



**SCARLATTI**  
Evaluation | Analytics | Insights

Prepared for: Fire and Emergency New Zealand

# Fire and Emergency's Culture Journey

2025 Qualitative research and insights

June 2025



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## Executive summary

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Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Fire and Emergency) commissioned a qualitative evaluation to better understand the lived experiences of personnel and assess progress towards culture change. This work complements quantitative indicators used to monitor the Eke Taumata programme, aiming to provide a fuller picture of how workplace culture is being experienced across the organisation.

Sixty personnel took part in interviews and focus groups, representing a cross-section of roles, functions, and locations. While the sample size was modest, theme saturation was reached, indicating key issues experienced across Fire and Emergency were identified.

*All findings reflect the perceptions and lived experiences of participants. They should not be interpreted as objective facts, but rather as insights into how Fire and Emergency's culture is being experienced by personnel.*

Participants supported the intent behind Fire and Emergency's culture change efforts and acknowledged signs of progress. However, many felt the pace and depth of change remained insufficient.

### Areas of strength

- **Strong sense of purpose:** Many personnel feel proud of their work and motivated by Fire and Emergency's mission.
- **Pockets of excellence:** Values-led leaders are creating inclusive, high-performing teams in different areas of the organisation.
- **New leadership development is spearheading change:** Recent training efforts are seen as relevant and impactful.
- **Diversity is slowly improving:** Workforce makeup is slowly shifting, and support structures like people-led networks are in place.

### Developing but uneven

- **Leadership remains inconsistent:** Capability varies widely, especially at senior levels, with some legacy behaviours persisting.
- **Culture initiatives lack buy-in and visibility at the frontline:** Intent of change is clear, but clarity the 'why' is not clear to all; delivery is also uneven and often disconnected from daily work.
- **Inclusion lacks depth:** Experiences differ across the organisation; progress is uneven, tokenism and exclusion persist.
- **Engagement efforts lack credibility:** People are sometimes asked for input but may not see action or follow-through.

## Critical risks

- **Accountability is weak:** People are not being held accountable for decisions and outcomes, and leaders are not consistently modelling accountability.
- **Toxic behaviour continues:** Bullying, racism, and misuse of power are still present; performance and behaviour management processes are ineffective and mistrusted.
- **Bureaucracy and silos slow progress:** Complexity and fragmentation drain energy and obstruct change; hierarchical decision-making is leading to paralysis.
- **High workloads are harming wellbeing:** Persistent under-resourcing and pressure to deliver are wearing people down; wellbeing messages and initiatives to address high workloads are perceived as out of touch.
- **Union dynamics are blocking progress:** Union activity is protecting instances of poor behaviour and performance, thus stalling accountability and culture change.

There are signs that culture change is taking hold. Leadership development is gaining momentum, diversity is improving, and values-led leaders are fostering positive micro-cultures. These shifts show what's possible. Progress was noted as slow and uneven – however, meaningful change is expected to take time in a large and complex organisation such as Fire and Emergency. Sustained attention, stronger system-level support, and consistent reinforcement are needed to maintain momentum and embed change across the organisation.

The Eke Taumata Internal Advisory Rōpū members confirmed the relevance of the findings and identified key priorities for enabling culture change – including strengthening accountability systems, improving behaviour management processes, fostering constructive union relationships, and improving communication and leadership capability.

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# Introduction



## Project objective

Fire and Emergency have embarked on a culture journey, monitored through an outcomes measurement framework. As part of this evaluation, Fire and Emergency commissioned Scarlatti **to lead a qualitative evaluation to add insights and a deeper understanding to the outcomes** generated through people metrics and survey programmes.

This report aims to support Fire and Emergency in their culture change journey. It shares findings from the qualitative evaluation undertaken, providing insights into the lived experiences of Fire and Emergency personnel and their perspectives on the barriers to culture change.

## Context

Fire and Emergency have been subject to multiple independent reviews of its workplace culture. The 2019 Shaw Report identified significant issues with bullying, harassment, and complaint handling. Later, the 2022 Independent Review of FENZ's Workplace Culture and Complaint Handling Practices by the Public Service Commission/Te Kawa Mataaho – led by Belinda Clark – found that while Fire and Emergency had made some progress, substantial challenges remained, particularly regarding complaint management and the need for stronger leadership at all levels. Fire and Emergency has since implemented changes to address recommendations included in these reports.

These independent reviews have set the tone for reform and highlighted key issues within Fire and Emergency, bringing longstanding problems to the forefront. However, they have also brought intense external scrutiny which could be contributing to a defensive approach and reactive decision-making.

The organisation has experienced significant organisational changes, especially in the past decade. For most of its history, New Zealand's fire services were locally funded and managed, with minimal central coordination and significant variations between regions. In 1975, local Fire Boards were amalgamated into a national New Zealand Fire Service, but Rural Fire Authorities remained separate. The Fire and Emergency New Zealand Act 2017 was enacted in response to persistent fragmentation, duplication, and inconsistent service delivery; it merged the following different entities under the umbrella of Fire and Emergency New Zealand:

- The New Zealand Fire Service
- The National Rural Fire Authority
- All local Rural Fire Authorities.

Key issues remain from these complex mergers. Past organisational changes have not always been managed effectively, resulting in hangups or mistrust from Fire and Emergency personnel. In addition, Fire and Emergency personnel and leadership may be struggling with change fatigue.

Furthermore, following the mergers, around 80% of Fire and Emergency's personnel are volunteers. Managing distinct workforces with different roles, expectations, and levels of engagement presents ongoing challenges for the organisation.

In response to the findings from the independent reviews, Fire and Emergency implemented the Eke Taumata programme to create a material shift in their organisational culture. This work is focused on four pillars (pou):

1. Building trust and increasing opportunities for engagement and influence
2. Strengthening our people leadership capability
3. Providing a safe, positive and inclusive environment
4. Raising the bar on acceptable standards of conduct and behaviour.

A comprehensive outcomes measurement framework has been developed to track progress. Quantitative indicators (e.g., turnover, talent attraction, tenure, and results from a regular Pulse Survey) have been showing positive results. However, Fire and Emergency have questioned whether these indicators were providing an accurate reflection of the lived experiences of their personnel. To address this, they contracted Scarlatti to lead a qualitative evaluation project, providing deeper insights to complement quantitative survey data and ensure a holistic assessment of cultural progress.

Insights from the qualitative evaluation will be utilised by the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) to inform activity across the organisation to drive improvement in culture. Through the wider outcomes measurement framework, these results will also be used to inform their Board, Minister, and other stakeholders on the progress achieved.

## Methodology

### Overview

In consultation with Fire and Emergency, Scarlatti developed a methodology that combined one-on-one online interviews and small online focus groups. The questions were drafted collaboratively and reviewed extensively, including by the Eke Taumata Internal Advisory Rōpū (the Advisory Rōpū).

Efforts were made to recruit participants that reflected the range of functions and demographics across Fire and Emergency, including both volunteer and career personnel. Participation was entirely voluntary and confidential. Scarlatti followed internal ethics processes to safeguard the privacy and wellbeing of all participants.

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data, with themes emerging directly from participants' experiences. Preliminary findings were presented to the Advisory Rōpū for sense-checking and clarification.

Figure 1 below illustrates the timeline and activities that lead to this report. A full description of the methodology, including interview guide development, ethics, recruitment and interview process, is available in Appendix 1 on page 46.

**Figure 1: Project timeline**



## Participants

A total of 60 personnel participated in the qualitative research – a small number when compared to the overall Fire and Emergency workforce. However, this aligns with qualitative research norms, where smaller samples enable in-depth exploration. Theme saturation was reached, indicating the sample was sufficient to capture key perspectives. The limited representation of career firefighters and volunteers, however, remains a noted limitation.

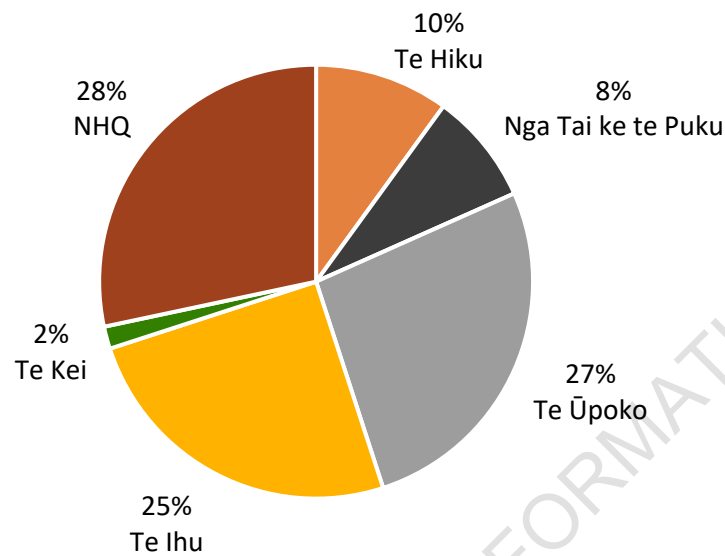
Time constraints and difficulties reaching volunteers meant fewer than planned were involved in the research. Similar challenges were encountered with career firefighters. Additionally, communication from the New Zealand Professional Firefighters Union (NZPFU) advised members not to engage with Scarlatti. As a result, only one career firefighter agreed to participate, and a one-on-one interview was conducted in place of the originally planned focus group. Table 1 below provides an overview of the roles of interview and focus group participants.

**Table 1: Roles of participants**

Interviews: Role group	Participated
<b>Interviews</b>	<b>11</b>
District Managers	3
Region Managers	2
Finance and Business Operations	1
Office of the Chief Executive	1
Organisational Strategy and Capability Development	1
People	1
Service Delivery and Design	1
Career Firefighter	1
<b>Focus groups</b>	<b>49</b>
Volunteer Support Officer, Trainers, National Training Centre, Community Risk Manager, Communication Centres	11
National Head Quarters (NHQs) Frontline Enabler / Corporate Support	10
People-led networks	7
General Managers	7
Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Chief Fire Officer	5
Volunteers	5
Regional Frontline Enabler / Corporate Support	4

We received a high uptake from the Te Ūpoko (Lower North Island) and Te Ihu (Upper South Island) regions. Participation from Nga Tai ke te Puku (Central North Island) was lower than expected considering spread of personnel across Aotearoa (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Participants by region



Age and tenure data was provided to us by Fire and Emergency. We were able to speak to participants at different stages within their working life (see Figure 3) and with tenure at Fire and Emergency (see Figure 4).

Figure 3: Participants by age bracket

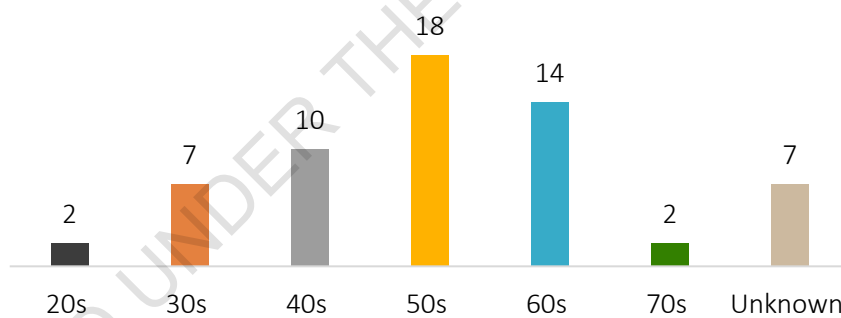
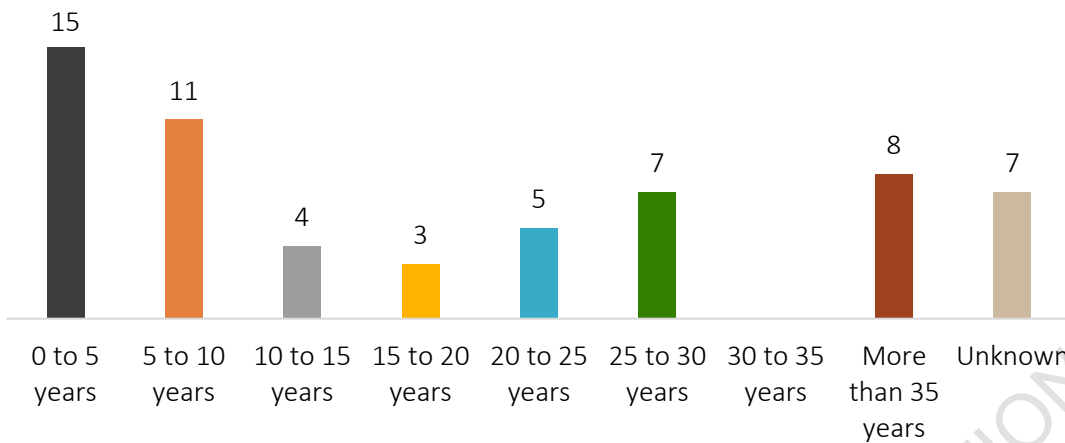
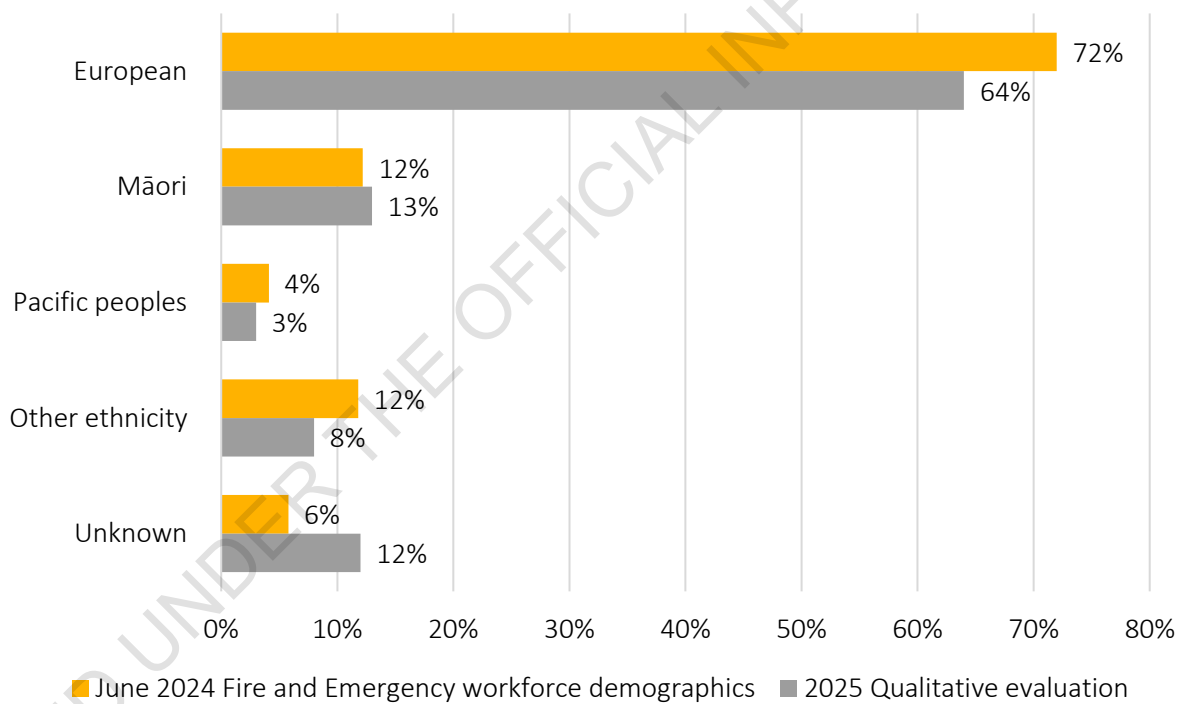


Figure 4: Participants by tenure



Participants' ethnicities closely match Fire and Emergency's workforce demographics as of June 2024, as detailed in Fire and Emergency's Diversity and Inclusion Strategy (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Ethnicity of participants compared to Fire and Emergency 2024 workforce demographics



When comparing gender demographics, we have a slight over-representation of females – 61% of participants identified as male and 37% identified as female, compared to 79% of Fire and Emergency's overall workforce identifying as male and 21% as female. This was influenced by the high proportion of NHQ personnel in the sample, which is less male-dominated than the frontline.

The people-led networks focus group had representatives from all Fire and Emergency's networks, including Disability, Whiria te Tāngata - Rainbow, Afi Pasefika, Women in Fire and Emergency, and Neurodiversity.

## About this report

### Considerations

This report presents findings from interviews and focus groups with 60 Fire and Emergency personnel. It reflects the participants' views only – not those of Scarlatti, the Fire and Emergency team leading this work, or others in the organisation.

These findings should not be considered in isolation. Other sources of data – including the Pulse Survey, organisational and operational metrics – should be considered alongside this work to provide a fuller picture of workplace culture at Fire and Emergency.

As with all qualitative research, the sample was relatively small and not statistically representative of the organisation as a whole. Every effort was made to include a wide range of views, with invitations extended to people from diverse teams, roles and backgrounds. However, participation from some key groups – including volunteers and career firefighters – was limited. This remains a constraint on the breadth of the data.

The value of qualitative research lies in the depth of insights it provides. The format allowed for probing, clarification, and exploration of underlying dynamics, offering rich context and a clearer understanding of the lived experiences of Fire and Emergency personnel. This depth enabled us to draw meaningful connections across themes and identify implications that may not surface through broader, quantitative approaches.

Despite the sample size, we observed early theme saturation, where similar ideas and concerns emerged consistently across the data. This suggests that the issues raised are not isolated or unique to a small group, but are shared by people in different parts of the organisation.

Scarlatti researchers presented preliminary findings to the Eke Taumata Internal Advisory Rōpū (referred to as the *Advisory Rōpū* in this document) on May 14, 2025. This session allowed us to sense-check themes, discuss implications and develop our understanding. The presentation was well received and confirmed that the insights identified were relevant across Fire and Emergency.

This report reflects what participants chose to share. We have not softened or filtered their accounts in order to honour their voices and acknowledge the issues they raised. The discussions were participant-led, meaning they focused on what mattered most to them – typically, things that were not going well.

While much of this report focuses on challenges, there are numerous positive insights throughout. These may not always reflect bold or sweeping change, but they are clear signs that progress is underway. In a large and complex organisation, meaningful change takes time. These early shifts should not be dismissed as insufficient but recognised as evidence that the culture change journey has begun.

Many participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to share their experiences and described the interviews and focus groups as a valued opportunity to be heard. This suggests that the process itself had intrinsic value – being asked, genuinely listened to, and taken seriously was a meaningful experience for them. Most participants were also interested in receiving the final report, wanting to see how their input had been acknowledged and contributed to the evaluation.

## Structure and content

Following this introduction, the report presents key findings in two main sections: lived experiences and barriers to culture change. Each section is organised into themes, presenting what we heard from participants and how we understood those perspectives, with direct quotes to illustrate the different ideas.

We then summarise insights in relation to the four pillars of Eke Taumata. The report concludes with a summary of findings.

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# Findings



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## Lived experiences

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Preliminary findings were presented to the Advisory Rōpū to test whether the themes resonated with their experiences. Where available, their feedback has been incorporated into the relevant sections on lived experiences and barriers to change. Not all themes were discussed separately with the Advisory Rōpū, so feedback is only referenced where it was specifically provided. Summaries of their feedback are also included at the end of each relevant section.

### Culture change intention vs. execution

Participants reported that leadership, including ELT, has communicated the need to improve workplace culture. They perceive it as signalling **Fire and Emergency's commitment to improvement**.

*"They're making that message very clear. That's the environment and organisation that they want. And I'm fully in support of that."*

Some participants in leadership and management roles observed that **workplace culture is beginning to shift in a positive direction**, even though "there's still a lot of work to go", as acknowledged by a participant.

However, participants across all levels of the organisation noted that while setting intentions is a necessary initial step, implementation has been uneven, slow, and not consistently experienced across the organisation. Some reflected that **Fire and Emergency is articulating the right messages, but follow-through has been variable – undermining trust and limiting impact**:

*"I don't think I've seen any culture change, but I can see that there are attempts being made to change it."*

Participants acknowledged that **culture change at this scale – within a large and complex organisation like Fire and Emergency – is inherently slow**. Some suggested that both physical distance (across locations) and organisational distance (across roles, functions and hierarchies) are contributing to inconsistent implementation. As one participant explains, they can see that Fire and Emergency aspires to do better, "but there are multiple tiers above us at the coalface".

*“ The overall experience is positive. I still enjoy working for Fire and Emergency. I can see where the organisation needs to be and also where I believe the senior leaders want it to be. There's a lot of myths or a lot of dilution from the higher levels down to where I'm working... But overall, for me, it's a positive experience because I know where we can be so I still hold hope, I still hold trust that the organisation can get to where it ought to be, where it's demanded to be. I can't say that's the same for others. Because they haven't been, I guess, exposed to things that I've seen with regard to being in the managerial positions which receive the information of what we need to disseminate. ”*

Leaders and managers are aware of the objectives set by Fire and Emergency and want to play an active role in the process. They hold positive views, recognising change efforts progressing through the organisation and signalling their support for a culture shift. However, those at lower levels may not have the same visibility – they report limited change “on the shop floor” to date. Communication and initiatives may be losing momentum or clarity as they filter down through the organisation. The complexity of the change process may also not be visible to everyone, which could contribute to perceptions of slow progress. Bringing more clarity to this may help manage expectations.

## Personnel driven by purpose and personal values

Overall, participants take pride in their contribution to Fire and Emergency’s mission – **making a positive difference in communities provides a shared sense of purpose and fosters** commitment to the workplace. One participant noted that personnel “like to know they’re working for an organisation that’s doing good” and further explained how they see this as “a superpower for the organisation”.

*“Just the genuine commitment of the people. I think most people at Fire and Emergency regardless of the team they are in... feel a sense of giving back to their community by being part of Fire and Emergency... Every role has a function [in] getting a truck out there.”*

Many participants reported strong relationships with their direct manager and team. These **relationships were seen as critical to their ability to thrive and to feeling a sense of belonging**.

*“I think a lot of us would say our brigades are thriving individually because of the effort we put in, we’re part of our communities and we’ve got like-minded people.”*

Participants shared **examples of positive micro-cultures within Fire and Emergency**, where personnel can feel valued and respected. However, many participants don’t think all personnel benefit from positive relationships with their direct managers or environments that allow them to thrive. Feedback suggested that **managerial capability was often seen as ‘luck of the draw’**, yet it had a significant influence on people’s day-to-day experience at Fire and Emergency.

*“I guess I’m fortunate now because I’ve got a fantastic boss.”*

The idea that purpose and strong relationships drive engagement and commitment to Fire and Emergency as a workplace resonated strongly with the Advisory Rōpū. However, the suggestion that personnel are generally engaged and committed resonated to a lesser extent. This highlights the difficulty in separating the perceived value of Fire and Emergency’s mission from perceptions of the organisation itself.

*“ They’re proud of what we do because the job is real. We’re the most trusted organisation in New Zealand... And that’s why people stay. ”*

*Fire and Emergency's mission and role in New Zealand's communities is driving engagement from personnel who value the purpose they contribute to. When relationships with direct managers and team members are positive and respectful, they foster a sense of belonging. However, some participants described a sense of 'staying despite the challenges' – a dynamic that can mask systemic issues behind high-level indicators like job satisfaction or turnover. These measures do not fully capture the complexity of personnel experience or the impact of workplace culture at Fire and Emergency.*

## Trust deficit – Organisational leadership and integrity

Participants discussed several factors that hinder personnel's trust in Fire and Emergency leadership, which are detailed in this section:

- Lack of accountability culture
- Hierarchical decision-making
- Lack of genuine consultation
- Breakdown in communication.

### Lack of accountability culture

The inconsistent accountability culture at Fire and Emergency was one of the strongest themes in the research – challenges related to the lack of accountability were raised in every conversation. It was also the preliminary theme that resonated the most with the Advisory Rōpū.

Participants reported **many instances where decision makers avoided taking accountability for their own actions**, except when the outcome was positive.

*“What I have noticed in the short time I've been [here] there seems to be... a culture of passing the buck, trying to palm it off onto somebody, [making it] somebody else's problem. Rather than taking responsibility or accepting that you might have done something wrong.”*

They also reported **a lack of clarity about who is or should be accountable for decisions or implementation**. This is undermining accountability across the organisation.

*“When the organisation messes up, whether they forget something or they just didn't do it, they don't actually know who is responsible for it. So no one takes accountability.”*

There were examples of **leaders and managers role-modelling accountability and fostering it within their teams**, such as:

- Holding themselves accountable before their team members, because *“I can't demand it from them but not display it myself”*
- Creating a 'safe to fail' space to open up conversations, fostering *“a healthier environment”* where *“people talk about things amongst themselves a bit more”*

- Empowering team members by saying “thank you for giving it a go” regardless of the outcome and closing the feedback loop.

