Venture Timaru
DISTRICT · ECONOMIC & TOURISM AGENCY

Kia ora koutou,

There are some encouraging signs coming through for our region, and this edition brings together a few of the things giving us reason to be positive about what lies ahead.

Fonterra's strong FY26 results and commitment to further South Island investment are good news for our food and fibre sector, creating opportunities not only for dairy but for the many businesses that support it. At the same time, growth in sectors such as aerospace is opening new markets for the engineering, manufacturing and technical capability we already have across South Canterbury.

Together, these examples highlight the strength of our existing industries while showing how new markets and applications can create opportunities for local businesses. Building on what we already do well, while staying open to what's next, will be important to the resilience and future growth of our district.

We've also just wrapped up another successful SCOFF. A big thank you to our team behind the event - Di, Sharnae and Grace, for bringing our local food producers and hospitality businesses together and giving our community another opportunity to celebrate the region's rich food culture. We're also grateful to the local producers, businesses and sponsors who support SCOFF and help make the event possible each year, and to *Ara New Zealand* for sponsoring prizes to this year's event. It's a great example of the collaborative spirit we see across our business community — people getting behind one another and creating something that benefits the wider district. Find out more below, including the winning business of the People's Choice Award.

There's more to explore in this edition, including key takeaways from the Aerospace Summit and what this growth could mean for South Canterbury.

We hope you enjoy the read and find something that sparks an idea, creates a connection or opens up a new opportunity.

Ngāku mo,
Nigel Davenport
Venture Timaru, CEO

Economic & Business Updates



Local Business MP Hamish Campbell (left) and Cr Nick Oxenham (centre) in Lower Discussion at the NZ Aerospace Summit.

Aerospace is building economic resilience here on Earth

Aerospace is no longer just about rockets and satellites. It is becoming an enabling sector for economic growth and resilience here on Earth, with reusable space vehicles, refuellable satellite infrastructure and UAVs creating new ways to collect data, connect people and infrastructure, and test technologies in space. Satellite imaging and data will increasingly support industries such as agriculture, forestry, fisheries, environmental management, infrastructure and disaster response, while applications developed in space are opening new opportunities in areas such as health technology, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology. This is creating a much broader economic opportunity for New Zealand, one that connects our existing strengths with new industries and new applications.

We are already seeing this growth across Canterbury, as it executes it's strategy to position Canterbury as New Zealand's Aerospace Hub. Dawn Aerospace is expanding internationally, including into Germany; Dr Sarah Kassana and her University of Canterbury team are turning space-based proton crystallisation into a commercial opportunity; and Ara Aerospace is scaling its solar-powered satellite imaging technology. At the same time, established manufacturing businesses such as Christchurch-based Argus are seeing significant growth through their work supporting Rocket Lab. Together, these examples show the breadth of the opportunity and the growing demand for the engineering, manufacturing and technical capability that sits behind it.

Venture Timaru Business Development Lead Tania Stoddart attended the 2026 New Zealand Aerospace Summit in Otautahi Christchurch, exploring what this growth means for New Zealand and South Canterbury. For our region, the opportunity is to build on the capability we already have and connect into a sector with significant future potential, while ensuring we have the workforce and skills needed to keep pace.

Read our Summit briefing report collated for the South Canterbury Aerospace Strategy Group, including key takeaways, learnings and insights, and recommended next steps for the group.

AEROSPACE SUMMIT REPORT



Fonterra Clandeboye – where a $70 million butter plant expansion is underway.

Fonterra results and investment provide positive outlook for our region

Fonterra's FY26 results are encouraging news for the future of dairy, with the Co-op delivering $27 billion in revenue and nearly $20 billion in cash returns to New Zealanders. Alongside these results, Fonterra has announced an additional $1 billion investment in its South Island operations over the next three years, focused on expanding protein manufacturing capacity and improving environmental performance, including water and emissions. This is a positive confidence in the future of dairy and the growing demand for sustainably produced, protein-rich and nutrient-dense foods.

