

2024-2025

Port and Harbour Marine Safety Code Annual Report



Ceara Owen

Port and Harbour Marine Safety Code

Executive Summary

The 2024–2025 year marked a significant period of progress and transformation for the Code. The work programme expanded to include two major projects:

- a comprehensive review of the code
- planning for an Assessment Process Improvement Project.

The review of the Code has been the main focus of the year. As we move this to completion in the next financial year, the focus will shift to refining the peer review and self-assessment process through the Assessment Process Improvement Project.

These projects were supported by strong stakeholder engagement, a robust peer review schedule and drafting process for new guidance materials.

The Code continues to evolve to meet the sector's needs, with a focus on collaboration, clarity, and future-proofing.

Key achievements included:

- completion of the first two stages of the Code review
- completion of four peer reviews
- initiation of a digital self-assessment tool
- Supporting Fire and Emergency New Zealand (FENZ) in the drafting guidance for Fire onboard guidance and Maritime NZ in the revision of the AToN guidance.

It has been a year of both consolidation and change. Alongside the continuation of peer reviews and self-assessments, partners worked closely on the significant review of the Code. Sector engagement has been stronger than ever, with completion of the programme of work for the Code Lead to visit all ports and harbours. The result is a Code which now has a robust foundation and a renewed commitment to making sure it remains fit for purpose into the future.



Update from the Chair

This has been a year of both change and continuity. The Working and Steering groups have again demonstrated their commitment to collaboration and achieving key milestones across the four pillars of the Code work programme. The guiding light for the work programme are the four pillars:

- Safety Management System (SMS) Peer Reviews programme
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Annual Joint Self assessments
- Guidance

Over the past year, the Working Group, made strong progress across its work programme. Four peer reviews, including one re-review, were completed. Reviews were completed in a timely manner, with reports reaching the Steering Group faster while maintaining good quality. The Panel Advisor, now 18 months in their role, has brought greater consistency and rigour to the process.

Sector engagement was also maintained and strengthened by a number of pro-active initiatives. The Code Lead visited a majority of partners nationwide, making sure there were opportunities for conversations about local challenges and successes. Regular newsletters kept stakeholders informed. The Annual Forum was a success, providing multiple opportunities to connect across the sector, share knowledge, and strengthen networks.

One key highlight of the year has been review of the Code. Officially started in October 2024, the review has been led by the Code Lead, supported by Maritime NZ. Developed through a co-design process, the review has had strong participation from across the sector. Reference groups have been formed to guide the work, and the Steering Group endorsed a 12-month project timeline, aiming to publish the revised Code in late 2025.

To maintain momentum, the Steering Group recognised the importance of resourcing and maintaining consistency. With contracts for the Lead and Panel Advisor due to expire, extensions were agreed through to 2028. This continuity will be critical as the revised Code is embedded, and new systems and processes for peer reviews and self-assessments are rolled out.

The Steering Group and Working Group thank all partners and stakeholders for their contributions. Special recognition goes to reference group members and workshop participants, whose input has been vital in shaping the revised Code. I would also like to acknowledge the substantial contributions of the Working Group.

The Steering Group recognises the contributions of outgoing members who have guided the group with expertise and dedication and warmly welcome new representatives who bring valuable perspectives from pilotage and regulatory operations. Our success relies on collective effort, and I am confident the partnership is moving forward with renewed energy.

We also acknowledge the efforts of those who took part in peer reviews and self-assessments, providing valuable insights that improve both local practice and the sector as a whole.

Work Programme

Pillar 1: The SMS Review programme

The peer review programme continues to be a key part of the Code, providing assurance and valuable learnings across the sector. For many partners, the peer reviews were not only an assessment but also reinforced good practice and highlighted areas where improvements could be made. The consistency and maturity of SMS practices across regions is more evident, a positive sign of sector-wide commitment.

Four peer reviews including one re-review were completed during the reporting year. A fifth review was scheduled for the year, however this was deferred to the first half of the 2025/26 year. This is to help the Lead to have a balanced schedule and more manageable workload not only for the Panel Advisor but for the reviewed parties.

