



Transport Accident Investigation Commission
Te Komihana Tiro tiro Aitua Waka

Statement of Intent 2014 – 2018

June 2014

Prepared in accordance with
section 139 of the Crown Entities Act 2004
(as amended by the Crown Entities Amendment Act 2013)

TAIC Statement of Intent 2014 – 2018

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29 May 2014

Hon Michael Woodhouse MP
Associate Minister of Transport
Executive Wing
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Dear Minister

We have the honour to present to you the Statement of Intent for the Transport Accident Investigation Commission for the period 2014-2018, prepared in accordance with section 139 of the Crown Entities Act 2004 (as amended by the Crown Entities Amendment Act 2013).

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Marshall'.

John Marshall QC
Chief Commissioner

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Helen Cull'.

Helen Cull QC
Deputy Chief Commissioner

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1. Chief Commissioner's Overview

The Commission's principal purpose is to determine the circumstances and causes of aviation, rail and marine accidents and incidents to avoid recurrences, and not to ascribe blame. This places the Commission in a unique position to influence and contribute to the safety of New Zealand's transport system. Commissioners and staff are motivated by an inspirational goal of ensuring there are "no repeat accidents – ever!"

We live in a global economy. Rail, sea, and air transport carries people and goods worldwide, but is not without risk. Recent events in Malaysia and Korea are a tragic reminder of what can go wrong, and highlight the importance of the independent investigative role of agencies such as the Commission. As part of the international community, New Zealand must be ready to respond, or assist other countries to respond, to major accidents, should they occur.

While the legislative functions of the Commission have not changed, the strategic and operational context within which it performs them has. Advances in transport technology, information systems, investigation techniques and best practice, increasing safety system complexity and changes in workforce dynamics continue to challenge the work of the Commission within its current resourcing levels.

Transport safety has the potential to benefit from the mass of data now obtainable from increasingly computerised transport systems. The Commission has begun growing its internal research capacity to capitalise on these opportunities. The Commission will focus over the next four years on using information and technology to increase operational flexibility and efficiency, and better target the Commission's resources to areas where it will have the most impact.

As a party to international transport conventions, New Zealand's reputation relies on the capability and capacity of the Commission to undertake its independent investigative and recommendatory functions. The organisation has just three investigators in each transport mode, and several highly experienced staff may be approaching retirement. Ensuring the Commission can maintain and improve its throughput and timeliness while recruiting and training new staff is a workforce planning priority. The technical expertise and skills required to undertake transport investigations are highly sought after internationally and require intensive training. Undertaking and implementing the results of a joint Commission/Ministry of Transport funding and capability review is a strategic priority for the Commission. The Commission will continue to pursue cost efficiencies, including through all-of-Government and shared services opportunities with other agencies. However, without further funding the Commission's ability to maintain its capability and level of service will be constrained.

The Minister of Transport has indicated his general priorities for the transport sector entities to focus on safety, improving the regulatory environment, helping open markets, and lifting sector performance. The Commission's work contributes to each of these priorities to differing extents, and it will retain focus on these areas as well as specific ministerial expectations of it for business, workforce and major accident planning to ensure the organisation remains a responsive and capable contributor to transport safety in the face of challenges such as those I have outlined above.



John Marshall QC
Chief Commissioner

2. The Transport Accident Investigation Commission

The Commission

The Transport Accident Investigation Commission (the Commission) is a standing commission of inquiry. Its mandate is to undertake independent investigations into certain accidents and incidents in air, rail and maritime transport, and to report its findings and recommendations.

The Commission's enabling legislation is the Transport Accident Investigation Commission Act 1990 (the Act). The Act gives the Commission powers and protections, and provides for accident investigation as a primary means of inquiry. The Commission is also supported by the general powers and processes of the Commissions of Inquiry Act 1908 including the use of submission and hearing processes and provisions to ensure natural justice is observed.

The Commission's mandate enables it to decide whether to open an inquiry into an aviation, marine or rail occurrence. The Commission must open an inquiry where the circumstances of an event are likely to have significant implications for transport safety, or the findings and recommendations are likely to lead to an increase in transport safety. The Act provides for the Minister of Transport to direct the Commission to open an inquiry under certain circumstances. The Commission determines how it conducts its inquiries and is independent in its deliberations.

The Commission is also an independent Crown entity under the Crown Entities Act 2004. Although it operates independently of executive government and other government agencies, the Commission fosters no-surprises and collegial relationships with agencies in the transport sector (and in other sectors) consistent with the Commission's mandate.

