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New tourism, engineering high school subjects get thumbs-up from airline industry

**John Weekes**

Senior Business Reporter · NZ Herald · 6 Aug, 2026 03:09 PM 4 mins to read

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Airline groups have broadly welcomed the introduction of tourism and engineering technology as high school subjects today.

The two subjects are among nine new ones the Government described as “future-focused” and industry-led.

Cath O'Brien, Board of Airline Representatives (Barnz) executive director, said having skilled tourism workers was critical for New Zealand.

She said high school students who did well in tourism could likely land jobs at airports, airlines, or in the broader travel industry.

“There's aviation-specific training if you're talking about pilots and engineering. But there are a huge number of people who are working in the aviation industry who are not technical operators.”

O'Brien said parents often wondered what the job pathway was for their children, and the new subjects might provide more clarity about that.

“If you've got a young person who's keen on tourism and they're keen on these subjects and they're fresh out of school, this will give them a leg up.”

She said the sector needed to train more young New Zealanders but the country would also still have to hire some overseas migrants to support tourism in the years ahead.

The Government today said the subject focus would be on the tourism system and how it functioned as an interconnected set of people, places, businesses, policies and environments to create visitor experiences.

“It's not just how to run your tourism business,” O'Brien said. “Tourism's a broad church and there are all sorts of business opportunities in it.”

The subject was intended to introduce students to varied roles across tourism, from operations through to destination management, sustainability, digital innovation and business leadership.

Another new subject of likely consequence for aviation is engineering technology.

The subject was intended to introduce students to how systems, machines, tools and infrastructure were designed, operated, maintained and improved across aviation, road, rail, maritime and other industries.

The Government's Transport Industry Skills Board will lead the development of engineering technology as a subject.

The board's chief executive Samantha McNaughton said the subject would give students practical experience and help them connect to further study, training, apprenticeships and work.

“Engineering supports many of the systems and industries that keep New Zealand moving, connected, and productive, but young people do not always see the full range of opportunities available to them,” McNaughton said.

Aviation Industry Association (AIA NZ) chief executive Simon Wallace said the subject could help address the sector's long-term need for more skilled engineers and technical workers.

“Aviation relies on a strong pipeline of people with practical engineering and technical capabilities,” he said today.

“Introducing students to these opportunities earlier will help broaden awareness of aviation careers and encourage more young people to consider pathways into aircraft engineering and the wider industry.”

Some industry leaders last month told the *Herald* [a shortage of skilled aviation engineers was worsening](#) and migration alone would not fix the skills gaps.

Boeing has predicted the world would need 2.4 million more commercial aviation professionals in the next 20 years.

And Airbus expected a global demand for 42,060 new airliners in the next 20 years.

Economic Growth Minister Nicola Willis and Education Minister Erica Stanford made the announcements today.

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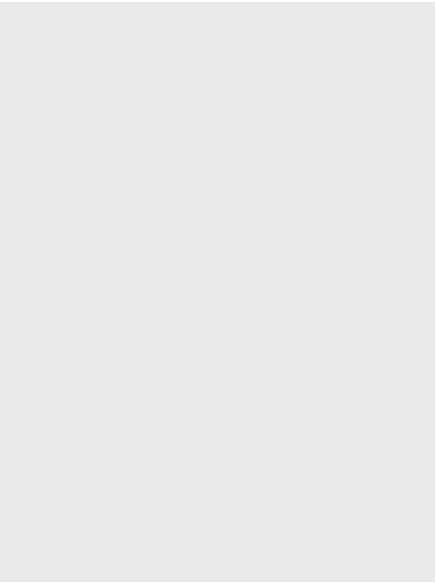
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John Weekes is a business journalist covering aviation. He previously covered consumer affairs, crime, politics and courts.

