Nelson Tasman | NELSON REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Quarterly Economic Monitor, Infometrics, September 2026: NRDA commentary

Nelson Tasman's recovery in motion

Latest economic figures just released by Infometrics are a good news story of strong growth and recovery in motion for the Nelson Tasman economy in the year to September 2026; the turning of the worm that was being talked about in June has continued. This is especially encouraging given what the region has been through, including last year's flooding and closure of several major manufacturing facilities which took a toll on the local economy and employment.

The September 2026 Quarterly Economic Monitor shows improvement across a wide range of key indicators. These include:

- The regional economy is outperforming the national economy. Provisional figures show Nelson Tasman's economy grew by 2.6% over the year to September 2026, ahead of national growth of 2.1%. Both Nelson and Tasman are contributing to this recovery, although Tasman is currently leading the way, with GDP growth of 3.6% compared with 1.8% in Nelson City. Strong commodity prices, particularly for our export-oriented industries, are helping underpin this growth.
- Our labour market remains relatively resilient. Nelson Tasman's unemployment rate averaged 4.3% over the past year, well below the national average of 5.5%.
- There are now signs that economic growth is beginning to translate into employment growth. While employment over the past 12 months remains 0.2% below the previous 12-month period, reflecting the impact of earlier job losses, the latest quarterly figures point to a shift in direction. Looking specifically at the September quarter, employment was 0.4% higher than in the same quarter last year, representing an important turning point, with employment beginning to grow again. Construction and healthcare are leading this improvement, helping to offset some of the losses in manufacturing.
- There are also encouraging signs of renewed investment. The value of non-residential building consents increased 15.1% over the past year, compared with a 3.1% decline nationally. Residential consenting is also growing again, albeit more modestly at 2.9%.

While the figures are very positive, and the recovery is in motion, it will clearly take time for stronger economic activity to translate into more jobs, higher incomes and improved confidence across the wider community. Businesses and households are still dealing with the effects of the downturn and higher fuel costs adding to operating expenses and putting pressure on discretionary spend.

Nevertheless, the direction is positive, and the September figures provide further confidence that the regional recovery is gaining traction.