The Commission, as part of its legislated function, has a role to play in New Zealand meeting its international treaty obligations for transport safety. The Commission is the primary means by which New Zealand fulfils international aviation and maritime obligations¹ to conduct independent safety- and prevention-focused investigations. These obligations require the Commission's inquiries to be separate from any investigations to determine blame or liability.

The Commission usually has three members, although the Act allows up to five Commissioners to be appointed. The members are also the Commission's board for the purposes of the Crown Entities Act 2004. Two of the appointed members are designated Chief Commissioner/Chairperson and Deputy Chief Commissioner/Deputy Chairperson respectively. The Commission is required under statute to employ a Chief Executive to operate the Crown Entity. The Chief Executive is not a member of the Commission. For the Commission to carry out its functions the Chief Executive employs staff in core roles (such as investigators), contracts specialist expertise as required, and ensures the efficient and effective management of the Commission as an independent Crown entity.

Purpose

The Act prescribes the Commission's purpose. It is *"to determine the circumstances and causes of accidents and incidents with a view to avoiding similar occurrences in the future, rather than to ascribe blame to any person"*². The Commission achieves its purpose by:

- conducting independent inquiries supported by factual investigations
- making and publishing findings and recommendations
- helping overseas accident investigation organisations when needed.

Operating environment

The Commission is a small part of the New Zealand transport sector but has a significant role to play in advancing transport safety. Aviation, rail, and maritime transport systems allow the movement of people

¹ Annex 13 to the charter of the International Civil Aviation Organization. Casualty Code of the International Maritime Organization.

² Section 4, Transport Accident Investigation Commission Act 1990

and freight within and beyond New Zealand, thus supporting tourism and trade. Safe transport systems are vital if New Zealand is to grow its domestic economy and participate in global markets.

The international connectedness of the transport system means that safety issues and their resolution can have widespread implications. International conventions are one way that safety systems and standards concerning vehicle design, training, and investigative standards (as examples), are applied across signatory nations.

Safer operation of the transport system results from the complex interaction of many factors. These factors include technology (such as the design and performance of vehicles), infrastructure, government policy and regulation, as well as human factors (people and their interactions with the environment). All these factors change and evolve, sometimes at a rapid pace.

Many state, commercial, and community entities share responsibility for transport safety. A challenge for all of these agencies, including the Commission, is to maintain an awareness of the changing operating environment and the implications for transport safety. The same holds true for individual users of the transport systems, whether they are transport professionals, recreational transport users, passengers or consignors of freight.

Key legislation and international treaties

The Commission is obligated to act through the provisions of its enabling legislation The Transport Accident Investigation Commission Act 1990. Other key legislative influences on the Commission include the:

- Commission of Inquiries Act 1908
- Civil Aviation Act 1990
- Maritime Transport Act 1994
- Railways Act 2005
- Coroners Act 2006
- Crown Entities Act 2004

In addition to domestic legislation there are a number of international conventions that influence the Commission's functioning as an independent accident investigation organisation. The most relevant international conventions are the:

- Convention on International Civil Aviation
- Convention on the International Maritime Organisation
- International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea
- The International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers
- Convention on the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea

Key relationships

On a day to day, case by case basis the Commission engages with a number of key stakeholders. Common engagement occurs with:

NZ Police – largely as first responders to accidents and as Coroners' agents.

Coroners – Coroners are tasked with determining the circumstances and causes of death. In fatal accidents the Commission and coroners roles are distinct but with common concerns relating to evidence and witnesses.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) – as the aviation regulator CAA has a statutory duty to notify the Commission of certain accidents and incidents, and to provide aviation related information on request.

Maritime New Zealand (MNZ) – as the maritime regulator MNZ has a statutory duty to notify the Commission of certain accidents and incidents, and to provide maritime related information on request.

New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) – as the rail regulator NZTA has a statutory duty to notify the Commission of certain accidents and incidents, and to provide rail related information on request.

The Commission generally directs its recommendations for remedying safety issues to the regulators for actioning because as regulators they have the most direct influential relationship with industry operators.

The Ministry of Transport – as the government’s principal advisor for transport policy and the Minister’s monitor for Crown entity performance.

