

METALS NZ



Manifesto 2026

Building a competitive, resilient
and low-emissions metals sector
for New Zealand



Executive summary

New Zealand's metals sector is foundational to the nation's economic prosperity, construction and infrastructure capability, and transition to a low-emissions future. Metals NZ represents manufacturers, importers, distributors and recyclers operating across the stainless steel, carbon steel and aluminium value chains. The sector employs approximately 30,000 New Zealanders and contributes around \$4 billion annually to gross domestic product.

This manifesto sets out Metals NZ's policy priorities for 2026 and beyond. It reflects the sector's commitment to free and fair trade, sustainability, innovation and a partnership approach with government.

The metals sector has a track record of constructive collaboration with successive governments to deliver mutually beneficial outcomes. Metals NZ seeks a continuation of this partnership approach to ensure New Zealand retains a competitive, resilient and low-emissions metals industry capable of supporting economic growth, infrastructure, build delivery and national security of supply.

This manifesto has six priority policy areas designed to deliver:

A competitive, resilient and low-emissions metals sector that underpins New Zealand's economic prosperity.

At its core is the retention of strategically important domestic production capability, internationally competitive energy settings and resilient supply chains that support New Zealand's long-term economic objectives.

About Metals NZ

Metals NZ represents a membership spanning manufacturing, importing, distribution and recycling across New Zealand's stainless steel, carbon steel and aluminium sectors.

Our members supply the materials and products that enable housing, commercial buildings, manufacturing, transport systems, renewable energy projects and infrastructure. The sector is central to the development of a circular economy through the reuse and recycling of metals and the reduction of lifecycle emissions.

Metals NZ advocates for policy settings that support investment, innovation, productivity and environmental sustainability, while ensuring New Zealand maintains domestic industrial capability.



Policy priorities driving New Zealand's economic prosperity

The following six priorities are aligned with Metals NZ's strategic pillars and are intended to strengthen New Zealand's economic resilience, industrial competitiveness and emissions reduction ambitions.



1. Secure, competitive and reliable energy supply

Policy priorities

Metals NZ calls for the Government to:

- Commit to a long-term industrial energy strategy that delivers internationally competitive electricity and gas pricing;
- Recognise the strategic importance of Emissions-Intensive, Trade-Exposed (EITE) industries and ensure policy settings maintain internationally competitive electricity pricing to retain domestic industrial capability and investment in New Zealand;
- Accelerate investment in renewable generation and industrial electrification;
- Ensure long-term fuel security, including strategic storage capability equivalent to at least 90 days of petrol, diesel and jet fuel supply.

Why this matters

Affordable and reliable energy is fundamental to economic growth, high-value manufacturing, export competitiveness and rising living standards.

EITE industries such as steel and aluminium manufacturing are strategically important contributors to New Zealand's economy, export earnings and industrial resilience. These industries compete internationally, while operating in highly energy-intensive environments. Maintaining internationally competitive electricity pricing is therefore critical to retaining domestic production capability, supporting investment in decarbonisation and preventing the "offshoring" of emissions and economic activity.

Past policy settings have contributed to higher energy costs, increased supply constraints and greater reliance on coal-fired generation during dry years. These pressures are eroding New Zealand's manufacturing competitiveness and undermining investment confidence.

Large industrial electricity users also play an important role in supporting overall system stability through demand response capability. Flexible industrial load can help manage peak demand, support renewable integration and reduce overall system costs and emissions.

New Zealand will continue to rely on imported fossil fuels for the foreseeable future.

For the metals sector, energy availability and affordability are barriers to growth and decarbonisation. Without secure and internationally competitive energy supply, New Zealand risks losing domestic production capability for steel and aluminium. The loss of domestic metals manufacturing would increase dependence on imported materials, reduce strategic supply security and undermine New Zealand's ability to respond to future global disruptions as experienced during COVID-19.

Large, stable industrial electricity users also underpin investment confidence in new renewable generation by providing predictable long-term demand. Retaining a strong domestic industrial base supports manufacturing capability and scale of New Zealand's renewable energy transition.

New Zealand will continue to rely on imported fossil fuels for the foreseeable future. Greater resilience and storage capacity are essential to reducing economic and supply risks.

