats.

Hear from Chris Hoffman, Group CTO & CISO at DTSL Group, as he shares practical insights on navigating cyber liability in today's digital landscape.

Followed by a Q&A.

Abbott Seminar

Where: Browne St Eatery, 50 Rosebank Rd
When: Tuesday, 7th October, 2025
Time: 7.30am - 9.00am
RSVP: maureen@rosebankbusiness.co.nz



Rosebank Business Association: Annual General Meeting

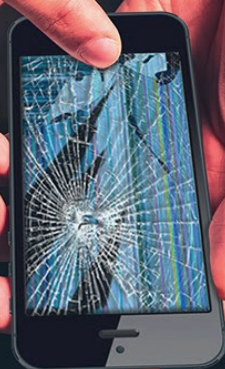
This year's Rosebank Business Association AGM is shaping up to be extra special. Along with reviewing the years performance, presenting the 2026/2027 budget, and holding elections for the Executive Board, Chair, and Treasurer, we'll also:

- Honour excellence in Rosebank with the presentation of the inaugural Mike Gibson Cup.
- Farewell our long-standing Chair, Stefan Crooks, and acknowledge his outstanding leadership and commitment to Rosebank.

Rosebank AGM

Where: RBA Office,
2/527a Rosebank Rd, Avondale
When: Thursday, 16 October 2025
Time: 5:00pm - 7:30pm
RSVP: maureen@rosebankbusiness.co.nz

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George Walker Hosting

Community, history and celebration at George Walkers Office Furniture - RBA September Hosting. Owner Michelle Maitland and daughters Serena & Mel shared their journey - from auction house beginnings to building NZ's largest office furniture showroom, now leading the way in sustainable office solutions

Huge thanks to George Walkers for your hospitality and generosity.



Serena Maitland, Fleur Evans, Michelle Maitland and Mel Kemp



Tam Irvine and Roisin Connolly



Candice Chen, Megan Miles and Raj Bhonsle



Bryan Teng and Bex Harris



Hamish Maude, Elaine Burden, Vaughan Tombs and Tracey Watene



Ash Goodwin and Mike Gibson



Karen Van Eden, Bruce Roberts and Craig Crestani



Investing in Your People

Why Learning & Development Matters

Training your staff is one of the basics of being a good employer. But beyond providing a solid foundation for your team to do their jobs, learning and development (L&D) can be a deeply valuable - and crucial - investment in your business.

"It's critical," says Nick Sheppard, Head of Learning, Development and HR at the Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA). An RBA Partner, the EMA supports and advocates for employers across New Zealand, including providing access to courses and training. Nick says that an L&D programme can have positive knock-on effects across your business, an assertion is backed up by a slew of impressive statistics.

First, there's the clear connection between L&D and employee engagement and retention. According to the LinkedIn Workforce Learning Report (2018), companies with comprehensive training programmes have a 50% higher retention rate. From the same report, a whopping 94% of employees say they would stay longer at a company if it invested in their career development.

"When people are choosing where they want to work and who they want to partner with," says Nick, "they're asking, 'How can you help me continue to grow and develop?' People want to know that the organisation cares about them and wants them to continue to develop and evolve."

But offering your team opportunities to learn and develop in their roles can also positively impact your bottom line. According to the Association of Talent Development (2015), companies with a structured L&D programme report 24% higher profit margins. Not only that, but 72% of companies say that L&D helps them to adapt to industry changes and new business challenges (Deloitte Corporate Learning and Development Trends 2020).

So what does L&D encompass, and what does it look like in

a small-to-medium-sized business? Nick recommends that employers provide 40-50 hours of learning and development per year as a rule of thumb, but he adds that this can accumulate from a number of activities, extending far beyond courses and e-learning.

"There is a range of different ways to describe L&D," he says, "including mentoring, micro-learning, stretch assignments, project-based stuff - it doesn't have to be formal training. Those are all the things that add up to 40 hours or so of professional development training."

Mel Baanders, a career L&D specialist who has worked across multiple industries in businesses big and small, agrees that an L&D programme need not be restrained to formal courses.

"Courses are great as both a learning and engagement tool," she says, "but L&D doesn't have to look like that. It depends on whether you're looking to build knowledge, build a skill, or build a new way of thinking."

For example, she explains, knowledge-building can range from e-learning to a LinkedIn course, or even a YouTube video.