Crown Law Office (CL) – as legal advisor to government agencies CL assists the Commission in areas of international law and the scope of the Commission’s functions, particularly when the Commission is asked to assist other countries.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) – MFAT assists the Commission in enabling access to other jurisdictions where the Commission is asked to assist in other countries’ accident investigations, or needs the assistance of other countries in its own investigations.

Transport sector operators and participants (industry) – the Commission draws upon operators, industry organisations and professional groups as key sources of specialist expertise, experience and information.

Other countries – the Commission is often assisted by its peer organisations overseas by their providing expertise, information and learning opportunities. The Commission has regular engagement with colleagues from Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, United States, Singapore, and Taiwan.

Organisation and operating model

The Commission operates from a national office in Wellington and is structured to facilitate inquiry and investigative processes while supporting the Commissioners’ independence. The Commission is a four-tiered organisation as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Employees fill core functional roles in the Commission. Additional expertise is bought in as required.

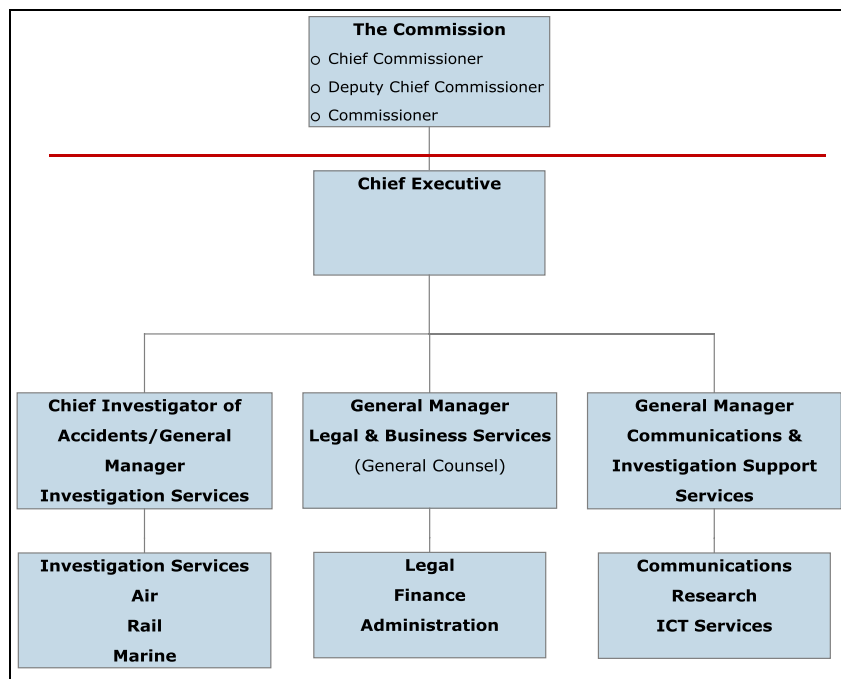


Figure 1: Organisational structure

3. Strategy

Strategic framework

The Commission uses two frameworks to guide the development of its strategic intentions. The frameworks are variants of the balanced scorecard approach: strategy mapping³ and the performance prism⁴. These frameworks focus the Commission’s attention on the most salient aspects of its strategic direction, and how to achieve its strategic objectives. Especially relevant to the Commission are a focus on non-financial aspects of organisational performance (an element of the strategy map) and reflection upon stakeholder wants and needs (performance prism).

The Commission’s strategy map is presented in Figure 2 below.