However, not all leaders were perceived as positive role models for accountability. Good role models stand out because they are the exception rather than the norm. The **lack of accountability in leadership was a key issue** for participants.

*“But [accountability] hasn't truly become part of the fabric of our workplace. And in a big way, that's because of our leaders not demanding it, not displaying it. And that's what we need to see.”*

*The lack of accountability is negatively affecting trust, confidence and engagement within Fire and Emergency. By not holding people accountable for decisions and outcomes, poor performance and negative outcomes tend to be ignored within the organisation. This can lead to potentially wasting resources, making harmful decisions or blaming others. Participants saw a strong link between a lack of accountability and workplace culture. The examples of positive micro-cultures across Fire and Emergency showcased what is possible to achieve through a stronger accountability culture.*

## Hierarchical decision-making

Challenges related to decision-making were another prominent theme raised by participants. It also generated a lot of agreement during discussions with the Advisory Rōpū.

Many participants – particularly those in regional roles or at lower levels of the organisation – felt that decisions affecting them were often out of touch. They described these as **‘top-down’ decisions made by leaders removed from frontline realities**, lacking both the context to inform good decisions and the visibility to understand their full impact.

*“Decisions are made at the senior level, and they don't always have the true impact of what they might be at the front line because ELT... is not always connected to the front line... So that makes it difficult to convey decisions to our people.”*

Some participants suggested that a **reliance on hierarchical structures lies at the root of many decision-making challenges**. As an operations-focused organisation with a command-and-control structure, Fire and Emergency has embedded decision-making practices that reflect this history and have been slow to adapt to current organisational needs.

*“ There does tend to be... a culture of what I would describe as dependence. And what I mean by that is... a lot of people are dependent on the hierarchy and people more senior in it to either make decisions or do the hard stuff or whatever. That's what I mean by dependency, as opposed to people being accountable for doing what their role was intended for them to do. ”*

As a result, **decision-making authority is not effectively delegated**. Participants described how most decisions are escalated to higher levels. This creates bottlenecks and can result in rushed decisions, made under pressure and without sufficient consideration, as **senior leaders become overloaded**.

*“There's just no let up, so it's normally very quick decisions and some of it on the fly. And I don't believe that's good actually. There's just not enough time to look at it properly. There's just not enough time to help people.”*

The lack of empowerment for middle managers and leaders also contributes to **decision paralysis and risk aversion**, “because people are not sure whether they can make the decisions” as explained by an interviewee. Participants observed that, without clear authority, managers often defer decisions upward, **creating inefficiencies and reinforcing the broader lack of accountability**.

*“We've ended up with less responsibility, less accountability because it all has to go up the line and, mechanically, we're not empowered to make really simple decisions.”*

*Decision-making at Fire and Emergency is centralised and constrained by hierarchical structures. This has affected confidence in decisions, with personnel questioning whether decision-makers are adequately informed. This contributes to a disconnect between leadership and the frontline. The lack of delegation is also fostering risk-aversion and preventing the implementation of a consistent accountability culture.*

## Lack of genuine consultation

Many participants said they had **opportunities to share their views** through channels like supervisor discussions, consultations, the Pulse Survey, the Advisory Rōpū, and the people-led networks. However, experiences were mixed. **Some felt that these platforms gave them a voice, while others did not feel genuinely heard**. Even within the Advisory Rōpū, views were divided on whether the preliminary theme “new platforms and opportunities to share thoughts and feedback” reflected their experience.

**Participants in leadership roles – especially those with long tenure – were more likely to feel positive** about the engagement opportunities available to them and confident that their input would be taken seriously.

*“Yeah, that's one thing the organisation is actually very good at. You can put your hand out and say, ‘oh, I don't like this, this is a risk or an issue’. And the organisation will listen and say, ‘what are we going to do about it?’”*

In contrast, **participants outside leadership roles reported fewer opportunities and questioned their authenticity or effectiveness**.

*“I often think with consultations that the decision's already been made. The consultation is just ‘oh shit, we better do a consultation.’”*

Participants also described their **willingness to speak up as highly dependent on context** – some felt safe sharing views in certain settings, but not in others where they believed their input wouldn't be welcomed.

*“Yeah, I've heard a lot of people reference to almost feeling invisible, in some forums and with some people I'd be cautious about voicing my views.”*

Some participants shared experiences – either personal or observed – of being **labelled as disruptors and facing negative consequences for speaking up against certain issues or behaviour**. Such experiences can undermine psychological safety and deter others from raising concerns.

*“If you are the one that raises an issue or stands up or tries to be an upstander, you're still put into the category of a disruptor. And then you just become the person that's just put to the side, ‘we don't really want them to say [anything]’. It would just be nice if something was actually done about some of those concerns rather than swept under the carpet.”*

Although some participants felt able to voice their views, they reported a **lack of consistency in how feedback was collected, acknowledged, and used to inform decisions**. Many shared examples of feeling ignored, dismissed, or sidelined by decision-makers, with some noting that their input appeared to have no influence at all.

“ *But sometimes as much as we voice our opinions and try and do things for the better. Sometimes we do just have that feeling like we're banging our head against the brick wall.* ”

The **hierarchical decision-making structure influences these experiences**, with feedback often becoming distorted or lost as it moves through layers of bureaucracy. One participant highlighted how information becomes distorted as it passes from person to person – suggesting messages can change or lose meaning by the time they reach the right person.

*“You, as a leader, have to fight and push and argue and complain and be the squeaky wheel and take so much energy and time. And then they wonder why we're all frustrated and pissed off.”*

*The perceived lack of consistent and genuine consultation was a source of widespread frustration. Many participants felt they have little influence over decisions that directly affect them or their teams – even when they can share their opinion, it may not be considered. It can leave personnel feeling undervalued and erodes trust in Fire and Emergency's commitment to culture change, wellbeing and performance.*

Note: Many saw the Pulse survey as too general to provide useful insights or influence decisions. Participants felt some questions were leading or too simplistic. They also noted that reporting focused on positive results, with little visible change in response to the findings.

## Breakdown in communication

*Note that communication issues are also reflected in other findings.*

Top-down and bottom-up communication were both described as challenging by participants. The preliminary theme “poor communication erodes trust” resonated strongly with the Advisory Rōpū as well, validating this feedback.

Top-down communication was often described as one-way. **Most participants felt senior and executive leaders were distant from frontline realities.** They described these leaders as generally unresponsive and said they rarely explained their decisions or offered opportunities for discussion.

*“No one answers their email or even acknowledges that you've sent an email. And then no one is willing to say, ‘Oh, this is what happened, or this is why we didn't do it.’”*

Bottom-up communication was described as difficult and often one-directional, with one participant likening it to sending something “into the abyss”.

*“Sometimes once you raise an issue, it could be quite a long time to get a resolution on it. It could be you know six months or more or even longer, and sometimes you might not ever hear back I suppose... that's something that I deal with quite often. We raise something right up to the senior leadership team of the organisation and it might not come back down... And we're just used to working in the grey and we can make stuff happen but sometimes, even if the answer is no, it would be good to get a clear definitive no or not just leave it in the abyss.”*

*The lack of open, two-way communication can leave personnel unsure whether their input has been received or considered. It also creates confusion and frustration when decisions are made without a clear explanation. Participants felt this signalled a deeper lack of organisational transparency and contributed to low trust in leadership.*

## Inconsistent leadership capability

### Legacy of limited leadership development

Participants reported that **leadership development across Fire and Emergency has historically been limited.** They described situations – personal or observed – where individuals stepping into leadership roles did not receive formal induction, training, or clear guidance on role expectations. One participant characterised this as “*setting people up to fail.*”

*“When you come into new roles, there's never any kind of induction. So again, how do you thrive when you're not really even given an insight into the job that you're applying for.”*

Leadership development was commonly described as informal, with **individuals expected to learn on the job by observing others or following their predecessor's example.** Participants noted this approach was challenging, particularly in the absence of consistent leadership support or regular, structured performance feedback.

“ In terms of the lack of induction... it sort of leaves you up to your own devices as to what good looks like... I've come into this role with next to no induction. I'm comparing what I do to the other people who are in a similar position or the people who have been in this position before me... I'm using that as a basis for what I should be doing and whether or not what I am doing is good or bad. But the problem with that is that you've got other people in the same position who are effectively doing the same thing. But their standards might be different. Their standards might be higher; their standards might be lower. And we've got a situation where we've got at least one person whose standards, to me at least, are significantly lower so they think they're thriving, [and] I think they're anything but. But there's no standard, there's no expectation.”

Advancement and secondment processes were described as traditionally based more on seniority and operational performance than leadership capability. Some participants reflected that this has, at times, led to individuals progressing into senior roles without the strategic or people management skills required, noting that strengths in operational roles do not necessarily translate to effective strategic leadership.

*“And you've got... leadership at that level that's come up through a very operational lens and has limited experience of working in other agencies or strategic planning or working with an advisory group, even some of their stakeholder engagement ability is a little poor.”*

*Gaps in leadership capability have affected workplace culture and slowed progress. According to participants, limited leadership development in the past has led to inconsistent behaviour and allowed poor practices to continue. They described a patchwork of micro-cultures shaped by individual leaders, rather than a clear, shared approach. It is identified as a barrier to improving people management and strategic leadership across the organisation.*

## Leadership development programmes are starting to address gaps

More recently, Fire and Emergency has introduced senior advisor roles focused on leadership development and started delivering a series of programmes built around the "leading self, leading teams, leading organisations" approach.

“ One of the best things that's occurred in more recent time is the establishment of senior advisors for leadership development. They're all great at their role in each of the regions. We have one per region. We've got an exceptional person here who is really providing; they are delivering the courses, lead self, lead teams sort of thing, and putting a very strong emphasis on how leadership is important to positive culture. And it's really paying dividends.”

Participants thought these new programmes are beginning to fill gaps in leadership capability, particularly by helping emerging leaders build skills grounded in evidence and clear standards. They

saw them as a sign that Fire and Emergency is trying to **move away from relying on hearsay**, informal on-the-job learning, or the mindset of “this is how we’ve always done it.”

*“The lead self, lead teams, and difficult conversations workshops, it's all at your fingertips now. It was not something that was offered before so I can appreciate that Fire and Emergency is taking the opportunity to start giving the training to people before they get into those leadership positions as well, because all these courses are open to anyone.”*

Those in leadership roles noted that they could see the **positive impact** of the programmes in their work with their team.

*“We've done a lot [of] leadership development. I've got everyone on my team through lead self and lead teams, and I've [done] lead leaders. So we are speaking a common language and we've [pulled together].”*

**Participants described the programmes as valuable and engaging.** They noted strong demand, with those who have completed them speaking positively about their experience. One participant described the enthusiasm for the programme, noting that *“people who attend those courses love them.”*

The positive feedback was echoed by the Advisory Rōpū – the value of new leadership development programmes resonated very strongly with attendees.

However, some participants expressed concern that **the programmes may not reach established leaders who hold long-standing views and ways of working.** There was a perception that some senior staff take part only to meet expectations, without genuine engagement or a clear understanding of the reasons for change.

*“They might have sat in the organisation for 30, 40 years. And they're not particularly used to engaging or listening to other thoughts or being challenged on their ways of working or doing things or that type of thing.”*

*Feedback from participants acknowledged that Fire and Emergency is making progress in addressing gaps in leadership development through the new programmes. They are valued at all levels of the organisation. However, there is uncertainty whether training will be enough to address long-standing inconsistencies, particularly at senior levels where leadership styles may be more deeply entrenched.*

## Persistent problem behaviour

The presence of toxic behaviour across Fire and Emergency was one of the strongest themes raised by participants. It was discussed at length in all interviews and focus groups. It resonated strongly with the Advisory Rōpū as well. **Participants described a range of inappropriate and discriminatory behaviours, including harassment, bullying, microaggressions, misuse of power, favouritism, racism, and sexism.**

Participants shared examples such as being asked to falsify reports, working with an *“absolute out-and-out bully”*, hearing racist comments dismissed as *“just a joke”*, experiencing *“behaviours that are less than civil at times”*, facing *“horrendous things... that should have people locked up”*, and working daily in in what was described as an *“environment of bullying”*. These were raised as serious concerns.

Participants were especially **concerned about inappropriate or discriminatory behaviour by people in management and leadership roles, which they felt often went unchallenged or unpunished.** They explained that it sends a message that such actions are tolerated and that speaking up is unlikely to make a difference.

*“I know of a [person] who's been moved around a little bit due to personality issues, very well known for being sexist and incredibly racist. It had been raised with [their direct manager]. I don't know if there was a conversation, but this [person] was put on a course about cultural capability, ticked that box and there's the accountability. [But] the behaviour still continues. There's no follow up, there's no check-in with the people who had experienced that racism and that sexism. But it's okay because [they've] done that course now. And [they're] still in [their] role and [they're] still in a position of leadership and management. And that's yuck.”*

Participants felt that the **lack of accountability for inappropriate behaviour undermines efforts to create a safe, positive, and inclusive workplace.** They acknowledged that ELT and senior leaders have communicated expectations around conduct, but these messages lose credibility when problem behaviours are not addressed consistently and systematically.

*“I hear people say, if they see bullying at the top level... ‘if they're not demonstrating the behaviour then why should I?’”*

*The persistence of inappropriate conduct – especially by those in leadership – signals deep systemic issues that communication about standards of conduct has not successfully addressed yet. Feedback from participants suggests that consistency and visibility are needed to provide a safe, positive and inclusive workplace for all.*

## Pockets of excellence

While the overall tone of interviews and focus groups was negative, **many participants shared examples of upstanders, supportive teams, and positive micro-cultures.** They described pockets of excellence where individuals and teams are driving constructive change and working towards the cultural goals set by the organisation. In these environments, personnel feel respected, valued, heard, and empowered – they are supported to thrive.

Participants described these **high-performing areas as led by individuals who go beyond formal systems and processes.** These leaders were seen as creating positive work environments through their own initiatives, values, and actions.

*“I think from my perspective, where I see good change, it is more or less down to... the luck of the draw in terms of someone with good values being in a position of influence to do that... If you've got the right balance, if you've got the right mix there of personality in terms of being able to be confident and outspoken, the right values that you want to be sharing and in a position of leadership in which they're able to have some influence, then you do get culture changed a little bit. But I don't think... that aspect of it is at all to do with the organisation. I think they're just lucky where they've got good people in there that happened to be in those positions making the changes.”*

When discussed with the Advisory Rōpū, the ‘pockets of excellence’ theme resonated strongly with some and did not resonate with others. The diverse views reflect the fact that **these pockets may be one of Fire and Emergency’s best kept secret**. Some are lucky to benefit from them, while others are ignorant about the fact that other teams or areas of the organisation function better.

According to participants, these **leaders demonstrated effective accountability** by taking responsibility for their own actions and holding others accountable in a fair and supportive way. One participant described this as creating “*an open and transparent and trusted environment where at times you're allowed to fail.*”

These leaders were also described as **setting clear behavioural expectations**, role modelling high standards, and calling out unacceptable behaviour when it occurred.

*“The way we speak to each other, our branch charter, we're very clear on what is acceptable and not acceptable in terms of behaviour. And I know that my manager and my [superior] are very big on ‘we've got these expectations for a reason’”.*

Participants noted that these **leaders empower their teams by delegating decision-making, mentoring through challenges, and supporting overall wellbeing**. They also described how some leaders help their teams navigate bureaucracy, reduce unnecessary pressure, and find practical workarounds when organisational processes don’t align with day-to-day needs.

Some participants raised concerns about the wellbeing of these standout leaders. They noted that **acting as a filter and managing challenges alone – without adequate organisational systems, tools, or support – creates heavy workloads and emotional strain**. These leaders were seen as being at serious risk of burnout because they are carrying more than is sustainable. One participant spoke about the personal impact, saying they now take medication “*so I can sleep, stuff to shut my brain off at night so that I'm not lying there awake.*”

*“One word. Sandwich. I feel as though we're the meat in the sandwich...I suppose the interface for the front line to management; we have to deflect, we have to interpret what's coming down from above and sometimes justify. When you're talking about some really small brigades trying to get some things across the line, that's hard work. So challenging is a good word... I really do feel as though we're the meat in the sandwich.”*

*These pockets of excellence were viewed by participants as examples of what culture change and effective leadership can achieve at Fire and Emergency. Often driven by personal commitment, they have the potential to pave the way for sustainable change and broader impact if supported and scaled.*

## Unhealthy workload

**High and unmanageable workloads** were a strong theme raised by participants across interviews and focus groups. It also resonated strongly with the Advisory Rōpū. They pointed to **inadequate resourcing and organisational complexity** as key causes. Participants described vacant roles not being filled, which led to team members taking on extra responsibilities, and said that bureaucracy often added to the pressure. As one participant put it, people are “*thinly stretched.*”

*“In situations [where people leave for long extended time], it would be nice to think that there was someone brought in for a period to help with the work, but it just gets left to [those] that are left behind. And they just say there’s no money to get any help.”*

Participants said that **high workloads are leading to inefficiencies, lower engagement, and reduced performance**. They described tasks and decisions being rushed, with pressure to deliver outcomes sometimes resulting in a focus on quantity over quality.

*“All the DCEs are just flat to the board like everyone, so you do get those mixed messages coming through. You’re getting discussions that are very short and sharp because there’s just not enough time. And I think that’s where the missing bit is for me.”*

Participants reported that ELT and senior leaders talk about the importance of wellbeing, but that workload pressures are not being fully acknowledged or adequately addressed. This disconnect was seen as **undermining the credibility of wellbeing and culture initiatives, which can come across as out of touch with day-to-day operational realities**.

*“Nothing gets stopped. It just keeps pouring through. It’s an organisation that wants to change, I think, at the top. It talks about reducing the workloads. Well, I have not seen that at all. And then that affects our people.”*

*Persistent high workloads, driven by under-resourcing and organisational complexity, pose concrete risks to Fire and Emergency. Participants warned that rushed tasks and declining engagement may result in compromised service quality and burnout. The disconnect between wellbeing messaging and lived experiences risks undermining both morale and credibility. Workloads can also limit personnel capacity and motivation to engage with change.*

## Diversity and inclusion improving, but still falling short

### Incremental progress

Participants reported that **diversity is gradually increasing, supported by changes in recruitment practices and efforts to promote inclusion across Fire and Emergency** (e.g., through people-led networks). Some noted that organisational policies have started to reflect broader societal shifts, which they saw as a sign of commitment to cultural change.

**Participants with longer tenure said that the working environment has improved over time** for women, Māori and Pacific peoples, LGBTQ+ personnel, neurodiverse individuals, and other minority groups.

*“I think if I joined today as a young Polynesian, the journey would be a whole lot better in the organisation than it was probably years ago.”*

However, the implementation of diversity and inclusion initiatives was perceived as inconsistent across the organisation. **Those from minority backgrounds said there is still a long way to go before they feel fully included**, and before the organisation’s diversity truly reflects wider society.

*“As a female firefighter, I’ve had massive challenges... I’ve been told that, as a female firefighter, I have to work twice as hard to be seen as half as good as a male counterpart. And*

*that was by a trainer on a course that I was attending... There are differences in how you are treated. It's not necessarily deliberate, it's just I think part of the culture."*

These differing perspectives were also reflected in the Advisory Rōpū, where views varied on how strongly the theme of "increasing diversity" resonated.

*Diversity at Fire and Emergency is gradually increasing, but participants emphasised that there is still considerable progress needed to create a safe, positive, and inclusive workplace for all. While many recognised the organisation's intent and commitment to change, the reported lived experiences of minority groups often fell short of acceptable standards. These individuals were still frequently seen as 'outside the norm', suggesting that inclusion is not consistent and systematic across the organisation.*

## Impact of operational legacy

Many participants implied that current attitudes toward diversity and inclusion are still influenced by Fire and Emergency's history as a primarily operational organisation.

They explained that **recruitment has traditionally followed a cookie-cutter model, focused on physical and cognitive criteria needed for frontline roles**. Some participants said there are still lingering views that diversity efforts compromise standards, and that diversity is sometimes seen as a constraint rather than a strength.

*“ But we've got an interesting leadership dilemma. We're quite a traditional organisation and the culture of what was New Zealand Fire Service, for example, is very male-oriented, somewhat macho, in my view, militaristic. And there's a lot of people that probably still hold to those values within Fire and Emergency, unwilling to move on, not recognising that the world has changed around them. ”*

Participants also said that **leaders who advanced through operational roles may have had fewer opportunities to engage with diversity and inclusion principles**, which can influence how actively they support inclusive practices, such as recruitment.

*“I asked if we could do the rainbow module and I was responded with, 'oh, we don't want to push that kind of stuff on people.'”*

Because of these challenges, some participants felt that **inclusion efforts came across as tokenistic**. They said the organisation's stated intentions around diversity and inclusion had not yet been fully realised. Examples they shared included: a lack of disaggregated diversity data to inform decision-making, difficulty accessing appropriate equipment for women, and instances of leaders resisting efforts to embed Māori approaches. **Participants called on the organisation to continue pushing for and reinforcing meaningful diversity and inclusion practices.**

*“Well, actually, at the regional leadership meeting that [I attended], a group stood up and said, 'the most important thing is to stop all this Māori crap.' That is the level of how un-inclusive, un-diverse, unsafe our organisation is... It comes down to us actually hearing the*

*message from ELT, but it comes down to ELT taking on the rest of enforcing culture change because it ain't going to happen unless they actually do some enforcing.”*

*While Fire and Emergency has taken steps toward improving diversity and inclusion, participants described longstanding norms rooted in the organisation’s operational history that continue to shape attitudes. Without consistent reinforcement and practical action, stated intentions risk being seen as superficial, undermining credibility and slowing cultural change.*

## Feedback from the Advisory Rōpū

Preliminary themes were discussed with the Advisory Rōpū in May 2025. For that presentation, themes were divided into positive and negative highlights. Attendees were able to share whether each theme resonated with them or not during the day. Scores were calculated by attributing numerical values to the nominal scale and calculating the average (see Table 2). Table 3 ranks the preliminary themes from the one that resonated the most to the least amongst attendees on the left. The right-hand column refers to the section in this report that addresses the same concept.

**Table 2: Rōpū score calculation**

Nominal scale used by Advisory Rōpū	Numerical value used to infer score
Strongly resonates	4
Resonates	3
Doesn't resonate	2
Really doesn't resonate	1

**Table 3: How well preliminary themes resonated with Advisory Rōpū attendees**

Rank	Preliminary theme	Rōpū score	Sentiment	Section in this report
1	Inconsistent accountability	3.89 / 4	Negative	Lack of accountability culture on page 16
2	Good leadership sparks local excellence	3.82 / 4	Negative	Pockets of excellence on page 23
3	Unhealthy workloads harm wellbeing	3.79 / 4	Negative	Unhealthy workload on page 24
4	New leadership development programmes	3.74 / 4	Positive	Leadership development programmes are starting to address gaps on page 21
5	Problematic behaviour often goes unchallenged	3.67 / 4	Negative	Persistent problem behaviour on page 22
6	Poor communication erodes trust	3.67 / 4	Negative	Breakdown in communication on page 19
7	Purpose and people drive Fire and Emergency appeal	3.43 / 4	Negative	Personnel driven by purpose and personal values on page 15
8	Leadership development is beginning to bridge gaps	3.18 / 4	Negative	Leadership development programmes are starting to address gaps on page 21
9	Engaged and committed staff	3.05 / 4	Positive	Personnel driven by purpose and personal values on page 15
10	Standardised recruitment stifles diversity	3.00 / 4	Negative	Impact of operational legacy on page 26
11	Role models driving change in pockets of excellence	2.89 / 4	Positive	Pockets of excellence on page 23
12	Increasing diversity	2.74 / 4	Positive	Incremental progress on page 25
13	New platforms and opportunities to share opinions and feedback	2.65 / 4	Positive	Lack of genuine consultation on page 18
14	Policy changes reflect societal change	2.55 / 4	Positive	Incremental progress on page 25

## Barriers to change

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In addition to the lived experiences of the participants, barriers to culture change emerged during the analysis. This section presents these barriers, providing an opportunity for Fire and Emergency to develop targeted actions to mitigate them.

### The cost of complexity

#### Bureaucracy

Participants described Fire and Emergency as a large, complex, and highly bureaucratic organisation. Many felt that personnel often spend more time navigating internal systems than delivering value. They found the **multiple layers of policies, systems, and processes** time-consuming and frustrating – especially when the purpose or benefit of these systems was not clear to them.

Participants also felt that **the organisation's hierarchy contributes to bureaucracy**. It creates what they see as unnecessary compliance requirements and leads to delays and bottlenecks. One participant said it is *"quite hard to get anything done"* because *"the blocks above us are quite large."* Another described the difficulty of navigating multiple layers just to replace equipment or get their team's basic needs considered.

