



The Space Race: Commuting into the Future

Published September 2025

Becks Ireland

The Tower Times is an investigative series from the Internal Comms team. We're digging deeper to uncover the stories that show how we're thinking forward - celebrating the bold moves, smart ideas, and future ready decisions that shape the way we work. If you're curious, inspired, or just love a good story, keep an eye out. There's more to come.

Are our emissions out of this world?

Astronauts might get to go to space, but spoiler: we travelled farther (and for less carbon!)

Following the recent Employee Commute Survey, I sat down with Aden Borlase-Mills, our Sustainability Analyst, to find out the travel tea.

Alien Translator

Now, before we get into it, if you don't speak Sustainability jargon (as most of us don't) I've done my best to translate it into earthling.

To start us off, let's break down 'tCO₂-e.' It's the standard unit that's used to measure greenhouse gas emissions.

The 't' stands for Tonnes, CO₂ just means carbon dioxide, and -e stands for 'equivalent'.

Not everything emits the same gases, and each gas has different warming effects on the climate, which causes a lot of headaches for sustainability experts.

It'd be like trying to pay for your morning coffee with 1 pound, 300 yen, and 20 pesos.

Instead, the emissions are converted and compared into what's called 'carbon dioxide equivalents.'

It's like taking greenhouse gases to cash converters, except unlike money, anyone doing emissions reporting from anywhere in the world is *required* to use this measurement.

So, how gassy were we?

We generated an estimated total of **501.27tCO₂-e** this year from commuting. That's the same weight as two and a half blue whales.

That seems like a lot, but Aden explained that it's actually below the national average.

Great Success

"One of the big wins is that our commuting emissions are lower than most companies in NZ. Our average emissions per employee are 0.55 tCO₂-e, a good amount below the national average of 0.67 tCO₂-e."

To translate, that's the carbon equivalent of a Tower person doing 50 loads of washing less per year than someone in the national average.

Our average commute distance came out at 24.76 km per person, per day. That means our people travelled an estimate of 3,595,077 kilometers this year, which is the same as doing **FIVE** return trips to the moon.

However, our people worked from home an average of 83 days in the last year, saving 78,557 commuting days across the company (two and a half moon trips!)

Shocking News

Aden described his biggest surprise was that "we have decreased our WFH days by an average of 8 days per person per year, whilst also reducing our total emissions."

He said it reflects a wider trend of people coming back into the office – that we're staying connected, *without* costing the planet.

He also noticed our public transport use has gone up 4% from last year, though the team are aware that accessibility and cost continue to be concerns in that sector.

“It makes me hopeful that people will go out of their way to do their bit for the planet. (Or they’re too scared of inner-city parking rates!)”

Stepping into the future

But whilst we're progressing boldly, there's still room to do even better.

According to the results, the number of people actively commuting is down by 25% compared to last year.

“Active commuting is stuff like walking, running, biking, or I don't know... Zip lining haha!”

Encouragingly though, 32% of employees live within 10kms of the workplace, so there's opportunity to increase our active commuting going forwards.

It feels like a good time to disclose that the Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Committee has bribed me to mention that it's currently **September**, so you can reduce your carbon impact and increase your steps at the same time!

Aden's Radar

Some of the takeaways from the survey that the Sustainability team will be keeping in mind going forward are:

- Traffic continues to be a challenge, prompting early travel or working from home.
- Many commutes involve more than two modes- like driving to the bus, or catching a bus then a train.
- Electric buses are increasingly used, especially in Auckland.
- Public transport costs and reliability remain concerns.
- Some commutes take over three hours return, impacting people's wellbeing and productivity.
- Active transport users reported that they enjoy their journeys, with Auckland's cycling facilities receiving praise.

The team REALLY wanted me to say thank you to everyone who took part, so I'll end it on that.

“Thank you so much to everyone for taking part” - Aden. (That's a real quote, too!)

Just kidding, he also said:

“These insights help us better understand and support your commuting needs while working toward reducing our carbon footprint. We’ll continue to run future surveys to track progress and guide improvements.”

This has been an editorial from the spoof comms newspaper, The Tower Times. If you’re eager to hear more about what the Sustainability team are up to, reach out to Aden!

If you have a story you would like us to feature, please reach out to Claire Vale and Becks Ireland.

Why do we do this?

Published February 2026

Becks Ireland

In Te Whare Tapa Whā, the pillars or walls of wellbeing in Te Ao Māori, one of the walls is Taha Wairua - spiritual wellbeing. It encompasses your beliefs, purpose, values, and connection to something greater than yourself.

With the geopolitical state of the world, the cost-of-living crisis, climate change, and too many more dumpster fires to count, it can feel really dystopian to go through the motions of daily life, like showing up to work to send emails. As cheesy as it sounds, part of the antidote is to try to find some meaning in the things we give our time to.