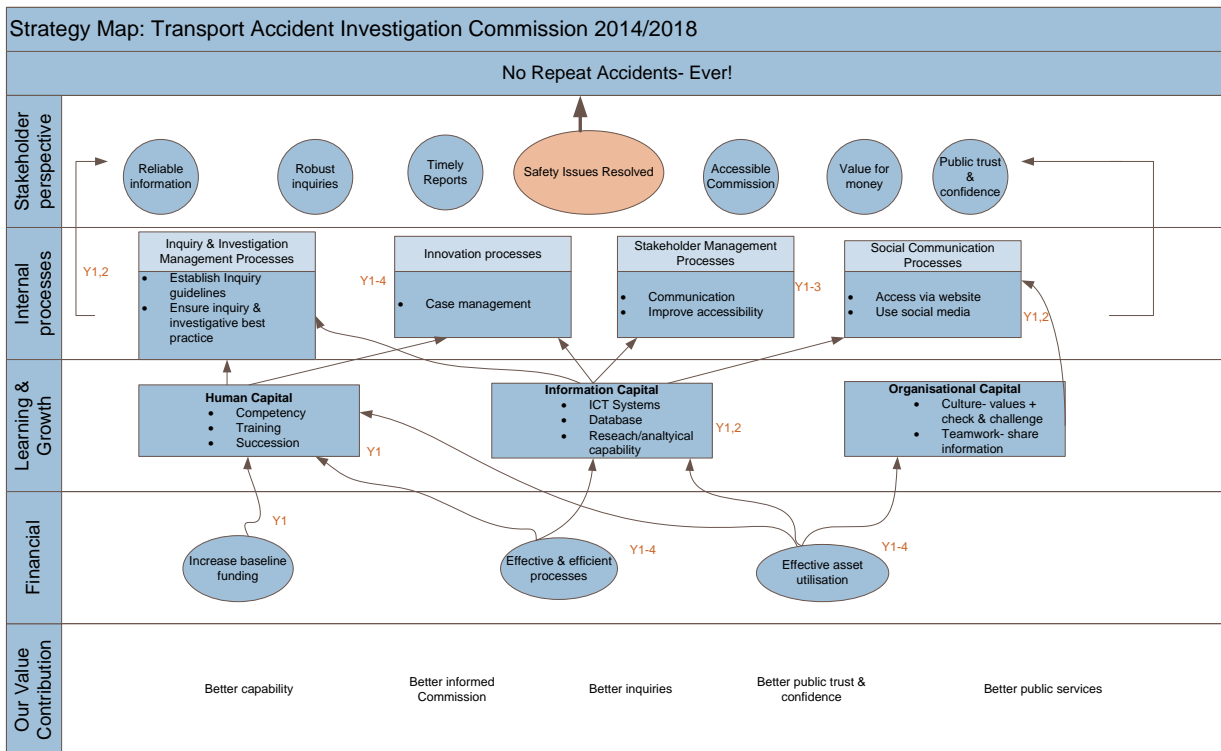


Figure 2: The Commission's strategy map

The Commission maintains its line of sight with its vision, mission and values.

Aspirational vision

The Commission’s strategic direction is focused on achieving a specific outcome expressed as a visionary statement: **No repeat accidents—ever!** This overarching goal reflects the Commission’s statutory purpose and task.

In addition, the Commission is mindful of its business model as an independent Crown Entity. The Commission is obliged to operate effectively and efficiently. It must provide value as a state sector organisation in terms of the service it provides (contributing to a safer transport system), and making the best use of the resources available to it (being a better public service).

³ Kaplan, R.S & Norton, D.P. (2004), “Strategy Maps Converting intangible assets into tangible outcomes”, Harvard Business Press.

⁴ Bourne, M. & Bourne, P. (2011), “Handbook of Corporate Performance Management”, John Wiley and Sons Ltd.

Mission

Safer transport through investigation, learning and influence

The Commission's mission statement focuses attention on what it is seeking to achieve in terms of its vision and how that might be realised.

Values

To help drive performance in achieving its statutory purpose and fulfilling its corporate obligations the Commission adopted the International Framework for Court Excellence values. These values guide the Commission's actions and behaviours. The values are:

- Fairness
- Impartiality
- Independence
- Competence
- Integrity
- Accessibility
- Timeliness
- Certainty

Relationship to Minister of Transport's priorities for the transport sector

The relationship of the Commission's output and impact to the Minister of Transport's priorities and desired outcomes for the transport sector is described in Figure 3.

