



Simon Bridges: "We're going through a strong period of growth because, in tough times, we've worked hard to show our worth."

## 170 years of backing Auckland business

### ► Karen Phelps

This year Auckland Business Chamber, New Zealand's oldest business association, is celebrating 170 years of supporting, connecting and advocating for businesses across the region.

Founded in 1856 the chamber has evolved alongside Auckland itself, maintaining a constant focus on strengthening economic conditions and adapting to the changing needs of its members.

It now represents businesses of all sizes from sole traders and start-ups to major corporates, operating across local and global markets.

"Reaching 170 years is pretty special," says chief executive Simon Bridges.

"It's a reminder of the legacy but also of not being complacent.

"We want to be as relevant now as we were back then. Auckland businesses felt they needed something like the chamber to advocate on big issues 170 years ago and that hasn't changed."

Membership is currently growing; a trend Simon attributes to proving its value during challenging economic conditions.

It has expanded staffing in key areas such as international business, events and member services to better support businesses navigating inflationary pressure, labour shortages and global uncertainty.

"We're going through a strong period of growth because, in tough times, we've worked hard to show our worth," explains Simon.

"New members are joining every day and that tells us we're delivering what businesses need right now."

A core part of the chamber's offering is practical, hands-on support.

Members can access a free 0800 advice line connecting them to legal, accounting, HR and other expert services, as well as mentoring and training through the Regional Business Partner Network, delivered in collaboration with MBIE and other government agencies.

An employment hub helps members find their next workers.

Another major drawcard is its events and networking programme, which includes everything from large-scale international speaker events and awards evenings to small, high-level roundtables with ministers, councillors and business leaders.

"Those connections are incredibly important," says Simon.

"They help businesses learn from each other, form partnerships and have direct access to decision-makers."

**"We're much more representative of the changing face of Auckland now. Being relevant to those communities has been a big part of our membership growth."**

The chamber also leverages its scale to secure buying privileges and discounts with major New Zealand brands, delivering tangible cost savings for members.

It plays a significant role in helping exporters, investing heavily in technology to streamline international export documentation used by thousands of Auckland businesses, from large exporters such as Fonterra through to small manufacturers.

Advocacy remains central to its mission. It represents individual businesses, supports business-to-business resolution and champions Auckland and nationwide economic issues, with a strong recent focus on small and medium-sized enterprises.

"We've been very active on issues that directly affect SMEs," says Simon.

"A recent example is the government's proposed surcharge ban, which was badly conceived and would have had negative impacts on businesses. We pushed hard on that, and the law has now been stalled."

Energy reform including improved competition and supply, technology enablement and tourism are also key priorities.

Simon says that the chamber continues to work with council and central government to create conditions that support innovation, productivity and the growth of globally competitive Auckland companies.

Internally it is investing in digital systems and customer relationship management to better serve members and reflect Auckland's increasingly multicultural business community.

"We're much more representative of the changing face of Auckland now," says Simon.

"Being relevant to those communities has been a big part of our membership growth."

As a not-for-profit and independent organisation, Simon says the purpose of the Auckland Business Chamber remains clear.

"We're here for one reason," he says.

"to support, connect and champion Auckland businesses and we'll keep doing that for the next 170 years."

## Client focus, expertise and on-time delivery

### ► Virginia Wright

Christopher Watt has recently changed his company name from Interior Design Build to IDB, reflecting their ongoing role as a general contractor. However, if clients prefer a full end-to-end project delivery service, they're very happy to provide that.

"If a client says I want you to build a design team, I'll get an architect and an engineer and other consultants and put the whole project team together. Otherwise, I'm quoting and tendering work with the client's architect which is where the Auckland market is currently," he explains.

A qualified and experienced quantity surveyor who has run a number of construction companies, Christopher has an extensive pool of trusted consultants and sub-contractors to call on that he's worked with over the years.

Equally at home building the best team for a design and build, or tendering for a project that's ready to go, his core skills include project and contract management and owner level compliance with building and health and safety regulations.

"We're flexible to meet our clients' needs and requirements going into the build and then once construction is underway, I'm hands on dealing with the on-site management and delivery," says Christopher.

"Essentially, I'm a boutique operator offering a bespoke construction service. I've got the skills to deliver a project end to end; I can tailor my services to meet my client's needs and if it's a complex project or a technical project requiring hands-on ownership level engagement that's what clients will receive."

IDB's main focus is on building interiors, commercial office fit-outs and building upgrades.

They represent the client with the skills, expertise and experience to deliver exactly what the project necessitates.

A project successfully delivered to a hard deadline just before Christmas illustrates both IDB's flexibility and their commitment to achieving a project to meet their client's needs.

The client had recently purchased two floors in Auckland's mixed use, 17-storey, 1980s built Vincent Towers, for long term occupancy. Craig Moller Architects was commissioned to design a quality fit-out with high-end finishes such as acoustic ceiling tiles and bespoke flooring. IDB ran the project with an open book procurement strategy and knew from the start that it would be a pressured build.

