

**Opening address by Dr John Small, Chair of the Commerce Commission, at the Pacific Island Network of Competition, Consumer and Economic Regulators (PINCCER) Conference**

11 March 2026

*The following text is a written version of the keynote address, adapted from the speech delivered at the PINCCER conference in Auckland.*

- It's a pleasure to welcome you all to Aotearoa New Zealand, to Auckland, and to the second PINCCER conference. We're delighted to host colleagues from right across the Pacific and grateful to those who have travelled long distances to be here over the next two days. I'm confident we'll leave feeling a little smarter, stronger, more connected, and energised for the work ahead.
- Although our countries differ in many ways, we share a set of common challenges. We are all relatively small, open economies, geographically dispersed and vulnerable to economic and climate related shocks. None of us enjoys the scale that larger markets take for granted, and all of us face the constant task of ensuring our markets remain competitive, resilient, and fair.
- That's why strong regulatory capability matters so much. As the OECD reminded New Zealand recently, when economies face headwinds, competition and regulatory settings need to be at their best. Across our region, we carry responsibilities that are central to economic development and public confidence: promoting competition, protecting consumers, and regulating essential services. These roles are vital and they are not easy.
- This is where regional cooperation becomes so valuable. By sharing expertise, information, data, and training opportunities, we can build long-term capability in ways that no single agency could achieve alone. We remain sovereign countries with different legal frameworks and policy settings, but we benefit enormously from learning from one another and identifying where greater alignment could lift outcomes across the region.
- From my own experience working in Pacific telecommunications markets, it was clear that regulation is both essential and challenging, and that models designed for large economies don't always translate neatly into smaller ones. Early ideas about a pan-Pacific regulator were well-intentioned but unrealistic. What we have built through PINCCER is far better: a practical, collaborative network that strengthens each of us while respecting our differences.
- PINCCER is not just a talking shop, it's a doing shop. It fills a critical gap by providing practical tools, workshops, shared resources, and relationships that open the door to ongoing exchange. Many of our agencies are young, or have taken on new

responsibilities, and the ability to learn from one another accelerates capability in a way that truly matters.

- The progress since the first conference in Fiji has been remarkable. What began as an enthusiastic conversation in a single room has grown into a network with real momentum because it delivers value. The friendships and professional connections formed there continue to deepen, and I encourage you to keep building those relationships over the coming days. Speak up, share your challenges, offer your ideas because we all benefit when we're open with one another.
- Looking ahead, the vision we share is clear. We want markets that are open, competitive, and fair. Markets where innovation thrives and firms can invest with confidence. We want consumers who feel informed, protected, and empowered. And we want regulators who are confident, capable, connected, and courageous in pursuing these outcomes for their communities.
- These goals are absolutely achievable. Working together over the next two days will help us take another step toward them. Our communities deserve strong, effective regulation, and this network is one of the ways we deliver it.
- It is a privilege for the New Zealand Commerce Commission to host you. We're looking forward to a productive and inspiring event. Thank you for being here.