

CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Ways of Working



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Foreword

The aviation sector is undergoing profound change. From emerging technologies to shifting global expectations, the environment we operate in is more dynamic than ever. In response, the Civil Aviation Authority is making significant changes to support the ongoing regulatory needs of aviation safety and security for New Zealand.

The implementation of the Civil Aviation Act 2023 and our new organisational structure in April 2025 are significant milestones for us.

They go hand-in-hand with planned changes to how we operate: taking an intelligence-led and risk-based approach, improving our leadership capability, fostering a 'one organisation' culture within the Civil Aviation Authority and Aviation Security, making regulatory decisions aligned with public interest and 'Just Culture' principles, and balancing trust with verification - based on the quality, and demonstration, of strong safety and security practices

This is a big organisational and operational undertaking for CAA, one we are in the process of actively embedding throughout 2025. We are already seeing positive impacts from these changes, and this will continue to be a focus for us into 2026 and beyond.

These changes are grounded in our vision to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our regulatory activities, in a way that supports economic growth and connectivity for all New Zealanders.

This work has been shaped by our people and by you — our stakeholders. Through extensive engagement, we've heard your call for a regulator that is timely, consistent, collaborative, and clear. We are committed to meeting that call, and ensuring our work continues to safeguard aviation in New Zealand in a way that enables innovation and economic growth and resilience.

How CAA works – both internally and externally – is just as important as having the right organisation structure. This document, the *Ways of Working*, captures how we will create and embed the ways of working that will define us as a modern, intelligence-led, and risk-based regulator. They describe how we will operate as one organisation, uphold our values and apply our regulatory tools with professionalism and purpose.

Thank you for taking the time to engage with this document and for your part in contributing to a safe and secure aviation system.

Keith Manch
Director of Civil Aviation and Chief Executive
Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand

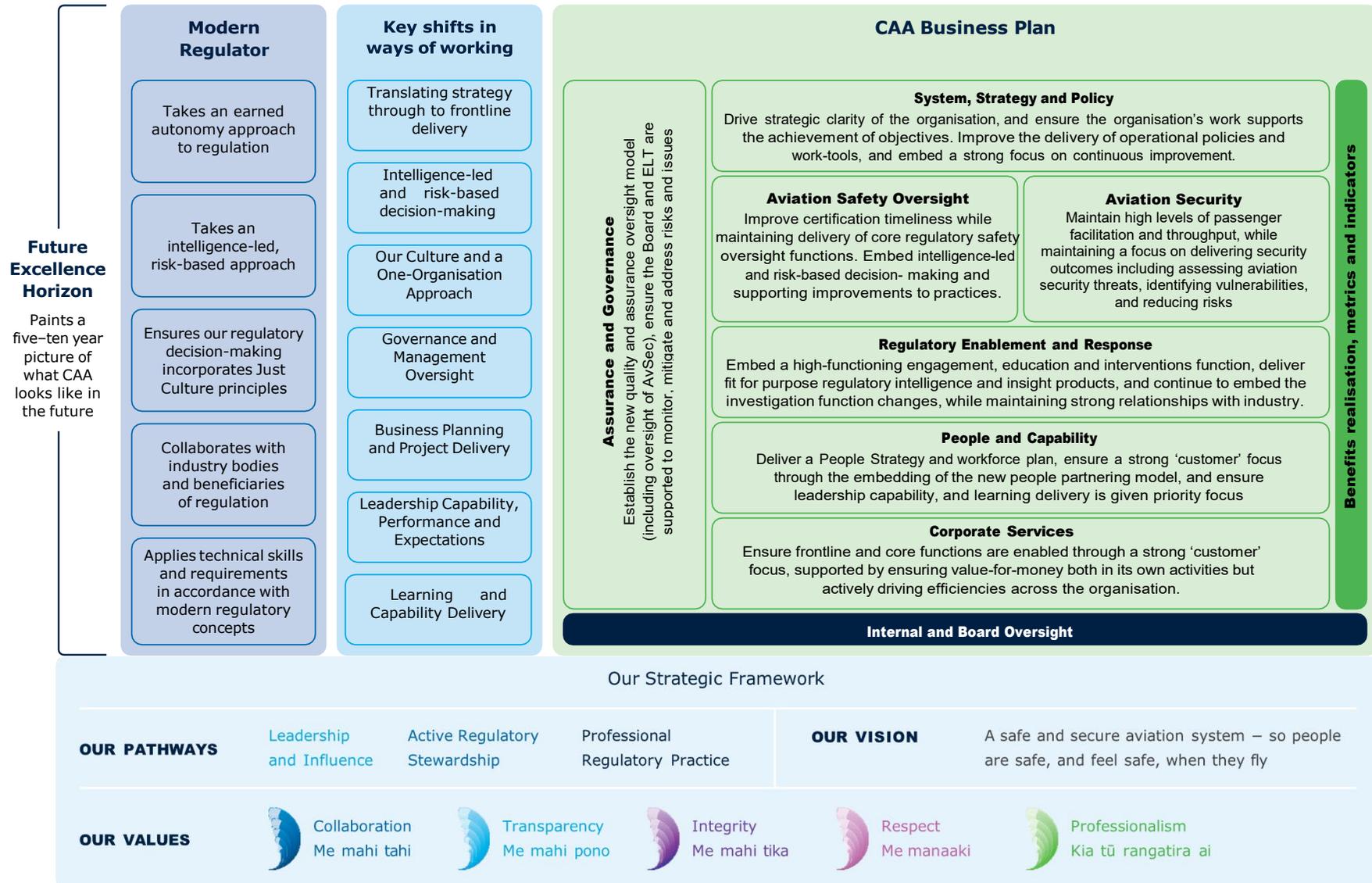
SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Introduction