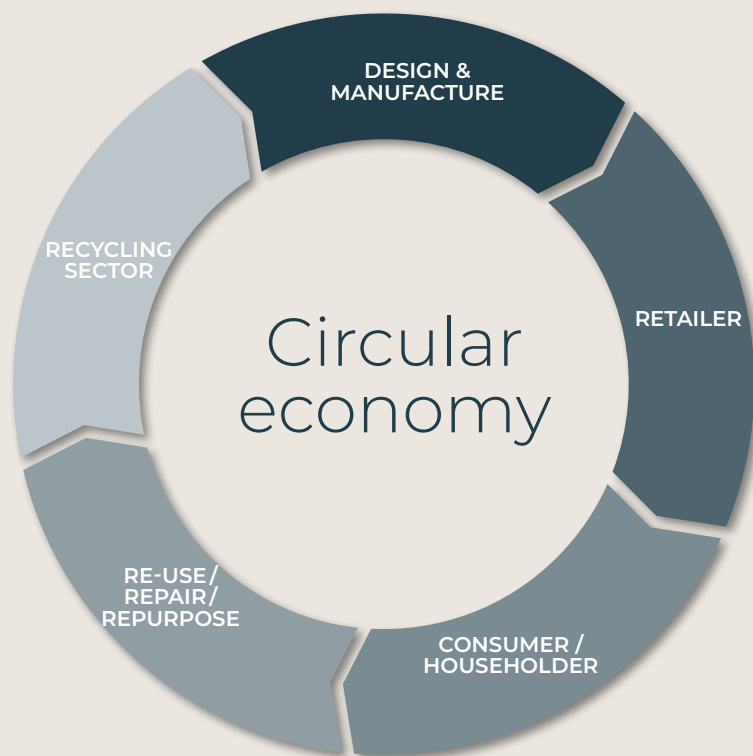
2. Transition to a circular economy

Policy priorities

Metals NZ calls for the development of a national circular economy strategy.

This strategy should include:

- Product stewardship frameworks;
- Incentives for reuse, recycling and remanufacturing;
- Standardised measurement of whole-of-life emissions, rather than focusing solely on upfront embodied carbon;
- Improved data, tools and procurement settings that prioritise circular outcomes.



Metals NZ calls for the development of a national circular economy strategy.



Why this matters?

Steel and aluminium are essential materials in a circular economy. Both are infinitely recyclable and highly reusable, making them critical to reducing waste and lowering lifecycle emissions across the built environment and infrastructure sectors.

Transitioning from a linear “take-make-dispose” economy to a circular model will strengthen domestic supply chains, reduce environmental impacts and create new economic opportunities for New Zealand businesses.

A coordinated national strategy will provide the policy certainty and market signals needed to accelerate investment in circular systems and technologies.



3. Ensure fair trade and a level playing field

Policy priorities

As a small, trade-dependent economy, New Zealand has long benefited from open international markets and a strong commitment to fair, transparent and rules-based trade. Metals NZ firmly supports these principles and recognises the role that imports play in supporting economic activity and consumer choice across New Zealand.

Confidence in open markets depends on all participants operating within a framework that promotes fair competition and a level playing field. New Zealand manufacturers have demonstrated that they can compete successfully on quality, innovation and service when market conditions are fair and consistent with internationally agreed trade rules.

A domestic metals sector is complementary to, rather than inconsistent with, New Zealand's commitment to open and rules-based trade. Maintaining confidence in the integrity of the trading system requires that all market participants can compete on fair and equitable terms.

Metals NZ supports the role of New Zealand's trade remedies framework in providing a transparent, evidence-based mechanism for assessing whether market conditions remain consistent with the principles of fair competition and rules-based trade.

Metals NZ calls for:

- Trade, procurement and emissions policies that recognise embedded emissions differences between domestic production and imported products, including the risk of carbon leakage where production shifts offshore to higher-emissions jurisdictions;

- Clearer thresholds for provisional trade remedy measures;
- Greater resourcing and enforcement capability for trade and compliance agencies;
- Continued support of enforcing product standards to ensure imported materials meet New Zealand's unique seismic and safety requirements.

Why this matters?

Steel and aluminium are globally traded commodities and imports play a role in New Zealand's economy.

However, unfairly dumped or subsidised imports distort markets, undermine domestic manufacturers, reduce employment and weaken New Zealand's industrial capability.