"It can also look like conversations," she says. "Asking, 'What have you got coming up that's new? Are you working with somebody you haven't worked with before? Is there an element to this that you think will be challenging? What do you think you could learn and grow from what you're about to do?' It can be finding a mentor who's working in the space you're interested in working in, or who has a really good network you can tap into."

Whatever the event or activity, Mel emphasises, critical to getting the best return on investment is guiding your team member to reflect on and apply what they've learned. "Quite often, businesses get caught up in a 'deliver, deliver, deliver' kind of cycle and people don't build their reflection muscle, which is where you start to realise just how much you've grown and learned," she says. "The next step is actually applying that knowledge. How do you take what



Nick Sheppard

you've learned and apply it to your role? Planning that out, then doing it, and then reflecting on it, requires a conversation. Most people like to have a people leader who's engaged with them, to talk them through that and support and guide that coaching conversation."

Mel adds that opportunities for L&D should not be reserved for the Gen Z or millennial workforce, nor should employers assume that people with a "head down, get the job done" mentality aren't open to learning. "Absolutely there are people who are in a space where they don't have extra bandwidth for anything beyond their job - I think we've all probably been through those times in our lives," she says. "But everybody likes to feel there is growth and learning available for them, that there are new challenges coming their way through their role. It's wrong to think that because somebody is older or coming to the end of their career, they're not still passionate about learning and being challenged and having something interesting happen in their role."

In the current economic climate, it's



Mel Baanders

understandable that some businesses might see L&D as an expendable expense. But Nick says that offering ongoing training can be one way to leverage other unaffordable costs and save money in the long term. "The last, probably, 12 to 18 months have been quite difficult financial times for businesses, where they may not be able to give employees salary increases," he says. "Some have used investment in their people as another form of recognition and adding value, where they say, 'We value you and we really want to continue to invest in you - what's something we could do in the training and development space?'"

He points out that the average cost per new-hire employee is about \$60,000 in terms of lost productivity per annum. By providing opportunities for L&D, he says, not only can your attention remain on your current team instead of finding new staff, but as the earlier statistics showed, "it's improving your return on investment, your productivity, efficiencies, and staff engagement."

Mel adds that even if an employee you've upskilled goes on to leave the business, it's not a total loss. "If they love your company, you leave the door open for them to come back, and they'll come back even better than when they left. If they're a champion of your business, that will help attract others to your organisation, so you'll attract stars just as your stars leave."

It also creates space for new growth and new ideas."

She also says that focusing on building up the talent you have within your ranks can benefit your business in terms of future growth and succession planning. "Look where you want your business to go," she advises. "Obviously you'll have your tech capability and all that sort of stuff to work through, but what is the people capability that you need, and how are you going to build it? If you can build it from within because you've really got great people working for you, who love you and your brand, why wouldn't you?"

Special thanks to Mel Baanders and Nick Sheppard for their contributions to this article. The EMA offers a range of learning opportunities for members to extend to their teams, as well as mentoring and guidance in the area of learning and development; for more information, visit ema.co.nz. Story by Beth Caunter.

5 FREE WORKOUTS

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Special Moments



The Icehouse Seminar 16th Sept

Olivia Blaylock, CEO of the Icehouse delivered a presentation on her 20 years in business and strategies for leadership.



Politicians visit World Moving

World Moving & Storage recently hosted Labour MPs Carmel Sepuloni, Barbara Edmonds, and Tangi Utikere, who joined the team for a chat, answering questions, listening, and sharing their insights.



Rosebank School Camp

Thank you to all the businesses that sponsored a child to Rosebank School's camp - these memories will be cherished forever.



Sshhh.... Can you keep a secret

Fifteen business owners were nominated by their staff to receive an Imago Wellness Bundle for being exceptional, compassionate, and supportive leaders during challenging times.



Credit & Collections Workshop

Nine Rosebank employees received training on credit management, prevention, and effective client communication.



6

Women's Health Week 11-25 August

27 women in our business community were celebrated for their kindness, resilience, and leadership.

in 2025



7

From Us to You - with Pie

Who can say no to pie? The RBA team was out once again, delivering Westie pies to local Rosebank businesses as part of our yearly tradition.

www.rosebankbusiness.co.nz



8

George Walkers Hosting

Community, history and celebration at George Walkers Office Furniture - RBA September Hosting.



9

National MP Chris Penk

Minister for Small Business and Manufacturing, Building and Construction, Land Information, and Veterans, as well as Associate Minister of Defence and Immigration - visited Renold for a factory tour and discussion before joining Rosebank business leaders for a Q&A session.



