

Key issues the focus for CBAFF 2025 conference

The 29th annual conference Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Federation of New Zealand (CBAFF) held in Napier last week brought together delegates from across New Zealand and internationally at a time of global uncertainty.

The conference was preceded by a tour of Napier Port, led by COO Adam Harvey, where delegates gained behind-the-scenes access to port operations, infrastructure, and future development plans.

CBAFF President Rachel Madden outlined the strong progress the council has made since the May AGM. She highlighted advances across portfolios, from education and engagement through to sustainability.

Delegates heard about milestones in education, including the redevelopment of the CBAFF UUI Course into modular blocks for release in 2026, the pathway toward FIATA accreditation, and new MPI-led industry training modules.

On engagement, she showcased expanded relationships, as well as collaborative projects with Ports of Auckland and youth-focused initiatives like Generation Future port tours.

She emphasised the importance of CEO and GM-level roundtables and new communication pathways for member queries to ensure timely advocacy and support.

Ms Madden also highlighted the Council's work on ESG, including youth engagement, partnerships for sustainability projects, and CBAFF's aspiration toward B Corp certification as a North Star for the industry.

CBAFF CEO Sherelle Kennelly in her opening address acknowledged the critical role ports play in keeping New Zealand connected to global trade. Her comments reflected on the importance of connection, collaboration, and sustainability.

In a compelling keynote, Peter Creeden (MPC International, Australia) urged a shift from "managing risk" to actively building resilience through investment in digital systems, people capability, and sustainable practices.

OCEAN FLYER

Delegates were introduced to an exciting breakthrough in New Zealand freight transport.

Shah Aslam, CEO of Ocean Flyer, and John Hamilton, Operations Director, outlined Ocean Flyer's vision for reshaping New Zealand's coastal supply chains.

Ocean Flyer is preparing to launch fully electric seaglidors on domestic



CBAFF President Rachel Madden.

coastal routes, signalling a new era of zero-emission, high-speed freight movement. Operating directly from harbours, they are bringing freight straight into CBDs and regional centres.

They shared insights on operational models, cargo capability, infrastructure requirements, and safety considerations for port access.

Delegates saw first-hand how this technology could reduce emissions, strengthen regional connectivity, and enable agile, just-in-time logistics.

A broader conversation on infrastructure followed on the Connecting the Dots panel led by Peter Creeden.

Efficient freight movement depends on a well-connected, multi-modal network underpinned by the right infrastructure, policy settings, technology, and industry collaboration.

Representatives from KiwiRail, National Road Carriers, NZ Transporting, and PortConnect explored how road, rail, and port connectivity can be strengthened. The panel discussed the current challenges facing the sector, from infrastructure gaps to capacity pressures, while highlighting opportunities for smarter planning, digital integration, and stronger alignment across modes.

The discussion reinforced that long-term strategy, collaboration, and investment will be essential to building a supply chain that is future-ready and able to keep New Zealand moving.

FREIGHT SECURITY

Security and compliance were also front and centre at the conference.

The Ministry of Primary Industries highlighted New Zealand's biosecurity priorities, while New Zealand Customs provided valuable insight into insider threats and organised crime at the border.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) delivered a timely session on air cargo security, emphasising the evolving global threat picture and the increasingly complex security environment facing New Zealand.

With expectations on Regulated Air Cargo Agents (RACAs) higher than ever, the session reinforced the critical importance of robust Known Customer processes, tamper-evident packaging, accurate declarations of security, and strong physical protection measures.

CAA also underlined that aviation security is not about "ticking boxes" – it requires genuine risk management, identifying and closing vulnerabilities, and recognising that an attack remains a realistic possibility.

The message was clear: the old way of doing things is not enough. Industry must step up and raise the bar to ensure New Zealand's aviation system remains both resilient and trusted on the world stage.

CARRIERS

Senior executives from COSCO, MSC, CMA CGM, and NPDL came together for the Carriers Panel, facilitated by Simon Dedman to discuss the future of New Zealand's global shipping connectivity.

The panel addressed pressing issues including service reliability, capacity planning, and congestion at key ports. With exporters calling for both stability and sustainability, carriers underlined the need for smarter fleet deployment, stronger collaboration with regional partners, and greater transparency in how services are delivered.

The discussion also highlighted environmental commitments, with carriers pointing to alternative fuel trials and green corridor initiatives as important steps toward decarbonisation.

Advances in digitalisation, such as blockchain-enabled bills of lading and real-time visibility tools, were showcased as critical to improving efficiency and resilience across New Zealand supply chains.

The panel's message was clear, building a reliable, sustainable, and connected future for New Zealand

trade will require collaboration, innovation, and a willingness to adapt global strategies to local needs.

PORTS

The Port-to-Port Panel led by Lincoln Hollis brought together leaders from Auckland, Napier, Tauranga, and Lyttelton, with the Port of Philadelphia joining virtually to provide an international perspective.

The discussion offered an in-depth look at the current state and future direction of New Zealand's port network, tackling issues such as infrastructure investment, congestion management, intermodal connectivity, and the management of berthing windows, all critical to meeting trade demands, enhancing resilience, and supporting national logistics strategies.

The Port of Philadelphia's contribution provided valuable context, highlighting how global port strategies intersect with New Zealand's ambitions and underscoring that many of the challenges faced, whether infrastructure bottlenecks, efficiency gains through technology, or evolving service models, are shared worldwide.

GLOBAL TRADE

A panel considered the current trade situation and New Zealand's global position. Moderated by Andrew Hudson, representatives from MFAT, MBIE, NZTE, ExportNZ, Ernst & Young New Zealand and Minter Ellison explored such issues as the state of the multilateral trading system to the impact of shifting political blocs and new Free Trade Agreements.

Discussion covered where New Zealand should focus next, services, and non-traditional issues such as ESG, labour standards, and digitalisation, alongside how exporters are adapting to supply chain disruption and geopolitical uncertainty.

The panel emphasised that while national interests are increasingly driving trade policy, opportunities remain for New Zealand to strengthen existing partnerships, pivot to emerging markets, and embrace digital solutions. The challenge ahead lies in navigating a more fragmented global environment while ensuring exporters remain competitive, resilient, and ready to seize new opportunities.

(To be continued next week)

The Headliner INVESTMENT NEWS SINCE 1979

In volatile times reliable information is even more vital. Follow the equities, moneymarket and currency markets as Headliner has for over 44 years.

SUBSCRIBERS RECEIVE:

24 fortnightly issues of the Headliner financial newspaper and premium access to www.headliner.co.nz daily reports.

Annual subscription: NZ\$170 (incl GST) US\$100

Order on headliner.nz or contact subscriptions@mgpublications.co.nz
Freephone 0800 649 696