Structural changes that took effect from 7 April 2025 reflect our goal of improving the organisation's performance. They provide the necessary conditions to ensure we can work effectively and efficiently in a challenging and changing aviation environment, and to affect new ways of working. However, it is those ways of working (our practices, systems, and culture) which will see us succeed, and which have now become our focus.

This document, *the Ways of Working*, specifies how shifts in our organisation will be implemented.

Approach to implementing our performance shifts and how it fits together



Key Terms

Future excellence horizon

This paints a picture of what CAA will look like in five to ten years once we have successfully embedded the changes.

Modern regulator

These elements describe what it means to be a modern regulator for CAA.

Key shifts in ways of working

These shifts describe the changes we need to make in how we work together, to enable us to move to a modern regulator. They incorporate our values, systems, processes, behaviour, and culture, and underpin new business processes and operating models at the organisation level.

Implementation and business plan

The work to embed changes to how we work is part of the core work of the organisation. Each team will focus on delivering core work and improving core work (implementing the changes). Each group will also be asked to complete a detailed work plan on how to deliver on these indicative priorities, which will make up the Organisation's Business Plan for FY25/26.

Benefits realisation, metrics, and indicators

These outline how we will measure the benefits intended from the changes, and how achieving these benefits will contribute to outcomes and the outcome-level measures described in our Statement of Performance Expectations.

Our Strategic Framework

The implementation of the structural changes and ways of working are aligned to our strategic framework and contribute to our vision and purpose.

Our Values

Everything we do, whether that be our core business-as-usual work or improving that work, must be underpinned by our values. Our values also help us to hold one another to account for implementing the new ways of working.

Bringing our future to life (future excellence horizon)

Respecting the past and acknowledging the present

Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand (CAA) is an agency with a strong and rich history. We have been connected to New Zealand's aviation sector since 1918. Our Aviation Security Service function also has a proud history, dating back to 1977.

Over the years, our enduring reason for being has been to ensure a safe and secure aviation system – so people are safe, and feel safe, when they fly.

Today, CAA is focused on becoming an intelligence-led and risk-based modern regulator, one where we are focused both on safety and security outcomes in a way that enables economic growth and social connectivity for New Zealand. We have undergone a combination of reviews and organisational assessments which have clarified our internal and external challenges, opportunities and strengths, and what needs to be done to address these.

The environment in which we operate

The aviation sector is impacted by all forms of change: economic, natural, political, technological, or by something like a global pandemic. The next five years will continue this trend – change is constant and our new normal.

In 2025, New Zealand is experiencing an economic downturn with high unemployment and inflation. Cost increases are occurring across the aviation sector, making the overall cost of domestic and international travel higher. Conservatively, we do not expect domestic and international passenger volumes to return to pre-pandemic levels until at least 2027.

CAA is operating in a constrained financial environment. This is in line with both the industry's and the Government's expectations of disciplined spending and performance improvements, particularly in regulatory decision making and passenger facilitation.