Most participants felt that **centralisation had increased bureaucracy and reduced efficiency**. Some noted that NHQ is jokingly referred to as *"the complicator,"* reflecting its reputation as a source of complexity rather than clarity.

*"I think thriving in my role would be the removal of some bureaucracy. It's really hard to affect change at Fire and Emergency. We are so big and complex that people often talk about, anything that comes into the national headquarters, they refer to it as putting it into the complicator."*

Several participants found that **official systems were not always seen as fit for purpose**. At times, following formal processes felt counterproductive, and some reported deliberately avoiding them. These workarounds – often referred to as **"acceptable workarounds"** – were seen as a way to improve efficiency and reduce frustration.

*"We just have to find an acceptable workaround to keep the wheels rolling. And really... the more people get involved, the harder it is. So often we're left with making these decisions and being accountable for them because [it's] either too hard or too long. So, we go and make a decision and get on with it."*

*High levels of bureaucracy are contributing to frustration and increasing workloads. They are also seen as a barrier to making meaningful change as energy and time are spent navigating the system. The use of informal systems – the 'acceptable workarounds' – carry risk by potentially bypassing critical safeguards and processes. They were described as a coping mechanism, indicative of the desire to improve efficiency.*

## Fragmented workplace

Participants described Fire and Emergency as siloed, with limited alignment across groups, teams, and regions. In one focus group, they used a metaphor: the organisation wants everyone in the same waka, paddling in the same direction – but in reality, people are in different waka, or paddling out of sync. They felt that **while people are working hard, progress feels slow**.

According to participants, **the lack of clear priorities, coordinated actions, and long-term goals makes it hard to align daily work and decisions**. As a result, the workplace feels fragmented, and personnel may end up working at cross-purposes without realising it. Participants did not see much evidence that Fire and Emergency is actively trying to address this barrier.

“The organisation knows a lot of its challenges stem from lack of alignment across different departments and directorates... but no work's done to think about how to bring the tiers of management on a journey, to understand working styles, operating styles, shared operating models that mean that you can actually do those things much more effectively because you're using the same language, talking in the same way. There's nothing done in that sense, to go 'okay over the next two to three years, we're going to invest in these things that are all aimed at trying to get an organisation to work essentially more effectively across its silos or break those silos down' ... nothing's done in that sense. And there's no real desire to even sort of talk about operating model, ways of interacting, it's not a conversation that happens. It's this directorate, this branch, their own objectives, their own objectives, their own objectives.”

*Silos can weaken cohesion and reduce overall performance. While they may be more visible in centralised parts of the organisation, their effects flow through to brigades, who then face conflicting messages and directions. This contributes to the growth of micro-cultures and encourages independent, rather than collective, ways of working.*

## Union dynamics are slowing culture improvement

Union influence was a complex topic that came up frequently in interviews and focus groups. **While participants acknowledged the important historical role of unions – especially in protecting workers' rights – some felt that current dynamics were getting in the way of accountability and the management of toxic behaviour.**

*“I've been a union member for many years. I was proud to be in the union. I appreciate the support they gave me. But certainly, as you go up through the ranks, it does feel like an anchor around your neck, dragging you down.”*

There were several examples shared of **unions supporting members who had breached conduct standards or were underperforming**. This was seen as contributing to tension between unions and Fire and Emergency and making it harder to address poor behaviour when it occurs.

*“What [a union] needs to do is actually stick to the mandates of what [they] should be there for and if someone is genuinely being wronged, 100% the union has a position. I've heard*

*[someone] say several times, 'I will not defend the undefendable.' Yet time and time again, the union wastes a shit ton of its money defending absolutely abhorrent behaviour just because they're a union member. Well, I don't think that should be a thing. I think... if you step over the line, you should be prepared to accept the consequences of it. But there's a culture now that you just run to the union and that pretty much puts a hold on everything, and you can't do anything."*

Some participants described a sense that certain staff, knowing there would be little consequence, felt emboldened to ignore rules or expectations. In these cases, **unions were seen as enabling individuals to avoid responsibility or manipulate the system.**

**Those in leadership roles described challenges in managing performance and implementing decisions under these conditions.** They spoke about the stress of navigating union involvement, saying they often felt they had to **"walk on eggshells" to avoid conflict or escalation.** Some said they hesitated to act firmly out of fear of backlash or negative media coverage, which could result in inappropriate behaviour going unchecked.

*"I just find that the union battles every single thing we try and do. It's just very militant, very aggressive and there's probably reasons for that. I think historically, there're reasons, there's a lack of trust on both sides. But I find it very, very difficult to thrive in an environment like that. If you're an operational manager on a daily basis it must just be difficult."*

**Union dynamics were also described as contributing to organisational complexity.** In some cases, it was felt that union representatives were involved in matters outside of their mandate, adding time and confusion. One participant criticised unions for **"trying to get into operational decisions and management decisions"** and called for Fire and Emergency to remind unions of their mandate.

A few participants discussed the example of the development of the code of conduct. Consultation with unions and associations delayed decisions during development – and in the end, not all unions supported the final product.

*"[A union] actually advised their members that they won't be following the Fire and Emergency standards of conduct, because it's a breach of the human rights acts and policies and this, that and the other... It is really hard when you're trying to hold people to account... We all had the opportunity to consult on this as individuals and as brigades and as a collective group of people, and for one union to say 'Nah, we don't want to do that, that's dumb'".*

*Current union dynamics were seen by participants as a barrier to improving accountability, addressing inappropriate workplace behaviour and implementing meaningful culture change. Participants gave examples of union support for underperformance and inappropriate conduct, which they felt undermined efforts to uphold standards. Working alongside unions was also linked to increased workload, stress, and inefficiencies across parts of the organisation. Advisory Rōpū discussions highlighted that constructive collaboration with unions will be essential to support progress.*

## Unmet operational needs

Many people interviewed felt that **brigades' basic operational needs were not always being met**. Reasons described included a lack of resources, excessive bureaucracy, and decision-making that felt removed from the realities on the ground.

“ I was talking about Eke Taumata and some of the initiatives that the people branch are doing. They're all good things. but they won't make a material difference until we've got the fundamentals sorted out for the organisation. It's almost a little... chicken and egg-ish. It could almost have the reverse effect... you roll something out and that station will be going, 'well, that's marvellous, but what about my truck?' ”

*Under the pressure of daily operations, culture change can sometimes be viewed as a low priority. Participants suggested that Fire and Emergency needs to prioritise what brigades need to deliver the best service first, so messaging from NHQ about workplace culture don't feel disconnected and frustrating to those dealing with ageing equipment or unmet operational needs.*

## Behaviour management process

Many participants described current systems and processes for addressing inappropriate behaviour or underperformance as **inadequate**, with one calling the process “*flawed*” and “*not working at a practical level.*”

The **complaints management process** was commonly seen as **excessively long**, creating stress for those involved and negatively affecting wider teams.

*“Sometimes the length of time it actually takes to come to a conclusion causes more damage than the original complaint.”*

A key concern of participants around behaviour management processes was the **lack of transparency about outcomes**. They viewed this as a barrier to both accountability and organisational learning. Some participants said not being open about outcomes was a **missed opportunity to clarify behavioural expectations and reinforce consistent standards**.

*“We have made very few examples of people. Some people should clearly be gone, but they're still with us. The solution would be to act on what you're saying and get rid of some of those people that have clearly done something that's totally outrageous.”*

**Perceptions that outcomes vary depending on who is involved further undermined trust in the process**. The absence of clear, consistent outcomes appeared to reinforce these perceptions, whether or not they were accurate. Someone explained outcomes depend on “*who gets the complaint, and what their past relationships have been.*” Another participant shared they had been bullied but did not raise the issue with superiors because of who the person was.

“ There are some key people across the district who, when they exhibit behaviour that's not acceptable, they are spoken with but that's all. I mean, it's laughed off... If we won't hold ourselves accountable at our own level, it makes our job even harder to get people that we essentially manage or look up to us to come around. Yeah, that's quite hard to watch. ”

As a result, participants reported that **many are discouraged from speaking up about misconduct or underperformance**. They described personnel feeling that the system doesn't work, fearing retaliation or being labelled troublemakers, and wanting to avoid a drawn-out process they suspect won't lead to a fair resolution.

*“I think until we can start seeing some repercussion from bad behaviour, everyone will continue either being too scared to be upstanders or they're just going to be too quiet to say anything. Until FENZ starts taking the bullying and harassment thing seriously [we won't be able to offer a safe, positive and inclusive work environment to everyone]. I just see it getting swept on the carpet so frequently.”*

*The current systems and processes in place to address poor behaviour and performance were perceived as inadequate, inconsistent and ineffective. Participants described a culture where offenders are not held to account consistently or transparently. This signals to all personnel that there are few real consequences, which may embolden others to behave similarly. The lack of visible outcomes also sets poor standards across the organisation, reinforcing the perception those affected will not be supported or heard.*

## Change resistance

Participants talked about mutually reinforcing factors **contributing to culture change resistance** within Fire and Emergency: long tenure, affinity bias and in-groups. In participants' views, these were unlikely to be resolved through training or policy changes alone.

### *Long tenure*

**Many participants linked long tenure and limited exposure to other organisations or ways of working with a tendency toward entrenched leadership styles.** While this was not seen as true of all long-serving leaders, participants noted it could foster reluctance to adopt or even consider new approaches. One shared the example of a leader who openly stated they operate according to personal principles rather than the organisation's rules. Others observed that when asked to implement culture change, some long-serving leaders responded defensively or disengaged. They describe their potential reaction as follows:

*“We've never done it that way before. We've always done it this way. Why do we have to change? They'll never get it.”*

Participants noted that **individuals who had progressed through operational ranks were often strong in procedural execution but could be less comfortable with strategic thinking or adapting to unfamiliar expectations**. As one person explained, these leaders were good at “*doing things right*” but less confident in “*thinking differently and doing the right thing*” when the situation called for it.

There was scepticism among participants about whether training or policy changes could shift these dynamics. Some saw retirement and phasing out of these leaders as the most likely route to change. **Several described this as a “generational problem” that will gradually correct itself.**

*“There is definitely positive movement in brigades when the leadership changes with younger, fresher, reinvigorated fresh lenses and I think that’s exciting. Obviously... it is a generational thing and it is it is a hard shift to do.”*

#### *Affinity bias*

**Affinity bias was perceived to influence appointment and promotion decisions.** Participants felt that some leaders tend to favour individuals with similar backgrounds, experiences, and values – possibly unconsciously. Some gave examples of individuals being “grandfathered” into roles despite questions about their suitability, reinforcing the perception that **conformity was valued over capability**.

*“I’ve seen that happen specifically with people getting quite senior job where they, in humble opinion, weren’t the best fit. And there are still a lot of that stuff around, that people will get shuffled into positions and those kinds of things if you know the right people from the past.”*

#### *In-groups*

An “old boys’ club” culture was also described, where **longstanding relationships formed through shared operational experience were seen to influence decisions across the organisation, including at senior levels**. This was perceived to limit the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Some participants felt that historical friendships influenced leadership decisions more than formal processes or objective assessments.

*“‘I trained them, I know them.’ It’s historical friendships outside of work that influence the decisions that are made day to day.”*

Cliques were also perceived to affect behaviour management when **leaders protected personal relationships over upholding organisational values**. One participant questioned the ability of leaders and managers to hold people accountable when they go fishing together on the weekend.

*“I have also seen what I think we would all understand when I say the ‘old boys club’ who are in that middle management space, protecting their own misbehaving, not adhering to the culture and the values that [are] expected of us within this organisation, for their own betterment and for the betterment of each other.”*

*Participants described entrenched leadership – including limited strategic thinking and people management skills – as a factor constraining decision-making and progress on cultural change. They observed that long tenure, affinity bias, and in-groups within Fire and Emergency often brought individuals with similar backgrounds and traditional leadership styles into influential roles. This may limit opportunities for fresh perspectives and new leadership approaches to emerge. These patterns can foster mistrust in leadership and make it harder to build momentum for widespread culture change.*

“ The biggest problem I see is that we've got a lot of people that are grandfathered into this organisation and grandfathered into their positions and no amount of training or leadership courses or ‘this is the way you should be behaving’ ... is going to change the way that they've already always done things for the last X number of decades or however long it is. ”

## Perceptions of inequities

Fragmentation and limited cross-functional understanding within Fire and Emergency were seen by participants as contributing to perceptions of inequity. “Us vs. them” narratives were raised across different contexts. After further discussion with the Advisory Rōpū, it appears that some of these views may stem more from misunderstanding than from actual disparities.

Participants shared examples such as:

- The **perceived dominance of operational staff** (“blue shirts”) at NHQ, where those without a uniform felt they were treated differently or valued less.

*“I get a feeling that blue shirts run the business. If a blue shirt wants something, that's very easy to happen. If a non-blue shirts want something, it's a lot more difficult for it to happen.”*

- A **view of NHQ as a barrier to effectiveness** at the brigade level. Regional participants, particularly those close to the frontline, described a lack of trust and a sense of condescension for NHQ staff.

*“There are some who will never respect NHQ for doing the best for our frontline firefighters. That's because it's ingrained into them... and you'll never change that until they actually depart the organisation. There are a larger number of younger, particularly younger people who get what NHQ is trying to do and why we're trying to do it and therefore much more accepting of listening to an opinion or a different way of doing something.”*

These perceptions were also seen to influence how some personnel view diversity and inclusion efforts. In a few cases, **diversity was perceived as “lowering the bar,”** with concerns that it could affect **performance**. Participants noted that not all personnel understood or recognised the value of increased diversity.

*“If you said to our firefighters that we want to increase the diversity of our firefighters, they would give you a dirty look, even today. If you say diversity, they think you're saying lowering the bar. If you say equity, they think you're saying take something off someone who's already got it... [But it's] not lowering the bar. We just want people that expand our business, expand our ability to think about how we do things and add value to what we do.”*

*Whether grounded in reality or perception, inequity dynamics appear to be creating tension across Fire and Emergency. It can lead to growing fragmentation, siloed ways of working, and reduced alignment. Limited resources across a large and complex organisation likely amplify these concerns. When personnel feel their needs are unmet, they may become more focused on what others are receiving, reinforcing perceptions of inequity.*

## Feedback from the Advisory Rōpū

Advisory Rōpū attendees were asked to rank the seven barriers identified in the preliminary findings. They were tasked with identifying which, if addressed, would be more likely to enable faster implementation of culture change. Table 4 below summarises the average ranks. Across the different groups, there were four consistent priorities:

1. Bureaucracy and fragmentation
2. Union dynamics
3. Behaviour management processes
4. Unmet basic operational needs.

**Table 4: Advisory Rōpū ranking of preliminary barriers to culture change**

1	Bureaucracy and fragmentation	Union dynamics
2	Poor behaviour management processes	Unmet basic operational needs
3	Long tenure	
4	Affinity bias	
5	"Blue shirt" dominance	

Discussion with the Advisory Rōpū provided further insights on some of these barriers. Notably, the "blue shirt" dominance was identified as a perception and other such perceived inequities were identified. Furthermore, long tenure was discussed as not being a barrier in itself but being linked to an increased risk of resistance to change.

3

# Outcomes



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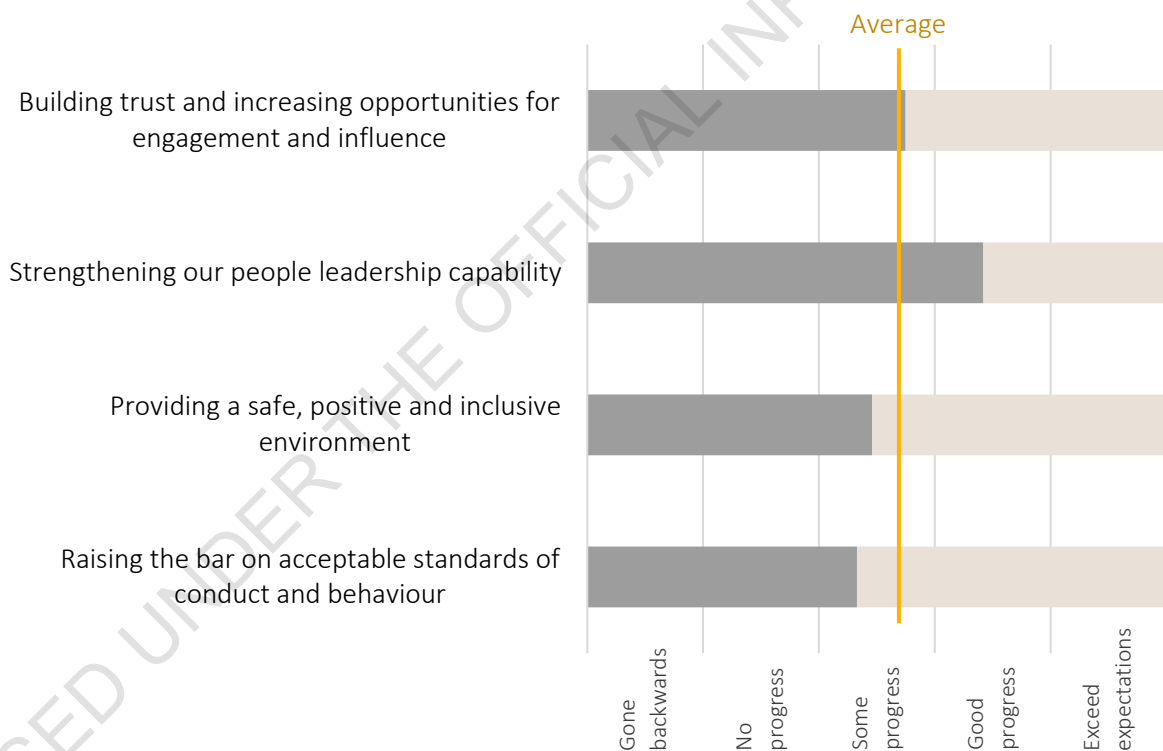
## Overview

This section provides a high-level summary of findings from interviews, focus groups, and Advisory Rōpū discussions, structured around the four pillars of Fire and Emergency's culture change work. Each pillar includes an average rating based on feedback from the Advisory Rōpū attendees, who were asked to assess Fire and Emergency's progress in small groups, using the following scale:

1. Gone backwards
2. No progress
3. Some progress
4. Good progress
5. Exceeded expectations.

Numerical values were attributed to each nominal scale item to calculate scores. A comparative graphic (see Figure 6) shows average ratings for each pillar and the average across all four pillars.

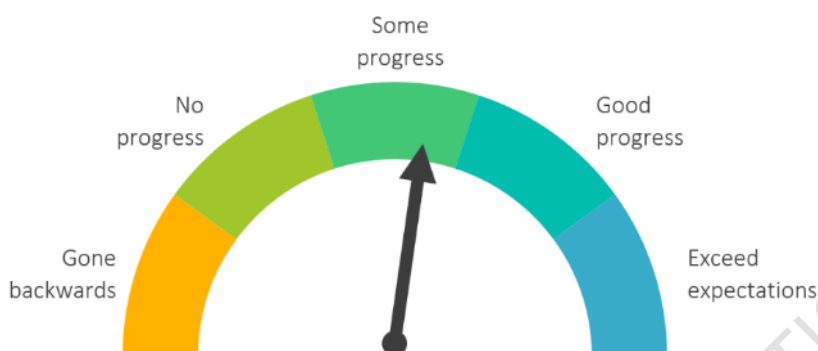
**Figure 6: Average Advisory Rōpū ratings of Fire and Emergency's progress against Eke Taumata pillars**



Ratings from the Advisory Rōpū suggest that members have noticed at least some progress in all four pillars. They noticed the most improvement in the second pillar – Strengthening our people leadership and capability for engagement and influence.

## Progress on Eke Taumata pillars

### Building trust and increasing opportunities for engagement and influence



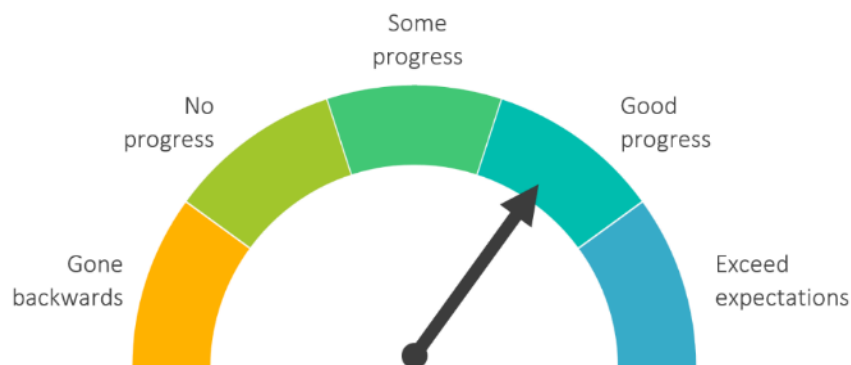
#### **Trust remains fragile due to inconsistent engagement.**

There are opportunities for personnel engagement, and some leaders are making efforts to connect with their teams. However, many feel their voices are not genuinely heard. Ongoing issues such as lack of accountability, hierarchical decision-making, complex systems, and a fragmented workplace continue to erode trust. Engagement initiatives are present but are often seen as inauthentic or misaligned with personnel needs, hindering efforts to restore trust across the organisation.

#### *Priorities suggested by the Advisory Rōpū*

- Encourage collaboration and strategic alignment across all areas of the organisation
- Strengthen the consultation process to inform decision-makers and close the feedback loop
- Provide clarity on levels and areas of accountability for different roles within Fire and Emergency – putting a face to the decisions.

## Strengthening our people leadership capability



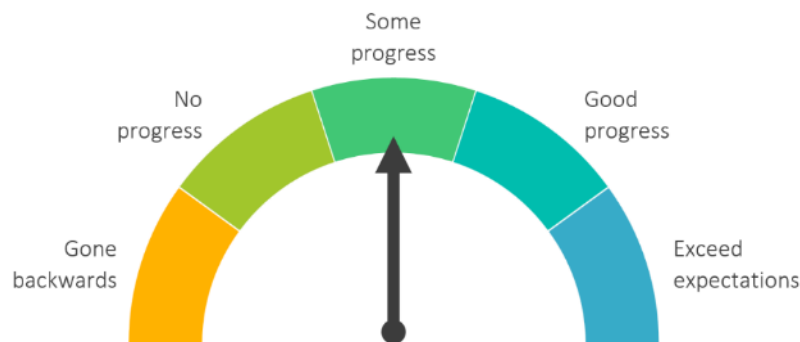
### Leadership capability remains uneven despite new development efforts.

Fire and Emergency has introduced new leadership development programmes that are starting to show positive results. However, these efforts are not sufficient to address gaps in leadership capability. Leadership remains inconsistent across the organisation – some teams thrive while others struggle. Legacy promotion practices based on tenure and operational experience, rather than leadership skill, have contributed to current challenges. Not all existing or aspiring leaders are attending capability development opportunities, and not all participants demonstrate meaningful change. Poor leadership remains unaddressed in areas. There is also a need to strengthen engagement with external groups, including unions and iwi, to support broader leadership improvements.

#### *Priorities suggested by the Advisory Rōpū*

- Expand participation in leadership development programmes
- Require completion of leadership training prior to promotion and develop leader mentorship programmes
- Uphold accountability through tools such as 360-degree feedback and performance reviews
- Strengthen relationships with external stakeholders, including iwi and unions.

## Providing a safe, positive and inclusive environment



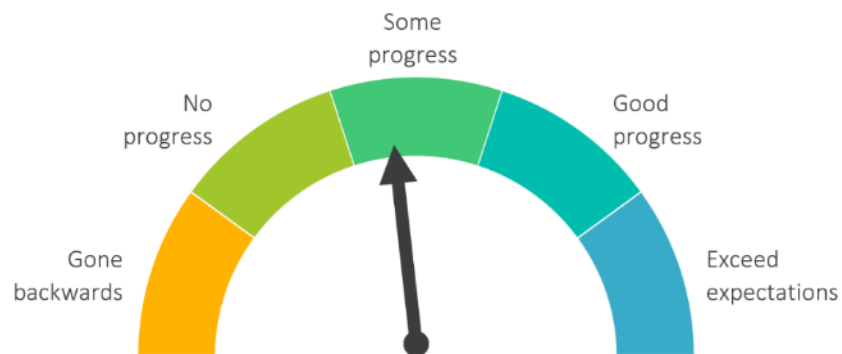
### **Foundations for inclusion are in place, but progress is inconsistent.**

Fire and Emergency is working to create a more inclusive and supportive workplace. Strong team relationships and a shared sense of purpose help foster belonging in some areas. However, ongoing problem behaviours – and an inconsistent approach to addressing them – are affecting trust and morale. High workloads also impact wellbeing and reduce openness to cultural change. While foundations for improvement exist, progress is slow, and change remains uneven and poorly communicated. Pockets of excellence show what's possible, but these remain isolated.