10

Rosebank's Most Wanted - Studio Q

Studio Q took home three gold medals, a category win, and the Supreme Award at New Zealand's Pride in Print Awards. For a small team, it was a huge accomplishment.



Kitchen Mania

Cooking Up Your Perfect Kitchen

You've likely heard their ads on the radio, complete with the catchy tagline: "Crazy about kitchens!" But if you haven't yet set foot into one of Kitchen Mania's three stunning showrooms - the largest of which is here in Rosebank - speaking to founder and managing director Carl Arnold will quickly convince you that the Kitchen Mania team's passion is genuine.

"When you work with a customer, you see how a new kitchen can give them so much joy," Carl says. "I love working closely with people and seeing their ideas and our ideas come into being. A new kitchen transforms a home - and people's lives, really."

Since 2009, Kitchen Mania has specialised in designing and building complete kitchens - think cabinetry, benchtops, fixtures, and fittings - all made to measure in their factory in Mount Wellington. With expert sales consultants, an in-house design team of 12, an experienced in-house installation team, and access to tradespeople and removal specialists through a sister company, the Kitchen Mania experience is one that marries budget-conscious creativity and design with start-to-finish, done-for-you service.

"There aren't many competitors in our market who work with customers from design to manufacturing to installation," Carl says. "We project manage the whole thing, including the plumbing and electrical, the flooring, the walls - anything and everything. Everything is taken off the customer's hands, and everything is looked after."

In the 25 years prior to founding Kitchen Mania, Carl made a career of importing woodworking machinery into New Zealand. After selling that business - and once again getting the itch to be his own boss - he landed on kitchen manufacturing after identifying a particular gap in the market. A ceiling gap, to be precise.

As Carl explains, in 2009, the "big box" hardware stores had begun to make their mark in the kitchen supply industry.

Struggling to compete, local manufacturers were largely moving towards bespoke designs. "There was a big market in the middle of customers who couldn't afford the bespoke-type kitchen," says Carl, "but they wanted a bit more than the flat-pack option. And one of the big things they wanted, the dream, was to close off the tops of kitchens to the ceiling."

(Readers will no doubt be familiar with the hard-to-reach, and therefore largely useless, gaps between the tops of the cupboards and the ceiling that feature in so many older kitchens.)

"Because in New Zealand we have 2.4m and 2.5m ceilings on the main floor," continues Carl, "you had to build specific kitchen cabinets that went to a certain height, and everyone's requirements were slightly different. I developed a system where we could stack cabinets on top of each other, and that's what we called our Q-bix range. We could build the cabinets to reach as high as 3m without the huge cost of bespoke manufacturing."

Carl describes what Kitchen Mania does, in the simplest terms, as "making boxes." "The factory is a very good, efficient mechanism for making boxes. And that's what we do. We make all the boxes that go together to make beautiful kitchens."

The process of designing, manufacturing, and fitting together those boxes is one that starts with the customer, taking into account more than just the facts and figures of the remodel.

"When a customer comes to us, either by visiting the showroom or filling out our online form, the very first thing we do is assign a designer to that customer," says Carl. "The designer then goes out to meet them on site, so we can actually see the property and where the kitchen is going to go. It's important for us to find out whether there are kids running around, or pets, and what's happening in that house, because that can give the designer some insight into the materials they might use, or where the light comes in, or the overall set-up of the house."

With measurements in hand, the designer then returns to one

of Kitchen Mania's three showrooms and works up the design. The customer comes in to go over the plans, look at materials, and discuss options and price levels. Carl says the process often involves changes, adjustments, and even additional consultations on site. The goal is a happy customer who's ready to hand off the rest to the Kitchen Mania team.

"People have busy lives these days," says Carl. "Trying to schedule plumbers, electricians, and project manage the kitchen installation is quite a big job. Our customers can just sign the order, pay their money, and have everything happen for them."

Each kitchen comes together in Kitchen Mania's Mount Wellington factory, "one of the most modern in New Zealand."

"We manufacture all the cabinetry in the factory," explains Carl, "the cabinetry is delivered to site, and the installer puts it all together as per the plan."

From there, Kitchen Mania's sister company provides any additional trades support, including the removal of the old kitchen, and the space is finished off. Carl is quick to celebrate the tradespeople who make it all happen



on the manufacturing and installation side. "We work with really cool people," he says, "and the team are really cool people as well."

That team includes Carl's wife, Cathy, and their three adult children, who each have management roles in the business. Carl says he would describe his team's culture as "like a family," but not just because his actual family works alongside him.

