

# Taupō Business Chamber

## President's Report

Annual General Meeting 2026

*Presented by: Abhinav Batta, President • April 2026*

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### **Kia ora koutou,**

It is with immense pride - and a little bittersweet emotion - that I present my President's Report to you at this Annual General Meeting. This will be my final report as President of the Taupō Business Chamber, and I want to use this opportunity to reflect on a remarkable year, celebrate what we have achieved together, and express my heartfelt gratitude to this incredible business community.

### **A Year of Momentum**

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The past year has been one of the most active and impactful in recent memory for the Taupō Business Chamber. Membership has continued to grow, event attendance has been consistently strong, and the energy I see at every gathering tells me that our members genuinely value what this Chamber stands for.

We have worked hard to ensure that every event we host delivers real value. Whether it was the buzz of a Business After Five, the depth of a ChamberWorks session, or the celebration of our Business Awards evening, our members have shown up - and kept showing up. That consistency is the lifeblood of what we do, and it does not go unnoticed.

### **Championing Our Members - Advocacy in Action**

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One of the Chamber's most important roles is to be the independent voice for local business. This year, we backed that up with action.

A standout example was our submission opposing the proposed ban on credit card surcharges. Many of our members - particularly in hospitality, retail, and service industries - felt strongly that this policy would unfairly impact their businesses. The Chamber listened, and we acted. We put a formal submission on your behalf, ensuring that the voice of Taupō's business community was heard at a national level. That is what your Chamber membership means in practice: when a policy threatens your bottom line, you don't have to face it alone.

Earlier this month, we facilitated a red tape roundtable here in Taupō with Deputy Prime Minister David Seymour and Minister Andrew Hoggard. This was not a photo opportunity, it was a carefully curated conversation between local business owners and two of the most senior decision-makers in government. The issues raised were real, the discussion was frank, and the fact that Taupō was at that table matters. Your Chamber made that happen.

We remain committed to advocating on issues that matter to you. If there is a rule, regulation, or proposal that is getting in the way of your business success, we want to hear about it.

## Events - Connecting, Learning and Celebrating

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This year's event calendar has been one of our fullest and most diverse. I am proud of what we delivered for our members:

- **Multiple Business After Five (BA5) events** - hosted at a variety of member venues across the district, these evenings continue to be the heartbeat of our networking calendar. The consistent attendance at our BA5s is a testament to how much our members value face-to-face connection. If there is one piece of advice I always give to new members, it is this: joining is just the first step - you have to show up.
- **NZ-India Free Trade Agreement Briefing** - as New Zealand's trade relationship with India continues to develop, we made sure our members had access to timely, expert briefings on what this means for local businesses. Events like this demonstrate that the Taupō Business Chamber is plugged into the bigger picture.
- **Taupō Business Awards 2025** - held at the Great Lake Centre, this sold-out black-tie event was a night to remember. With live music, dazzling lighting, a 360° photo booth, and winners announced across eight categories, the evening was a true celebration of innovation, dedication, and community spirit in our district. Nights like this remind us all why we work so hard; and why celebrating each other matters.
- **ChamberWorks** - this year we became a delivery partner for a national MSD initiative, connecting local employers with workforce solutions tailored to the Taupō region. It is a programme that genuinely changes lives, and I am proud that the Chamber played a hands-on role in bringing it to life here, **working with local employers to shape it in the Taupō region**. The local launch at Vine was a real moment for this community.
- **MTF Finance Elevate Taupō** - I am delighted to announce that we have secured a naming rights sponsorship partnership with MTF Finance Taupō for our Elevate event series. The first MTF Finance Elevate Taupō takes place on 22 April, featuring a panel of local business leaders sharing real stories from the coalface. This is exactly the kind of event that sets the Taupō Business Chamber apart - practical, locally grounded, and built for our members who are looking to step up their leadership and business capability.
- **Chamber Christmas Party** - a wonderful evening that brought our community together to celebrate the year.
- **Netwalking and Coffee & Connect** - our more informal events continue to attract members who want to build relationships in a relaxed, welcoming setting.
- **Emerge - New to Known** - this year marked an exciting milestone with the rebranding of the First 15 group to Emerge - New to Known. The rebrand reflects a renewed energy and direction, and significant work has been carried out behind the scenes to transform Emerge into a truly thriving group. We have had record numbers and thank you to our sponsors to back our events. A heartfelt special mention goes to

Kerre Collins, whose leadership and dedication have been instrumental in driving this evolution. Kerre, you have done an outstanding job.

We are always looking at how we can improve our events, introduce new formats, and make sure every member - whether you have been with us for ten years or ten days - feels that the Chamber is genuinely working for you.

## **Beth - The Woman Who Made It All Happen**

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I must take a moment to acknowledge someone who has genuinely transformed this organisation.

When Beth joined us as General Manager in February 2025, I knew we had found someone special. What I did not fully anticipate was just how quickly she would hit the ground running and raise the bar across everything we do. Beth has brought energy, professionalism, and genuine care to this role. She has made the Chamber feel more connected, more organised, and more vibrant - and quite frankly, she has made me look very good as President.

Beth, on behalf of the board and the entire membership - thank you. The Taupō Business Chamber is in excellent hands, and I have no doubt the best is yet to come.

## **A Personal Note - Seven Years, and a Grateful Heart**

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This is my final President's report, and I want to be honest with you: writing it has not been easy.

My journey with the Taupō Business Chamber began in 2018 when I opened my first business - Incredible India Restaurant - with the support of this community. I joined as an intern, thanks to the generosity and encouragement of then-President Catie Noble, who saw something in me and gave me a chance. I became a board member in 2020, Vice President in 2023, and President in 2024. Seven years. What a journey.

If I am being truthful, I think I am one of the biggest beneficiaries of this organisation. The relationships I have built through this Chamber, the support you have all shown for my businesses – Incredible India Restaurant, Earthy Foods, Dough Bros and Café Lacus - have meant more than I can properly express. You did not just support my businesses. You supported me.

When I reflect on my presidency, the achievement I am most proud of is appointing a full-time General Manager. That decision was not just about efficiency - it was about making a statement. It said: the Taupō Business Chamber is serious. We are here for the long term. We are going to champion and celebrate local businesses with everything we have. I believe that decision will continue to pay dividends for this organisation long after I step down from this board.

I want to say thank you to Catie Noble for giving me my start and Jess Nicholes (Vice President) for supporting me during my presidency term. Thank you to the board members I have served alongside over the years - your dedication is remarkable. Thank you to every

member who has attended an event, made a connection, supported a fellow member, or simply renewed their membership year after year.

## Looking Ahead

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To whoever steps into the President's role - you are inheriting a Chamber in great shape. The foundation is strong, the team is exceptional, and the membership is engaged. Keep showing up. Keep advocating. Keep celebrating what makes Taupō's business community so special.

With the first MTF Finance Elevate Taupō already under our belt by the date of the AGM, and a strong events calendar already taking shape, including our inaugural Golf Day in October, the momentum heading into the next chapter of this Chamber is real. They are not starting from scratch - they are stepping into something that is already firing.

And to our members - I am not going anywhere. You will still see me at events, still cheering on the Chamber from the crowd. The only thing that's changing is my title.

This community changed my life. I hope it does the same for every business owner who walks through our door.

*Ngā mihi nui,*

**Abhinav Batta**

President, Taupō Business Chamber  
2024–2025