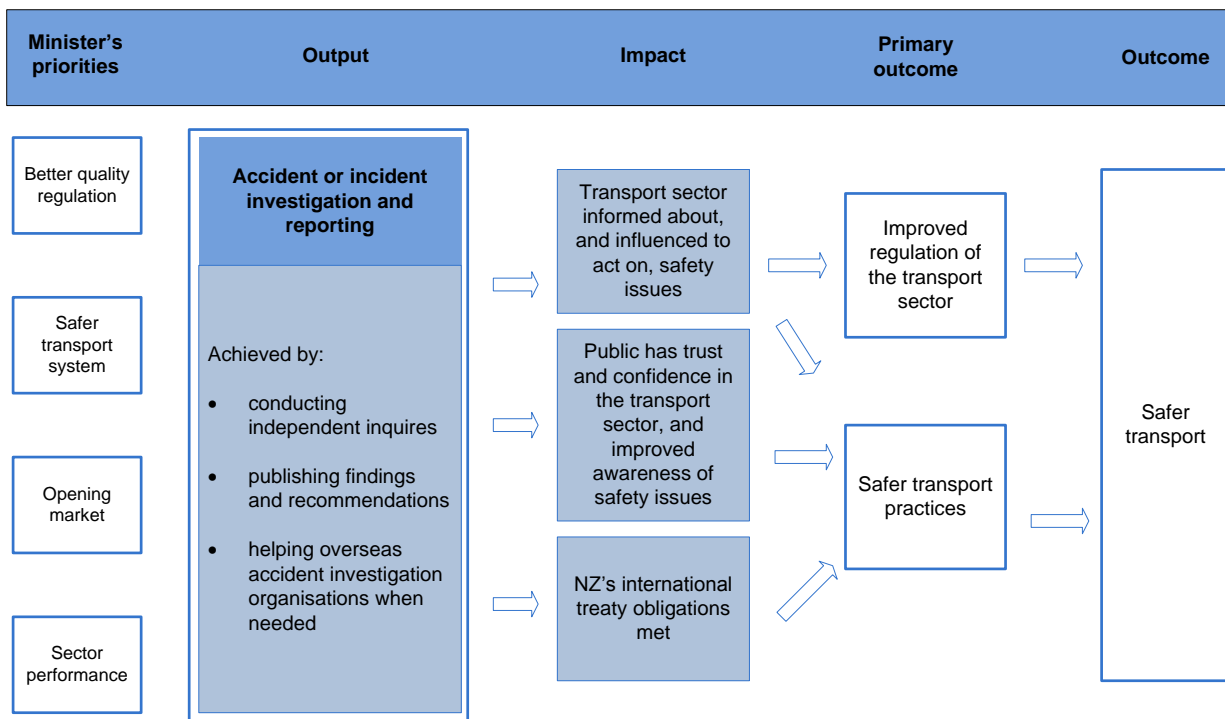


Figure 3: Relationship of the Commission's output to ministerial priorities, desired impacts and outcomes for transport

4. Strategic intentions

The Commission’s overarching aspirational goal is for there to be **No repeat accidents—ever!** so supporting the Minister’s desired outcome of safer transport. The Commission seeks to pursue this goal by working to ensure safety issues are properly identified and resolved. The Commission has set five strategic objectives to ensure it contributes to a safer transport system and meets its statutory obligations.

The five strategic objectives and their intended impacts are:

- Deliver sound, cost effective Crown entity performance → Better public service
- Develop and maintain responsive reciprocal stakeholder relationships → Better informed Commission
- Share inquiry and entity information → Better public trust and confidence
- Develop and maintain capable staff → Better capability
- Properly conduct investigations → Better inquiries

No repeat accidents – ever!

The Commission has been preparing to use four indicators, focused on its statutory purpose of preventing recurrences, as indicators of whether its work is contributing to its desired outcome. These indicators relate to safety issues which have featured in Commission inquiries over recent years. During 2013 – 2014, the Commission has been working with the Ministry and regulators to confirm the availability and interpretation of data to use for these indicators.

Main measures: Outcome

Indicator	Target 2014-18	Current 2012-15
The incidence of aircraft involved in pilot training nearly colliding or colliding with other aircraft.	Incidence trend (per pilot training flying hour) declines.	Actual collision data was identified for the Inquiry into Civil Flying Training Safety completed in 2012-13. Work with CAA has confirmed an ongoing data set will be available.
The incidence of rail safety occurrences involving trains or rail maintenance vehicles where visible mapped or computed GPS positions at train control could have helped avoid a conflict or track warrant breach.	Incidence trend declines.	Work with the New Zealand Transport Agency has identified that a suitable ongoing data set relating to a category of “signal passed at danger (red)” is available. (The indicator will be revised slightly to reflect recent improvements to trains’ GPS position visibility in train control and the final data type selected.)

The incidence of recreational boating accidents involving serious injury or loss of life where a lack of demonstrated knowledge by the skipper appears to have been a factor. Incidence trend declines. Work with Maritime New Zealand has identified that a data set relating to fatalities will be available. The indicator will be revised accordingly.

The incidence of the presence of performance impairing substances in persons performing safety critical tasks in the aviation, marine and rail transport modes. Incidence baseline is established. Work with the transport sector regulators has established that a baseline cannot be established due to a lack of suitable data. The measure will be reconsidered once the outcome is known of policy work currently underway in the area of substance impairment.

