

Media Statement
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Young Pasifika Leader's Story Highlights Infrastructure Awards

From accompanying her mum on night shift as a child to becoming a structural engineer, leader and champion for Pasifika representation in infrastructure, Karina Kaufusi's moving story has seen her awarded the *Next Generation Leader Award* at the 2025 Building Nations Impact Awards.

"Karina embodies the future of infrastructure in Aotearoa," says Infrastructure New Zealand Chief Executive Nick Leggett. "She leads with humility, technical excellence, and cultural intelligence, and her leadership is lifting others along the way."

"Karina is proof that when we nurture diverse talent we can bring through transformative leadership and build a stronger, more inclusive industry."

Karina's leadership, grounded in the Tongan value of *Tauhi vā* (nurturing relationships), has reshaped how her organisation engages with Pasifika professionals and communities, embedding inclusion and representation into the heart of infrastructure delivery.

The 2025 Impact Awards also celebrated three exceptional projects that are delivering nation-shaping outcomes:

- Hutt City Council received the *Infrastructure Decarbonisation Award* for Te Ngaengae Pool + Fitness, New Zealand's first aquatic facility to achieve a 5 Green Star rating. With a 56% reduction in carbon emissions and 53% less energy use, the project sets a benchmark for low-carbon community infrastructure, underpinned by deep co-design and environmental leadership.
- Willis Bond was honoured with the *Excellence in Innovation Award* for the country's largest modern mass timber office building – 90 Devonport Road in Tauranga. Completed on time and under budget, it showcases the viability of timber and how innovation and prefabrication can deliver sustainable, high-performance commercial spaces.
- The Rural Connectivity Group (RCG) was recognised with the *Social Impact Award* for its Rural Connectivity Programme, which has delivered over 560 mobile sites to some of

New Zealand's most remote communities. Their shared network model, developed in partnership with government and major telcos, is a New Zealand first, and is grounded in deep collaboration with iwi, councils, and landowners, ensuring cultural and community priorities are respected.

"All these winners reflect the depth of leadership, innovation, and community impact that exists across our sector," says Leggett. "Whether it's Karina's inspiring story or the visionary and innovative infrastructure projects also recognised, this year's awards remind us that great infrastructure is about more than costs, plans and delivery. It's about talented people coming together and building things for the good of our communities."

"Infrastructure New Zealand and our whole industry congratulates all the 2025 Impact Award recipients for their outstanding contributions to the future of Aotearoa New Zealand."

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Infrastructure New Zealand is Aotearoa's peak membership organisation for the infrastructure sector. We promote best practice in national infrastructure development through research, advocacy, and public and private sector collaboration. We promote public and media discussion on issues of importance to the infrastructure sector. Our membership is comprised of around 140 organisations, including government agencies, consultants, contractors, financiers, utilities, and academics. These organisations employ approximately 150,000 people in infrastructure-related roles and are united in their commitment to creating a better New Zealand through outstanding infrastructure.

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