Maintaining a level playing field is essential to sustaining local investment, jobs, innovation and capability in strategically important industries.

New Zealand policy settings should also recognise that imported metals can carry significantly different embedded emissions profiles depending on their country of origin and production methods. Poorly designed domestic climate policies could lead to carbon leakage. This means production might move offshore to places with weaker environmental standards, potentially boosting global emissions while simultaneously diminishing New Zealand's industrial capacity and job market.

Strong standards enforcement is equally important to ensuring that materials used in New Zealand's buildings and infrastructure are safe, durable and fit for purpose.

 Maintaining a level playing field is essential to sustaining local investment, jobs, innovation and capability in strategically important industries.

4. Leverage government procurement and standards

Policy priorities

Metals NZ calls for government procurement, building standards and infrastructure planning to support the use of high-quality, low-emissions metal products.

This includes:

- Procurement policies that recognise whole-of-life carbon performance, durability and recyclability;
- Standards that enable and promote the use of locally produced metals and innovative technologies;
- Greater consistency and certainty in public infrastructure investment pipelines.

Long-term certainty is particularly important for capital-intensive industries such as metals manufacturing and recycling.

Why this matters?

The Government spends approximately \$52 billion annually on goods and services and, accordingly, has significant influence over market behaviour and investment confidence.

Clear procurement and infrastructure signals can help accelerate the uptake of sustainable materials, support domestic manufacturing capability and encourage investment in innovation and emissions reduction technologies.

Long-term certainty is particularly important for capital-intensive industries such as metals manufacturing and recycling.



5. Drive investment in research, development and innovation

Policy priorities

Metals NZ supports mechanisms that can further increase investment in:

- Hydrogen-based ironmaking;
- Emerging low-emissions iron and steelmaking technologies;
- Carbon capture, utilisation and storage;
- Workforce capability, training and education across the metals value chain.

||| Innovation remains central to the future competitiveness and decarbonisation of New Zealand's metals sector.

Why this matters?

Innovation remains central to the future competitiveness and decarbonisation of New Zealand's metals sector.

Collaborative projects involving industry and government – such as New Zealand Steel's electric arc furnace at Glenbrook – demonstrate how co-investment and policy support can accelerate emissions reductions while strengthening domestic industrial capability.

Ongoing investment in research, technology development and workforce skills will help ensure New Zealand remains internationally competitive in a rapidly changing global economy.



6. Support the Government's critical minerals strategy

Policy priorities

Metals NZ supports the Government's 2025 Critical Minerals List and the broader Minerals Strategy for New Zealand to 2040. The identified list of 37 critical minerals includes several strategically important inputs and co-products relevant to New Zealand's steel and aluminium sectors, including:

- Aluminium;
- Metallurgical coal;
- Vanadium.

Metals NZ calls for continued recognition and support for these strategically important resources and supply chains.

Metals NZ supports the Government's 2025 Critical Minerals List and the broader Minerals Strategy for New Zealand to 2040.

Why this matters?

Critical minerals are essential to economic resilience, advanced manufacturing, infrastructure development, national security and emerging technologies.

The Government's critical minerals framework provides a foundation for:

- Strengthening domestic and international supply chains;
- Supporting strategic partnerships;
- Encouraging investment and resource development;
- Advancing the Minerals Strategy for New Zealand to 2040, including the goal of doubling minerals exports to \$3 billion by 2035.

A secure and resilient supply of critical minerals will be increasingly important as global demand intensifies and geopolitical uncertainty grows.



Call to action

New Zealand's metals sector is committed to supporting economic growth, infrastructure and build delivery, emissions reduction and the transition to a circular economy.

The six priorities outlined in this manifesto strike a pragmatic balance between sustainability, resilience, competitiveness and open markets. They reflect the policy settings needed to ensure the metals sector can continue making an enduring long-term contribution to New Zealand's future prosperity.

Metals NZ looks forward to working collaboratively with government, industry partners and other stakeholders to deliver these outcomes for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

Six policy priorities

1. Secure, competitive and reliable energy supply
2. Transition to a circular economy
3. Ensure fair trade and a level playing field
4. Leverage government procurement and standards
5. Drive investment in research, development and innovation
6. Support the Government's critical minerals strategy