So today I'm digging deeper into our 'Why'. Why do we do this? What's insurance actually good for, and why do we show up every day?

The money stuff

Insurance plays a pretty pivotal role in the New Zealand economy. Without it, no one could take out a loan, because the banks need to know that the assets they're lending against are protected.

When we look at the numbers from a series of studies done in 2024:



There's a clear discrepancy between what Kiwi are borrowing and what they are saving. According to these numbers, the average New Zealander wouldn't be able to cover the costs of a total loss or large repair on their own.

There's a great story from NZ business owner, Nick Stewart, about his '\$100k year'.

Over the course of the year, rats did \$18,000 of damage to his truck, a small rubber washer failed in his roof that led to \$55,000 of water damage in his house, and his wife's leg surgery was a \$28,000 endeavor. Fortunately for Nick, he had insurance, but he shared his story as a warning to others. He said,

"Even if I'd been religiously maintaining a sinking fund for 20 years at \$5000 per year, and never used it for anything else, I'd have \$100,000. This single year would have wiped me out completely – leaving me to start from zero at age 49."

So, we do this for our customers. But I often find myself asking...

Who are our customers?

As someone who doesn't work directly with customers, I sometimes find the amorphous "customer" a bit abstract. Whenever I find myself in this place, unable to put a face to the needle of our compass, I think about my family and friends.

I may not understand the complexities of underwriting, of analysing risk, or how we protect our customer data in security systems, but I feel reassured that someone does.

I'm reassured that if my sister crashed her car, she wouldn't have to give up her dream of making costumes for movies in place of a more stable job, because insurance gives her that financial safety blanket. I am reassured that if my uncle and aunt's home was lost to a peril, my baby cousin would still have a roof over his head, because insurance gives them that protection.

After our New Year's trip this year, my best friend and I arrived back at my house to find her car had been broken into. The back window was smashed, and the ignition had been ripped up. Knowing that she had insurance deescalated a potentially devastating start to the year, to just an inconvenient one.

Every day, somewhere in Aotearoa, someone is having a catastrophically bad day. I am reassured that we do as much as we can to make it a little bit easier for them.

Our customers are some of the many human beings that make up this beautiful country.

They're the 87-year-old man who was so excited that he was able to make an online claim on his own, because he'd only just started using computers. He proudly told someone at a conference about his experience.

They're the woman who was grateful for our help when her husband was facing health challenges and had been put into care. She called us needing to add his hearing aids to their policy and was deeply moved when a rep from Tower sent her flowers.

Our customers are the man that had his car stolen and didn't quite understand all the details of his policy. The man who after being talked through it all, was able to better protect himself going forward, and even updated his son's policy cover too.

As Hema reminded us last year at All Hands - "Behind every claim, there is a human." Not just words to live by, but words to work by.

By logging in every day, you are making a difference, and that right there is our Taha Wairua.



Would a man get paid more to write this?

Published March 2026

Becks Ireland

The gender pay gap has always confused me. If we know that men get paid more than women, why can't we just... fix it?

With some confronting stats coming out of International Women's Day this year - out of 193 countries only 15 have parliaments where women make up at least 40 percent - I found myself scrambling for answers.

So what is the gender pay gap, and how bad is it?

The gender pay gap is a measure of how much the women in a company get paid compared to the men.

Overall, the gender pay gap in NZ is 5.4%, but not all women are affected equally. For Māori and Pacific women in New Zealand, the gap is even greater - at 17.8%.

Different industries tend to have different gaps and averages too. The average gap in the NZ financial services industry is 23%, but globally it's closer to 30%. Tower's reported gender pay gap for FY25 was 16.5%.



New Zealand’s ‘[Mind the Gap](#)’ register tracks and publishes pay gap data for participating businesses. Tower was among the first 50 companies to join the register in 2022, publicly reporting our pay gap data. You can read more about our reporting on page 30 of our [annual report](#).

Problem is, the numbers don’t tell the full story.

Take airlines, for example. Most flight attending roles are held by women, but pilot and engineering roles are mostly held by men. Those jobs sit in very different pay brackets, so the industry ends up with a 50 percent average gender pay gap.

When I spoke with our Head of Reward, Performance and Wellbeing, Megan Powers, she explained that while the gender pay gap is important to recognise, gender pay equity is the more reliable measure of fair pay.

Where the gender pay gap asks, “what do you pay men vs what you pay women?” the gender pay equity gap asks, “what do you pay men vs what you pay women *for the same job?*”

Tower’s gender pay equity gap is 0.3%, which is not even half a percent. Megan said that a number that low is just “statistical noise,” and that this is a huge win for Tower.