The change and complexity in emerging technologies will increase exponentially, which will continue to test the regulatory system but also create opportunities for how CAA operates.

Sudden cost pressures could also emerge before reaching financial sustainability; for example, over the next five years more aerodromes may start or restart scheduled flights that require aviation security screening, putting more pressure on our finite resources.

We are adapting to our new normal by being creative, fostering a culture of continuous improvement, and tenaciously finding efficiencies in how we operate.

Becoming a modern regulator

Becoming a modern regulator means:

- We build a comprehensive picture of our participants and apply less intervention to those who have effective safety and risk management systems, and more where this is not the case.
- We engage with stakeholders to keep regulation fit for purpose and make it as straight forward as possible to comply with regulatory requirements.
- We clearly communicate our consistent, transparent, and timely regulatory decision-making, drawing on the principles of *just culture*.
- We apply the full spectrum of prescriptive and outcomes-based regulation and use the 'right tool at the right time' in response to regulatory problems, from education to enforcement.
- This approach will ensure the regulatory burden on participants is appropriate and supports them to achieve positive economic outcomes for New Zealand, while being clear that our enduring purpose is a safe and secure aviation system.

The change in the regulatory relationship between CAA and AvSec brought about by the Civil Aviation Act 2023 enables more effective collaboration—combining functions where appropriate. With a shared purpose, we can better leverage our experience, skills, and relationships to fulfil our duties efficiently, while avoiding duplication and unnecessary cost.

We are committed to investing in leadership capability so that our leaders are equipped to grow and support our people while offering technical expertise. A strong focus on learning and capability—especially in core and frontline skills—will ensure training is accessible, relevant, and aligned with our strategic direction and risk settings. This will enable consistent, confident decision-making using the right tools at the right time.

We are modernising our practices to ensure they are fit for purpose and support smarter, faster regulatory decision-making. This includes investing in new systems and infrastructure to replace legacy platforms and support future needs.

We remain focused on communication, consistency, and timeliness in all regulatory decision-making. Under the Public Service Act 2020, Crown entities are part of the wider public service and are guided by its shared principles, values, and spirit of service. These, along with our organisational values and just culture principles, underpin our work and reinforce our commitment to the public interest.

We will continue to strengthen engagement with stakeholders and the public, improve how we contribute to New Zealand's economy, and deepen our collaboration with government agencies and industry bodies. We will also maintain alignment with international standards and continue our role as regulatory stewards of the aviation system.

What will it really look like if we make these shifts and move to being a modern regulator?

Our participants

Participants entering and operating in the aviation system will be capable of meeting safety and security requirements. There will be a consistent understanding of respective roles and responsibilities that are seen to work cohesively together, collectively strengthening safety and security regulatory outcomes.

Participants will have trust and confidence in CAA and the integrity of the regulatory system. They will see us as one cohesive entity and will receive consistent and timely quality advice, decision-making, and communication. They will be informed of expected timeframes and our progress toward them. They will consider us responsive, agile, and professional. Consequently, they will be motivated to engage, provide necessary safety and security information proactively, and collaborate.

We will work with emerging technology participants enabling them entry to the aviation system upon meeting necessary standards. We will enable New Zealand to be a leading test bed, where the world watches as novel technology is flown safely and securely. Our participants will be provided with timely information and decision-making and, while they might not always agree with the decision made, they will understand and respect why and how. They will see decisions which align with the public interest and *just culture* principles.

Participants will be aware of CAA's full range of regulatory activities and will trust these activities are proportionate and make a tangible positive impact on safety and security outcomes.

Case study

This case study is a fictionalized example of new ways of working embedded in future certification renewal visits.

A new manager of a small regional aerodrome recently prepared for a routine certification renewal visit from CAA inspectors. The aerodrome has an important role in the local community, supporting tourism operators, air services, and regional connectivity.

In the lead-up to the visit, the manager had engaged in several constructive conversations with CAA and received helpful information about previous safety events and regulatory expectations.

Although the manager was new to

aviation, they had a background in public infrastructure and had clear guidance material and timely engagement with CAA, which helped them find opportunities to improve safety practices on site.

During the inspection, the CAA team focused on areas of recent change and other key risk points. The visit was professional, collaborative, and conducted with an emphasis on efficiency and clarity.

The aerodrome manager came away from the experience with a strong impression of CAA's professionalism, noting the clarity of expectations and constructive nature of the engagement.