"The whole business is like an extended family," he says. "Everybody works bloody hard for each other, and we all celebrate the wins."

One recent win was the introduction of a new Italian range, Cucina Lusso, featuring "sleek, minimalist lines and rich, premium finishes." The team travels to Europe once a year to visit trade shows

and keep apprised of new trends, and Carl says the designers are always looking to push the boundaries of what they can achieve for their customers.

"We're open to looking at what we need to do to stay on trend and on point - we need those boundaries to be pushed. But our factory is set up for efficiency, so when we push the boundary, we do so in a way that keeps those efficiencies in the way we manufacture and install."

Over the years, kitchen trends have come and gone ("When we started out 16 years ago, I'm not kidding you, 80% of what we made in the factory was dove grey"), but the quality customer service and craftsmanship provided by the Kitchen Mania team never wavers. Carl invites RBA members to stop by the showroom on Jomac Place and have a look at some of their work.

"Business owners are busy people," he says. "We take all the hassle out of the kitchen installation. Being able to just give it to somebody to do 100% is a big thing."

To get in touch with the Kitchen Mania team, visit their showroom at 2 Jomac Place or online at kitchenmania.co.nz.



kitchenmania

CRAZY ABOUT KITCHENS

About Us

Kitchen Mania is your local NZ owned and operated kitchen manufacturing business located in Avondale.

We are passionate about creating quality kitchens accessible for New Zealanders. We are industry leaders, offering the best of kitchen design, processing, manufacturing and installation in the Auckland region.

And the kitchen sink. The best thing? We make it all right here in New Zealand.

Contact Us

Avondale Showroom

2 Jomac Place, Avondale 1026

Mt Wellington Showroom

525 Mt Wellington Highway, Mt Wellington

Milford Showroom

1 Shakespeare Road, Milford

Phone: 09 588 4045

Email: admin@kitchenmania.co.nz

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Because of their outstanding quality, the Winemakers' Reserve range of wines make for a thoughtful gift. For corporate clients, they say more than "thank you". For family and friends, they're a way of marking milestones with something special. And of course, they're just as rewarding when opened and enjoyed at home, with the people who matter most.

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Learn more visit www.babichwines.com

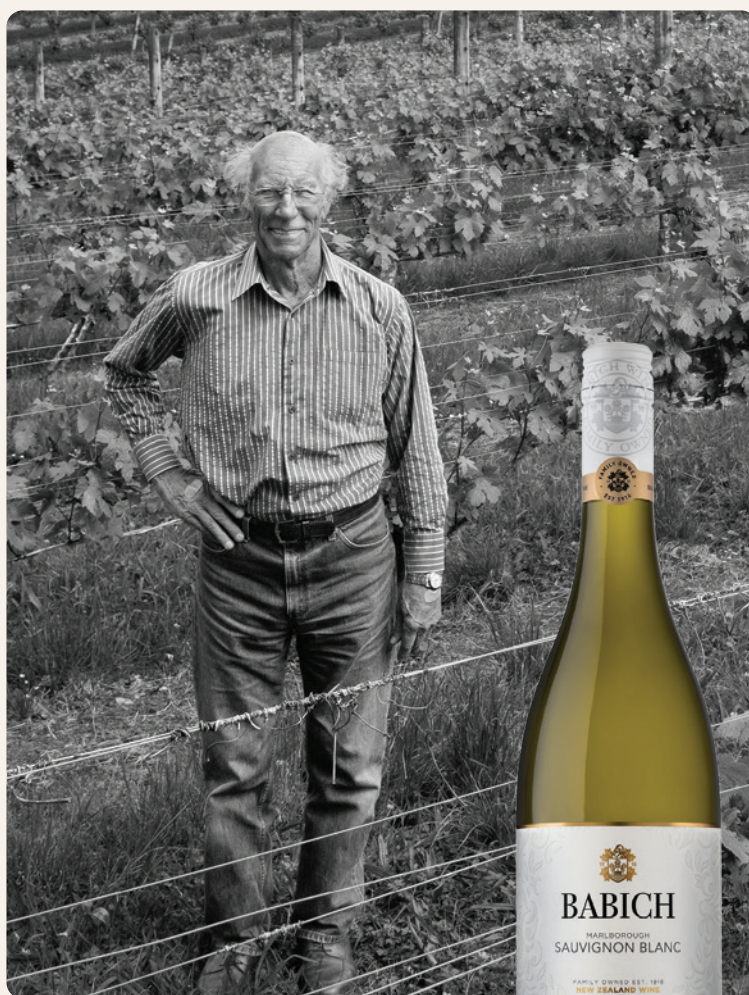


To the characters who brought character to our wine

Peter Babich once fell from the top of a 60-year-old pine tree, broke several ribs and limbs, and punctured a lung. He managed to crawl to his trusty Landcruiser and drove home, honking the horn with his head to sound the alarm. He may have spent a month in hospital, but the tree got the trim it needed.