#### *Priorities suggested by the Advisory Rōpū*

- Celebrate and replicate examples of effective, inclusive and positive team culture (i.e., pockets of excellence)
- Establish a dedicated change management team to support the Eke Taumata rollout
- Strengthen the communication plan to improve visibility and understanding of change efforts.

## Raising the bar on acceptable standards of conduct and behaviour



### **Problem behaviours persist due to inconsistent responses.**

Poor behaviour continues across Fire and Emergency and is not being addressed in a consistent or effective way. Some participants noted signs of positive intent and early changes. However, responses often rely on individuals with strong personal values rather than clear, organisation-wide systems. The current approach is seen as unclear, and many members of personnel lack the confidence or capability to challenge misconduct, particularly when they do not trust the process or outcome. Union dynamics and in-groups are seen critical barriers to progress and accountability in this area.

#### *Priorities suggested by the Advisory Rōpū*

- Work collaboratively to address union-related barriers to managing conduct
- Positively reinforce good behaviour to help set clear standards
- Clarify expectations related to the Code of Conduct
- Include behaviour management in leadership development programmes.

4

# Conclusion



This research highlights the complexities of cultural change at Fire and Emergency. Participants shared a strong desire to see the organisation succeed and acknowledged early signs of progress. While they supported the direction of change, many saw limited impact in their daily work and noted that culture messages often don't reflect operational realities. This disconnect is affecting trust, confidence, and engagement.

### **What's working well**

Many participants value their role as a way to contribute to their communities. The organisation's purpose and values remain a strong anchor for engagement. Examples of strong leadership and inclusive teams show that high performance and wellbeing are possible when conditions allow. New leadership development efforts were welcomed, and the increasing workforce diversity was seen as progress. Participants noted stronger signals from the top and a few new opportunities to speak up. There is a clear willingness among personnel to engage with change.

### **What's uneven and needs strengthening**

Improvements were observed, but their implementation and impact were often seen as inconsistent. Participants acknowledged that change is underway but questioned whether it is being driven deeply and systematically enough to shift longstanding behaviours and structures. Many described a patchwork of micro-cultures shaped by individual leaders, rather than a unified organisational culture. Accountability, consultation, and communication practices were seen as improving in some areas but not in others. High workloads and operational demands make it difficult to sustain change.

### **What remains concerning**

Participants raised long-standing challenges that continue to undermine progress. These include a lack of accountability, inconsistent responses to poor behaviour, entrenched leadership norms, and decisions disconnected from operational realities. Bureaucracy, silos, heavy workloads, and tense union dynamics also limit the ability to improve systems. Poor role modelling by leaders is damaging morale and undermining standards. Some groups – especially minority personnel – still face exclusion, and intentions around inclusion need to be matched by visible, consistent action. It is not yet clear to participants how Fire and Emergency will address these long-standing challenges.

### **Moving forward**

The research shows an organisation starting to shift, but with real barriers still in the way. Sustained attention, system-level support, and clear reinforcement of standards will be critical. A more deliberate, structured approach, backed by strong leadership and alignment across all levels, is needed to maintain momentum. Participants painted a picture of personnel ready to contribute to that journey – what they want now is to see the change take hold.

Suggestions from the qualitative research and Advisory Rōpū have been collated in Appendix 2, page 52.

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# Appendices



## Appendix 1: Methodology

In consultation with Fire and Emergency, Scarlatti developed a methodology including a mix of one-on-one online interviews and small online focus groups. This approach was recommended by the team involved with the Fire and Emergency’s Whanaungatanga project. Table 5 presents the planned data collection.

**Table 5: Planned data collection**

	Interviews	Focus groups
Audience	Tier three and four roles	Tier four and below roles
Target	10	11 groups of up to 6 people
Content	Open-ended questions	Mix of open-ended questions, anonymous online polls and private chat
Platform	Online via Zoom	Online via Zoom

### Development of interview guide

Between September and December 2024, Scarlatti worked with Fire and Emergency to understand needs, clarify scope and shape the methodology. The Fire and Emergency team was closely involved in developing the approach and questions through multiple feedback loops and peer reviews. They requested that questions align to the four outcomes and avoid duplication with the Pulse Survey. The draft interview questions were tested with the Eke Taumata Advisory Rōpū on 24 October, then revised based on feedback.

ELT sign-off on research approach and material was received in February 2025 and was followed by a highly structured communication plan led by Fire and Emergency. The approved interview guide (see Appendix 4, page 58) included questions on:

- General experience of working at Fire and Emergency
- Changes noticed around people and culture
- Thriving and belonging at Fire and Emergency
- Having your voice heard on decisions that impact you
- Leadership and management, including leadership development
- Accountability and decision-making
- Diversity and inclusion
- Fire and Emergency values
- The complaints management system.

The interview guide for focus groups (see Appendix 4, page 61) was modified to make the questions more suitable for a group setting and allow for some questions to be answered through private messages or voting polls.

## Research ethics

An information sheet and consent form were developed in collaboration with Fire and Emergency (see Appendix 3, page 54). The information sheet outlined the purpose of the research and requirements from participants, as well as how the confidentiality of participants was protected. It provided details for withdrawing from the research and contact details for Scarlatti researchers. This information sheet was included in communication with all Fire and Emergency personnel contacted during the research.

All participants provided formal consent to Scarlatti researcher after being reminded of the key details contained in the information sheet at the start of each interview and focus group. A consent form was filled and signed by the Scarlatti interviewer each time, confirming they:

- Provided the participant with a clear and accurate verbal explanation of the evaluation project, including its purpose, process, and how the information will be used
- Answered all of the participants' questions to the best of their ability
- Believes the participant understands the evaluation and what participation involves.

The interview questions covered issues around conflict, culture, leadership, trust and diversity and inclusion – topics that could be uncomfortable for participants. While we did not expect serious emotional harm to participants from asking these questions, there were mitigations in place to protect participants' wellbeing (see Table 6).

**Table 6: Mitigations for participants' wellbeing**

Ethics committee review	The Scarlatti ethics committee reviewed the approach for this research and the interview / focus group questions to ensure the psychological safety of participants. Ethics approval was obtained before any fieldwork began.
Participation was voluntary	Participants could decide if they wanted to take part in this work. They also had the option to answer only specific questions and skip any questions they wished during the interview. Participants withdraw at any time during or after the interview with no negative consequences.
Informed consent	Scarlatti followed an informed consent process with everyone involved. This involved providing comprehensive information about the research and allowing opportunities for questions so that people can make an informed decision about whether they wish to get involved. Scarlatti also collected verbal consent from interviewees and written consent (through private chat) from focus group participants at the beginning of all interviews.
Confidentiality	Fire and Emergency was not aware of who we contacted and whether they declined or participated in the research. All information shared by participants has been anonymised, and all details that could identify someone have been removed. This was conveyed in Fire and Emergency's Communication Plan, the information sheet and at the beginning of the interviews / focus groups.

Some participants were eligible for compensation. Two-thirds of the roles involved in the interviews and focus group were asked to accommodate their participation within their standard workday. These participants were not compensated. However, compensation was provided for volunteers and rostered employees. Fire and Emergency agreed to provide:

- Volunteers who take part in this research with a \$70 gratuity payment, in the form of a donation or gift card (in line with other Fire and Emergency research projects)
- Rostered employees who take part in this research with overtime payments (we acknowledged to participants that there will be a record of attendance through overtime claims). This overtime payment covered a maximum of 90 minutes per participant and was funded from the Culture Change budget.

The qualitative evaluation ethics process concluded in April 2025 once all processes and material had been reviewed and approved.

## Recruitment

Fire and Emergency took charge of communicating with personnel about this project in February 2025. This included sharing information about

- The purpose of the work undertaken
- What it involved
- Confidentiality details
- Sampling approach – advising that Fire and Emergency personnel may be contacted by a member of the Scarlatti team, inviting them to take part in this research.

These messages were shared through a range of internal channels, including hui with various internal stakeholders, online portal information pages and emails dispersed by leaders, to ensure the message reached different parts of the organisation.

## Sampling

The sampling approach, recommended by Fire and Emergency, aimed to be inclusive of different role types spanning frontline, frontline enabler and corporate support, including career staff and volunteers.

Recruitment began in March 2025, with the goal of reaching up to 76 participants overall. Scarlatti worked with one member of the Fire and Emergency's People team to draw a sample roughly ten times larger than the target number, split into roles. A second sample was later requested due to a low response rate for some roles (see below).

Members of people-led networks were asked to submit an expression of interest (EOI) to take part in the research.

Participants were booked on a 'first come, first serve' basis, including EOIs from the people-led networks' members.

## Response

We contacted 859 Fire and Emergency personnel and received 168 responses in total – an average response rate of 19.56% (see Table 7 for details). Response rates varied across roles. It was high for

one-on-one interviews and focus groups with NHQ frontline enabler / corporate support. It was very low for career firefighters and volunteers.

Personnel were contacted via email. Follow-up phone calls and texts were trialled in response to low uptake but were not effective enough to continue.

**Table 7: Recruitment and response numbers**

Contacted	859
Texted	31
Called	17
No response	701
Replied but not available / interested	66
Interested	102
Booked	75
Participated	62
Total responses	168

Targets for one-on-one interviews were met quickly – personnel in these roles were overall very interested in taking part in the research (see Table 8).

**Table 8: Interviews: Role group target versus participated**

Interviews: Role group	Target	Participated
District Managers	3	3
Region Managers	2	2
Finance and Business Operations	1	1
Office of the Chief Executive	1	1
Organisational Strategy and Capability Development	1	1
People	1	1
Service Delivery and Design	1	1
Total	10	10

We conducted a total of nine focus groups – two fewer than originally planned (see Table 9). Time constraints and difficulties reaching volunteers meant only one focus group was held with this group. Similar challenges were encountered with career firefighters. Additionally, communication from the NZPFU advised members not to engage with Scarlatti. As a result, only one career firefighter agreed to participate, and a one-on-one interview was conducted in place of the originally planned focus group.

**Table 9: Focus groups: Role group target versus participated**

Focus groups: Role group	Target	Participated
Volunteer Support Officer, Trainers, National Training Centre, Community Risk Manager, Communication Centres	12 (2 focus groups)	11
NHQ Frontline Enabler / Corporate Support	12 (2 focus groups)	10
People-led networks	6 (1 Focus group)	7
General Managers	6 (1 Focus group)	7
Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Chief Fire Officer	6 (1 Focus group)	5
Volunteers	12 (2 focus groups)	5
Regional Frontline Enabler / Corporate Support	6 (1 Focus group)	4
<i>Career Firefighters</i>	<i>6 (1 Focus group)</i>	<i>1</i>
Total	66	50

In future research, we recommend that alternative email addresses be obtained for volunteers – they rarely check their Fire and Emergency email address. We also suggest that support from unions is critical to encourage participation from career firefighters. Reaching personnel through channels they trust and consult regularly is critical.

The final sample for our qualitative analysis was small in comparison to the overall workforce at Fire and Emergency. Although, as we reached early theme saturation, this gives us confidence that the themes capture an accurate representation of the experience at Fire and Emergency. However, the lack of representation from certain groups should be acknowledged and identified as a caveat to the insights outlined in this report.

### Interview process

Two Scarlatti researchers participated in each interview and focus group – one lead interviewer and one person taking notes. Interviews included one participant and lasted up to 60 minutes, while focus groups went for up to 90 minutes and included four to seven participants.

Interviews and focus groups have different benefits and disadvantages (see Table 10). Using both data collection methods allowed us to mitigate disadvantages within our time and budget constraints.

**Table 10: Benefits and disadvantages of data collection methods**

	Benefits	Disadvantages
Interviews	Dive deeper into the nuances of personal experience High level of confidentiality	Resource intensive
Focus group	Interactive discussion to understand collective attitudes and organisational dynamics Reach more people within limited resources	Sensitive topics can cause participant discomfort Risk of groupthink

To mitigate the risk of participants feeling uncomfortable when sharing sensitive information in focus groups, we supplemented group discussions with anonymous polls and enabled participants to contact researchers privately within the chat function.

Interviews and focus groups were participant-led, which allowed participants to share what was most important to them and for themes to emerge naturally. To encourage more meaningful discussions, questions were sometimes asked in a different order or omitted altogether – this approach provided flexibility to explore front-of-mind topics in greater depth.

With consent from participants, interviews and focus groups were recorded on Zoom. Transcripts were uploaded to a secure qualitative analysis software for thematic analysis. All interviews and focus groups were held on Zoom to ensure recordings were only accessible to the Scarlatti team and would only be stored on our secure server.

Thematic analysis was used to interpret the data. Rather than applying a predefined framework, themes were allowed to emerge inductively from participant responses. These were then tested for recurrence and relative weight across the dataset to identify the most significant and widely shared perspectives.

## Appendix 2: Suggestions

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Fire and Emergency's size, complexity, and deep-rooted traditions mean that change takes time. Both the analysis and Advisory Rōpū discussions highlighted the need to address challenges at two levels: from the outside in (via systems and procedures) and from the inside out (by modelling good leadership and testing scalable change initiatives).

### Strategy

At a macro level, Fire and Emergency could benefit from a coherent change management strategy that provides clear direction, builds shared commitment, and enables change across all levels.

Fire and Emergency is best placed to design this strategy, likely through rounds of consultation and co-design. For example:

- **Step one:** Facilitate workshops with key stakeholders from across the organisation to surface resistance, confusion, and disengagement. Give space for individuals and groups to share concerns and internal barriers to change.

**Outcomes: Collaboration, engagement and commitment**

- **Step two:** Hold a follow-up workshop to co-design a logic model that defines the purpose for change, the intended outcomes (short, medium, long-term), and the actions and responsibilities needed to achieve them. Use this to anchor all initiatives and communication, and ensure Eke Taumata stays focused and relevant.

**Outcomes: Road map to operationalise strategy**

### Targeted areas for change

At a micro level, multiple suggestions emerged from interviews and focus groups, as well as from the Advisory Rōpū who was tasked with identifying solutions to identified barriers to change. They are summarised below.

#### *Collaboration*

- Increase opportunities for meaningful consultation, particularly on decisions that directly impact teams and individuals.
- Work collaboratively with unions to uphold standards, improve accountability, and reduce inefficiencies.

#### *Leadership development*

- Define and promote what good leadership looks like at Fire and Emergency – set expectations.
- Celebrate upstanders and champion good leaders at all levels of the organisation, highlighting the impact of effective leadership.
- Invest in 'pockets of excellence' by providing resources and recognition to build momentum.
- Continue providing training to increase leadership, strategic and people management capability, including recognising and addressing unconscious bias, delegation and decision making, communication skills and active listening.

*Communication:*

Develop and implement a communications plan that:

- Clearly outlines what a positive workplace culture looks like – in support of the code of conduct
- Ensures decision-makers are well-informed and close to operational realities
- Explains the purpose of systems, processes, rules, and policies in plain language.

*Accountability*

- Clarify what people are accountable for at all levels, covering both interpersonal behaviour and job performance
- Strengthen psychological safety so personnel feel safe and supported to speak up, try new things, and take initiative
- Ensure consistent management of poor behaviour and performance across the organisation, including improving the efficiency of the complaints management system.

*Research and evaluation*

Understand what works:

- Study pockets of excellence to identify what supports their success and how it can be replicated
- Develop a playbook with practical recommendations for scaling up effective practices.

Understand gaps and barriers:

- Interview those with the most influence to understand their level of commitment to change and any barriers
- Conduct deep dives into specific roles, portfolios, and regions to explore differences in culture and performance
- Investigate experiences of minority groups to better support diversity and inclusion.

Understand systems:

- Explore system-level misalignments that impact performance, culture, and strategy (e.g. how systems enable or obstruct collaboration, value creation, or alignment across teams)

## Appendix 3: Information sheets

### Interview information sheet

#### SCARLATTI Culture outcomes qualitative evaluation Interview information sheet

As you may be aware, Fire and Emergency New Zealand has embarked on a culture journey. To ensure a holistic view of the progress being made, Fire and Emergency is working with [Scarlatti](#) (a research and evaluation firm) to lead a qualitative evaluation. This will add insights and a deeper understanding to the quantitative research already in place (such as the 'your say' people experience surveys and the Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey). We'd like to invite you to take part in an interview with us.





**What does Fire and Emergency want to learn through the evaluation?**  
Fire and Emergency wants to gather feedback about what this culture journey 'looks like' for Fire and Emergency personnel, understand its impact, and identify challenges and opportunities for the next part of this journey. The discussion will focus on how you think the organisation is going to create a safe, positive and inclusive environment for people, particularly in areas such as:

- Building trust and increasing opportunities for engagement and influence
- Strengthening people leadership capability
- Providing a safe, positive and inclusive environment
- Raising the bar on acceptable standards of conduct and behaviour.

**Why have I been asked to participate in an interview?**  
Your feedback is important. Scarlatti has randomly selected you to participate so that we hear from a range of people from across Fire and Emergency. We want to hear from you but also want to be clear these interviews are voluntary. It's up to you whether you participate. We will follow an informed consent process with you, this involves providing details about the evaluation and allowing opportunities for questions so that you can make an informed decision about whether you wish to take part. We will also collect verbal consent from you at the beginning of the interview.

**What do the interviews involve?**  
The interviews will be conducted online via Zoom in April 2025 with two members of the Scarlatti team (see below). The interview will last 45 - 60 minutes. Place holders have been scheduled will filled on a first come first served basis.

**Meet the evaluation team...**  
An experienced team from Scarlatti will be conducting these interviews. You can reach out to Dana Carver if you have questions. Or you can email [Culture.Change@fireandemergency.nz](mailto:Culture.Change@fireandemergency.nz)

	<b>Dana Carver</b> <a href="mailto:Dana.carver@scarlatti.co.nz">Dana.carver@scarlatti.co.nz</a> 027 5245 796
	<b>Julie Moularde</b>
	<b>Ruby Coltman</b>
	<b>Molly Coltman</b>

Page 1

## What will Scarlatti do with the insights gained through this work?

The key themes and insights from the evaluation will be developed into reports that will help to monitor progress of Fire and Emergency's culture journey, and to inform its future direction. The findings of this work will be shared in a couple of different ways, including through:

- A report to Fire and Emergency outlining the key themes and findings (if you choose to participate, we will send you a copy of this report personally)
- The key themes identified through this work will be reported by Fire and Emergency as part of the next Eke Taumata Culture Outcomes Ministerial report.

## How will Scarlatti protect my confidentiality?

Scarlatti takes confidentiality seriously and will take multiple steps to keep feedback confidential. One employee with people systems and data expertise from Fire and Emergency's People Branch has provided Scarlatti with a representative sample of 660 personnel. Employee-Led Network (ELN) members have been invited to opt-in by contacting Scarlatti directly. From the sample, and the ELN members who opt-in, Scarlatti will randomly select participants. No raw interview data or identifiable feedback will be shared with Fire and Emergency. All feedback will be combined during analysis and only aggregated information will be reported. No one's name will be included in the report, and we won't share who specifically said what during their interview. If we include any quotes in the final report, we will check with you first to ensure you are comfortable with those quotes being used. Any quotes, if included, will be kept confidential with all identifiable information removed.

We will plan to take detailed notes during your interview. With your permission, the interview will be recorded using Zoom's recording feature to help Scarlatti with interview notes and verbatim quotes. The interview files will not be shared with Fire and Emergency. The recordings, notes and transcripts will be saved on a secure database on Scarlatti's computer network for up to two years beyond the end of the evaluation. This timeframe allows Scarlatti to confirm information if questions arise from the final reports that require us to review interview data. If you are not comfortable being recorded, we would still like to interview you and hear your feedback.

## What if I don't want to do the interview or change my mind during or after the interview?

It is up to you whether you participate. You are free to decline if you don't want to do the interview. You can also withdraw once the interview has started or after it is completed. If you decide you would like to withdraw after the interview, please contact Dana Carver (contact information on page one of this information sheet). We will then remove any information you have provided up to the point where it is impossible to remove it.

We will share draft findings with Fire and Emergency in late May and will submit final reports in July. Please note, once we have begun sharing findings in late-May, we are no longer able to remove your information.

Your wellbeing is important. If you are feeling upset during the interview or are uncomfortable sharing you can skip any questions you want to or stop the interview at any time. We may also stop the interview to check how you are doing. After the interviews we will provide all participants with a list of support services where they can access immediate support (either internally at Fire and Emergency or externally). In rare cases, if we are concerned about your immediate safety, we may contact emergency services and would share enough information for them to respond. We will let you know if we plan to do this.

[More information including Q&As is available on the Fire and Emergency Portal \(login required\)](#)

## Focus group information sheet

### SCARLATTI

As you may be aware, Fire and Emergency New Zealand has embarked on a culture journey. To ensure a holistic view of the progress being made, Fire and Emergency is working with [Scarlatti](#) (a research and evaluation firm) to lead a qualitative evaluation. This will add insights and a deeper understanding to the quantitative research already in place (such as the 'your say' people experience surveys and the Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey).

#### What does Fire and Emergency want to learn through the evaluation?

Fire and Emergency wants to gather feedback about what this culture journey 'looks like' for Fire and Emergency personnel, understand its impact, and identify challenges and opportunities for the next part of this journey. The discussion will focus on how you think the organisation is going to create a safe, positive and inclusive environment for people, particularly in areas such as:

- Building trust and increasing opportunities for engagement and influence
- Strengthening people leadership capability
- Providing a safe, positive and inclusive environment
- Raising the bar on acceptable standards of conduct and behaviour.

#### Why have I been asked to participate in a focus group interview?

**Your feedback is important.** Scarlatti has randomly selected you to participate so that we hear from a range of people from across Fire and Emergency. **We want to hear from you but also want to be clear these focus groups are voluntary.** It's up to you whether you participate. We will follow an informed consent process with you, this involves providing details about the evaluation and allowing opportunities for questions so that you can make an informed decision about whether you wish to take part. We will also collect verbal consent from you at the beginning of the interview.

#### What do the focus groups involve?

The focus groups will be conducted online via Zoom in April 2025 with two members of the Scarlatti team (see below). The focus group will include up to seven participants in similar roles, from across Aotearoa and last 60 - 90 minutes. Place holders have been scheduled and will be filled on a first come first served basis. Options for providing confidential answers during the focus group will also be available by a private chat function.

#### Meet the evaluation team...

An experienced team from Scarlatti will be conducting these interviews. You can reach out to Dana Carver if you have questions. Or you can email [Culture.Change@fireandemergency.nz](mailto:Culture.Change@fireandemergency.nz)



Dana Carver

[Dana.carver@scarlatti.co.nz](mailto:Dana.carver@scarlatti.co.nz)

027 5245 796



Julie Moularde



Ruby Coltman



Molly Coltman

## What will Scarlatti do with the insights gained through this work?

The key themes and insights from the evaluation will be developed into reports that will help to monitor progress of Fire and Emergency's culture journey, and to inform its future direction. The findings of this work will be shared in a couple of different ways, including through:

- A report to Fire and Emergency outlining the key themes and findings (if you choose to participate, we will send you a copy of this report personally)
- The key themes identified through this work will be reported by Fire and Emergency as part of the next Eke Taumata Culture Outcomes Ministerial report.

## How will Scarlatti protect my confidentiality?

Scarlatti takes confidentiality seriously and will take multiple steps to keep feedback confidential. One employee with people systems and data expertise from Fire and Emergency's People Branch provided Scarlatti with a representative sample of 660 personnel. Employee-Led Network (ELN) members have been invited to opt-in by contacting Scarlatti directly. From the sample, and the ELN members who opt-in, Scarlatti has randomly selected participants. No raw interview data or identifiable feedback will be shared with Fire and Emergency. All feedback will be combined during analysis and only aggregated information will be reported. No one's name will be included in the report, and we won't share who specifically said what during their interview. If we include any quotes in the final report, we will check with you first to ensure you are comfortable with those quotes being used. Any quotes, if included, will be kept confidential with all identifiable information removed.

We will plan to take detailed notes during the focus group. The interview notes will not be shared with Fire and Emergency. They will be saved on a secure database on Scarlatti's computer network for up to two years beyond the end of the evaluation. This timeframe allows Scarlatti to confirm information if questions arise from the final reports that require us to review interview data.

## What if I don't want to do the interview or change my mind during or after the focus group interview?

**It is up to you whether you participate.** You are free to decline if you don't want to do the interview. You can also withdraw once the interview has started or after it is completed. If you decide you would like to withdraw after the interview, please contact Dana Carver (contact information on page one of this information sheet). We will then remove any information you have provided up to the point where it is impossible to remove it.