Our people

Our people will be suitably trained, with our frontline regulatory workforce possessing mixed skills to balance sector specific expertise and excellent regulatory acumen. They will be supported to deliver outcomes effectively and make risk-based decisions relating to safety or security.

Our leaders will be accountable and transparent, capable of balancing both people and technical leadership. They will support our people, guide performance, and be responsible for fostering open dialogue and high-performance. People leadership is seen as a critical core capability, so leaders will be given support and time to cultivate this.

It's important to us that our people feel empowered and supported to speak up and share ideas or raise issues, that teams are supported, and the organisations continue to be a great place to work.

Our people will exemplify our values in everything we do – in our regulatory activities, interactions, and decisions.

The organisation

CAA is focused on being a modern regulator that can put safety and security outcomes at the forefront, while also facilitating innovation, enabling sustainable aviation, and supporting economic growth and connectivity for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

We will operate and feel like one organisation rallied to a common purpose, which makes the most of the full diversity and experience of our people across our different business groups. We will be financially stable, efficient, and forward-thinking, and use integrated data and advanced analysis to identify and respond to risks, ensuring our resources are where they are needed the most.

CAA will ensure our systems remain fit for purpose, lead across sectors, influence international aviation outcomes, and maintain strong partnerships, especially in the Pacific. A shared vision and inclusive culture will guide our leadership and enable open and effective engagement.

The public

The travelling public will feel safe and secure when they fly.

They will consider security procedures at airports to be necessary and efficient. There is trust that any threats will be averted through the security screening actions we undertake. Policy and regulatory considerations will be aligned with operational activity to ensure that the travelling public pass as seamlessly as possible, without unnecessary delays, through our screening activities.

The public will see an integrated system – from kerb to plane – where airports, airlines, CAA, and other public sector agencies work together

to ensure efficient and effective security screening activities, so New Zealand has safe and secure skies and is highly regarded internationally.

The public will appreciate the peace of mind that comes with the safe and secure operation of activities in the tourism, sport, and recreation sectors, and all New Zealanders will indirectly

benefit from the economic benefits generated by these.

Through our actions, we will indirectly improve economic sustainability and social connectivity for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

Accountability bodies, decision-makers, stakeholders, and partners

We aim to enhance trust and confidence in our regulatory performance and decision-making. We are aware of our strengths and challenges and will continue to foster mutually supportive relationships with our stakeholders to drive sector-wide change and safety and security outcomes.

For the benefit of New Zealand, it is imperative that CAA is a high-performing, responsive regulator that delivers on transport system goals and supports modernization.

Our international partners will be able to trust New Zealand's aviation system continues to meet global standards, improves upon vulnerabilities where possible and supports safe and innovative operations.

SECTION TWO: IMPLEMENTING WAYS OF WORKING ACROSS THE ORGANISATION

Ministerial and Board expectations

An important context for all the work we do (and how we do it) is the Letter(s) of Expectation from Ministers we receive on an annual basis. In addition to delivering on our statutory functions, this shapes CAA's work each year. The current letter from the Associate Minister of Transport emphasises fiscal sustainability, core business improvement, and enabling advanced aviation. The key priorities include:

- demonstrating value for money,
- operating in a risk-based and intelligence-led way,
- improving certification processing times,
- maintaining efficient and secure Aviation Security services,
- and supporting rapid development of advanced aviation technologies.

These expectations directly inform our strategic and business planning priorities, and align with CAA's vision of becoming a modern regulator. As our ways of working mature, they will deliver tangible benefits not just for the aviation sector, but also for the travelling public and New Zealand more broadly. The public will benefit from a more seamless, secure, and trustworthy aviation experience. International partners and accountability bodies will have continued confidence in New Zealand's regulatory system, recognising our strong safety standards and openness to innovation. These changes are embedded in CAA's broader planning, governance, and assurance systems, ensuring long-term alignment, consistency, and accountability.

Focus on delivery

It's important we maintain a strong focus on quality, timeliness, and continuous improvement of our work. This includes aligning all efforts to maximize efficiency, especially in frontline safety and security delivery, such as certification and passenger screening. Achieving this requires coordinated support across multiple internal functions. Our culture and leadership approach will support this.

Our Culture and 'one organisation' approach

Culture is an essential building block for the success of the organisation and for us as individuals.