The inclusion of a Panel Advisor significantly improved the quality and consistency of reviews. Reviews were done promptly, and reports provided to the Steering Group faster while maintaining high quality. This made sure of the continued consistency in safety management systems across the sector.

The SMS Review Programme saw the completion of peer reviews in four regions: Gisborne, Otago, Chatham Islands and Bay of Plenty.

Region	Status	Outcome
Gisborne (re-review)	Completed	Code Consistent
Otago	Completed	Code Consistent
Chatham Islands	Completed	pending
Bay of Plenty	Completed	Code Consistent
Nelson	Deferred to October 2025	

Forward planning was also done for 2025/26. Peer reviews will be scheduled for Northland, Nelson, Taranaki, and Wellington.

Pillar 2 – Guidelines

Progress was made on updating Aids to Navigation (AtoN) guidance and on developing protocols in collaboration with FENZ. This guidance will be aligned with the Code review work to make sure it is aligned and consistent with the revised Code.

Work Programme

Pillar 3 – Annual joint SMS self-assessments

The self-assessment process is designed to help Code partners evaluate how well they follow the Code's standards and identify areas for improvement. It supports continuous improvement and makes sure that partners are managing marine safety risks effectively. Self-assessments are done annually by Code partners at their respective locations. The results are submitted to the Code leadership for analysis.

The self-assessment is completed using a structured form approved by the Code leadership group. This form requires partners to assess their consistency with the Code standard across various metrics. It is completed jointly by all Code partners at a location. This collaborative approach makes sure all relevant parties are involved in the evaluation process.

Efforts are underway to align the self-assessment and peer review processes with the revised Code. New systems are being designed to enhance data capture and provide deeper insights into safety performance and compliance.

This year marked a significant step forward with the trial of a new digital self-assessment tool. Feedback has been positive, with partners noting its potential to replace the existing word-based process. Once fully implemented, it will improve consistency and allow the collection of richer data, supporting better insights across the sector.

Annual self-assessments provide valuable opportunities for reflection and improvement, helping to embed the principles of the Code in day-to-day practice. Partners remain engaged in completing regular assessments in alignment with the Code.

Pillar 4 – Stakeholder engagement

Engagement with partners was a highlight of the year. The Code Lead completed a two-year schedule of visits to every port and harbour in New Zealand, providing opportunities to hear directly from those applying the Code in practice. These visits offered valuable insights into local challenges and successes, while strengthening relationships across the sector.

Alongside visits, bi-monthly newsletters kept partners informed and connected. This year a new feature, *'Insights from the Sector'*, was introduced, allowing partners to directly contribute experiences and perspectives to support greater Code consistency.

The annual Forum reinforced collaboration, bringing together Code partners and observers for discussion, workshops, and networking. The event in May attracted 72 in-person attendees, with an additional four joining online. Participants represented 16 commercial ports and 17 Regional Councils. Presentations from technical experts and operators highlighted lessons learned, while discussions centred on the importance of strong relationships in applying the Code. Feedback confirmed that the Forum strengthened collaboration and knowledge-sharing across the sector.

Stakeholder engagement continues to be instrumental in shaping the Code's direction and priorities. These collective efforts make sure the Code remains a practical and collaborative framework supporting safe and consistent practices across New Zealand's ports and harbours.

Special projects

Code Review

The Code Review has been the most significant work this year, with strong partner participation and well-attended workshops. These sessions provided a chance to pause, reflect and shape the Code's future. Participants contributed valuable perspectives, making sure the draft reflects a broad range of operational realities. While developing the material into a draft has taken longer than expected, it has been important to make sure we incorporate the wide range of feedback.

To make sure there was a comprehensive review of the Code, a three phase process (discovery, co-design and draft, review and refine phase) was followed:

The Discovery phase:

The Code was reorganised into thematic topics. While the content was not changed, this approach provided clarity on what to retain, remove, or add. It highlighted the need to reduce duplication, use plain Language, improve flow and make sure the Code is future-focused with strong sector relationships. Four central themes were identified:

- Who the Code should apply to.
- What Code consistency should look like.
- How the Code relates to legislation.
- What the Code should contain on safety management systems (SMS).