That kind of grit still shapes our wines today.


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Member Profiles

We profile **Members** of the Rosebank Business Association

PowerHub: Smarter Energy for Your Home

PowerHub is a New Zealand electricity retailer committed to delivering more than just power; they offer smarter, more resilient energy solutions for your home. Alongside your everyday electricity, PowerHub provides advanced battery systems and smart software that help you stay powered, even during outages.

Their EcoWave home battery system is designed specifically for households in New Zealand and Australia. It includes a 15kWh battery, a hybrid inverter, and intelligent software, all working together to keep your home running smoothly. The system connects with your existing solar panels or their solar PV setup and integrates with grid and generator power for extra security.

When you switch to PowerHub, the battery is included as part of your monthly service. It stores electricity and data, transforming your home into a future-ready SmartHub.

What is Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS)?

With PowerHub's IaaS model, you don't need to buy expensive equipment up front. Instead, they provide the EcoWave battery system as part of your service, backed by PowerHub's local research and global sourcing.

EcoWave utilizes LiFePO4 (lithium iron phosphate) batteries - a safer, longer-lasting, and more environmentally friendly option compared to standard lithium-ion batteries. These batteries are stable under heat, free from rare metals like nickel and cobalt, and offer over 8,000 charge cycles - far more than typical batteries.

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For more information, contact Sophia Bristow on 021 528 918.



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Paul Jarvie,
EMA Employment Relations
& Safety Manager

Drug Testing on the Rise in Workplaces to Counter Amphetamine Risks

Workplace drug testing is becoming more prevalent in New Zealand as employers face changing drug-use patterns and health and safety obligations.

What was once largely about cannabis has shifted toward methamphetamine and opioids, which carry far greater impairment risks.

At the Employers and Manufacturers Association (EMA), our AdviceLine is receiving more calls from employers seeking guidance on random and confirmatory testing; managing prescription medications; and developing fair, transparent policies. These challenges reflect the complexity of balancing safety with employee rights.

Recent data from The Drug Detection Agency (TDDA) shows why concern is rising. In Q4 2024, just 3.99% of tests returned positive, but the makeup of those positives is changing. Cannabis remained most common at 59.1%, but methamphetamine rose to 24.4%, and opioids climbed to 12.1%. In March, TDDA added tramadol and fentanyl to its standard testing panel, reflecting opioid risks. These figures highlight an evolving threat, where substances that cause severe impairment and long-term dependency are increasingly entering workplaces.

Employers are legally obliged under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 to eliminate or minimise risks. Drug and alcohol impairment is an obvious hazard, particularly in industries like construction, transport, and manufacturing, where mistakes can have catastrophic consequences. Methamphetamine can impair vision, cause dizziness and poor judgment, and lead to fatigue. Opioids, whether prescribed or illicit, can cause drowsiness and dependency, raising accident risks. This explains why many businesses are re-examining their policies.

Yet drug testing cannot be introduced casually. It intrudes on privacy and can only be justified in specific circumstances: pre-employment checks, random testing in safety-sensitive roles, post-incident investigations, or when reasonable cause exists. To withstand legal scrutiny, testing must also be supported by employment agreements or policies.

A clear policy should state why the testing is being done, which roles are affected, what substances are being tested, and how standards apply. It must be developed in good faith with staff consultation. Workers should be able to ask questions, understand the rationale, and provide feedback. Linking the policy to employment agreements ensures compliance is enforceable.

Medicinal cannabis presents one of the toughest challenges. Though legally prescribed, it may contain THC, which remains detectable after impairment passes. Unlike alcohol, there is no legal threshold for cannabis impairment, leaving employers to balance safety with legitimate medical use.

Employees may assume that their prescriptions protect them, but employers still have a duty of care. Recent cases have confirmed that in safety-critical roles, disciplinary action or dismissal may be justified if THC is present, regardless of prescription status.

However, the NZ Drug Foundation and others warn that zero-tolerance approaches risk unfairly penalising people who are following medical advice. Employers are urged to handle such cases carefully, consult openly, and seek specialist advice.