We will share draft findings with Fire and Emergency in late May and will submit final reports in July. Please note, once we have begun sharing findings in late-May, we are no longer able to remove your information.

Your wellbeing is important. If you are feeling upset during the interview or are uncomfortable sharing you can skip any questions you want to or stop the interview at any time. We may also stop the interview to check how you are doing. After the interviews we will provide all participants with a list of support services where they can access immediate support (either internally at Fire and Emergency or externally). In rare cases, if we are concerned about your immediate safety, we may contact emergency services and would share enough information for them to respond. We will let you know if we plan to do this.

[More information including Q&As is available on the Fire and Emergency Portal](#) (login required)

## Appendix 4: Interview guides

### Interviews

Purpose	Questions
<b>Introductions and context</b>	<p>We have been contracted by Fire and Emergency to conduct interviews and focus groups to provide insights on the progress made on their culture journey.</p> <p>As you have seen in the information sheet, your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any point. There will be no negative consequences, and Fire and Emergency will not know that you have been contacted and whether you completed the interview. If you are uncomfortable with any question, let me know, and we can skip it.</p> <p>This interview is to better understand your views and opinions. There are no right or wrong answers.</p> <p>Everything you say is confidential. We will collate all the information we get from respondents into a report. We will not include any identifiable information.</p> <p>Do you have any question?</p> <p>Do you understand your rights, and do you agree to take part in this interview?</p> <p>We would like to record the interview for the purpose of taking verbatim quotes, but it is up to you. The record will only be available to the Scarlatti project team. Are you okay with us recording?</p> <p>We will start now.</p>
<b>Getting to know the respondent</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you tell me a little about your role at Fire and Emergency?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>What does a typical day involve?</i></li> <li>b. <i>What do you enjoy most?</i></li> <li>c. <i>How long have you been in this role? at Fire and Emergency? Always in this role?</i></li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<b>Overarching culture questions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. How does the overall experience at Fire and Emergency feel to you currently?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Have you seen improvements in the last year?</i></li> <li>b. <i>Which was the most significant?</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Fire and Emergency want everyone in the team to thrive at Fire and Emergency. What does this mean in your role?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>How are you being supported to thrive?</i></li> <li>b. <i>What more could be done to support you?</i></li> </ol> </li> <li>4. What does belonging look like at Fire and Emergency?</li> </ol>

Purpose	Questions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>What are the factors or experiences that make you feel like you belong?</i></li> <li>b. <i>What are the factors or experience that make you feel like you don't belong?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 1:</b> <b>Building Trust and Increasing Opportunities for Engagement and Influence</b>	5. Do you feel like your voice is heard on decisions that impact you in the organisation? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>What are your experiences?</i></li> <li>b. <i>What are the factors or experiences that make you feel like you are not being heard?</i></li> </ul>
	6. Where have you seen accountability being taken? How does that make you feel? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Where have you seen accountability not being taken? How does that make you feel?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 2:</b> <b>Strengthening Our People Leadership Capability</b>	7. Can you tell us a little about the person you report to and your relationship with them? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Do they have good communication skills?</i></li> <li>b. <i>Are their words and actions aligned around people and culture?</i></li> <li>c. <i>Do they have the training and support they need to be a good leader?</i></li> <li>d. <i>Do they take accountability when they make mistakes?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 3:</b> <b>Providing a Safe, Positive and Inclusive Environment</b>	8. Fire and Emergency want a safe, positive and inclusive work environment. What does a safe, positive and inclusive environment look like for you? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Would you say your current work environment is safe, positive and inclusive?</i></li> </ul>
	9. Do you feel like you can bring up important issues without fear of reprisal? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>If not, why not?</i></li> </ul>
	10. How is diversity represented within Fire and Emergency? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>How do you feel you are included in the organisation?</i></li> </ul>
<b>Outcome 4:</b> <b>Raising the Bar on Acceptable Standards of</b>	11. Can you name the four Fire and Emergency values? <i>Kia tika: we do the right thing</i> <i>Manaakitanga: we serve and support</i> <i>Whanaungatanga: we are better together</i> <i>Auahatanga: we strive to improve</i>

Purpose	Questions
<b>Conduct and Behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Which one resonates with you the most? Why?</li> <li>b. How do you see these being demonstrated at Fire and Emergency?</li> </ul>
	<p>12. Fire and Emergency has recently implemented a new complains management system, in response to recommendations from the 2022 Independent Review of Fire and Emergency New Zealand’s Workplace Culture and Complaints Handling Practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Are you aware of this new system?</li> <li>b. If yes, how do you think it’s working?</li> </ul>
<b>Close</b>	<p>13. Is there anything else you’d like to add?</p> <p><i>Other researcher, is there anything else you wanted to ask?</i></p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback. You can still decide to withdraw from this research until mid-May, the process is detailed in the information sheet, or you can contact me directly.</p> <p>Would you like us to send you the notes from this interview?</p> <p>Would you like the report that will be given to Fire and Emergency to be sent directly to you?</p> <p><i>Share support options if needed</i></p> <p>Internal supports at Fire and Emergency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety, health and wellbeing volunteer's page: <a href="#">Safety, health and wellbeing   The Portal</a></li> <li>• EAP and Safety, health and wellbeing (on the Portal)</li> </ul> <p>External supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Mental Health foundation: <a href="#">Home   Mental Health Foundation</a></li> <li>• 1737 Need to talk? <a href="#">1737 - Need to Talk?</a></li> </ul>

## Focus group

	Questions
<p><b>Introduction and context</b></p>	<p>We have been contracted by Fire and Emergency to conduct interviews and focus group to provide insights on the progress made on their culture journey.</p> <p>You are joining a focus group today, which means that there are other people involved in this discussion. The benefits of focus groups is the ability to hear from more people involved in the organisation within a limited time. It also allows robust discussions that provide rich insights.</p> <p>However, there are some ground rules about our discussion today:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Everything shared today is confidential and we ask that you do not repeat anything to anyone. This includes the names of participants and researchers. This also means that you should not name anyone else when sharing examples or stories.</li> <li>• You have all been randomly selected. We received a list of names and email grouped by certain departments and randomly contacted a sample in those, of which the first to respond are you all. There may be people you know in this group. There may be people with different levels of seniority. In this focus group, we ask that these are put aside. Everyone here is on even ground for the duration of this focus group.</li> <li>• Share your own experiences and thoughts openly – even if you feel like others on this call don't think or feel the way you do. It is important for us to understand the different perspectives and viewpoints that exist within Fire and Emergency.</li> <li>• All opinions are valid. You may disagree but please do so respectfully. We tackle problems, not people.</li> <li>• Do not interrupt others. Be respectful of everyone.</li> <li>• Stay on topic. I may intervene to keep the conversation on track.</li> <li>• Give everyone a chance to speak. I may signal that it is someone else's turn to speak at times.</li> <li>• We have a lot of questions to ask, so we will need to keep things moving. The chat function in this meeting has been set up to be completely confidential. I will be the only one who can see what you write. If you have anything you want to share, but we run out of time or you don't feel comfortable, you can do this in the chat.</li> </ul> <p>There are moments when we will use the Zoom polls. These are all set up to be anonymous, and we will not share the results of the poll with the group.</p> <p>You are welcome to step away to visit the bathroom or attend to anything you need to. Just make sure you are on mute first. There will be a 5-minute break halfway through this meeting for you to get a cup of tea or coffee or do anything you need.</p>

As you have seen in the information sheet, your participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any point. There will be no negative consequences, and Fire and Emergency will not know that you have been contacted and whether you completed the interview. You can leave this meeting at any point; you don't need to tell us.

If you are uncomfortable with a question, you do not have to answer it. You can write your answer in the confidential chat at any time if you want. I will not respond as my attention is on the group, but I will be reading everything.

This discussion is to better understand your views and opinions. There are no right or wrong answers.

Everything you say is confidential. We will collate all the information we get from respondents into a report. We will not include any identifiable information.

If we are concerned about your wellbeing, for example, if you become upset during the conversation, we will follow-up with you via email.

Do you have any questions?

Please **write Yes in the chat to acknowledge that you understand your rights and agree to take part in this focus group.** If you do not agree, you can leave now.

We'd like to record this meeting to ensure we accurately capture the conversation for our reference. The recording and notes will only be used by Scarlatti researchers involved in this project and will never be shared with Fire and Emergency or anyone else.

Recording also allows us to:

- Remove a participant's input if they withdraw from the research after the interview
- Provide individual responses if requested, which isn't possible without a recording due to the group setting.

**Please write Yes in the private chat if you agree to be recorded, or No if you do not.**

*If someone says no:*

We won't be able to record this meeting, but we'd like to use live transcription as the next best option. It will run in the background, and each of you will be assigned a pseudonym to keep the transcript confidential.

	Questions
	<p>We'll keep a private list linking pseudonyms to participants so we can remove your input if you decide to withdraw from the research later. This helps us retain the rest of the data for analysis.</p> <p>The transcript and notes will only be used by Scarlatti researchers and will never be shared with Fire and Emergency or anyone else.</p> <p><b>Please write Yes in the private chat if you agree to live transcription, or No if you do not.</b></p> <p><i>If someone says no:</i></p> <p>We will not be able to use live transcription for this meeting. The note taker will do their best to capture as much of the conversation as possible, but we acknowledge and accept the risk that the data from this focus group might be discarded if one participant decides to withdraw from the research later.</p> <p>We will start now.</p>
<b>Getting to know the respondent</b>	<p>Let's start with a quick round of introductions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Please share your name, role at Fire and Emergency, and one word that describes what you think about your role at Fire and Emergency.</li> </ol>
<b>Overarching culture questions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. In the past year, have you noticed changes around people and culture at Fire and Emergency?</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Poll 1:</b> Fire and Emergency aims for everyone to thrive in their roles.</p> <p>We have three questions that will show up on your screen now. Please scroll down to answer all three. You can select as many answers as you would like for the first question. We will not show the results and all answers are anonymous.</p> <p>If there is any specific experience you would like to share with us, please do it in the private chat.</p>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Do you feel you and others are currently supported to thrive at Fire and Emergency? How? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What more could be done?</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
	<p><b>CUT IF RUNNING OUT OF TIME</b></p> <p>Let's discuss belonging at Fire and Emergency.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. First, we are going to ask you if you agree or disagree with the statement, <i>I feel like I belong in Fire and Emergency</i>. We will not show the results, and all answers are anonymous.</li> </ol>

	<p>Questions</p> <p>a. If there is any specific experience you would like to share with us, please do it in the private chat.</p> <p><b>CUT IF RUNNING OUT OF TIME</b></p> <p>5. What factors or experiences contribute to a sense of belonging at Fire and Emergency?</p> <p>a. What factors or experiences might hinder a sense of belonging?</p>
<p><b>Outcome 1:</b>  <b>Building Trust and Increasing Opportunities for Engagement and Influence</b></p>	<p>We will now talk about having your voice heard at Fire and Emergency.</p> <p>6. We are again asking you if you agree or disagree with a statement, <i>I feel that my voice is being heard on decisions that impact me in the organisation</i>. We will not show the results, and all answers are anonymous.</p> <p>a. If there is any specific experience you would like to share with us, please do it in the private chat.</p>
	<p>7. What are good practices you have seen at Fire and Emergency to allow people's voices to be heard?</p> <p>a. What else / more would you like to see?</p>
<p><b>5 min BREAK</b></p>	

	Questions
<b>Outcome 2: Strengthening Our People Leadership Capability</b>	<p><b>Poll 2:</b> We are now going to ask a few poll questions. Scroll down to answer all the questions. To answer these, please consider the person you report to. We will not show the results, and all answers are anonymous. We are again asking if you agree or disagree with each statement:</p> <p><i>The person I report to has good communication skills.</i></p> <p><i>The person I report to aligns their words with their actions around people and culture.</i></p> <p><i>The person I report to receives the training and support their need to be a good leader.</i></p> <p><i>The person I report to takes accountability when they make mistakes.</i></p> <p>If there is any specific experience you would like to share with us, please do it in the private chat.</p>
	<p>8. Thinking about accountability at Fire and Emergency:</p> <p>a. Where have you seen accountability being taken and how does that make you feel?</p> <p>b. Where have you seen accountability not being taken and how does that make you feel?</p>
<b>Outcome 3: Providing a Safe, Positive and Inclusive Environment</b>	<p><b>Poll 3:</b> Fire and Emergency want a safe, positive and inclusive work environment. We have three questions that will show up on your screen now. Please scroll down to answer all three. You can select as many answers as you would like for the first question. We will not show the results and all answers are anonymous. If there is any specific experience you would like to share with us, please do it in the private chat.</p>
	<p>9. How close do you think Fire and Emergency is to provide a safe, positive and inclusive work environment to everyone?</p> <p>10. How is diversity represented within Fire and Emergency?</p>
	<p><b>Poll 4:</b> We are again asking you if you agree or disagree with a statement, <i>I can raise important issues without fear of reprisal</i>. We will not show the results and all answers are anonymous. If there is any specific experience you would like to share with us, please do it in the private chat.</p>
	<p>11. What could be done to increase comfort levels talking about important issues at Fire and Emergency?</p>

	Questions
Outcome 4: Raising the Bar on Acceptable Standards of Conduct and Behaviour	<p><b>CUT IF RUNNING OUT OF TIME</b></p> <p>Fire and Emergency has recently implemented a new complaints management system in response to recommendations from the 2022 Independent Review of Fire and Emergency New Zealand’s Workplace Culture and Complaints Handling Practices.</p> <p>Write in the private chat to answer this question:</p> <p>12. How do you feel the new system is working?</p>
	<p><b>CUT IF RUNNING OUT OF TIME</b></p> <p><b>Poll:</b> We would like to now talk about the four Fire and Emergency values. The four Fire and Emergency values are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kia tika: we do the right thing</li> <li>• Manaakitanga: we serve and support</li> <li>• Whanaungatanga: we are better together</li> <li>• Auahatanga: we strive to improve</li> </ul> <p>13. Let us know in the poll if you knew about them or not. We will not show the results and all answers are anonymous.</p>
	<p><b>CUT IF RUNNING OUT OF TIME</b></p> <p>14. How have you seen these demonstrated at Fire and Emergency?</p>
Close	<p>15. Is there anything anyone would like to add before we wrap up?</p> <p>Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback. You can still decide to withdraw from this research until mid-May, the process is detailed in the information sheet, or you can contact me directly.</p> <p>We might follow up with a couple of resources in case you need help. EAP is available to all employees. It is free and anonymous.</p> <p>If you want access to the notes from this meeting, just to your notes exclusively you can let us know so let Ruby know in the chat type notes and we will know what it means.</p>

	Questions
	<p>And the reports we provide to Fire and Emergency will be available to all of you and will be the exact same thing we share with you that we share for the project. There's no summary or anything different. You will see the same thing and we'll send that to you when it's completed, which could be in July.</p> <p>Share support options</p> <p>Internal supports at Fire and Emergency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety, health and wellbeing volunteer's page: <a href="#">Safety, health and wellbeing   The Portal</a></li><li>• EAP and Safety, health and wellbeing (on the Portal) <i>need the links</i></li></ul> <p>External supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Mental Health foundation: <a href="#">Home   Mental Health Foundation</a></li><li>• 1737 Need to talk? <a href="#">1737 - Need to Talk?</a></li></ul>

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# Culture journey qualitative research and insights 2025

## Executive summary

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Fire and Emergency New Zealand (Fire and Emergency) commissioned a qualitative evaluation to better understand the lived experiences of personnel and assess progress towards culture change. This work complements quantitative indicators used to monitor the Eke Taumata programme, aiming to provide a fuller picture of how workplace culture is being experienced across the organisation.

Sixty personnel took part in interviews and focus groups, representing a cross-section of roles, functions, and locations. While the sample size was modest, theme saturation was reached, indicating key issues experienced across Fire and Emergency were identified.

*All findings reflect the perceptions and lived experiences of participants. They should not be interpreted as objective facts, but rather as insights into how Fire and Emergency's culture is being experienced by personnel.*

Participants supported the intent behind Fire and Emergency's culture change efforts and acknowledged signs of progress. However, many felt the pace and depth of change remained insufficient.

### Areas of strength

- **Strong sense of purpose:** Many personnel feel proud of their work and motivated by Fire and Emergency's mission.
- **Pockets of excellence:** Values-led leaders are creating inclusive, high-performing teams in different areas of the organisation.
- **New leadership development is spearheading change:** Recent training efforts are seen as relevant and impactful.
- **Diversity is slowly improving:** Workforce makeup is slowly shifting, and support structures like people-led networks are in place.

### Developing but uneven

- **Leadership remains inconsistent:** Capability varies widely, especially at senior levels, with some legacy behaviours persisting.
- **Culture initiatives lack buy-in and visibility at the frontline:** Intent of change is clear, but clarity the 'why' is not clear to all; delivery is also uneven and often disconnected from daily work.
- **Inclusion lacks depth:** Experiences differ across the organisation; progress is uneven, tokenism and exclusion persist.
- **Engagement efforts lack credibility:** People are sometimes asked for input but may not see action or follow-through.

## Critical risks

- **Accountability is weak:** People are not being held accountable for decisions and outcomes, and leaders are not consistently modelling accountability.
- **Toxic behaviour continues:** Bullying, racism, and misuse of power are still present; performance and behaviour management processes are ineffective and mistrusted.
- **Bureaucracy and silos slow progress:** Complexity and fragmentation drain energy and obstruct change; hierarchical decision-making is leading to paralysis.
- **High workloads are harming wellbeing:** Persistent under-resourcing and pressure to deliver are wearing people down; wellbeing messages and initiatives to address high workloads are perceived as out of touch.
- **Union dynamics are blocking progress:** Union activity is protecting instances of poor behaviour and performance, thus stalling accountability and culture change.

There are signs that culture change is taking hold. Leadership development is gaining momentum, diversity is improving, and values-led leaders are fostering positive micro-cultures. These shifts show what's possible. Progress was noted as slow and uneven – however, meaningful change is expected to take time in a large and complex organisation such as Fire and Emergency. Sustained attention, stronger system-level support, and consistent reinforcement are needed to maintain momentum and embed change across the organisation.

The Eke Taumata Internal Advisory Rōpū members confirmed the relevance of the findings and identified key priorities for enabling culture change – including strengthening accountability systems, improving behaviour management processes, fostering constructive union relationships, and improving communication and leadership capability.



# A place where we all feel we belong.



**Building a safe, positive and  
inclusive environment for us all**

**June 2025**

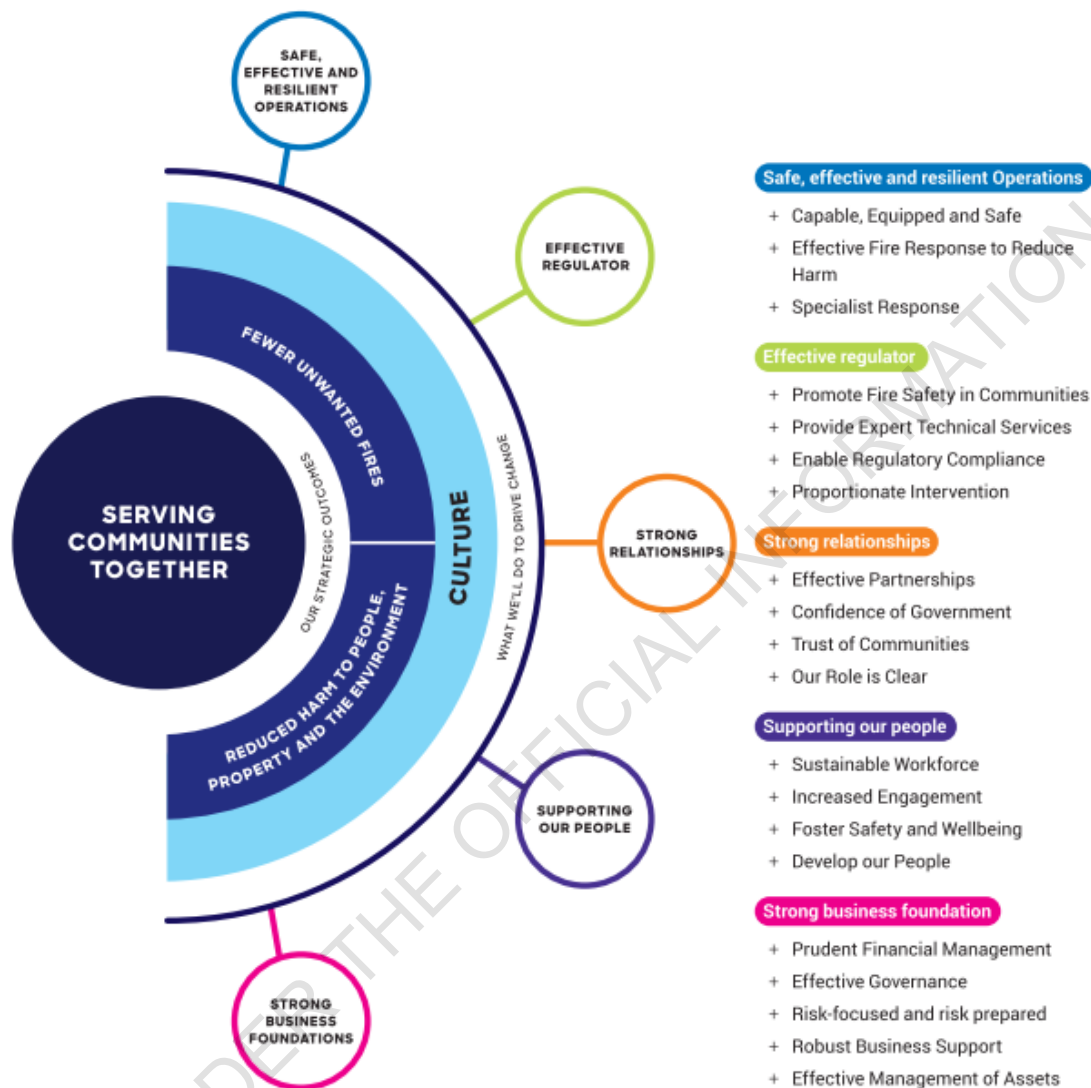
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## Introduction

**Culture is at the heart of Fire and Emergency and underpins everything we do.** In *Tā Mātou Ahunga Rautaki – Our Strategic Direction 2025–2030*, our culture is recognised as the foundation that drives our purpose and empowers us to achieve our strategic outcomes.



Fire and Emergency is proudly working towards our vision of being a place where every person feels a true sense of belonging — a place where people are supported, valued, and empowered to thrive. A safe, inclusive, and positive environment not only enriches the experience of our people, but also strengthens our ability to serve our communities.

To bring this vision to life, we've developed this plan. It sets out the future culture we aspire to, highlights four key areas of focus, outlines the actions we will take, and establishes how we will track our progress — ensuring we keep growing, learning, and improving every step of the way.

## The People Who Will Make Our Aspirations A Reality

To create an environment that enables us to maximise the impact we have, and create an organisation where we all feel we belong, we need every person who is a part of Fire and Emergency to play their part.

We need to ensure all our organisational systems and practices support us to provide a positive experience for all of our people.

Our Executive Leadership Team needs to stand at the front of the organisation's efforts to create an environment where we are supported and enabled to be the very best we can be, in support of our communities and each other.

Our people leaders need to positively engage their people in their mahi, supporting them to be successful, challenging them to be better, creating an environment where positive behaviour is recognised, and inappropriate behaviour is addressed.

Each and every one of us needs to check our own behaviour, ensuring we are positively contributing to supporting and enabling each other, and check our mates' behaviour, being an upstander to challenge behaviour that negatively impacts others.

This plan sets out our goalposts – what we are striving to achieve for our people, and the actions we will take, over a sustained period to achieve those aspirations – knowing that our efforts are focused on seeking to provide every one of our people with a positive experience working or volunteering for Fire and Emergency New Zealand.

## Background to the plan

On 1 July 2017 Fire and Emergency was established bringing together over forty legacy organisations into a unified fire and emergency service for New Zealand.

Unsurprisingly, the merging of so many entities made it difficult to achieve consistent organisational culture and workplace behaviours. Furthermore, there is agreement that behavioural challenges are a well understood concern within Fire Services internationally.

Recognising this, in 2018 our then Chief Executive commissioned retired Judge Coral Shaw to review our organisational culture, including how bullying and harassment was managed, to help the organisation in its aspiration to build a positive workplace culture. The Shaw Report made recommendations on areas where improvement was necessary. These were accepted, and a programme to implement these recommendations commenced.

In 2022 our Board Chair asked Te Kawa Mataaho/Public Service Commission to independently review our progress towards achieving the recommendations of the Shaw Report. This review, the Independent Review of FENZ's Workplace Culture and Complaint Handling Practices, was completed in December 2022.

