

# RUAKURA INLAND PORT ON TRACK

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THE OPENING OF RUAKURA INLAND PORT MARKS A STEP CHANGE FOR THE SUPPLY CHAIN.



Ruakura Inland Port joint venture partners, left to right: Leonard Sampson, CEO, Port of Tauranga; Chris Joblin, CEO, Tainui Group Holdings; Hinerangi Raumati Tu'ua, Chair, Tainui Group Holdings; and Julia Hoare, Chair, Port of Tauranga

**R**uakura Inland Port, a major new investment in supply chain infrastructure for the Upper North Island, is now scaling up operations after its soft launch in August last year. The first KiwiRail train rolled into the new nine-hectare inland port on 3 August.

A rapid scaling up in the six months since has trains calling daily at the site on the eastern boundary of Hamilton, each transporting up to 90 containers on their journey between MetroPort Auckland and Port of Tauranga.

Of the seven trains currently calling at Ruakura each week, five are bringing imported goods containers from MetroPort Auckland, unloading at Ruakura, reloading

with New Zealand-made goods, and carrying on the journey to Port of Tauranga for exporting internationally.

The \$60-million facility has been more than 15 years in development by Tainui Group Holdings (TGH), the commercial entity of Waikato-Tainui, and is owned and operated in a 50:50 joint venture (JV) with Port of Tauranga. The two parties have signed an initial 50-year lease for the port, with Port of Tauranga subsidiary Quality Marshalling to manage the onsite operations.

The JV partners plan to grow the inland port to match customer demand. With four stages in total, the inland port will grow to 30 hectares when fully developed, and will have potential capacity for one million 20-foot-equivalent units of

container movements per year, serving the golden triangle of Hamilton, Tauranga and Auckland.

The facility has twin rail sidings of around 800 metres, enabling trains to enter the port from either direction of the East Coast Main Trunk Line. KiwiRail currently operates more than 60 weekly services between Port of Tauranga and MetroPort in Auckland.

Chris Joblin, Chief Executive of TGH, says the project marks a step change in New Zealand logistics infrastructure.

'Ruakura is about moving significant volumes of freight from road to rail connectivity, while not sacrificing sustainability for efficiency or cost. Our JV's vision is to transform freight movement and drive economic growth across the "golden triangle" region,' Joblin says.

### DRIVING ECONOMIC GROWTH

The port is a key attractant for major logistics and industrial tenants in TGH's surrounding Ruakura Superhub, which is one of Australasia's largest multi-use developments.

Developed on whenua returned to Waikato-Tainui under its 1995 settlement with the Crown, Ruakura Superhub has been recognised as 'a project of national significance' in planning frameworks under successive governments. Spanning an area equivalent to Auckland's central business district, the 490-hectare Ruakura Superhub will ultimately include logistics, industrial, commercial, retail and green space, as well as homes for around 3000 families.

The scale and ambition of the project reflects the economic growth of the golden triangle, which already handles about 50 per cent of New Zealand's freight volume.

With population growth projected to be another 700,000 people by 2042, and container volumes growing by 60 per cent within the same period to meet new demand, the region needs the additional capacity and increased resilience brought by Ruakura Inland Port.

The growing size of container ships is also testing the capacity of marine terminals. The port is able to receive export cargo containers and hold import cargo containers in a similar way to a marine port terminal. Ruakura will effectively be able to provide the ports of Tauranga and Auckland with additional capacity, as containers are accepted for export, or flow in to Ruakura for de-vanning before the contents are distributed across the North Island.

Among the first tenant openings at the Ruakura Superhub was retail giant Kmart, which opened its new 40,000-square-metre distribution facility in September 2023, closely followed in October by cold chain specialists Big Chill (13,000 square metres). Global player Maersk (16,000 square metres) also opened a major cold store facility at Ruakura Superhub in mid November.

The Ruakura Superhub creates a new and competitive logistics ecosystem for the Upper North Island. The co-location of importers, exporters, and domestic players alongside high-capacity rail and road networks, coupled with an inland port, empty container depot, and other logistics service providers means more freight can be moved more efficiently, and in a more sustainable way.

