

Trust data – nothing but the facts



In this bewildering era marked by significant global uncertainty – political, economic and social – BRANZ CEO *Claire Falck* believes the need to rely on accurate data has never been more critical for the building and construction sector.

Wars, trade wars, tariffs and protectionism dominate the headlines, and we wake each morning unsure whether what we believed to be true yesterday will remain so today. Due to the warp speed of change, our increasing dependence on social media and the lack of time to find and check facts, our views on all manner of topics can often be shaped by conjecture, speculation and plain misinformation.

Data please, not distortion

This situation is not unique to the building and construction sector, but the impact of anecdotal feedback as opposed to data-driven insights can have far-reaching consequences. For instance, rumours about material shortages or misunderstanding of regulatory changes might lead to panic buying and artificial price inflation. Or speculative media reports about labour shortages might discourage investment in new projects, in turn leading to job losses and reduced economic activity.

We need facts and reliable data. By prioritising data-driven decision making, stakeholders can mitigate these sorts of risks and foster a more stable and predictable environment – even when the world at large is less than predictable.

Just how healthy is the sector?

A good illustration of this point would be holding up a mirror to the sector itself.

I would hazard a guess that, if you did a straw poll asking about the state of the building and construction sector in New Zealand right now, the responses would be overwhelmingly negative.

Every day, we read or listen to reports about skyrocketing costs, building firm liquidations, product failures, consent delays and a negative long-term outlook. This influences how people – even within the sector – view its performance.

And yet, when we look at the data, the truth is far more nuanced – and positive in some cases. You just have to get the data together. Until now, that has been difficult to do, but BRANZ has just made it so much easier.

BRANZ Build Insights – comprehensive, efficient and reliable data

You will read more about BRANZ Build Insights in this issue (see page 44). This new tool provides an instant snapshot about what's happening in the building sector, sourced and carefully collated from reliable data.

Build Insights tracks building system data, analyses it and presents practical insights that support the industry to plan, to identify trends and to better predict things like build delivery and consenting times, among many other uses.

In terms of myth-busting negative sector perceptions, in the first quarter

of 2025, Build Insights uncovered some vital green shoots emerging. For example, the number of building consents issued for stand-alone homes has been slowly increasing – hitting 15,975 in the 12 months ending March 2025, an increase of 5% from the 12 months ending March 2024.

Importantly, the data identifies clear trends that will enable industry actors to plan accordingly. For example, the fact that new builds are progressively getting smaller in response to higher building costs will be of particular interest to architects, designers and group home-building firms.

More data (and opportunities) to come

BRANZ will continue to incorporate additional reliable data sources so Build Insights increasingly will become a one-stop shop for accurate, wholesale industry data.

The tool is not just immediately useful – it has huge potential too. Imagine if we could start tracking instances of product or building system failures to enable earlier interventions to occur or foresee and prevent workforce shortages before they happen.

BRANZ understands that data is not just about numbers or trends. It's about outcomes. And these are the sort of issues and opportunities we believe data – and BRANZ Build Insights – will help us solve. ◀