Co-design phase

This approach allowed for broad sector involvement. Reference groups were set up and five workshops held between December 2025 and March 2026, covered the following topics:

- Purpose and Monitoring
- Critical Risks and SMS
- Roles and Relationships
- Code Application and Risk Assessment.
- The workshops helped to reaffirm the Code's vision and key purpose which are:
 - Agreement that the Code's primary audience is the major commercial ports, Regional Councils with compulsory pilotage, and Maritime NZ.
 - Comprehensive SMS is essential, with emphasis on critical risk management.
 - Clear communication of risk management and controls (Appendix 1).
 - The need for strong relationships built on trust, communication, and clear roles.
 - Inclusion of biennial Code Application Assessments

Draft, review and refine phase

A technical writer took outputs from the workshops and drafted them into revised sections for review by the Working and Steering groups. They then refined the first draft.

Wider consultation with partners, Chief Executives, NSSIG, Marine Managers, NZMPA, and others was started September 2025. The revised Code is expected to be published in late 2025.

Special projects

Assessment Process Improvement Project

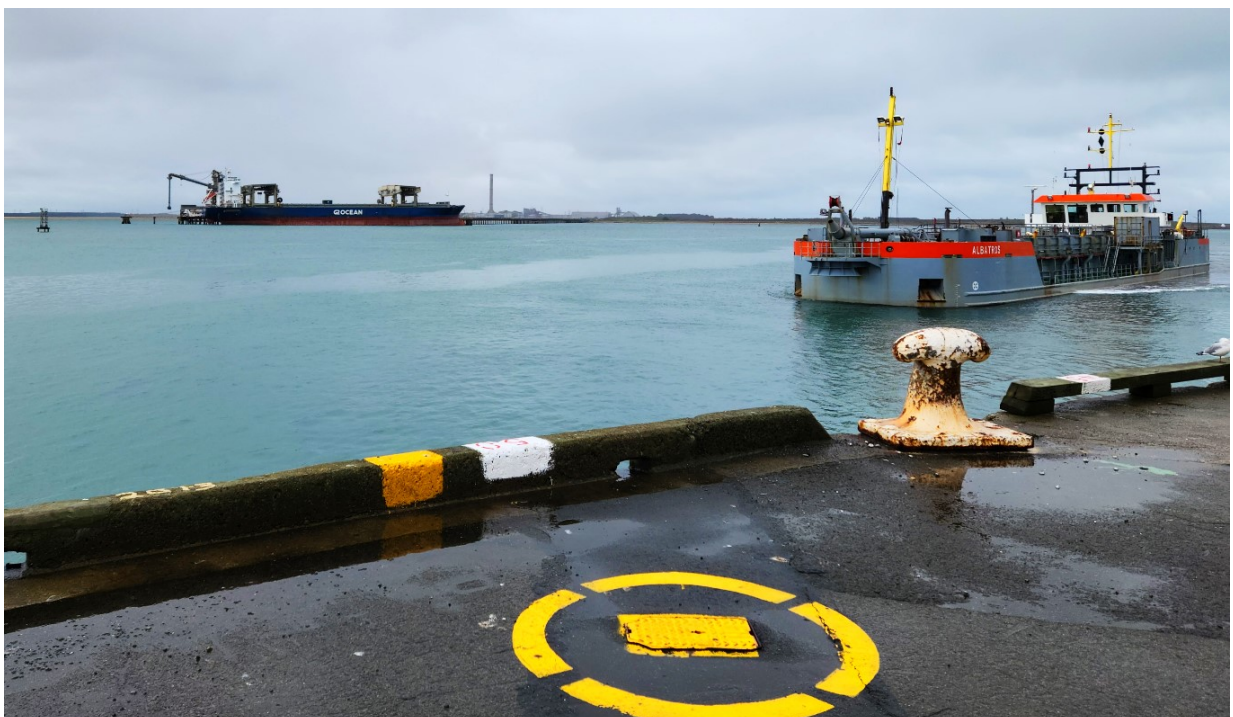
This project will improve tools and processes for peer and self-assessments, align assessments with the revised Code and explore the use of technology and data ethics. In the 2024/25 year, planning and workshops for this project commenced while the new Code was being drafted. The bulk of this work will be done in 2025/26 with the Panel Advisor joining the Working Group to help design new systems, making sure they are robust, user-friendly, and aligned with sector needs.

