

Tēnā koutou

I'm writing at the start of my second term as Telecommunications Commissioner to share reflections on the past five years and outline priorities for the period ahead.

It's a privilege to serve in this role and I welcome the opportunity—through reappointment by the Minister for Media and Communications—to finish the job I started by seeing through the implementation of the legislative changes introduced in 2018.

Telecommunications networks are essential national infrastructure. They underpin economic activity, connect communities, and provide vital lifelines in times of emergency.

The Commission continues to play an important role in ensuring these networks function well and that the market delivers for all New Zealanders.

Over the past five years, we've worked collaboratively with industry and consumer groups to promote competition that delivers long-term benefits for consumers.

We've made significant progress in delivering key legislative requirements—putting in place a new fibre regulatory regime, smoothing the transition from copper to fibre, improving Retail Service Quality (RSQ), and strengthening our ability to monitor and report on the market.

Our latest *Annual Monitoring Report*, published alongside this letter, shows that consumers are benefiting from regulatory settings that support a stable platform for competition.

New Zealanders generally enjoy the ability to switch providers, access services that meet their needs, and benefit from pricing that compares well internationally.

However, there is still more to do. As the *Annual Monitoring Report* also shows, the market remains highly concentrated, and addressing this concentration continues to present challenges. In particular:

- Fibre remains a monopoly service in the absence of effective competitive constraints, but we see an opportunity to refine the regulatory settings, ahead of the next regulatory period beginning in 2029.
- Copper services are still in transition, but our focus is now shifting to rural areas, where safeguarding consumers during copper withdrawal is just as important as it was in urban centres.
- Our RSQ programme is well advanced, but some issues identified in the legislation—particularly billing, switching, and contracts—are still to be addressed.
- Getting comparative performance information into the hands of consumers is key to helping them make informed choices and strengthening the demand side of the market.

Looking ahead, we are entering a pivotal phase for telecommunications in New Zealand. Over the next five years, almost every aspect of the current regulatory framework will come under review, in line with the mechanisms built into the regime. As the market evolves, we will ensure regulation remains fit for purpose—retaining what is necessary and retiring what is not.

We expect to see significant deregulatory change over the coming five years. This includes:

- Nationwide withdrawal of copper regulation.
- Streamlining multi-operator service regulation to reflect what remains necessary.
- A shift in the RSQ programme towards a primarily monitoring role.
- Recalibrated fibre settings ready for the next regulatory period.

At the same time, technological advances continue to reshape the sector, and broader developments are raising complex questions around resilience, scams, data rights, digital equity, and the role of digital platforms. These issues may give rise to new regulatory challenges in the future.

The foundations we've laid put us in a strong position to build a more competitive, innovative, and consumer-focused sector—one that drives investment, innovation, productivity, and growth.

I look forward to continuing our work with industry, consumers, and government to ensure New Zealand's telecommunications sector maximises its potential for the future.

Ngā mihi nui

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Tristan Gilbertson', followed by a period.

Tristan Gilbertson

Telecommunications Commissioner