The high-level findings of the 2022 Review were as follows:

- Fire and Emergency had done a lot of work to address the 2019 Shaw Report recommendations, but still had some way to go to achieve lasting culture change.
- Poor behaviours remained and needed to be addressed urgently.
- Changing the culture must be part of the core work of all leaders at Fire and Emergency
- Stronger leadership is needed at all levels.

One of the overriding reflections from this Review is that the desired organisational culture outlined in the Shaw Report was not fully achieved due to the recommendations being completed as a discrete project, rather than being integrated into business as usual.

The Review recommended that the Executive Leadership Team design and implement a plan to enhance the workplace culture. This plan addresses that recommendation but more importantly, allows Fire and Emergency to take ownership of its organisational culture as it looks to the future.

## Intent of the plan

This plan is our commitment to our organisational culture journey. It states our desired future organisational culture and the key characteristics that will underpin this. It highlights four key pillars where activity will be focused across the organisation, and it outlines actions that will be taken, either as specific programmes of work, or in an ongoing manner, to build and sustain a safe, positive and inclusive environment for all our people, enabling them to focus on delivering service to our communities and to each other.

These actions will occur at multiple levels across the organisation.

- We will focus on aligning all of our key organisational systems and practices to support us in building an organisation where all our people feel they belong and are supported to enable them to thrive.
- Our Executive Leadership Team will own and drive actions that provide clear and accountable leadership of our culture journey.
- Our people leaders act to create a safe, positive and inclusive environment within their teams.
- Each member of Fire and Emergency taking personal ownership for their own behaviours and ensuring they, at all times, contribute to creating a sense of belonging, and a safe, positive and inclusive environment for everyone.
- In addition, a large number of supporting initiatives and programmes will, through the way they are conducted and delivered, make a meaningful contribution to delivering on our culture journey. Individuals will be held accountable for their role in creating a positive and supportive environment for themselves, and their teams.

It is important to explain how we will monitor and report on the outcomes we are seeking. This plan outlines the measurement framework we have developed, enabling us to monitor, evaluate and report on our progress. This will enable us to know what is working, and what more we need to do, to create that safe, positive and inclusive environment for us all.

Beyond this plan, our Executive Leadership Team is also collectively accountable for ensuring that a safe, positive, and inclusive environment becomes a reality for every member of Fire and Emergency through the way they govern the organisation's wider work. We will only achieve the goalposts we have set for ourselves if everything within Fire and Emergency is aligned to the vision we aspire to achieve for our people.

Progress will be shared with our Board, our Minister, all Fire and Emergency personnel, and the public of New Zealand. We want to be very transparent, and be held to account, in the actions we are taking and the progress we are making. We will do this through our accountability documents externally, and through ELT-led communications internally.

## The environment we strive to provide for our people

To enable us to focus our efforts in creating a positive and supportive environment for everyone who works or volunteers for Fire and Emergency, we need to clearly define the goalposts we are striving for – what that positive and supportive environment looks like, what people will experience, and the behaviours that each of us are responsible for demonstrating.

We seek to ensure Fire and Emergency is a place where each and every one of us feels we belong. A place where we are supported and enabled to thrive, so collectively we can focus on delivering service to our communities and to each other.

In this context, thriving is about being supported to perform your role well, to develop, to work or volunteer in an environment that enables you to bring your best self to your work and your team, knowing that you will be valued and appreciated for the positive contribution you make and the different perspectives and experiences you bring.

Enabling you to feel you belong means providing you with an environment that is safe, positive and inclusive, and that is underpinned by our core values:

- Kia tika – do the right thing
- Manaakitanga – we serve and support
- Whanaungatanga – we are better together
- Auahatanga – we strive to improve

To ensure people experience a safe, positive and inclusive environment, individually and collectively we all need to be adaptable and responsive, respectful, accountable, trustworthy, and committed to service.

To learn more about what this looks like in practice, check out the detailed description of the goalposts we are striving for, and what the behaviours we all need to display to achieve this look like in practice, [here](#).

## Our Framework for Our Journey

The Executive Leadership Team is ultimately accountable for ensuring Fire and Emergency is a place where you are supported to enable you play your part in serving New Zealand communities to reduce unwanted fires, and to reduce harm to people, property and the environment.

Achieving this requires a whole-organisation effort.

We need to ensure that all of our organisational systems and practices are aligned to support our goal. Our Executive Leadership Team need to visibly and pro-actively lead the changes required across the organisation and set the tone for both leadership and individual accountability and action. Our people leaders need to create a positive and supportive environment within their teams, recognising positive contribution and challenging actions that work against the environment we strive to provide. All of us need to take responsibility for our own actions and behaviours, and ensure they are aligned with the safe, positive and inclusive environment we all want and deserve. We also need to have the courage to call out actions and behaviours that aren't aligned with this, and to do that, the Executive Leadership Team, and all people leaders, need to create a safe and supportive environment to come forward with concerns.

The framework below details our goalposts, the four pou that will support the achievement of those goalposts the programmes, initiatives, actions and commitments that will enable us to realise our goal, and the supporting programmes and initiatives that will meaningfully contribute to our journey.

Our work started with the establishment of our Eke Taumata programme. The Eke Taumata programme was established to act on the recommendations from the 2022 Te Kawa Mataaho/Public Service Commission review into our workplace culture and complaint handling practices. Those recommendations detail the foundational work necessary to create the platform to achieve meaningful change in people's experiences working or volunteering for Fire and Emergency. Those foundations are almost complete. Our focus now turns to the ongoing role of our leaders, and the alignment of our organisational systems and practices with our culture goalposts.

## Our framework for Our Journey

### Our Goal

Fire and Emergency NZ is a place where all of our people can feel they belong. A place where they are supported to enable them to thrive, so that collectively we can deliver service to our communities and each other.

We seek to provide an environment for our people that is safe, positive and inclusive, where we all are adaptable, responsive, respectful, accountable, trustworthy and committed to service.

### Shifting the Dial on our culture – the environment we provide for our people

Building trust and increasing opportunities for engagement and influence.

Strengthening our people leadership capability.

Providing a safe, positive and inclusive environment.

Raising the bar on acceptable standards of conduct and behaviour.

Organisational Systems and Practices

Executive Leadership Team Commitments

Leader-Led Initiatives and Actions

Individual Accountability for Conduct and Behaviour

Supporting Programmes, Initiatives and Actions

Diversity

Leadership

Policy

Responding to Behaviour and Conduct Complaints

Te Kawa Mataaho/Public Service Commission Review Recommendations

## Our Road Map

This plan connects to our broader strategic direction. In our refreshed strategy we make it clear that our “culture” – the way we do things around here – is a key foundation to our ability to serve New Zealand communities well. This plan details the actions we will take to create an environment, and ways of working, that support the achievement of our strategic priorities.

The following pages detail the specific activities, actions and commitments that will be taken under each of our four pou to deliver on providing an environment where all of our people feel they belong and are supported to enable them to thrive – one that is safe, positive and inclusive.


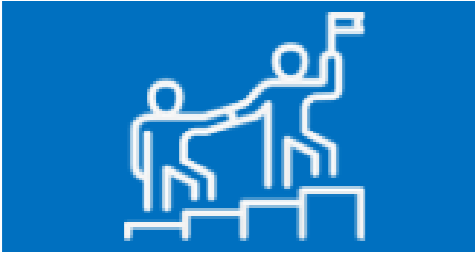


Some of these activities and actions are time-bound i.e., they will deliver specific outcomes and then conclude, however many of them are enduring, i.e., they are changed practices, and approaches or specific actions and commitments that will need to be sustained and continued on an ongoing basis.

For this reason, this is not a plan that will end. To provide a safe, positive, and inclusive environment, we will need to maintain our focus on our actions and commitments over the long-term.

For each of our pou, this plan details activities, actions, and commitments at three different levels:

- Improvements, changes and additions to our organisational systems and practices
- Executive Leadership Team commitments
- Leader-led initiatives and actions

In addition, each and every member of Fire and Emergency needs to take personal ownership for their contribution to providing a safe, positive and inclusive environment, and ensuring, at all times, our own behaviour and conduct aligns with our Code of Conduct and our Values. In addition, we all need to be upstanders – calling out and challenging behaviour we observe that does not align with our Code and Value.

<p><b>Pou One: Building Trust and Increasing Opportunities for Engagement and Influence</b></p> 	<p><b>Why does this matter?</b>  High levels of trust, engagement and opportunities for influence are key drivers of job satisfaction. As a large organisation of 14,000 people, of which nearly 12,000 are volunteers, geographically spread across more than 600 sites, creating consistent opportunities for engagement and influence at Fire and Emergency can be challenging. Our people have told us they want to be more involved in decisions that directly impact them, and the way they undertake their role. They have also told us it is important that they understand how decisions are made in the organisation – even if they don't agree with them. They want to be assured that a diverse range of views have been considered, and to understand the reasons for the direction taken. Furthermore, our internal pulse surveys indicate that while most of our people enjoy working or volunteering at Fire and Emergency, they are often highly cynical and have low trust of organisational decision making. To involve our people, we must consider what actions need to be undertaken to continue to unify both our urban and rural, and our volunteer and career workforces to ensure their voices contribute to our journey to create an environment where we all feel we belong.</p>	<p><b>How do we intend to achieve it?</b>  We will make improvements to our organisational systems and practices so that they better support engaging our people in decisions that impact on them, enabling them to have a voice in those decisions. The Executive Leadership Team will establish an ongoing programme focused on increasing their direct engagement with Fire and Emergency personnel and make decision-making more transparent. Our leaders will embed a range of practices focused on increasing levels of engagement with their teams, eliciting their views on what is working well and what needs to change, and taking action in response to that input.</p>
<p><b>Pou Two: Strengthening People Leadership Capability</b></p> 	<p><b>Why does this matter?</b>  Leadership has the single biggest influence on people's experience at work, or in their volunteer role. Leaders set the tone for the environment we provide for our people. Visible, engaged people leaders, who put their people, and providing a positive, engaging, and safe environment, at the centre of everything they do will significantly shape the experience each and every one of us has in our role with Fire and Emergency. Leadership starts at the top – the consistent, visible, demonstration of our values, expected behaviours, and ways of working from the Board, Chief Executive, Executive Leadership Team and every people leader is critical to creating the safe, positive and inclusive environment we strive to provide. We need visible, engaged people leaders who model the type of environment we are seeking to provide for every member of Fire and Emergency, and will drive the changes required in their areas of influence.</p>	<p><b>How do we intend to achieve it?</b>  We will create opportunities for our leaders to be more visible, directly engaging with people from across the organisation. We will provide a comprehensive suite of both formal and informal development opportunities for our people leaders to ensure they have the skills, knowledge and attributes necessary to make a meaningful impact on our change journey. Our people systems will all be aligned with our leadership framework to ensure they reinforce strong people leadership at every stage of a person's journey with Fire and Emergency, and we will make organisational decision-making more transparent.</p>
<p><b>Pou Three: Providing a Safe, Positive and Inclusive Environment</b></p> 	<p><b>Why does this matter?</b>  Ensuring each and every one of our people has a positive experience working or volunteering for Fire and Emergency can only be achieved if we provide a safe, positive and inclusive environment, free from unwanted or harmful behaviour, where people are respected for who they are, their background, and the individual strengths and differences they bring. We know that some of our people continue to experience behaviour that is harmful, physically and/or mentally, that is inappropriate in any working or volunteering environment, and that negatively impacts on their ability to undertake their role and feel safe and supported in doing so. While we acknowledge that this type of behaviour is the exception, not the norm, the fact that it still occurs must change if we are to enable our people to be successful, and thrive, in their roles and/or careers with Fire and Emergency.</p>	<p><b>How do we intend to achieve it?</b>  We will make substantive changes to the fundamental organisational systems that define and set appropriate standards of behaviour and conduct, ensuring there is absolute clarity on above and below the line behaviour and conduct in Fire and Emergency. We will ensure we have systems and practices that support and encourage diverse thinking, background and experience. We will build programmes that acknowledge and harness the value of diversity within Fire and Emergency, ensuring all diverse voices have the opportunity to be heard, and ensuring opportunities are equally available to all Fire and Emergency personnel. Our leaders will be active champions for diversity, our diversity programmes and initiatives, and role model the expected standards of behaviour and conduct. Our people leaders will be our strongest role-models of our values and expected behaviours.</p>
<p><b>Pou Four: Raising the Bar on Acceptable Standards of Conduct and Behaviour</b></p> 	<p><b>Why does this matter?</b>  We recognise that without a comprehensive approach to managing and maintaining acceptable standards of conduct and behaviour, we will be unable to provide the safe, positive and inclusive environment each and every one of our people deserves to experience when working or volunteering for Fire and Emergency. We know that inappropriate behaviour and conduct is not the norm, however it does still occur within our organisation and this must change. In the past we have allowed inappropriate behaviour and conduct to go un-checked and this must stop. Being clear on what constitutes inappropriate behaviour and conduct, and holding those people who still choose to engage in that behaviour to account, is a necessary part of our journey to create an environment where all of our people feel they belong and are supported to thrive in the mahi they do for Fire and Emergency, and more importantly our communities. This pou focuses not only on managing our conduct and behaviour systems successfully, but also increasing visibility, expectations, and the level we expect all our people to operate at. Ultimately that means we all can expect and experience an organisation that is truly safe, positive, and inclusive.</p>	<p><b>How do we intend to achieve it?</b>  We will ensure the underpinning systems that make clear acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and conduct are robust, aligned, and well understood across the organisation and by every member of Fire and Emergency. Those systems will provide absolute clarity on the consequences of behaviour and conduct that falls below acceptable standards. Our decision-making with respect to inappropriate behaviour and conduct will signal the importance of maintaining high standards, create consistency, and provide clear and visible disincentives for behaving that does not align with our Code of Conduct, and the obligations on each and every one of us to play our part in creating a safe, positive and inclusive work environment. Our people leaders will be our strongest upstanders – calling out inappropriate behaviour and conduct, holding themselves, and each other to account for the leadership role they play in setting the standards of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.</p>

## Our Actions

### Our Goal

**Fire and Emergency NZ is a place where all of our people can feel they belong. A place where they are supported to enable them to thrive, so that collectively we can focus on delivering service to our communities and each other.**

We seek to provide an environment for our people that is safe, positive and inclusive, where we all are adaptable, responsive, respectful, accountable, trustworthy and committed to service.

	Building trust and increasing opportunities for engagement and influence	Strengthening our people leadership capability	Providing a safe, positive, and inclusive environment	Raising the bar on acceptable standards of conduct and behaviour
<b>Programmes, Initiatives, Organisational Systems</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pulse and other Surveys, Qualitative Focus Groups and Interviews - ongoing</li> <li>Advisory Rōpū/Groups, Working Parties, Working Groups and Forums - ongoing</li> <li>Volunteer Voice Forum and Volunteer Engagement Toolkit - 2025/26</li> <li>Online Engagement Tools - 2025-2027</li> <li>Authorising and Decision-Making Framework - 2025/26</li> <li>Engagement, Consultation and Change Management Policy - 2026/27</li> <li>Volunteer Leadership Conferences - ongoing</li> <li>Brigade, Station and District Audits and Integrated OSM Reporting - ongoing</li> <li>Data and data analytics to support decision-making - ongoing</li> <li>Strengthen LAC reporting and integrate with local planning</li> <li>UFBA Relationship Management 2025/26</li> <li>Rautaki Māori - ongoing</li> <li>Development of regional rōpū Māori to support retention - ongoing</li> <li>Portal Refresh - 2025-2028</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership Development suite of programmes - ongoing</li> <li>Talent and Succession Planning (partnership with SDO) – 2025/26</li> <li>Wahine Mentoring Programme 2024-2026</li> <li>Leader Induction and Core Skills Development Programme – 2025/26</li> <li>Leader-Led Engagement Toolkit and regular Communications Updates – 2026/27</li> <li>Volunteer Brigade Leader Support and Review System – 2025/26</li> <li>Embedding our Leadership Development Framework in all of our people systems – 2025-2028</li> <li>Rank and Role project – 2025/26</li> <li>Operational reviews, AAR and lessons management - ongoing</li> <li>Risk reduction and community readiness and recovery training - ongoing</li> <li>Cultural capability uplift - ongoing</li> <li>Rautaki Māori - ongoing</li> <li>Procurement sourcing, capability and business partnering - ongoing</li> <li>Assurance reviews and risk management work plan - ongoing</li> <li>Review governance model and function – 2026/27</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Te Tikanga Whanonga/Our Code of Conduct and supporting Policy Suite – 2024/25</li> <li>Whanaungatanga Programme – 2023 - 2027</li> <li>Employee-Led Networks - ongoing</li> <li>Safety, Health and Wellbeing Roadmap and Work Programme – 2024-2028</li> <li>Peer Support, Counselling, Psychological Support programmes - ongoing</li> <li>Review of attraction and selection approaches – 2025-2028</li> <li>Diversity and Inclusion Framework and Plan – 2025-2030</li> <li>Speak Safe @ Fair Way - ongoing</li> <li>Training Improvement Programme – 2025-2028</li> <li>Response Capability Projects - ongoing</li> <li>Training Progression System Review 2025-2028</li> <li>Unification Initiatives - ongoing</li> <li>Frontline wellbeing programme – 2025-2027</li> <li>Communication Centre environment improvements – 2025-2027</li> <li>Rautaki Māori - ongoing</li> <li>Develop Pūrākau reflecting the importance and unique contribution of wahine - ongoing</li> <li>Cultural identity and discovery initiatives and programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Te Tikanga Whanonga/Our Code of Conduct – 2024/25</li> <li>Bullying, Harassment and Victimisation Policy – 2024/25</li> <li>Complaints Management System - ongoing</li> <li>Sexual Harm Policy – 2024/25</li> <li>Managing Inappropriate Behaviour and Conduct Policy – 2024/25</li> <li>Criminal Conviction Vetting Policy – 2024-26</li> <li>Guidance material and education programmes to support leaders in responding appropriately to inappropriate behaviour and conduct - ongoing</li> <li>Financial stewardship including business partnering and administration of levy provisions - ongoing</li> <li>Integrity framework – 2026/27</li> <li>Maintenance and administration of canteens – 2025/26</li> <li>Legal, privacy and OIA services and training - ongoing</li> </ul>
<b>Executive Leadership Team Commitments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transparent decision-making - ongoing</li> <li>Quarterly site-based ELT meetings - ongoing</li> <li>ELT attendance at Branch, Region, District events including conferences, recognition events, honours and awards ceremonies - ongoing</li> <li>ELT-led online drop-in sessions - ongoing</li> <li>“Our People First” approach to communications, media comment and information sharing - ongoing</li> <li>Quarterly union and association engagement forums - ongoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Regular Leader Drop-In Sessions - ongoing</li> <li>ELT meeting observer opportunities - ongoing</li> <li>Coaching and mentoring of current and aspiring leaders - ongoing</li> <li>Attendance at branch leadership team meetings - ongoing</li> <li>Participation in leadership forums, development programmes and other leader-level engagements - ongoing</li> <li>Executive Leadership Team sub-committees - ongoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Championing and supporting employee-led networks</li> <li>Recognition and reward initiatives – Nga Tohu Raukawa, Fire and Emergency Awards</li> <li>Leadership of Matariki celebrations and other cultural programmes and initiatives</li> <li>Being a safe place to raise concerns</li> <li>Visible demonstration of our values and supporting behaviours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Decision-making on our most serious behaviour and conduct investigations</li> <li>Six-monthly monitoring and review of complaints management system</li> <li>Transparent reporting on complaints management system outcomes and effectiveness</li> <li>Ownership of “the standard you walk past is the standard you set” – being our strongest upstanders</li> </ul>
<b>Leader-Led Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Driving the active engagement of our people in the design and delivery of initiatives that will have a direct or indirect impact on them</li> <li>Responding to quantitative and qualitative information on our people’s experience</li> <li>Drop-in sessions, team meetings, and working groups</li> <li>Brigade-level culture surveys</li> <li>Engagement sessions on He taonga te ahi, he tangata, te taiao and the application of it to our mahi</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tier Three leadership cohort</li> <li>Cascading personal leadership statements</li> <li>Coaching and mentoring of current and aspiring leaders</li> <li>Providing development opportunities for current and aspiring leaders to build their leadership capability</li> <li>Cross-branch partnering to provide clear understanding of needs and expectations between teams and to break down silos</li> <li>Community Risk Management connection and cohesion</li> <li>Operational staff recognition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Values-based recognition and reward</li> <li>Leading values sessions with teams</li> <li>Utilising restorative practices as an early response to interpersonal and team-based issues and challenges</li> <li>Shout-out boards</li> <li>Team charters</li> <li>Regional, local diversity and inclusion groups</li> <li>Education around “serving” not being at the cost of individual safety and wellbeing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visible upstanders to calling out inappropriate behaviour and conduct</li> <li>Decision-making on inappropriate behaviour and conduct</li> <li>Strengthened approach to performance management, with an emphasis on both the what (delivery) and the how (contribution to culture) in setting performance expectations, monitoring performance and providing performance feedback</li> <li>Leaders’ intents issued across districts</li> <li>Zero tolerance policy for unsafe deployment conduct</li> </ul>
<b>Individual Accountability</b>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring and checking own behaviour</li> <li>Acknowledging others for behaviour that aligns with our Code of Conduct</li> <li>Challenging, or raising concerns, about behaviour that doesn’t align with our Code</li> <li>Respecting, supporting, and valuing others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitoring and checking own behaviour</li> <li>Challenging directly, or escalating to a people leader, behaviour that doesn’t align with our Code</li> </ul>

- Strategic Implementation Programme - aligning our investment strategy and approach with our strategic priorities, ensuring that we are investing time, effort and resources where they will have the most significant impact
- Future State Capability (Future Operating Capability) – understanding and aligning our service delivery operating model with current and emerging needs, and community risk profiles.
- Emergency Management and Incident Management Capability Framework and Systems – improving our ability to manage and respond to long duration and complex, incidents, improving co-ordination, safety and effectiveness.
- Operational Doctrine Development and Refresh – using the lessons from our operational audits, reviews and deep dives to develop a comprehensive suite of operational doctrine to guide our operational practice and decision-making.
- Paearu Mahi – developing and maintaining a high level of senior command operational response capability, and providing organisational assurance of senior-level operational command capability.
- Safe Person Concept and Dynamic Risk Assessment Review – developing an action plan to enhance, and provide assurance over, the understanding and effective application of safe person concept and dynamic risk assessment in our frontline operational personnel. (In partnership with People branch)
- Volunteer Support Officer Handbook – comprehensive training programme and supporting resources for Volunteer Support officers, to enhance their ability to support volunteer brigade and ensure they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to monitor and improve brigade operational readiness, safety and training delivery.
- Pihanga – national roll-out of the Pihanga programme, focused on reducing the growing administrative burden placed on volunteer brigades.
- Health Standards and Health Monitoring Programme -establishing and implementing a programme to manage the health and wellbeing of our operational personnel, ensuring they are, and remain, fit for duty, and monitoring the potential impact of known exposures on their health and wellbeing over time.
- Local Advisory Committee Establishment and Operation – establishing the remaining local advisory committees, and continuing to support those committees, providing a strengthened connection and engagement with local communities, improving our understanding of community strengths and needs, and enabling us to partner more effectively with communities.
- Performance Development, Remuneration and Benefits System, Practices and Policies Reviews – aligning our performance development, remuneration and benefits approaches with good practice, ensuring they contribute to recognising and reinforcing contribution to organisational priorities, including the creation of a safe, positive and inclusive environment for all our people.
- Internal Audits – strengthening the effectiveness of our internal systems and practices through actioning outcomes and recommendations from internal audits, ensuring our internal systems and practices are effective, efficient and fit for purpose.
- Policy review programme - ensuring our policies and supporting guidance remain current and fit for purpose and enhance and contribute to creating a place where all of our people feel they belong and are supported to thrive.

Detail on all of the actions and initiatives in this plan can be found in the respective Branch plans supporting our organisational culture plan, using the key below to identify which Branch is leading the work, or, for those that are all of organisation actions or initiatives, in Appendix One of this plan.

All of Organisation

People Branch

Service Delivery Operations

Service Delivery Design

Finance and Business Operations

Office of the Chief Executive

Kaupapa Māori and Cultural Communities

Organisational Strategy and Capability Development

## How Will We Know We Are Making Progress?

A key part of this plan is measuring the outcomes we achieve. Ongoing measurement not only gives us confidence that we're on the right track, but also helps us find new ways to improve and create lasting, positive change.

We've developed an outcomes measurement framework specifically for organisational culture. This framework is informed by valuable insights from the NZ Defence Force and the Office of the Auditor-General, based on their work tracking the impact of NZDF's Operation Respect.