Real-world queries highlight these difficulties. A call to the EMA's AdviceLine from a poultry farm, which updated its policy to include saliva testing for safety-sensitive roles, sought clarity on the difference between testing positive and being impaired.

A food-packaging company asked about best practice for confirmatory tests after a non-negative (positive) oral fluid result. These calls reflect the dilemmas facing employers, who must act fairly but decisively.

Drug testing is not universally appropriate. In office roles with low health and safety risk, random testing could breach privacy and fail the legal test of justification.

Employers should begin with a risk assessment, reviewing accident records and absenteeism data to determine necessity. If testing is warranted, using an accredited provider is essential. IANZ-accredited agencies follow strict protocols, including lab confirmation of non-negative results, to ensure defensible and unbiased processes. Unverified kits or DIY approaches risk costly disputes.

Employers must also train managers to recognise impairment, document observations, and handle conversations discreetly. Policies should explain how prescription medications will be considered, how test results are securely stored, and when the results are destroyed.

Testing should not be seen only as disciplinary. The best approaches integrate testing with wellbeing initiatives such as employee assistance programmes, rehabilitation support, and confidential reporting. By applying policies consistently and fairly, employers can build trust while protecting both their workforce and reputation.

Although TDDA reported a slight decline in overall positive rates compared with the previous quarter, the rise of methamphetamine and opioids is deeply concerning. Combined with uncertainty around medicinal cannabis, employers cannot rely on outdated or generic policies. Regular reviews, updates to reflect emerging risks, and clear communication with staff are now essential.

For assistance in adding drug testing to your employment agreements or workplace policies and effectively implementing testing, call the EMA AdviceLine on 0800 300 362.



Ravina Ram
Matrix Security

Essential Security Tips for Your Business

Keeping your commercial property secure protects your people, assets, and reputation. Here are key steps every business should consider:

Invest in smart security systems

Install AI cameras, alarms, and access control for 24/7 monitoring. Remote access via smartphone makes it easy to keep an eye on your property anywhere, anytime.

Access control

Limit entry to authorised staff with keycards, codes, or biometric systems. Update codes regularly and remove access for ex-employees immediately.



Light it up

Good lighting deters intruders. Focus on entrances, carpark, and hidden areas. Motion-activated lights are especially effective.

Reinforce doors and windows

Use strong locks, deadbolts, and reinforced frames. Install security film or bars on vulnerable windows to add extra protection.



Maintain your systems

Ensure your security system is regularly serviced and tested; test alarms, cameras, and sensors to ensure they're working. Update software and replace faulty equipment promptly.

Train your team

Employees are your first line of defence. Teach them to follow security protocols, report suspicious activity, and to never prop open doors.

Have an emergency and response plan

Create and practice evacuation and response procedures. Keep contact details handy and coordinate with local authorities.

Use security signage

Clear signage not only helps meet compliance and keeps staff and visitors informed, but it also deters would-be intruders by showing that your property is actively protected.

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Kate de Lautour
The Icehouse

Flush with Ambition: FLSSH is Now NZ's Largest in Sector

Family-owned sanitation provider FLSSH has acquired Kiwi Flush, a deal the Henderson-based company says marries a long-planned growth strategy with a right-time opportunity.

The acquisition was pressure-tested in the Icehouse Owner Manager Programme, where FLSSH directors Anthony and Stefan Covic refined their financial model and integration plan. The transaction signals optimism and a bet that leadership capability will drive momentum as the country transitions into a new economic cycle.

How did you incorporate the plan for the acquisition into your time in the Icehouse, and what was happening in the business at the time you joined?

Stefan:

The Icehouse was instrumental. We entered the Owner Manager Programme with a possible acquisition already on our radar as a serious possibility and as a core part of our strategic growth plan. The Icehouse provided the perfect environment to pressure-test the entire plan. We used the frameworks and expertise to refine our financial modelling, develop a robust integration strategy, and plan for the operational and cultural challenges of merging two established companies. This wasn't just a sounding board; it was crucial for our future strategy, giving us the confidence to execute a deal of this scale.

The skills we learned and the connections we made through the OMP were foundational to this acquisition. Before we got into the Icehouse, we were at a crossroads as a business; with things getting bigger, we were outstripping the processes, planning, and governance that we had in place. We were weighing up individual mentorship or bringing in external directors.

How has this deal now positioned FLSSH in the market?