Impact measures are included in the current Statement of Performance expectations.

Deliver sound, cost effective Crown Entity performance

The Commission expects to manage all routine cost pressures from within its current baseline funding in the short term. It continuously seeks efficiencies to meet cost pressures and to improve service delivery where possible. It has joined several all-of-government purchasing contracts when these are beneficial.

The Commission is also participating in a benchmarking programme pilot led by the Transportation Board of Canada to help assess performance as a safety-focused investigations agency. The Commission will consider the results of this benchmarking exercise in its next strategic and business planning round.

In the medium term, however, the challenges of a changing operating environment, continual advances in investigation tools and techniques, likely staff turnover, and the expectations held of inquiries will mean the ability to manage within the current baseline is unsustainable. The Ministry of Transport and the Commission are undertaking a funding review of the Commission to assess the sustainability of its funding model. The review will provide the necessary information to determine if a Budget bid can be supported. If a Budget bid is found not to be supported, the Commission may need to review and re-assess its strategic intentions, as they are described below. In either case, a new Statement of Intent is likely to be required before the standard three-year interval.

Table 1: Measures for strategic intention "deliver sound, cost-effective Crown entity Performance"

Objective	Measure	Target for financial year end			
		2015	2016	2017	2018
Continuously improve operating efficiency	Consider results of benchmarking exercise in strategic and business planning	To be reported	Implementation	Implementation	Implementation
	Evaluate all-of-government and shared services opportunities as they arise, and implement if appropriate	To be reported /implemented 30 June	To be reported /implemented 30 June	To be reported /implemented 30 June	To be reported /implemented 30 June

Develop and maintain responsive, reciprocal stakeholder relationships

A project to review the amount and quality of contact stakeholders receive in relation to an individual inquiry receive was planned for 2014, but was deferred because of staffing constraints.

Table 2: Measure for strategic intention “develop and maintain responsive, reciprocal stakeholder relationships”

Objective	Measure	Target for financial year end			
		2015	2016	2017	2018
Develop and maintain inquiry stakeholder programme	Inquiry stakeholder contact programme developed and implemented.	Developed	Implementation	Implementation	Review

Share inquiry and entity information

Knowing what is going on in the wider social, political, technological and policy environments, local and international, is critical to a well-informed commission. Many government and industry information systems are data rich, but not necessarily accessible or analysed.

The Commission is developing a small research function to support properly conducted inquiries, and to ensure inquiry and organisational information is shared and accessible. Embedding this research function into operations is part of the year 1 (2014/15) work programme. Part of this work will involve improving the use of the notification database to assist analysis of incidents and accidents reported to the Commission.

The Commission has begun developing a Watchlist of safety issues identified through its inquiries that it believes need to be given more attention. To communicate this Watchlist to transport sector participants, it will be publicised during 2014/15.

Table 3: Measure for strategic intention “share inquiry and entity information”

Objective	Measure	Target for financial year end			
		2015	2016	2017	2018
Communicate more about what the Commission does, learns, and recommends to help improve transport safety	Watchlist publicised.	Published	Reviewed and published	Reviewed and published	Reviewed and published

Develop and retain capable staff

The effectiveness of the Commission’s operating model depends on investigators having the right skills and experience. Transport industry participants will have trust and confidence in investigations only when they are conducted by people with significant experience in the relevant mode.

The Commission is planning to review and update the investigator training programme to ensure currency in generally accepted practice and competency in core requirements.

Succession planning is a challenge for the Commission—investigators need to be experienced and credible, so they tend to be mature professionals. However, investigator skills are expensive to grow and maintain. Many transport accident investigations agencies face these same issues, and so trained accident investigators are also sought after globally. The Commission is preparing a work force plan in 2014/15 to support succession planning and continuing operations

Table 4: Measure for strategic intention “develop and retain capable staff”

Objective	Measure	Target for financial year end			
		2015	2016	2017	2018
Acquire, develop, and retain strategic skills	Number of fully qualified investigators per mode (Not reflective of investigator headcount; assumes some staff will be ‘in-training’)	≥ 3	≥ 3	≥ 3	≥ 3
Develop and maintain a workforce plan	Workforce plan developed (Targets in out-years will flow from, and be developed in conjunction with, the developed plan.)	Developed	Implementation	Implementation	Implementation

Properly conduct investigations and inquiries

The Commission achieves improvement in transport safety only by maintaining investigative standards. Findings and recommendations must be credible and provide confidence as to their veracity. Reports must be independent, evidence-based, useable, and timely.