Our organisational culture outcomes measures include both an overall assessment against our organisational culture goals, and individual reporting against the four outcomes. Our organisational outcomes measurement framework uses three distinct sources of data to provide a holistic assessment of how progress is being made:

- Annual quantitative data generated through all-people Pulse surveys, including both direct and indirect measures of the organisational culture outcomes
- Regular monitoring of people metrics, generated through HRIS and other people systems
- Annual qualitative insights generated through independent evaluation activities

### Culture outcomes measurement framework – Data sources

Data sources by culture outcome				
Building trust and increasing opportunities for engagement and influence.	Strengthening our people leadership capability	Providing a safe, positive and inclusive environment	Raising the bar on standards of conduct and behaviour	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'your say' pulse surveys</li> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'your say' pulse surveys</li> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Leadership development data</li> <li>• Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey</li> <li>• People data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'your say' pulse surveys</li> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Kia Toipoto gender and ethnic pay gap analysis</li> <li>• Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey</li> <li>• People data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'your say' pulse surveys</li> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Complaints management data</li> <li>• Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey</li> <li>• Health, Safety and Wellbeing data</li> </ul>	
Data sources for benefits measurement				
Improved trust and confidence	Reduced risk of harm or reputational damage	Improved Employee and Volunteer engagement	Employee and Volunteer wellbeing	Capability uplift
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'your say' pulse surveys</li> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'your say' pulse surveys</li> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey</li> <li>• Work Health safety data</li> <li>• Complaints data</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'your say' pulse surveys</li> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Reduced absenteeism/turnover</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'your say' pulse surveys</li> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Kia Toipoto gender and ethnic pay gap analysis</li> <li>• People data</li> <li>• Complaints management data - Reduced incidents of harm</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'your say' pulse surveys</li> <li>• Qualitative research</li> <li>• Whanaungatanga Wellbeing Survey</li> <li>• Training data</li> </ul>

**Annual reporting will be shared across the organisation to keep everyone informed and engaged in our progress.** It will support continuous improvement and guide updates to our organisational culture plan, helping us prioritise actions and stay focused on what matters most in the year ahead.

### Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

Outcomes measures will provide us with information on how we are performing, and a continuous improvement approach will ensure that our data informs future organisational culture initiatives.

Fire and Emergency will produce six-monthly organisational culture reporting in line with confirmed outcomes measures and present this information alongside organisational culture trends and

highlighting opportunities for improvement to the Executive Leadership Team. The insights will inform the annual Branch business planning process and ensure Fire and Emergency is constantly working to improve organisational culture.

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## The environment we strive to achieve – our goalposts in detail

**Fire and Emergency New Zealand is a place where you feel you belong. It's a place where you are supported and enabled to thrive, so collectively we can deliver service to our communities and each other.**

===

Feeling you **belong** means providing you with an environment that is:

### **Safe:**

- Your physical, mental, spiritual, cultural, sexual identity and overall wellbeing is supported
- You can be yourself, in a manner that is respectful of others
- You are empowered to make decisions to keep yourself and others safe
- You are supported to learn from mistakes
- Everyone is open to respectful challenge, alternative ideas, and perspectives

### **Positive:**

- We all focus on seeking out the positives and making things better
- We are proud to be a part of Fire and Emergency New Zealand
- We support and help each other through challenging situations
- We all have a desire to do better and to positively contribute
- We celebrate success and recognise the contribution we all make to the organisation
- We are optimistic and ambitious for what Fire and Emergency can achieve and contribute to Aotearoa
- We all assume good intent in others and all act with good intent ourselves
- We tell our story/whakapapa and celebrate where we have come from, collectively and individually

### **Inclusive:**

- Everyone can feel like their voice is heard
- We listen to, and are accepting of, others and their views when they are expressed respectfully and constructively
- There are opportunities to be involved in decisions that impact you
- Multiple differing perspectives are considered in our decision-making
- We actively share knowledge and information with each other
- We recognise and respect that there is strength in diversity, both of background and of thought
- We actively work to uphold the mana of others
- We uphold our commitments to work with Māori as tāngata whenua
- Decisions are explained clearly

## Expected Behaviours

Individually and collectively, our behaviours are		
	Which is	Which isn't
<b>Adaptable and Responsive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing and applying creative solutions in a safe manner</li> <li>Responding to what is in front of us and what is changing around us</li> <li>Listening, learning, reflecting, and responding to new and/or better information</li> <li>Promoting effective constructive problem solving</li> <li>Always being ready to deal with the unexpected, building flexibility into our approach and keeping our options open</li> <li>Understanding a single person does not hold the answer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jumping in and acting without thought</li> <li>Being unplanned</li> <li>Working outside our organisational parameters and systems</li> </ul>
<b>Respectful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We listen with purpose and curiosity, with the intention of truly understanding others' points of view</li> <li>Acknowledging the strengths in diversity, and respect others for their individuality</li> <li>Reserving judgement until we have understood others' points of view</li> <li>Respecting the strengths, experiences and capabilities others bring</li> <li>Recognising that everyone has something valuable to contribute and we are all responsible for empowering them to contribute</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Related to hierarchy, age, gender or experience, rank</li> <li>Blind agreement or disagreement</li> <li>Using your biases, background, and experiences as an excuse or to devalue others</li> <li>Personal criticism of the individual</li> </ul>
<b>Accountable</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being responsible for decisions and resulting outcomes</li> <li>Taking personal ownership of your actions, always striving to do your best and be the best version of yourself</li> <li>Thinking about the impact of your actions or words on yourself and others before proceeding</li> <li>Being an upstander – challenging actions and behaviours that are not aligned with a safe, positive, and inclusive environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blaming others</li> <li>Setting yourself or others up to fail</li> <li>Getting drawn into crowd behaviours</li> <li>Turning a blind eye</li> </ul>
<b>Trustworthy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acknowledging that building trust takes time and actively working to build trust internally and externally</li> <li>Being transparent and honest</li> <li>Actively contributing to creating a positive experience for others</li> <li>Being there when others need support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A "one and done" or "ticking the box"</li> <li>A short-term tool</li> <li>Saying one thing and doing another</li> </ul>
<b>Committed to Service</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ethos of putting others above oneself</li> <li>Demonstrating humility</li> <li>Striving to be trusted</li> <li>Outward looking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Going above and beyond to the extent where it creates harm, to ourselves or others</li> <li>Being self-serving, or focused on bettering oneself</li> <li>Putting your own goals, aspirations, and performance above those of the organisation</li> </ul>

## Organisational Values

Our organisational values underpin our organisational culture aspirations and provide clarity for how we undertake our work, and how we behave. All organisational culture change activity should support or reinforce our values and expected behaviours, allowing us to realise our organisational culture vision.



### **Kia tika** **We do the right thing**

- We hold each other to high standards.
- We are trusted by and trusting of others.
- We do what we say we will.
- We show courage to do what's right rather than what's easy.
- We take responsibility and think of others.



### **Manaakitanga** **We serve and support**

We work towards strengthening and developing by being proactive and responsive to the needs of others, including our teams and communities.



### **Whanaungatanga** **We are better together**

- We seek opportunities to connect and build inclusive relationships with others – our team members, different parts of our organisation, our partners and our communities.
- We bring people together, celebrate difference and provide a safe environment for all to thrive.



### **Auahatanga** **We strive to improve**

- We meet the needs of our communities by looking to the future and continuously finding ways to make things better.
- We are flexible and adaptable.
- We embrace change.
- We acknowledge what's gone before and learn from experiences that help us adapt to future needs.

## Appendix One: Our “All of Organisation” Actions

### Pou One: Building Trust and Increasing Opportunities for Engagement and Influence

- Refreshing our portal (intranet) to significantly enhance its effectiveness as a key two-way communication and engagement tool for Fire and Emergency. This refresh will consider structure, content, accessibility and the introduction of online engagement tools and forums to create opportunities for two-way engagement. *Over a three year period from 2025 to 2028.*

Our Executive Leadership Team will give effect to the following commitments, and embed in “the way we do things around here “, on an ongoing basis:

- Greater transparency in their decision-making – communicating and making easily accessible, the decisions they make and the information they considered in making those decisions. *Ongoing.*
- Holding their quarterly strategic meetings at Fire and Emergency sites across the motu and combining these with the opportunity for informal interaction and engagement with personnel located, or working out of, those sites and the surrounding areas. *Ongoing.*
- Holding regular ELT-led drop-in sessions, to share information on key things happening across the organisation, hear from our people, and answer questions/provide more information on areas of interest to attendees. *Ongoing.*
- Establishing and leading an “our people first” approach to communications, media comment and information sharing – ensuring that information that will be shared externally, is made available to our people first, wherever practicable. *Ongoing.*
- Holding quarterly union and association engagement forums – discussing and sharing views on matters of mutual interest, seeking input into key initiatives and programmes, and providing updates on key strategic programmes and initiatives. *Ongoing.*

Our people leaders will embed the following initiatives and actions in their day-to-day leadership practices on an ongoing basis:

- Driving the active engagement of our people in the design and delivery of initiatives that will have a direct or indirect impact on them, ensuring they have a strong voice in the way we shape our work and in decision-making on matters that impact them. *Ongoing.*
- Using the qualitative and quantitative data and insights we gain from surveys, focus groups and other forums on our people’s experience working or volunteering for Fire and Emergency to continuously improve the environment we provide for our people. *Ongoing.*
- Using a wide range of team engagement methods to engage with, share information with, understand the views and perspectives of our people, and enable them to contribute to key programmes of work and organisational decision making. This will include tools like drop-in sessions, team meetings and working groups. *Ongoing.*

## Pou Two: Strengthening people leadership capability

Our Executive Leadership Team will give effect to the following commitments, and embed them in “the way we do things around here “, on an ongoing basis:

- Holding regular leader drop-in sessions, enabling our people leaders to engage directly with ELT on topics of interest, including a Q and A session. *Ongoing.*
- Providing opportunities for our people leaders to observe ELT meetings. *Ongoing.*
- Formal and informal coaching and mentoring of current and aspiring leaders – formal coaching and mentoring will occur as part of the broader talent and succession planning framework. *Ongoing.*
- Making themselves available for attendance at branch leadership team meetings other than their own branches to enable direct engagement with people leaders on a regular basis. *Ongoing.*
- Actively participating in leadership forums, leadership development programmes and other leader-level engagements, either as presenters or as participants in the programmes. *Ongoing.*
- Continuing to develop and enhance the practice of establishing ELT sub-committees on key matters, enabling direct participation of tier three and four organisational leaders in ELT-level oversight and decision-making. *Ongoing.*

Our people leaders will embed the following initiatives and actions in their day-to-day leadership practices on an ongoing basis:

- Continuation of the Tier Three leadership cohort, building the level of influence this group has over organisational decision-making, organisational leadership, and leading our journey to create a safe, positive and inclusive environment for all Fire and Emergency personnel. *Ongoing.*
- Cascading personal leadership statements, that create a visible commitment to effective and transparent people leadership, enabling people to feel comfortable challenging our people leaders if they don’t live up to the commitments in those statements, and setting a very visible and transparent stake in the ground on the role they will play in championing a place where there people are supported and enabled to thrive in their roles and careers, and in support of New Zealand communities. *Ongoing.*
- Formal and informal coaching and mentoring of current and aspiring leaders – formal coaching and mentoring will occur as part of the broader talent and succession planning framework. *Ongoing.*
- Making themselves available to attend others’ leadership team meetings, to create greater visibility of our people leaders, and provide development opportunities. *Ongoing.*

## Pou Three: Providing a safe, positive and inclusive environment

Our Executive Leadership Team will give effect to the following commitments, and embed them in “the way we do things around here “, on an ongoing basis:

- Championing and supporting employee-led networks through formal sponsor role, attendance at meetings and events, and participation in networks. *Ongoing.*
- Leading and championing Fire and Emergency recognition initiatives including Nga Tohu Raukawa and Fire and Emergency Awards. *Ongoing.*
- Leadership and participation in cultural identity and discovery initiatives including Matariki celebrations, Kaupapa Māori sessions at ELT meetings, Te Reo Māori lessons and attendance of cultural capability programmes. *Ongoing.*
- Creating a visible profile across the organisation that builds trust and provides people with a safe place to raise concerns. *Ongoing.*
- Visible demonstration of our values and supporting behaviours, holding each other to account for continuously checking our own and each other’s behaviour to ensure it role models the expectations in our Code of Conduct, and builds respect, trust and confidence with our people. *Ongoing.*

Our people leaders will embed the following initiatives and actions in their day-to-day leadership practices on an ongoing basis:

- Embedding values-based recognition and reward practices into their day-to-day leadership approach. *Ongoing.*
- Leading values sessions with their teams, enabling people to understand what displaying our values looks like in practice, and how their teams will give effect to this in their own ways of working. *Ongoing.*
- Using restorative practices as an early response to interpersonal and team-based issues and challenges – work with individuals and teams to resolve any issues at as low a level as possible as soon as they surface. *Ongoing.*
- Implementing recognition practices that provide tangible, visible ways for the efforts of people to be recognised by both leadership and peers through initiatives like shout-out boards, shout-outs at team meetings. *Ongoing.*
- Establish team charters with their teams that establish commitments from all team members on ways of working and interacting that support the provision of a safe, positive and inclusive environment for every team member. *Ongoing.*
- Participating, championing and supporting regional and local diversity and inclusion groups. *Ongoing.*

Each and every member of Fire and Emergency will take personal responsibility for:

- Monitoring and checking their own behaviour, and ensuring that, at all times, it aligns with the expectations clearly detailed in our Code of Conduct. We will each play our part in ensuring our own behaviour and conduct contributes to an environment where every one of our colleagues feels respected, valued, and included. *Ongoing.*
- Acknowledging their colleagues when they behave and conduct themselves in ways that align with our Code of Conduct. *Ongoing.*
- Challenging others when their behaviour and conduct falls below those standards, or, if we don’t feel comfortable doing this directly, raising it with a leader to address. *Ongoing.*

- Actively playing our part, as a member of the Fire and Emergency team, in ensuring ALL team members are respected, supported and valued for who they are and the diverse experiences, thought, and backgrounds they bring to the team - recognising the strength that comes from the strong sense of team that Fire and Emergency is built on. *Ongoing.*

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## Pou Four: Raising the bar on acceptable standards of conduct and behaviour

Our Executive Leadership Team will give effect to the following commitments, and embed them in “the way we do things around here”, on an ongoing basis:

- Taking on the role of decision-maker for our most serious behaviour and conduct investigations, applying a consistent lens that raises the bar on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and raises the bar on the sanctions for behaviour and conduct that constitutes serious misconduct, harms others, or otherwise negatively impacts on the experience our people have while working or volunteering for Fire and Emergency. *Ongoing.*
- Regular monitoring and review of our complaints management system, its performance and effectiveness. *Ongoing.*
- Leading communication on our complaints management system outcomes and effectiveness, and championing improvements. *Ongoing.*
- Being our strongest upstanders in calling out inappropriate behaviour and conduct – taking ownership for setting the highest standards of behaviour and conduct, and for setting standards for unacceptable behaviour and conduct – driven through giving visibility and meaning to “the standard you walk past is the standard you set”. *Ongoing.*

Our people leaders will embed the following initiatives and actions in their day-to-day leadership practices on an ongoing basis:

- Being very visible upstanders – calling out inappropriate behaviour and conduct whenever they see it, supporting people to understand why the behaviour is inappropriate and what acceptable behaviour and conduct looks like. *Ongoing.*
- Being decision-makers on allegations of inappropriate behaviour and conduct, applying a consistent lens that raises the bar on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. *Ongoing.*
- Strengthening their focus on performance development and management, with an emphasis not just on the what (delivery) but also the how (contribution to culture) in setting performance expectations, monitoring performance and providing performance feedback. *Ongoing.*

Each and every member of Fire and Emergency will take personal responsibility for:

- Monitoring and checking their own behaviour, and ensuring that, at all times, it aligns with the expectations clearly detailed in our Code of Conduct. *Ongoing.*
- Challenging others, or raising concerns with organisational leaders, when we observe behaviour and conduct falls below those standards. *Ongoing.*
- Being an upstander, calling out, challenging, not tolerating behaviour that has a negative impact on others, excludes or devalues others, or otherwise works against providing a safe, positive and inclusive environment. *Ongoing.*

# Speak Safe @ Fair Way

**TO**

Fire and Emergency New Zealand

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**FROM**

Name: Gordon Hart

Position: Client Manager

Company: Fair Way Resolution Limited

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**JANUARY - MARCH 2025**



**kia tau**  
YOUR EXPERTS  
IN DISPUTE  
RESOLUTION

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# Executive Summary

This quarter continued a healthy level of engagement from multiple stakeholders. This included constructive meetings with PSA, FECA and UFBA, presentations with a wide array of teams to help raise awareness of the service, and attendance at the Fire and Emergency Regional Volunteer Leaders Conference in Dunedin where we were able to connect with over 200 volunteers.

The number of service requests has settled at around 15 per month (49 in the October – December 2024 quarter, 45 in this quarter). Bullying continues to be the leading cause of complaints. Fourteen new investigations have commenced during the quarter. Four Final Findings Reports have been issued in the quarter (bringing the total to nine to date), resulting in 31 live investigations as of 31 March 2025.

The focus on the timeliness of investigations has continued with further refinements to the fortnightly Investigation Progress Update Report to provide more detailed information on the progress of investigations, ensuring greater timeliness awareness and transparency.

Engagement of members with the Kāpehu service has continued to increase, both in terms of individuals using the service (17 this quarter compared to 11 last quarter) as well as the number of coaching sessions undertaken (28 this quarter compared to 22 last quarter). A pleasing development is a trend for callers to be using the service outside of the complaint process, suggesting that the service is being used before a matter escalates into a complaint.

Despite good feedback received about the Speak Safe scheme, there remains skepticism among members as to whether cultural change within the organisation will be achieved. There is also concern about the decision-making process once investigations are completed, and there may be benefit in increased education of members regarding the decision-making process.

## 1. Service Usage

Month	General Enquiries	Complaints	Total Service Requests
May 2024	4	44	48
Jun 2024	4	28	32
Jul 2024	4	19	23
Aug 2024	6	18	24
Sep 2024	3	26	29
Oct 2024	2	21	23
Nov 2024	2	8	10
Dec 2024	3	13	16
Jan 2025	1	10	11
Feb 2025	1	17	18
Mar 2025	4	11	15
<b>Running Total</b>	<b>34 (14%)</b>	<b>215 (86%)</b>	<b>249</b>

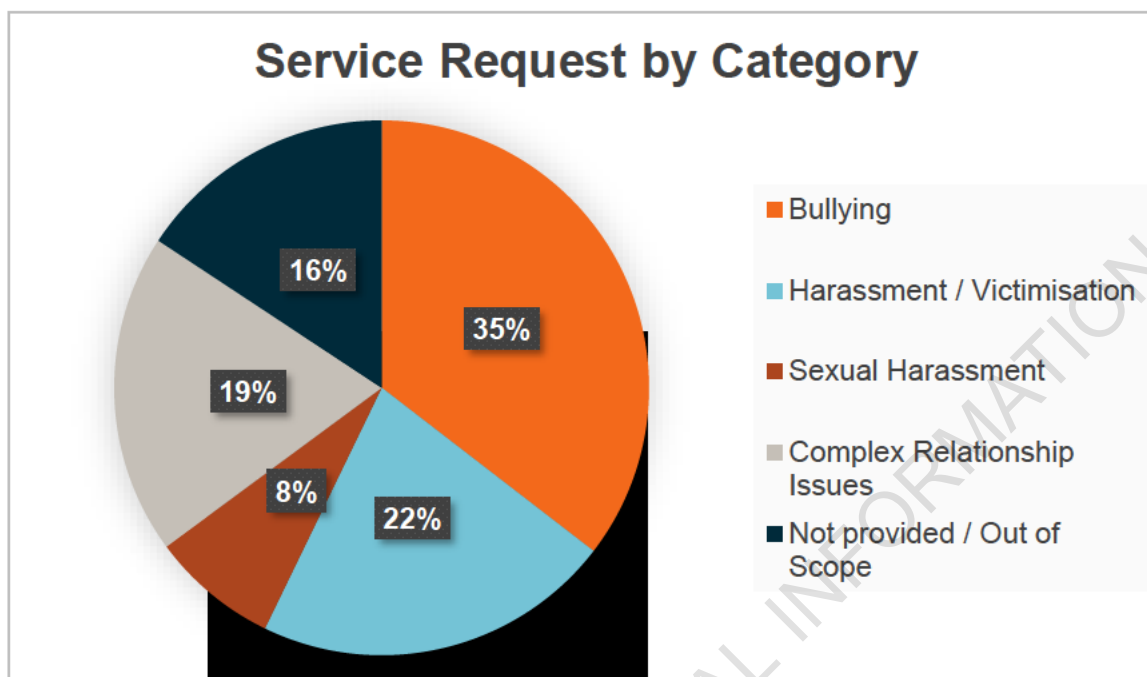
Table 1.1 Total Service Requests

## Service Requests by Category

Month	Bullying	Harassment / Victimisation	Sexual Harassment	Complex Relationship Issues	Not provided / Out of scope
May 2024	19	9	2	12	8
Jun 2024	16	5	4	5	9
Jul 2024	13	10	0	3	8
Aug 2024	6	5	3	9	2
Sep 2024	6	20	7	10	2
Oct 2024	10	2	0	5	7
Nov 2024	5	1	1	1	4
Dec 2024	12	0	2	3	1
Jan 2025	5	2	0	4	2
Feb 2025	7	6	1	5	3
Mar 2025	7	5	3	1	1
<b>Running Total</b>	<b>106 (35%)</b>	<b>65 (22%)</b>	<b>23 (8%)</b>	<b>58 (19%)</b>	<b>47 (16%)</b>

Table 1.2 Service Requests by Category

Note: A single Service Request may relate to multiple incidents/matters. The total for each row in the table above may be higher than the actual number of Service Requests received in any given month, as some Service Requests will likely fall under more than one category. The information is provided to give an overall view of the nature of the Service Requests we are receiving.

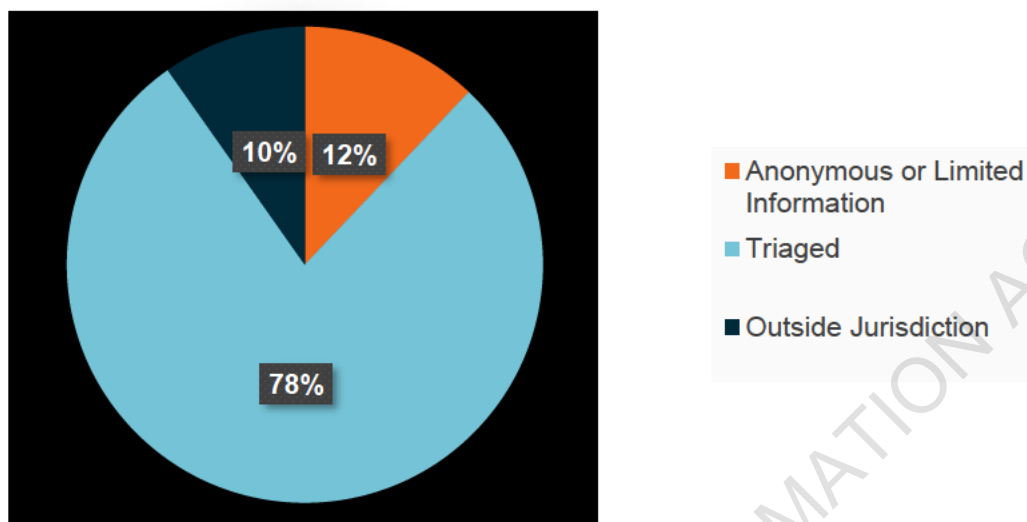


## 2. Complaints

Month	Outside Jurisdiction	Anonymous or Limited Information	Triaged	Total Complaints
May 2024	4	8	32	44
Jun 2024	0	6	22	28
Jul 2024	3	2	14	19
Aug 2024	2	0	16	18
Sep 2024	2	3	21	26
Oct 2024	4	1	16	21
Nov 2024	2	1	5	8
Dec 2024	1	1	11	13
Jan 2025	1	1	8	10
Feb 2025	2	1	14	17
Mar 2025	0	2	9	11
<b>Running Total</b>	<b>21 (10%)</b>	<b>26 (12%)</b>	<b>168 (78%)</b>	<b>215</b>

Table 2.1 Complaints and Scope

## Complaints



### 3. Triage

Month	Complainant did not wish to proceed to formal stage	Complaint progressing to formal stage	Total Triaged
May 2024	15	17	32
Jun 2024	9	13	22
Jul 2024	1	13	14
Aug 2024	3	13	16
Sep 2024	2	19	21
Oct 2024	1	15	16
Nov 2024	0	5	5
Dec 2024	2	9	11
Jan 2025	1	7	8
Feb 2025	3	11	14
Mar 2025	0	9	9
<b>Running Total</b>	<b>37 (22%)</b>	<b>131 (78%)</b>	<b>168</b>

Table 3.1 Complaints proceeding to formal process

Note: The total for complainants not wishing to pursue a formal complaint includes people who are engaged in early (informal) resolution processes, such as mediation.