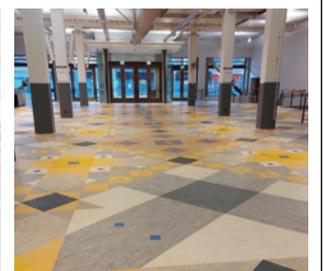
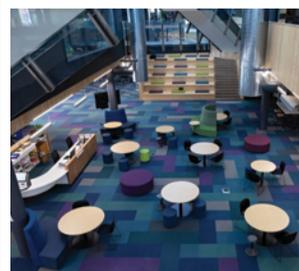
Because there were residents living in the mixed-use building, they were unable to start work before 8am, had to be offsite by 5pm, and could not work weekends. Noisy work was heavily restricted and had to be notified and agreed in advance with the Body Corporate Manager who lived in the building and was active in liaising between all parties.

IDB had the required combination of skills and experience to manage the Body Corporate restrictions and brought in the right team of people to manage a successful outcome. To get there the programme had to be re-sequenced on a regular basis as IDB adapted to typical construction challenges.

One example involved a subcontractor ringing up the day before delivery saying they couldn't perform for another two weeks.



**Hills Commercial Floors.**  
Proud to have our  
customers walk all over us.



**Auckland:** 24C Allright Place Mt Wellington | 09 2766242 | auckland@hcf.co.nz  
**Wellington:** 27C Dragon Street Grenada North | 04 232 7003 | wellington@hcf.co.nz  
**Christchurch:** 26 Hillview Road Phillipstown | 03 365 4229 | christchurch@hcf.co.nz

[www.hcf.co.nz](http://www.hcf.co.nz)



IDB focuses on building interiors, commercial office fit-outs and building upgrades.

Prompt action to get Moller to agree a design change and a rapidly approved minor variation through Auckland Council avoided project delay.

The last three weeks involved a day-by-day programme for every contractor.

It was IDB's upfront risk management in engaging with subcontractor Troake, who offered all four of the finishing trades with one point of contact: partitioning, painting, stopping and suspended ceilings that allowed the hard deadline to be met.

"They committed to hitting the deadline with me and it's only because we worked

closely together that we made it," says Christopher.

"Decorations and final fit ended up being completed the day before we handed over.

"I had the council final inspection on Friday with Client Practical Completion handover on the same day, with the client moving in a day later Saturday. It's pretty much unheard of to be able to deliver to those timescales."

Achieving this outcome before Christmas, alongside a highly satisfied client, is testament to IDB's proven capability to deliver exactly what they promise.



*Proudly supporting  
Interior DB Ltd*

• CEILINGS & PARTITIONS • INSULATION • FIXING • STOPPING • PAINTING

🏠 11 Anvil Rd, Silverdale
☎ 09 426 7664
✉ sales@troake.co.nz
🌐 www.troake.co.nz








We get the job done

# QUICKLY & EFFICIENTLY.

Dated fit-out slowing leasing interest? Call us for a no-obligation cost estimate and get your space tenant-ready.

- FLOORS, PARTITIONS, CEILINGS & SHOPFRONTS
- SMALL EXCAVATOR & TRICKY-ACCESS WORK
- CONCRETE CUTTING & MINOR REPAIRS
- HIGH-RISE & MALL SPECIALISTS

4 Holmes Rd Takanini, Auckland 1061 | 📞 021 070 2702 | ✉ adrian@precisiondemolition.co.nz | 🌐 www.precisiondemolition.co.nz

Fit Out &

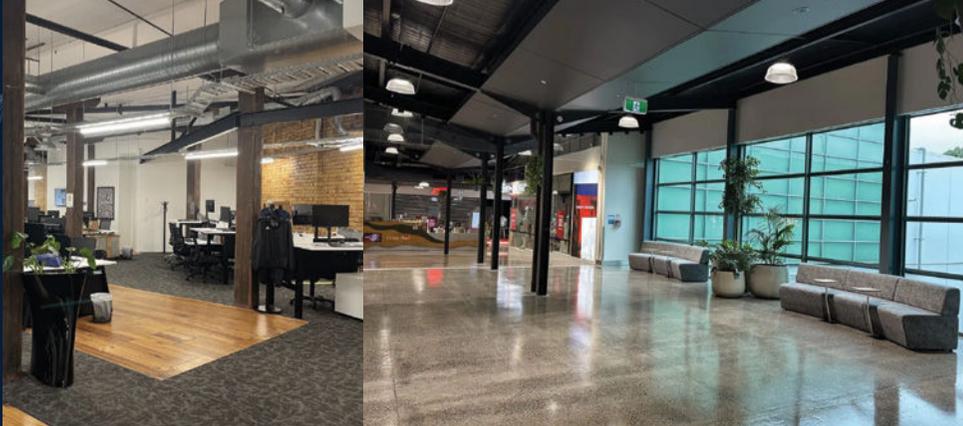
## Building Upgrade Specialists

IDB is an office fit out company that specialises in tailored construction solutions to suit your company's specific requirements. Whether it's a build-only fit out or design and build, we work diligently to complete your construction project on time and within budget.

09 816 8410

enquiry@interiordb.co.nz





www.interiordb.co.nz