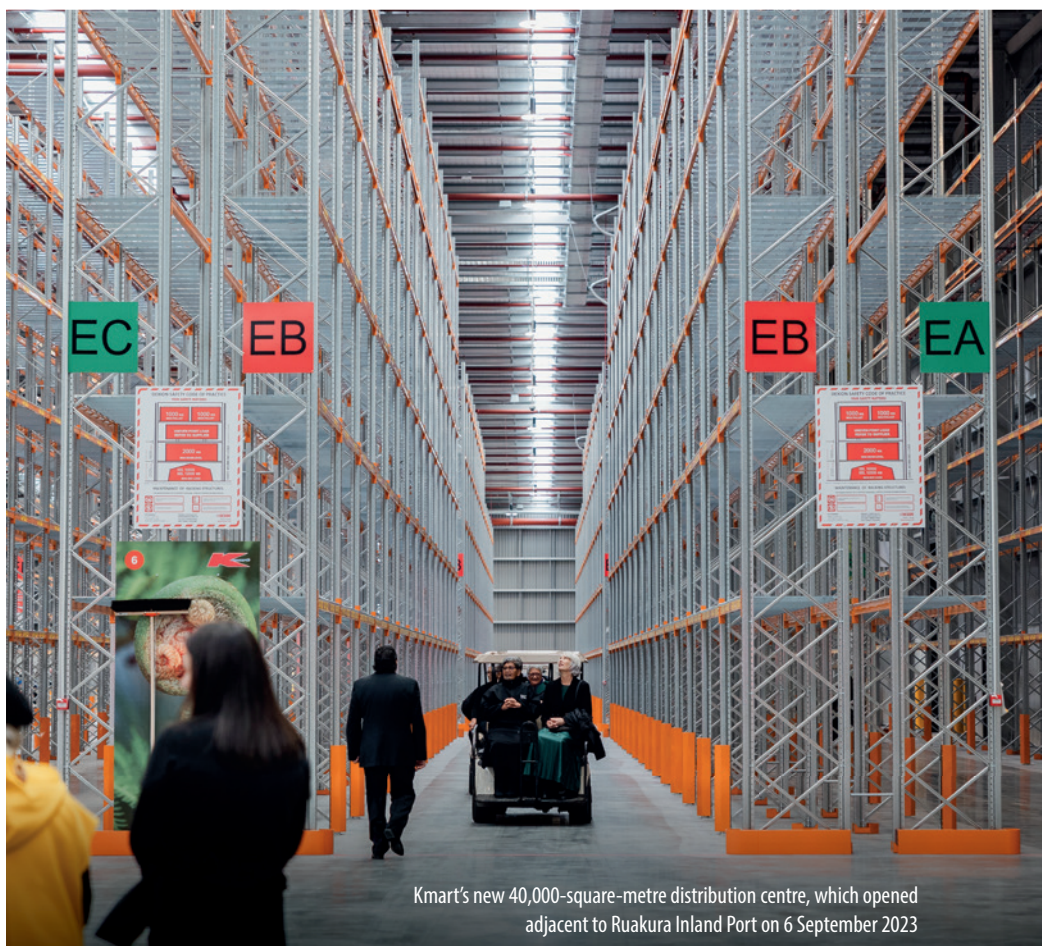
A key feature of the Inland Port is its potential to decarbonise the supply chain by shifting more freight from road to rail. Once at its full capacity, the Ruakura Inland Port will remove the need for 65,000 long-haul truck journeys per year, also reducing carbon emissions by 600 tonnes per year and road congestion associated with road transport, according to analysis by Castalia.

### SUPPORTING EMPLOYMENT

The development is forecast to support 6000–12,000 employment opportunities across the businesses tenanted there, in addition to the wrap-around services thriving to support the needs of Ruakura, from construction and engineering to hospitality and retail.

A number of iwi-owned businesses have been engaged in the earthworks, vertical construction and landscaping of the massive site. For Waikato-Tainui, as the landowner and developer, the Ruakura Inland Port and Superhub are intergenerational 30–50-year projects on track to create a more resilient economic future for the more than 86,000 members of the iwi. //

For further information, visit [www.ruakurainlandport.co.nz](http://www.ruakurainlandport.co.nz).



Kmart's new 40,000-square-metre distribution centre, which opened adjacent to Ruakura Inland Port on 6 September 2023