If we know that the issue is about the distribution of roles, how do we fix that?

As Megan explained, because Tower’s pay gap is driven by the high number of women in frontline roles, the quickest way to close it would *technically* be to hire more men into our frontline, but that’s hardly the empowering feminist solution we’re aiming for.

Closing the gender pay gap takes time. More time than any of us would like. The World Economic Forum's 2024 report predicts 134 years to reach full global gender pay equity.

So, while we keep pushing for pay parity around the world, at least we can take comfort in knowing that no, a man *wouldn't* have been paid more to write this, (not at Tower at least!)



"CRIME HERTZ"

BECKS IRELAND

No no no no... BATMAN!

Published April 2025

Becks Ireland

4 min read

I'm sure many of you will be aware of Star Wars Day on May 4th, but you may not have heard of the lesser-known Batman Day on May 1st!

To celebrate International Batman Day, we thought it would be fun to run an experiment, asking "...What would Batman look like as a Tower customer'?"

Thank you to Underwriting Manager Tushar Makreri and Product Managers Tom Duke and John Whitta, for their great insights!

For those who are new here (like me), our Underwriting team are responsible for taking different risks (like a customer wanting to insure their car), holding it up against the risk appetite set by our RAA team, and figuring out how to best protect our customers with insurance, while also ensuring that the premiums we collect cover the costs of the claims we pay out.

Let's see how they would tackle our crime-fighting customer...

First up, Batman's iconic vehicle, the Batmobile. It's a franken-car made up from a 1967 Chevy Impala chassis, a V8 engine, and a modified 1970 Corvette with a body kit. It has bulletproof glass, an aftermarket exhaust that acts as a flame thrower, and multiple other weapons related modifications. It's stored off the street in a very secure garage. Would we insure it? Absolutely not! But why?

Tom and John were quick to flag the modifications and noted that the key features were American models, so parts would be expensive to get over here if something happened to the car. They also noted that the Batmobile wouldn't be registered (licensed and warranted) nor would it be recorded in Redbook (a third-party database that tells us the market value of different vehicles. This data enables us to provide customers with a quote online) so Batman wouldn't be able to use MyTower to get a quote.

I asked why modifications were such a red flag for us, and Tom explained that as cars get more modded and stray further from the off-the-line standard, it's harder to ensure that the safety features and quality standards are maintained, making it harder to predict the performance and reliability of the car. So, when Batman's car has a feature like an aftermarket flamethrower exhaust, we don't want to be responsible for the third-party cover for the BMW driving behind him! John noted the distinctive and novelty nature of the car made it more of a target for theft or damage too.

Another consideration...What kind of rental car do you give Batman while his Batmobile is in for repairs? We couldn't imagine Batman fighting crime from a Hertz rental!

Tushar completely agreed, and noted that we have no appetite for modifications, even the Batmobile being lowered by an inch would put it outside of our appetite!

Next, the Batcave. A multi-story subterranean property. It has been partially destroyed in an earthquake but has been rebuilt with earthquake prevention measures in place, and Batman will have an accurate rebuild cost number he can provide. It's in a high crime area, but has significant security measures, including a 24/7 guard on site. What factors would we consider when figuring out whether this property is insurable or not?

John and Tom advised that we wouldn't necessarily know the Batcave is subterranean. The first issue they could foresee would be whether Batman would be willing to disclose the address of his secret lair to us? And how would we get an assessor to the site...

Tushar highlighted that Batman doesn't earn money from his endeavors, so *technically* his assets count as Bruce Wayne's personal effects, so the Batcave could be insured as a garage or shed addition to Wayne Manor. Whilst we wouldn't necessarily take into consideration the crime rate of the area, we would offer a small discount for the onsite guard (thanks Alfred!)

Other factors to consider would be whether the total sum insured is too high. If the rebuild cost was \$10million, and something happened to both Wayne Manor AND the Batcave, it would be classed as a “large event” due to the high payout cost, despite it only impacting one property. Considerations like this put the Batcave firmly outside of our risk appetite.

Okay, well if those assets exceed our risk appetite, what about his dog? We offer pet insurance, right? Ace the Bat-Hound is a rescue German Sheppard who's about six years old. He's a working dog in search and rescue, with a side hustle in active combat... Surely, we can make that work in a policy?

We wouldn't insure a working dog unless we insure him as a farm dog under a farm policy, but as Tushar previously established, technically as Batman isn't being paid for the superhero work he does, Ace is not a working dog. However, we must acknowledge that through Ace's “hobbies”, his high risk of injury would put him outside of our risk appetite.

Well, you heard it here first folks. While Batman may be a standup crime fighter, we could not take him on as a customer. Thank you to Tom, John, and Tushar for being great sports, and thank goodness we have all these experts to protect our business!