Investigations are conducted according to international standards and operating procedures, and recommendations are based on analysis of the evidence and findings. The International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) maintains an assessment inventory to assess a State's compliance and preparedness to deliver safety-focused investigations in accordance with Annex 13 to the ICAO convention. The Commission will conduct a self-assessment using the tool.

The Commission is also planning a comprehensive project to develop and enhance existing guidelines designed to maintain investigation best practice and proper governance of inquiries.

Table 5: Measures for strategic intention "properly conduct inquiries"

Objective	Measure	Target for financial year end			
		2015	2016	2017	2018
Develop and maintain inquiry and investigation best practice	Self-review against ICAO standards every two years	Met	-	Met	-
	Complete review of investigation and inquiry guidelines	-	Completed 30/6	-	-
	Successful judicial review of a Commission inquiry process or decision	0	0	0	0
	Successful challenge to an Ombudsman, the Privacy Commissioner, or Human Rights Commission of an administrative decision or action	0	0	0	0

5. Organisational health and capability

To carry out its task, the Commission relies on functional expertise, effective ICT systems, and strong business intelligence and analytical capability.

The Commission is a small organisation. It has 17 FTE's and 3 contract staff supporting current operations. Each person employed is a single point of specific expertise. In this regard each staff member is a sole professional. It is therefore important the Commission invests in its professional staff to ensure peer group engagement, and maintain currency in profession trends and advancements.

People

The Commission's people are its key asset. To be credible, key roles in the Commission's inquiry system must be relevant to the industry and task; therefore, the Commission recruits professional staff with mode-specific skills, and contracts additional expertise when required.

Investigator training and development is comprehensive and on-going. While employed with the Commission, investigators must complete annual courses, including specialist accident investigator training at entry and advanced levels. Staff undertake accident investigation training at Cranfield University in the United Kingdom, because accident investigation training is unavailable in New Zealand. The Cranfield qualifications are recognised internationally and means investigators are capable of working alongside their international peers. This is important for seamless engagement should New Zealand ever need international assistance in investigating a catastrophic transport event.

Non investigator professional staff are also supported to maintain and develop their professional competencies. Legal, financial, research and general management tertiary training is undertaken with an emphasis on strengthening the operations of the inquiry system.

The Commission is developing a workforce plan to ensure it retains a focus on maintaining appropriate capability well into the future. The workforce plan forms part of the strategic intentions discussed above.

Information communication technology and management systems

Over recent years the Commission has introduced a new information management system and, as detailed above, it is seeking to improve its access to and use of data from elsewhere in the sector. At the same time, the Commission faces the issues of all public sector agencies in ensuring its information technology systems remain secure, including ensuring the legal protections given to inquiry and private personal information are preserved, and information generally is managed in accordance with requirements including the Public Records Act 2005. Meanwhile new technologies from social media to small screen devices and big data applications present challenges and opportunities to accident investigation and corporate reputations. This includes information technology related 'better public sector' objectives such as "digital by default" service provision. The Commission intends to draw these different strands together in a new integrated Information communications technology and management systems strategy tentatively themed "Digital dialogue. Digital diligence."

To ensure the Commission is appropriately informed and can itself readily inform the public the Commission will upgrade its processes for receiving notification of accidents and incidents in years 1&2 (2014-16) and activate its refreshed website.

Business intelligence and analytical capability

As discussed earlier, the Commission intends to develop a small research function to support properly conducted inquiries and to ensure inquiry and organisational information is shared and accessible. Embedding this research function into Commission operations is part of the year 1 (2014/15) work programme.

Equal employment opportunities

The Commission is committed to offering equal employment opportunities to Māori, Pasifika, and all ethnic or minority groups, women, and people with disabilities. Ensuring that age-related factors are properly addressed in workforce planning and management is a priority given the Commission's ageing work force. The Commission's recruitment and employment processes are founded on the Commission's values, especially those of fairness, impartiality, and integrity. The recruitment process aims to attract and appoint investigators, and support staff, who meet the high degree of skill the Commission requires, and who have the values, and attributes to contribute to its objectives and strategic direction. The Commission's managers are made aware of, and given support to fulfil, equal opportunity employment obligations.

Measures of organisational health and capability

The Commission's measures of organisational health and capability are given in Table 6 Table 6.