Culture is foundational to CAA's success. It's not a stand-alone programme but something embedded in everything we do—shaped by our values, behaviours, and how we work together. Leaders play a critical role in modelling expectations, taking a just culture approach, addressing poor behaviour, and supporting teams through development and coaching.

We are focused on working more collaboratively across functions, breaking down silos, and engaging stakeholders in a unified way. Our 'One Organisation' approach is about acting as a cohesive, diverse system—beyond structural changes—requiring ongoing, deliberate effort to shift mindsets and build a shared identity across all groups.

Leadership capability, performance, and expectations

Improving our leadership capability has been identified as an immediate priority area, and specific initiatives have been identified and accounted for in the business plan to support this way of working:

Leadership involves demonstrating exemplary behaviours and living and breathing our values every day. This includes leaders developing a strong sense of self-awareness and understanding the impact of how they work. It also includes appropriately identifying and addressing behaviours that conflict with our expected behaviours and values, and approaching difficult conversations with courage and care.

Learning and capability

Our approach to learning and capability will shift from transactional and compliance-based training, to ensuring that learning and capability development is embedded at every opportunity and in the way we do things. Over time, and with dedicated effort, we expect to become a learning organisation that prioritises learning and capability at all levels and in everything we do. We will be clear on the capability we need now and into the future, and be deliberate and focused on the provision of fit for purpose, effective and modern learning interventions.

We will provide governance and management oversight and direction to enable the focusing, acceleration and delivery of the most critical learning and capability priorities for our front-line aviation security and safety teams.

Translating strategy through to delivery

For our people to work effectively, we need clear strategic direction and consistent priorities. A new team now leads end-to-end regulatory strategy, aligning it with priorities, investments, and regulatory improvements. Success, however, depends on organisation-wide collaboration.

Our strategy is shaped by national and international contexts and Government expectations. While execution mechanisms exist, further clarity is needed, and a dedicated team is refining how best to articulate our long-term direction.

Business planning

CAA's business planning approach needs to better align strategy, priorities, and resource allocation. Reviews show that there are opportunities to better align priorities and resources. This year, we'll focus on refining core work, reassessing priorities, embedding structural changes, and supporting new teams—delivered largely through day-to-day work. Future planning will be guided by strategic objectives, with project work limited to approved or essential initiatives.

Intelligence-led and risk-based approach

Overview

CAA is responsible for identifying and addressing aviation safety and security risks at the system, sector and operator levels. We support regulatory stewardship and targeted interventions, while operators manage their own risks.

Our oversight will balance trust with verification – an approach known as **earned autonomy**. As an organisation, our resources are limited, so we will prioritize areas that could have the potential for the highest risk and harm. It's important we strike the right balance for this, as we don't want to place unnecessary burdens on low-risk operators while potentially overlooking areas that are at higher risk. We rely on quality data – shared and recorded by all – to inform where we should focus our efforts.

What exactly is our intelligence-led and risk-based approach?

While intelligence has often been used to inform individual safety decisions, being truly intelligence-led and risk-based means using data and insights across all levels of the organisation—strategic, operational, and tactical. This approach helps us apply the right regulatory tools including education and outreach, and direct limited resources to the areas of greatest actual or potential harm.

At the strategic level, it shapes objectives, standards, and priorities. Operationally, it informs planning and resource allocation. Tactically, it guides frontline decisions. These levels must be connected and supported by clear procedures and tools, which help our inspectors to make confident, risk-based decisions.

Quality and Assurance approach and relationship to oversight of AvSec

CAA is required to ensure any provider of aviation security services meets the standards and requirements specified in the Act and the rules (particularly Part 140). Were there to be a third-party provider, CAA would undertake oversight of that provider through a regulatory framework. Regarding AvSec, CAA ensures AvSec meets these standards – as a provider who is not an aviation document holder – through a robust internal oversight approach. There is a shift in our approach to the quality and assurance of this so that we address risks, issues and deficiencies from an all-of-organisation perspective and have good management oversight.

Conclusion

Ways of Working is intended to provide transparency around the CAA's ongoing change and our new ways of working. It is a window into how our strategic vision, regulatory responsibilities, and organisational culture are evolving to meet the demands of a modern aviation environment.

As we embed these new changes, we remain committed to working with industry, government partners, and the public to ensure a safe and secure aviation system for all New Zealanders.

Contact us

If you have any questions about this document or would like to engage with the CAA on any aspect of our new ways of working, please contact:

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