## 4. Referrals to Wellbeing Services

Month	Peer Support	Vitae - EAP	Wellbeing Team	Kāpehu
May 2024	0	0	1	14
Jun 2024	0	0	0	7
Jul 2024	0	0	0	5
Aug 2024	0	0	0	7
Sep 2024	0	0	0	4
Oct 2024	0	0	1	4
Nov 2024	0	0	0	2
Dec 2024	0	0	0	5
Jan 2025	0	0	0	4
Feb 2025	0	0	0	7
Mar 2025	0	0	1	6
<b>Running Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>65</b>

Table 4.1 Referrals to Wellbeing Services

## 5. Early Resolution

Month	Facilitation	Mediation
May 2024	0	1
Jun 2024	0	1
Jul 2024	0	0
Aug 2024	0	2
Sep 2024	0	1
Oct 2024	0	1
Nov 2024	0	0
Dec 2024	0	1
Jan 2025	0	0
Feb 2025	0	0
Mar 2025	0	1
<b>Running Total</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>

Table 5.1 Early Resolution Processes initiated this Month

## 6. Referrals to Fire and Emergency

Month	Referred to Fire and Emergency
May 2024	1
Jun 2024	1
Jul 2024	1
Aug 2024	0
Sep 2024	0
Oct 2024	1
Nov 2024	0
Dec 2024	0
Jan 2025	1
Feb 2025	2
Mar 2025	1
<b>Running Total</b>	<b>8</b>

Table 6.1 Complaints referred to Fire and Emergency

## 7. Investigation Insights

Month	Investigations Opened	Investigations Closed
May 2024	1	0
Jun 2024	10	0
Jul 2024	4	0
Aug 2024	3	0
Sep 2024	2	0
Oct 2024	11	0
Nov 2024	1	0
Dec 2024	5	5
Jan 2025	6	1
Feb 2025	5	2
Mar 2025	3	1
<b>Running Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>9</b>

Table 7.1 Number of Investigations Opened and Closed

Note: A single investigation may involve more than one complaint.

**Average length of time for Open Investigations:** 110 working days

**Average length of time for Decision Making Process:** 10.5 days

## Process Trends

Nine investigations have now run their full course, with the final reports issued to the relevant decision makers within Fire and Emergency.

Retaliatory complaints on occasions continue to be a factor. In several cases, the original complaint has drawn a response of a counter-complaint, adding complexity to a case.

The average length of time for open investigations has reduced from 144 days in the October – December 2024 quarter to 110 days in the January – March 2025. The reduction is partially due to efficiencies created as we gain a greater understanding of the complexity of a ‘typical’ Fire and Emergency investigation and of the working environment. Additionally, it reflects the completion of quite complex and time-intensive investigations. It is expected that going forward the timeframes will fluctuate depending on the complexity of future investigations as well as the level of engagement by the parties.

Several reasons for the delays have been identified and are being reported on a fortnightly basis. Some of these are quite particular to Fire and Emergency, such as parties being unavailable and away on medical leave, reflecting the physical and dangerous nature of the job. In some cases, we continue to experience delays from the parties and / or their representatives, including refusal of parties to take part in face-to-face interviews on advice of their representatives. In one case, where both parties complained against each other, neither party would agree to be interviewed or provide written responses, and the investigation has been limited to interviewing third-party witnesses.

A few of the complaints received (and investigations undertaken) might ordinarily have been expected to have been resolved within brigades by earlier intervention of managers and leaders. We acknowledge the provision of increased training being provided to leaders such as “Mastering Difficult Conversations” and envisage a reduction of such complaints over time as those learnings are applied.

## 8. Kāpehu Service Insights

### The Kāpehu Service

Kāpehu is a telephone-based workplace coaching service, providing an off-the-record conversation. It is non-judgemental safe space for people to discuss what is happening to them and figure out what they want to do about it. It’s about coming with a problem and leaving with a plan.

Kāpehu is entirely confidential and impartial, as the service is delivered by Fair Way Resolution, who sit outside of Fire and Emergency. Any employee, volunteer, manager, or contractor may contact us for support.

People can access the service by either phoning our team or completing a webform. When someone contacts us, we will arrange for a Kāpehu coach to call them back at a mutually convenient time.

A conversation can then take place to help them clarify any issues they are having at work, understand their options, reflect on how they’re feeling and decide what they want to do about it.

The service can be accessed by an individual multiple times if necessary.

## Service Summary

Month	Number of People Accessing the Service	Number of Coaching Calls Delivered
May 2024	14	18
Jun 2024	7	12
Jul 2024	5	4
Aug 2024	7	10
Sep 2024	4	6
Oct 2024	4	11
Nov 2024	2	7
Dec 2024	5	4
Jan 2025	4	6
Feb 2025	7	11
Mar 2025	6	11
<b>Running Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 8.1 Summary of Kāpehu Service Usage

## Visitor Contacts in the Reporting Period

During the period, the Kāpehu service connected with multiple visitors who wanted to explore a range of themes. Below is a breakdown of the visits received, the Kāpehu visits can be further explained with definitions provided in the [International Ombudsman Association Uniform Reporting Categories](#) document. It is important to note that it is usual for a visitor's issue to fall into more than one reporting category and for these categories to be represented in multiple months if the visitor engaged in repeated use of the service.

### Visitor contacts for the quarter January - March 2025

Month	New contacts	Locations of contacts using the service	Calls Completed	Categories
January	Kāpehu (4)	Te Hiku (0) Ngā Tai ki Te Puku (0) Te Upoko (1) Te Ihu (0) Te Kei (0)	Kāpehu (6)	<b>Evaluative Relationship</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Diversity-Related</li> <li>• Assignments / Schedules</li> <li>• Feedback</li> <li>• Respect  Treatment</li> <li>• Performance Appraisal / Grading</li> </ul>

		National Headquarters (3) Undisclosed (0)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departmental Climate</li> <li>• Retaliation</li> <li>• Discipline</li> </ul> <p><b>Career Progression &amp; Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job classification and Description</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul> <p><b>Peer &amp; Colleague Relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Priorities, Values, Beliefs</li> <li>• Diversity-Related</li> </ul> <p><b>Values, Ethics and Standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Values and Culture</li> <li>• Standards of Conduct</li> </ul> <p><b>Organisational, Strategic and mission Related</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of Positional Power/Authority</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Organisational Climate</li> </ul> <p><b>Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance</b></p> <p>Discrimination</p>
February	Kāpehu (7)	Te Hiku (0) Ngā Tai ki Te Puku (0) Te Upoko (3) Te Ihu (1) Te Kei (1) National Headquarters (1) Undisclosed (1)	Kāpehu (11)	<p><b>Evaluative Relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Bullying, Mobbing</li> <li>• Diversity-Related</li> <li>• Respect  Treatment</li> <li>• Performance Appraisal / Grading</li> <li>• Departmental Climate</li> <li>• Retaliation</li> <li>• Discipline</li> </ul> <p><b>Career Progression &amp; Development</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job classification and Description</li> <li>• Job Application/Selection and Recruitment Process</li> </ul> <p><b>Peer &amp; Colleague Relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect / Treatment</li> </ul>

				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Bullying, Mobbing</li> <li>• Retaliation</li> </ul> <p><b>Values, Ethics and Standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards of Conduct</li> </ul> <p><b>Organisational, Strategic and mission Related</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic and Mission-Related/Strategic and Technical Management</li> <li>• Use of Positional Power/Authority</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Priority Setting and/or Funding</li> </ul> <p><b>Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criminal Activity</li> <li>• Discrimination Harassment</li> </ul>
March	Kāpehu (6)	<p>Te Hiku (0)</p> <p>Ngā Tai ki Te Puku (0)</p> <p>Te Upoko (3)</p> <p>Te Ihu (0)</p> <p>Te Kei (2)</p> <p>National Headquarters (1)</p> <p>Undisclosed (0)</p>	Kāpehu (11)	<p><b>Compensation &amp; Benefits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compensation</li> </ul> <p><b>Evaluative Relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Equity of Treatment</li> <li>• Respect  Treatment</li> <li>• Trust   Integrity</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Departmental Climate</li> <li>• Retaliation</li> <li>• Physical Violence</li> <li>• Supervisory Effectiveness</li> <li>• Discipline</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul> <p><b>Peer &amp; Colleague Relationship</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect   Treatment</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Bullying, Mobbing</li> <li>• Diversity Related</li> </ul> <p><b>Career Progression &amp; Development</b></p>

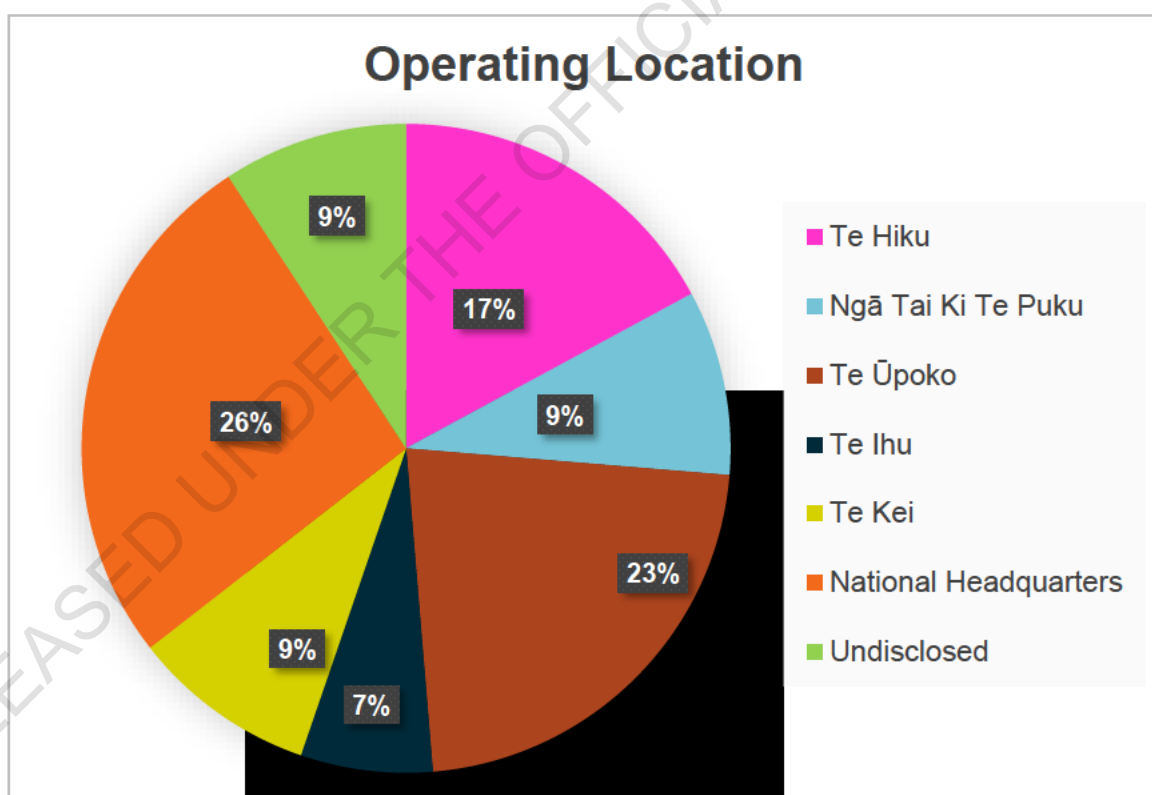
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job classification and Description</li> <li>• Career Progression</li> </ul> <p><b>Legal, Regulatory, Financial and Compliance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Criminal Activity</li> <li>• Harassment</li> <li>• Discrimination</li> </ul> <p><b>Safety, Health and Physical Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Telework / Flexplace</li> <li>• Work Related Stress and Work-life Balance</li> </ul> <p><b>Organisational, Strategic and mission Related</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership and Management</li> <li>• Use of Positional Power/Authority</li> </ul> <p><b>Values, Ethics and Standards</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards of Conduct</li> <li>• Values and Culture</li> <li>• Policies and Procedures not covered in Broad Categories</li> </ul>
<b>Quarterly Total</b>	Kāpehu (17)	Te Hiku (0) Ngā Tai ki Te Puku (0) Te Upoko (7) Te Ihu (1) Te Kei (3) National Headquarters (5) Undisclosed (1)	Kāpehu (28)	Evaluative Relationship (22) Peer & Colleague Relationship (8) Career Progression & Development (11) Compensation & Benefits (2) Legal, Regulatory, Finance & Compliance (9) Safety, Health, and Physical Environment (5) Services / Administrative Issues (0)

				Organisational, Strategic & Mission Related (14)
				Values, Ethics & Standards (8)
<b>Running Total</b> (since start of contract)	Kāpehu (65)	Te Hiku (13) Ngā Tai ki Te Puku (7) Te Upoko (17) Te Ihu (5) Te Kei (7) National Headquarters (20) Undisclosed (7)	Kāpehu visits (100)	Evaluative Relationship (80) Peer & Colleague Relationship (34) Career Progression & Development (33) Compensation & Benefits (5) Legal, Regulatory, Finance & Compliance (20) Safety, Health, and Physical Environment (12) Services / Administrative Issues (2) Organisational, Strategic & Mission Related (18) Values, Ethics & Standards (24)

Table 8.2 Kāpehu Visitors by Region

## When was Kāpehu Used and by Whom?

(Since the service began)



## Feedback about the service

One of the fundamental principles of Kāpehu is the focus on confidentiality and in maintaining this, only a general comment is provided to reflect unsolicited feedback from visitors.

- *"I really wanted to use the system and see if I'm on the right track. Thank you"*
- *"I am very grateful for having the conversation. I have other things to try"*
- *" Thank you I really appreciate this"*
- *"Thank you I really like the reframing conflict; it has been really helpful – it's good to hear it."*
- *"Thank you so much for all your time, you were always a calming light at the end of the tunnel that I couldn't see."*
- *"Great thank you, I feel better prepared now"*
- *"I'm sure the work that you do is valuable, but the service is toothless, it will not create the shift in culture that is required"*

The visitors using the service during the quarter volunteered positive feedback regarding the service and illustrated that they were leaving with a different perspective.

The feedback also illustrated that there is a growing concern that the service will nevertheless not be able to create the cultural change that the visitors considered is needed.

## Trends and issues raised during the Quarter

As a conflict resolution provider, we draw insights from the visits we receive. The intention of this section is to share insights Kāpehu gained during the quarter and focuses first on internal trends and issues raised by visitors and then shares some insights around best practice for resolving workplace conflict.

### Internal trends and issues

#### Visits in this quarter

- The shift away from the service being accessed purely for de-escalation of current conflict has been sustained this quarter with 68% of visits focusing on coaching for an issue which required the visitor to prepare for an imminent conversation. This is more than a 20% increase over last quarter and an indication that the Kāpehu Service is being used as it was intended, as a preventative resource.
- Fair Way hopes that as the service becomes more widely known that Kāpehu will increasingly be used to de-escalate issues before they become conflict. This was true for one visitor who accessed the service four times, and who shifted from wishing to raise a complaint against their manager for bullying, to increasing their skills to be able to have a difficult conversation and feeling as though they could competently manage the relationship dynamics.
- The cumulative regional figures for new visitors to the service indicate that Te Hiku, Te Ūpoko and National Headquarters are high users of the service. The increase seen in the Te Ūpoko region has been driven by this quarter's figures, with the visitor numbers representing 41% of total new visitors; this is nearly three times higher than it was last quarter. The number of visitors calling from National Headquarters remains high, and these

visitors tend to access the service for a greater number of times, e.g., six-seven contacts with a coach.

- The primary location of conflict raised by visitors this quarter was within the evaluative relationship. Difficulties in the manager | direct report dynamic accounted for 79% of calls, and this is comparable to last quarter where the percentage was 73%.
- It is important to note that the evaluative category is used to describe three possible scenarios:
  1. Firefighters | employees raising issues with management
    - In this quarter it accounted for 68% of evaluative calls, a comparable number from last quarter at 62%.
  2. Management raising issues with firefighters or direct reports
    - In this quarter it accounted for 14% of evaluative calls. This is an increase on last quarter's figure of 6%, and indicative of managers proactively using the service to support their leadership role.
  3. Firefighters | employees raising issues with colleagues where supervisory effectiveness has been questioned due to a perceived or actual lack of support or intervention.
    - In this quarter this category accounted for 18% of calls, which is a decrease from last quarter at 31%.

**Significant subcategories raised in calls this quarter**

	Subcategory	% visits this quarter
1	Communication – Evaluative Relationship	57%
2	Use of positional power	21%
3	Standards of conduct	21%
4	Departmental Climate – Evaluative Relationship	39%
5	Supervisory Effectiveness	18%
6	Retaliation – Evaluative Relationship	29%
7	Performance Appraisal – Evaluative Relationship	18%
8	Discrimination	25%
9	Trust   Integrity – Evaluative Relationship	18%
10	Respect   Treatment – Evaluative Relationship	32%

## Common themes raised during coaching:

### Discrimination and Harassment

- Whilst numerically it did not reach the top subcategories this quarter the following is of significance:
  - 32% of call concerns qualified as Legal, Regulatory and Financial Compliance concerns. Numerically this is nine of twenty-eight visits, which a significant increase from last quarter's two visits.
    - Two calls raised concerns regarding criminal activity
    - Four calls raised concerns regarding harassment
    - Seven calls raised concerns regarding discrimination
- *This quarter a Kāpehu visitor approached the service to raise concerns of discrimination that they had both experienced and witnessed within the Brigade. This visitor decided not to proceed through to the investigation arm of Speak Safe due to their hesitation about the decision makers for the investigation sitting inside of the organisation. They carefully weighted the personal cost to them in entering a formal complaint process vs the 'slap on the hand' that they perceived the leadership would receive from the decision maker. This prevented them proceeding with a significant complaint.*

### Synergistic use of the service

- This quarter a coach worked with a visitor multiple times who was a party to a formal process. This highlights that both Kāpehu and the Investigation arm of Speak Safe can and do work synergistically to support people during conflict. The coach supported the visitor to be clear on how they wished to respond and to engage fully at every step of the process.

### Communication

- Communication, as a contributing factor to conflict is known, but it has increased significantly this quarter, from 36% to 57%.
- Positive workplace culture is driven from the top down and communication remains central to achieving this. Issues with communication was raised in 72% of evaluative and 50% of peer conversations this quarter.
- It is worth noting that people in helping professions are often highly conflict avoidant, when this is paired with the need to serve it can lead to conflict at an identity level and these are often the most complex conflicts to resolve.

### Retaliation

- Retaliative behaviour in an evaluative relationship continues to be a significant category this quarter, but as a proportion this has dropped slightly to 29% (from 32%).
- Retaliatory behaviour has also been raised within collegial relationships and accounts for 7% of calls (down from 14% of visits last quarter).
- If we consider both the evaluative and collegial retaliation data, the feedback raised about punitive behaviour remains steady at 36% (slightly down on last quarter at 45%). This figure remains a concern and indicates a loss of trust and confidence in both power and peer-based relationships.
- *This quarter the Kāpehu team worked with a visitor who called proactively to raise concerns about their leader who had not followed FENZ internal processes. During the time that the coach supported the visitor to prepare for a difficult conversation with their manager, the visitor indirectly received a threat by a more senior leader suggesting that they discontinue with their concern.*

- Kerry Gregory's speech is being actively raised by visitors as aspirational, however concerns have been expressed regarding the layer of leadership beneath the c-suite level. This layer of leadership was described by a visitor as a close-knit boy's club.

### Departmental Climate

- Departmental Climate concerns have remained steady this quarter at 39%, vs 32% last quarter. This continues to reflect on the dynamic or culture that is ignored, poorly managed or perpetuated by leadership.
- This was echoed in the values and culture data that presented this quarter and is a reminder that the leadership dynamic is often a reflection of the system. This quarter 29% calls that fell into the Values, Ethics and Standards category, noticeably six calls were identified as relevant for Standards of Conduct and five calls for Values and Culture.
- Concerns regarding Respect/Treatment inside the evaluative dynamic was raised by 32% of visitors this quarter, this is an increase from 18% last quarter and in line with the above concerns raised.

### Management

- Loss of trust and confidence in management was raised again this quarter with the number of concerns about supervisory effectiveness being comparable at 18%. This occurred equally in calls from both National Headquarters and Te Ūpoko regions.
- Calls raising concerns about career progression continued this quarter with issues being raised in 39% of visits.
- Qualitative data suggests that there is an inconsistent application of policies that allow for managerial discretion, (e.g. the hybrid working policy) and this appears on occasions to be potentially used as a lever to apply pressure to employees where there is a perceived or actual performance related concern.
- The ability, or rather inability to have a difficult conversation at management level is not unique to FENZ, and the Kāpehu service has noted this trend across organisations that it works with. However, the inconsistent application of policies across an organisation leads to a sense of injustice within teams. Managing fairness and the perception of fairness is a post COVID-19 struggle for many workplaces, and transparency and consistency in approach and process is key to avoiding the divide that can result when employees compare notes.
- The service is being used by management to upskill for difficult conversations, and we would encourage this ongoing application of Kāpehu: *The Kāpehu team took calls from a visitor this quarter who was reasonably new to leadership. The leader was proactively seeking support on how to shift a culture of poor behaviour that had previously been unaddressed, specifically the leader wanted support on how to have a difficult conversation at both the group and one on one level. They demonstrated a willingness to reflect on their approach to conversations, the behaviours they needed to shift and were open to learning new ways of phrasing challenging topics.*

### Neurodiversity

- Visitors this quarter are naming neurodiversity as a component to the relationship breakdown in calls. This awareness is not just with the person that they are in conflict with; visitors are also recognising and owning nuances in their own behavior and reactions.

## 9. User Satisfaction

Whilst only a low volume of user satisfaction surveys have been completed and returned, the feedback received so far indicates that of those entering the service:

- 83% of clients felt that the service and processes were clearly explained
- 75% of clients believed that they were carefully listened to
- 75% of clients believed that their query had been handled efficiently
- 75% of clients felt that Speak Safe staff were friendly and courteous

It is expected that over time data will be available from those clients who have been through the entire complaints / investigation process.

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# Glossary and Notes

## Glossary

**Service Request** – Any contact with the Speak Safe service, captured on our proprietary case management system.

**Complaint** – An issue or concern raised about a particular matter.

**General Enquiry** – An information request or query.

**Triage** – The act of assessing the nature and severity of a complaint.

**Early resolution process** – A dispute resolution process that is informal and often occurs before more formal proceedings e.g. mediation.

**Investigation** – A formal and independent examination of the statements and facts pertaining to a particular complaint (or complaints), with findings summarised in a report.

**Kāpehu** – a telephone-based workplace coaching service operated independently by Fair Way.

## Table Notes

### Table 1.1

The total number of contacts that the Speak Safe service received during the reporting period, broken down into general enquiries and complaints.

### Table 1.2

The total number of contacts that the Speak Safe service received during the reporting period, broken down into the categories identified in the Service Level Agreement.

### Table 2.1

The number of complaints received during the reporting period. This table shows how many complaints could proceed to triage, and for the complaints that could not proceed to triage, the table identifies the reasons why they could not be progressed.

### Table 3.1

Of the complaints that were triaged, this table shows the number of complainants who wished to proceed to a formal process and the number who did not wish to proceed.

The reason for not proceeding may include the use of an early (informal) resolution process, such as mediation, in lieu of a formal process.

### Table 4.1

The number of referrals made to each of the four recognised wellbeing channels over the reporting period.

### Table 5.1

The number of early resolution processes initiated during the reporting period, by category.

### Table 6.1

The number of complaints referred back to Fire and Emergency, either to Case Facilitators or People Branch.

**Table 7.1**

The number of investigations opened and investigations closed during the reporting period. An investigation may involve more than one complaint – for example, if a counter complaint is made, it may form part of the same investigation process. Similarly, a single complainant may make complaints against multiple respondents for the same incident and these may form part of a single investigation, depending on the circumstances.

**Table 8.1**

A summary of the number of people who accessed the Kāpehu coaching service, and the number of

coaching calls delivered, broken down by month.

**Table 8.2**

The number of people who accessed the Kāpehu service during the reporting period, and the number of coaching calls completed (an individual may have more than one call). Data is broken down by area and the table also shows the nature of the issues raised during the calls.