Table 6: Measures of organisational health and capability

Staff are capable			
Measure	Target 2014-18		Current 2013-14
Average number of training hours per annum	Investigation staff: 1000 hours/annum (100 hours per investigator/annum) Non-Investigation staff: 200-400 hours /annum 40 hours per person per annum + 1 tertiary based programme (negotiated)		829.25 hours. 269.5hours
Organisational capability is maintained and strengthened			
Measure	Target 2014-18		Current 2013-14
% distribution of years employed post qualification (investigation staff)	1-5 years	20%	40%
	6-10 years	60%	30%
	10+ years	20%	30%

6. Risk management

Managing risk

The Commission's key strategic risks are linked to organisational capability and specifically work force availability and competency. The Commission's key risks are:

- loss of reputation and credibility
- an ageing work force
- scarcity of affordable sector expertise
- maintaining competency for conducting independent inquiries into rare catastrophic events.

Management of these risks is discussed below.

Loss of reputation and credibility

A reputation for high-quality, independent investigations, fairness, strong research and analysis, and rigorous testing of claims and assertions are key to the Commission's credibility as a high performing public sector organisation. Lapses in performance in any of these aspects can erode public trust and confidence in the Commission's ability to make an effective contribution to making transport safer.

This risk is managed by:

- staff working to relevant professional standards of practice with managers assessing performance against the standards as part of the Commission's on-going performance management programme
- cultivating a culture of "check and challenge" throughout the organisation where staff are encouraged to speak up
- management displaying proactive leadership of the organisation's values
- implementing the plan to develop inquiry protocols to provide clarity of process and requisite standards of inquiry
- implementing the plan to strengthen informed investigations supported by research by embedding the research function within the organisation
- Commissioners exercising robust governance, including testing investigation team input to their inquiries.

Ageing work force

The Commission's workforce demographic is weighted towards an older cohort with over half of the staff aged 55 years old or more. This group largely comprises the mature, seasoned accident investigators whose skills and experience in accident investigation are key organisational assets that are hard, expensive and take time to replace. Resignations or retirements of these experienced staff members anticipated over the next four years will create a capability gap.

This risk is managed by:

- developing and implementing a workforce plan with a view to managing succession in key roles.

Scarcity of affordable sector expertise

Filling a vacant investigator position can be difficult. Trained and experienced accident investigators are a scarce resource globally, and investigation agencies tend to hold on to their expertise. Two factors in particular contribute to this situation: training in accident investigation is a medium- to long-term endeavour for the organisation and the individual, and it is expensive because of its specialist nature; and because accidents are by their nature rare events, only a small number of investigators are experienced in large-scale, catastrophic events.

This risk is managed by:

- growing expertise through programmed training and development
- retaining expertise through supporting base professional expertise, professional memberships, and opportunities for practical experience through inter-agency assistance programmes.

Maintaining competency for conducting independent inquiries into rare catastrophic events

Major catastrophic transport system failures are rare events. The Commission's day-to-day work provides opportunity to hone practical investigative skills, but exposure to substantive events is rare. This means effective oversight and administration of an integrated accident investigation response is rarely tested. The Commission does undertake desk-top exercises and scenario testing from time to time as resources allow. However, to be effective it needs to operate a risk management programme for preparedness of a major catastrophic event.

This risk is managed by:

- major accident manuals and procedures maintenance
- desk-top planning exercises, and participation in other agencies exercises
- scenario testing of plans and processes
- providing opportunities for participation in larger-scale investigations overseas
- participating in across government initiatives, such as the Ministry of Transport-coordinated Transport Response Team and the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet-led Mass Fatalities Framework development
- including relevant professional development content for appropriate staff members
- developing and implementing a risk management programme for ensuring preparedness for a major catastrophic event is developed and maintained.

7. Relationship with the Ministers of Transport

The Commission maintains a “no surprises” relationship with the Minister of Transport and Associate Minister of Transport consistent with its statutory independence. Standard elements of the relationship include the:

- receipt of an annual letter of expectations from the Minister, Statement of Intent and Statement of Performance Expectations preparation, and reporting quadrimesterly (every four months) against the Statement of Performance Expectations and annually against the Statement of Intent and the Statement of Performance Expectations.
- meetings of the Chief Commissioner with the Associate Minister quarterly or as required
- briefings of the Ministers about significant recent or forthcoming activity.

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