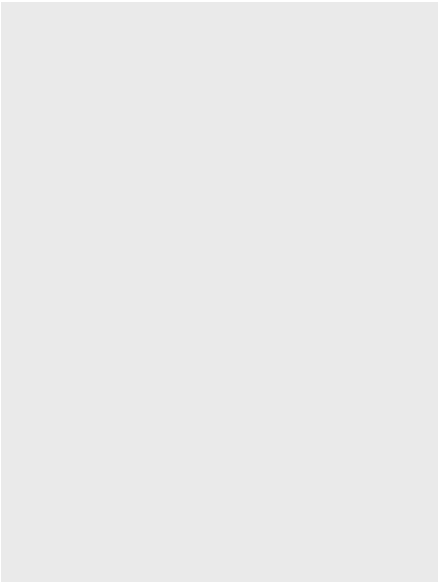
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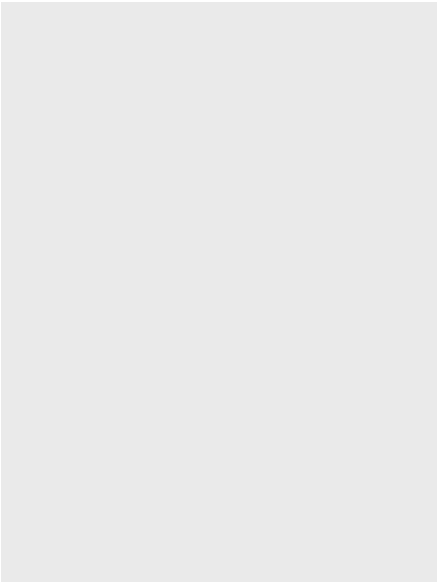
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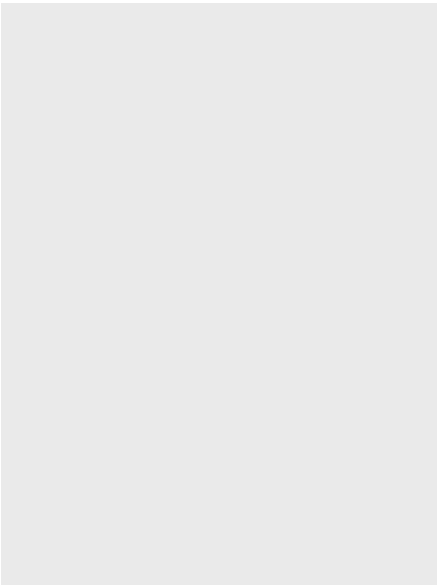
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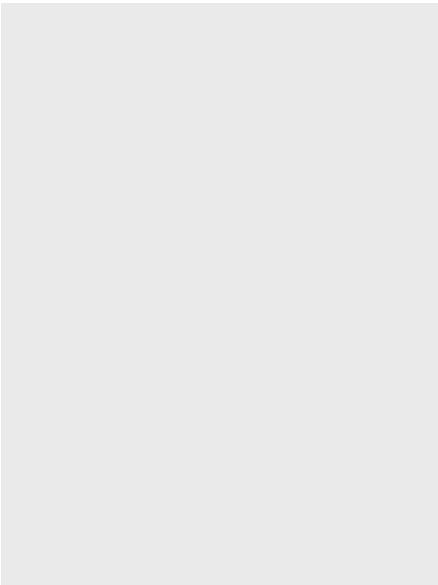
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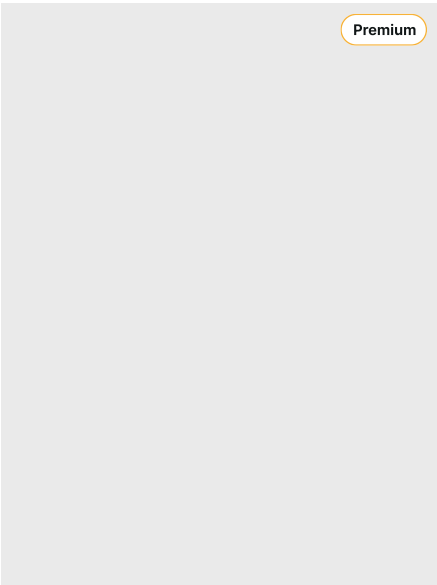
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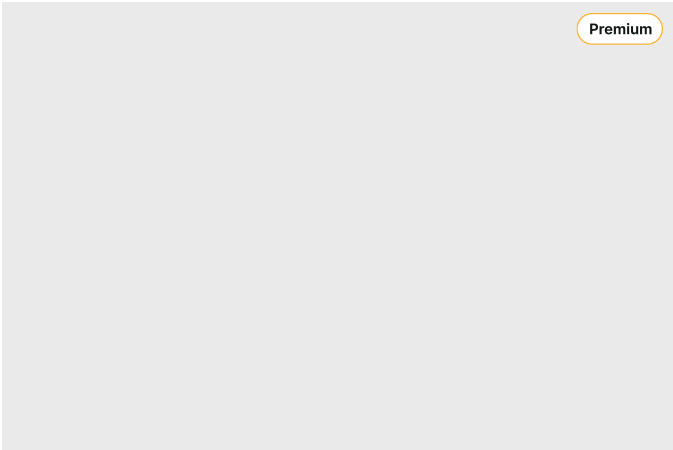
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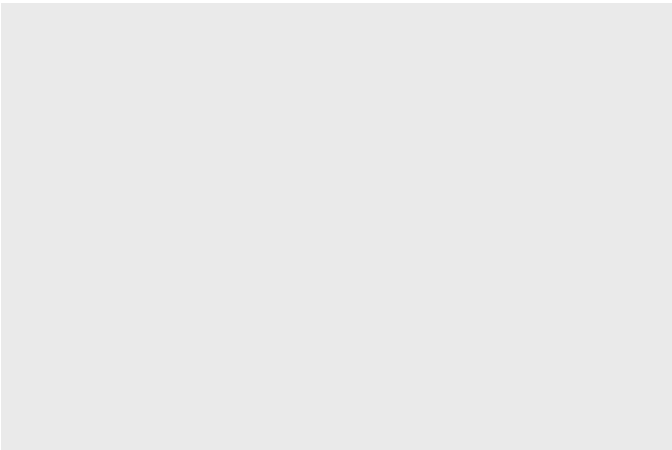


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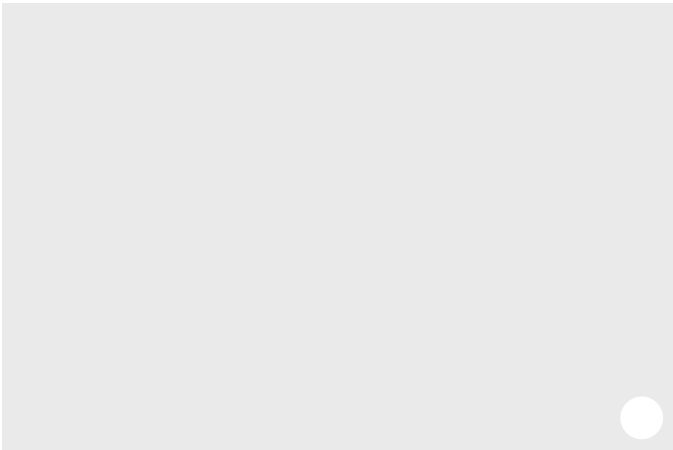
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