The Panel Adviser has played a key role in strengthening review quality and supporting process design within the Working Group.

Key priorities for improving the assessment process includes:

- better alignment between self-assessments and peer reviews
- the introduction of digital tools
- development of systems for improved data capture and insights.

The Steering Group will oversee the implementation of recommendations from the project, making sure there is a smooth transition and sustained quality improvements



Financial report 24/25

Financial Result for the Year

	YTD Actual 24/25	YTD Budget 24/25	Variance	
Revenue				
MNZ	80,000	80,000		
Councils	80,000	80,000		
Ports	80,000	80,000	(0)	
Conference fees	200	600		
Total Revenue	240,200	240,600		
Expenses				
Secretariat	204,524	192,577	(4%)	
Conferences	16,125	18,000	10.5%	
Consultancy	2,333	4,000	42%	
SMS review panel briefings				
Travel Expenses	7,271	13,850	48%	
Advertising				
Communication and data				
Other Operating	676	150	(72%)	
Overhead allocation	36,155	36,155		
Total Expenses	267,084	264,732	(1%)	
Surplus/(Deficit)	(26,884)	(24,132)		

Financial reporting:

Although the annual budget shows an overall loss, this was anticipated due to the rising costs of living and the additional work that needed to be done during the Code review. The deficit will be recovered through the reserves held by the Code.

The People of the Code

This year saw changes in membership of the Working Group. Outgoing members included Grant Bicknell (Port Otago) and Matt Dean (Maritime NZ), both of who have made significant contributions during their terms. New members welcomed were Robbie Jensen (Napier Port), representing ports and bringing valuable expertise in pilotage, and Sonny Ali, representing Maritime NZ with extensive regulatory and operational experience.

Grant held the role of Working Group Chair for the previous year. David Bishop assumed the role of Chair for a 12-month term, endorsed by the Steering Group.

We would like to thank Grant and Matt for their support over the last three years and wish them well in the future.

Steering Group

Kirstie Hewlett, Maritime NZ CE Representative and Chair
Jon Moore, Port Operator CE Representative
Nigel Corry, Regional Council CE Representative

Working Group

Jon Jon Peters, Harbourmaster Representative
David Bishop, Marine Manager Representative (appointed Chair June 2025)
Robbie Jensen, Marine Manager Representative (appointed June 2025)
Jake Oliver, Harbourmaster
Clyde Fernandez, Maritime NZ
Sonny Ali, Maritime NZ (appointed June 2025)
Matt Dean, Maritime NZ (term ended June 2025)
Grant Bicknell, Marine Manager Representative (term ended June 2025)

Secretariat

Ceara Owen, Code Lead
Paul Barrett, Code Panel Advisor

Next Year and the Future of the Code

The Working Group met on 25 March 2025 to reflect on achievements since the Strategy was developed two years ago and to consider the Code's direction over the next three to five years.

Over the past two years, the group has largely met its objectives. Key outcomes included:

- developing a clearer understanding of the Code's scope
- defining Code consistency
- reviewing the Code
- committing to an improved assessment processes done by Code Partners.

The group agreed that the Strategy's three-year outcomes remain relevant and achievable, with some foundational work still required. Much of this will be addressed through the completion of the Code review and the assessment improvement project.

Looking ahead, several priorities were identified:

Continuing the Code Review

2025 will be pivotal as partners move from review to implementation, with the revised Code scheduled for publication later in the year. By June 2026, the focus will be on embedding the new Code across all partnerships, with all future assessments to be based on it.