For Timaru District, this is encouraging news. Our food and fibre sector already contributes 6.2% of New Zealand's total food and fibre exports, and investment like this helps strengthen the industries and businesses that are important part of our local economy. We've already seen this commitment in action, with Fonterra investing $75 million in its Clandeboye butter plant in response to growing export market demand. As demand for high-value dairy products continues to grow, further investment in South Island processing capability presents opportunities for our region and the businesses that support it.

READ FONTERRA'S FY26 REPORT



Celebrating another year of local food, producers and hospitality

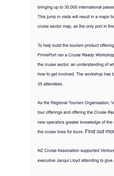
Feedback from the community and businesses involved report that SCOFF 2026 has been a great success.

SCOFF, South Canterbury Outstanding Food Festival, celebrates our eateries, food producers and manufacturers and is held in September each year across Timaru, Mackenzie and Waimate districts.

Each year we try to add something a little different for SCOFF and as a result this year the people's choice award was introduced. This came about after feedback from the eateries involved who asked to add a competitive element and make it fun for their teams, as they worked to create dishes that created attention and drew in the crowds.

A major incentive for both the eatery teams and those voting has been prizes from one of our key sponsors, Ara New Zealand. Scroll down to find out which eatery took out the 2026 People's Choice Award.

Special thanks to all those who supported SCOFF 2026, particularly our sponsors, 100% Pure NZ Honey, Mount Cook Alpine Salmon, Hospitality NZ, Barker's of Geraldine, Ara New Zealand, Waimate District Council, Mackenzie District Council and Movie Max Digital.



Pier 64's SCOFF dish - Moroccan-spiced Lamb Rump

2026 People's Choice Award and Winning Voters

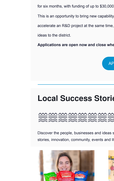
Close to 1000 votes were received for people's choice and we're thrilled to announce our winners:

People's Choice Prize winner: Pier 64, Timaru

People's Choice Prize runner-up: Salvos, Timaru

Our winning voters will soon be announced - keep a watch on SCOFF socials to find out.

Business Resources & Support



Cruise Ready Workshop participants

Cruise season momentum builds

Timaru is gearing up for a record cruise season ahead, with the 17 ships now booked estimated to be bringing up to 30,000 international passengers directly into our CBD, plus between 10,000 – 15,000 crew. This jump in visits will result in a major boost to our visitor economy and puts Timaru prominently on the cruise sector map, as the only port in the country to have an increase in visits for the coming season.

To help build the tourism product offering for the international visitors from the ships, Venture Timaru and PrimePort ran a *Cruise Ready Workshop* last month targeted at new operators and giving insights into the cruise sector, an understanding of what's involved when working with cruise lines and an outline of how to get involved. The workshop has been held twice in the last few years and this year attracted about 35 attendees.

As the Regional Tourism Organisation, Venture Timaru works to coordinate and support the independent tour offerings and offering the *Cruise Ready Workshop* is a first step to build business capability and give new operators greater knowledge of the sector and to learn about the expectations of passengers and the cruise lines for tours. Find out more about independent tours for passengers.

NZ Cruise Association supported Venture Timaru and PrimePort to deliver the workshop, with chief executive Jacqui Lloyd attending to give an overview of the cruise sector.

The first ship for the season arrives on Saturday 12 December, with the final ship due on Thursday 15 April 2027.

2026/27 CRUISE SCHEDULE



R&D Career Grant

Looking to bring fresh ideas and emerging talent into your R&D programme? The R&D Career Grant can help businesses employ a recent master's or PhD graduate in **science, technology, engineering, design or business** for six months, with funding of up to $30,000 for a master's graduate or $35,000 for a PhD graduate.

This is an opportunity to bring new capability into your business, support the next generation of talent and accelerate an R&D project at the same time. It's an opportunity to develop local talent or attract new skills and ideas to the district.

Applications are open now and close when funding is allocated.

APPLY OR FIND OUT MORE

Local Success Stories

Discover the people, businesses and ideas shaping life in the Timaru District. Explore local business success stories, innovative, community, events and lifestyle, alongside updates on our district's economic performance.

BUSINESS SUCCESS | LIFE & WORK | LOCAL INNOVATION

Venture Timaru, 119 Stafford Street, Timaru, Canterbury 7910, New Zealand, 64(3)6726952
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