This strategic expansion enhances our coverage across the North

Island, integrating Kiwi Flush's operations with our existing depots in Whangārei, Tauranga, Hamilton, Taupō, Wellington, and two locations in Auckland. The acquisition grows our total fleet to over 7,500 portable sanitation units and over 40 trucks, creating an inventory of portable toilets, portacoms, trailered luxury units, showers, and hand-wash basins that will allow us to better serve our key partners in the construction and events industries.

Have you been affected by the downturn in construction and by events being postponed?

Absolutely. However, our business is diversified across both sectors, which provides a natural hedge, and we will continue to look to diversify into other sanitation and cleaning sectors.

We are incredibly optimistic. Iconic festivals like Splore, international sporting events like SailGP, and international acts like Metallica and Ed Sheeran returning to NZ are massive confidence boosters. On the construction side, our data is showing "green shoots" of recovery. The number of issued consents is a key barometer, and they indicate a steady, albeit careful, climb back.

How are teams, assets, and operations being brought together in a way that keeps employees motivated and engaged?

Anthony:

Right now, our number one priority is people. That means clear and constant communication with both the FLSSH and Kiwi Flush teams, as well as with our customers, to assure them of a seamless transition. Operationally, we are meticulously planning the integration of our vehicle fleets, routing software, and depot logistics.

Blending cultures is the most critical part.

You're opening a new Henderson depot. How does this link to your long-term vision for innovation?

Our new depot is the physical embodiment of our long-term vision for FLSSH: it's state of the art and engineered for a North Island-wide scale. Launching in tandem with the acquisition, it marks a pivotal moment in our growth.

Drawing on insights from facilities we have visited around the world, we are confident this depot sets a new benchmark, not just for New Zealand, but internationally.

Engineered to service our expanded Auckland fleet, the depot features advanced systems for cleaning, maintenance, and sustainable waste processing. Key initiatives include a 180,000-litre rainwater harvesting system and extensive solar power integration, significantly reducing our environmental footprint while increasing our capacity.

See the Icehouse website for 2026 Owner Manager Programme dates or email grow@theicehouse.co.nz. www.theicehouse.co.nz





Bethany Sweeney
Smith & Partners

Employment WOF: Time to Assess Employment- Related Matters?

Most businesses are often so busy focusing on the day-to-day operations – keeping things moving, marketing, meeting targets, staying profitable, and managing client expectations – that employment-related matters become less of a priority.

But just as vehicles require checks to ensure they stay roadworthy, employment-related matters should also be checked periodically

to ensure they are compliant with all relevant laws, regulations, and standards, while remaining effective and aligned with your business goals.

People, particularly employees, are often described as a business's biggest, most valuable asset. Therefore, just as business owners prioritise shareholder agreements, partnership agreements, constitutions, and terms and conditions, employment-related documentation and processes are just as critical. Neglecting them can expose your business to legal risks, reputational damage, and unnecessary costs.

The employment agreement: a key document

Under the Employment Relations Act 2000, every employee must have a written employment agreement.

There are many types of agreements, such as permanent, fixed-term, casual, and secondment agreements. Each type carries different legal implications, and using the wrong one, or one that is poorly worded, can expose your business to risks and lead to disputes or claims.

The Act stipulates the mandatory terms which must be included in employment agreements. Apart from this, there are other relevant terms which are generally included in employment agreements, including certain terms that are tailored to the business and the role.

Policies and procedures: an internal roadmap

Clear, robust, and fit-for-purpose employment policies and procedures help to set clear guidance on the expected standard of behaviour/conduct, as well as rules on various aspects of the employment relationship, such as use of motor vehicles, etc. Common policies include:

- code of conduct
- health and safety
- bullying and harassment
- IT and social media.

Employer obligations: process matters

Any action by the employer that may impact an employee and their terms of employment must be done in accordance with the law. For example, if an employer wants to vary an employee's hours of work due to a financial downturn, this cannot be done unilaterally. Employers must engage in a process in good faith with the employee before making such changes. This entails a number of specific steps which must be followed.

Failure to follow proper processes can result in personal grievances.

Under the Act, the remedies available for personal grievances are:

- lost wages
- compensation (tax free)
- statutory entitlements
- penalties for breaches of statutory obligations.

Independent contractors: getting the classification right

If someone is providing services to your business but is not an employee, they may be an independent contractor. However, this distinction is not assessed by what the agreement says, but by the real nature of the relationship in practice.

Misclassifying an employee as a contractor can result in significant liabilities, including back pay for annual leave, sick leave, and KiwiSaver contributions, and even penalties.