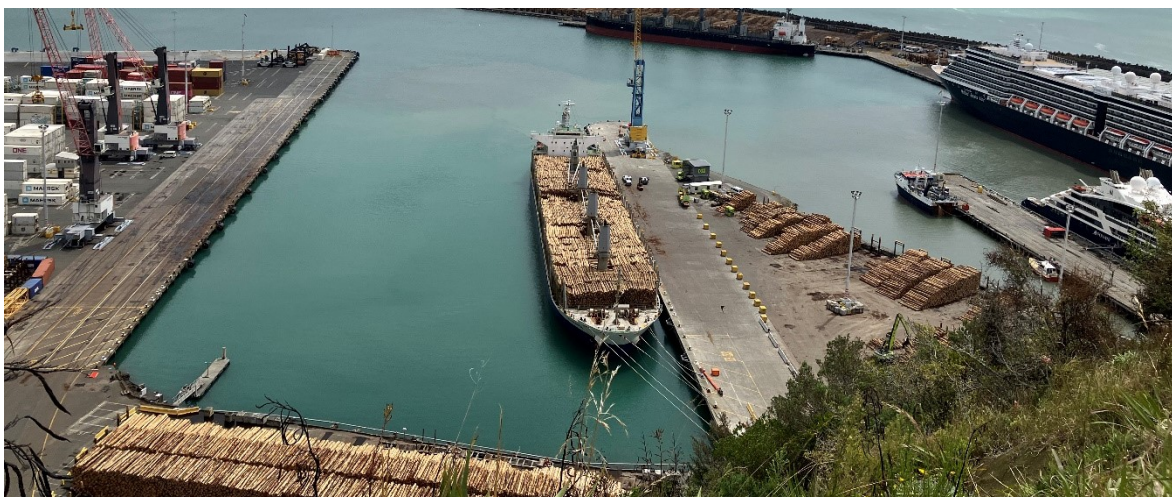
Self-assessment and Peer Review

Joint self-assessments and SMS peer reviews will be adapted to align with the revised Code, making sure of consistency and stronger monitoring. New processes and systems are expected to be in place for the 2026/27 review period. The digital self-assessment tool will also be refined and rolled out to support data-driven insights.

Sector Engagement

Engagement remains a priority, with continued visits, forums, and extended stakeholder involvement to strengthen relationships and increase CE participation. Efforts will also focus on supporting Code Partners to meet the revised standards and expectations.

Together, these initiatives will make sure the Code continues to be a robust, future-focused framework that supports safe navigation in New Zealand waters.



Register of Partners' Code Consistency

Region	Harbour authority and port operator	Last review of SMS	Code consistency	SMS self-assessment submitted
Northland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northland Regional Council Northport Channel Infrastructure Golden Bay Cement 	2022	Pending	Yes
Auckland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Auckland Transport (ARC) Port of Auckland 	2023	Consistent	Yes
Bay of Plenty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bay of Plenty Regional Council Port of Tauranga 	2025	Consistent	Yes
Waikato	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Waikato Regional Council 	2017	Consistent	Yes
Taharoa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maritime NZ Taharoa Ironsands 	2020	Consistent	Yes
Gisborne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gisborne District Council Eastlands Port 	2024	Consistent	Yes
Hawkes Bay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hawkes Bay Regional Council Napier Port 	2024	Consistent	Yes
Taranaki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taranaki Regional Council Port Taranaki 	2018	Consistent	Yes
Wellington	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greater Wellington Regional Council Centreport 	2022	Consistent	Yes
Nelson	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nelson City Council Port Nelson 	2023	Consistent	Not required
Marlborough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marlborough District Council Port Marlborough 	2024	Consistent	Yes
West Coast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buller District Council Westport 		Pending	Yes
Canterbury	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment Canterbury Port Lyttelton Primeport 	2024	Consistent	Yes
Otago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Otago Regional Council Port Otago 	2025	Consistent	Yes
Southland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environment Southland Southport 	2023	Consistent	Yes
Chatham Islands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chatham Island Council 	2025	Pending	Yes