Time for a tune-up?

Your business may benefit from a warrant of fitness check by one of our employment law experts. We'll check on the above or provide tailored advice on any aspect of employment law.

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Talk to the employment law experts at Smith and Partners about a cost estimate for an employment WOF or advice on any other employment-related matter.



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Bernard McCrea
Abbott Insurance Brokers

One-Year Interest Rates and the OCR: Both Blunt, Until They're Not

Understanding how the OCR, deposit rates, and bank margins shape real borrowing costs.

Interest rates are easing, and the big question for businesses and households alike is how far and how fast. The Official Cash Rate (OCR) remains the anchor, but how this translates into actual borrowing costs depends on bank margins, deposit pricing, and competition across the lending market.

The one-year fixed mortgage rate has always been a crucial

benchmark. It's the term many customers prefer for fixing their rates, and historically, it has moved almost in lockstep with the OCR, with a remarkable 96.5% correlation. On average, the (special) one-year fixed rate has sat about 2.01% above the OCR. Right now, that margin is narrower at **1.49%**. While it has crept up slightly over the past year, the data suggests banks are still passing on the majority of OCR movements to borrowers.

Markets are already pricing in further easing. One-year wholesale swap rates fell to 2.60% following weaker second-quarter GDP figures - around 40 basis points lower than the levels seen prior to the August 2025 rate cuts. This aligns with the Reserve Bank's signal that two additional 0.25% OCR cuts are likely at the October and November meetings. If delivered, the OCR is expected to sit at 2.50% by year-end, with the full stimulatory effect yet to flow through the economy.

Deposit rates are also adjusting. One-year term deposits are now sitting in the 3.65–3.75% range, down from earlier highs. Combined with lower wholesale rates, this easing in funding costs gives banks greater scope to reduce lending rates, which is welcome news for borrowers, though less so for savers.

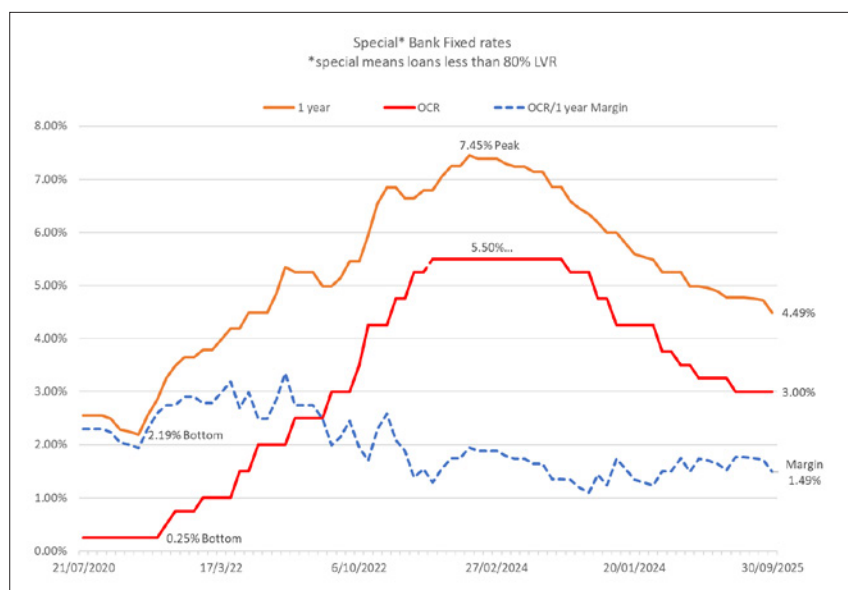
It's important to remember that while the OCR attracts the most attention, it's not the only number that matters. Margins, deposit costs, and competitive pressures between lenders all shape the real borrowing costs experienced by households and businesses.

What's clear is that we are well past the peak rates of November 2023. The one-year fixed mortgage rate, due to its close alignment with the OCR, remains a key benchmark to watch as the easing cycle continues. Monitoring both wholesale and retail rate movements will help businesses and households make more informed decisions about borrowing and saving.

If you'd like to explore what this means for you or your business, please contact:

Bernard McCrea - Financial Adviser
Abbott Insurance Brokers
027 486 2501

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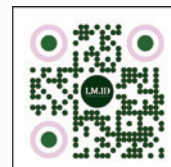
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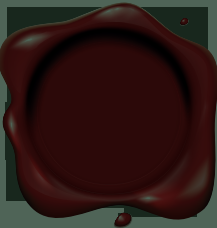
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