

Institute of Directors Otago Southland Branch
Chairperson's Report – 2026 AGM
Scott Mason, Branch Chair

Tēnā koutou katoa,

On behalf of the Institute of Directors Otago Southland Branch Committee, it is my pleasure to report on the past year, my second as Chair. It's certainly been a dynamic 2025, and the early stages of 2026 have only highlighted what an uncertain governance world we live in.

The Institute of Directors stands as Aotearoa's professional body for directors and continues to sit confidently at the centre of our governance ecosystem. Our mission remains to support directors in adding value to their organisations, and NZ generally.

At the helm nationally is our Board, which oversees the appointment of our CEO and ensures our organisation runs as a tight, well-governed ship. The National Council remains our collective conscience, keeping the members' best interests firmly in focus. The Otago Southland Branch is proud to have Trish Oakley as Council President. I also sit alongside her on the Council and was appointed to the Board last year at the AGM —so yes, the South has a strong voice in the room, and we use it.

Regional Performance

The Otago Southland Branch maintained stable membership over the year ending the year with 721 members, a modest 1% decline in a tough economic climate. The branch represents around 7% of the Institute's national membership of 10,548 members overall. Encouragingly, chartered membership in the branch increased by 3.6%, including 41 Chartered Fellows, 80 Chartered Members and 14 Distinguished Fellows. Member engagement remains strong, with an average tenure of 8.2 years, above the national average of 7.2 years, and a retention rate of 85.2%, also exceeding the national rate of 83.8%.

We were also delighted to recognise members achieving significant governance milestones this year, welcoming one new Distinguished Fellow, Stephen Higgs, and one new Chartered Fellow, Michelle Henderson, bringing our regional total to 14 Distinguished Fellows (of just 84 nationally) and 41 Chartered Fellows. Congratulations also to those in our region who achieved Chartered Membership this year — your governance journey is just beginning, and we look forward to seeing it continue to grow.

Events & Engagement

The branch delivered a varied and engaging programme of events during the year, hosting 25 events and attracting 659 attendees, up from 621 in 2024. This sits within a strong national programme of 273 events attended by more than 7,359 members and guests. A highlight for the year was the Ngāi Tahu Governance 101 event in August with Dr Michael Stevens, which drew nearly 90 attendees and generated excellent engagement.

Our local sponsor events also added valuable professional insights to the calendar, including Director Dialogues – Navigating workplace law reform with Anderson Lloyd, Governing AI for trusted integration with Deloitte, and Director capability in 2025: Appointments, accountability and alignment with Platinum Recruitment.

Thank you to our branch committee for supporting Michelle in curating the programme, and for generously contributing their time, networks and expertise to chair sessions and facilitate panel

discussions throughout the year. As is our tradition, in lieu of speaker gifts we also made donations to several charities.

Some other highlights for me included:-

- Paul Spoonley – The new demography of NZ
- Enhancing Health and Safety governance workshop with Francois Barton
- Women in governance informal networking lunches
- Charting a China course roadshow event travelling to Queenstown / Invercargill / Dunedin with CEO Alistair Crozier NZ China Council

We rounded off the year with our annual night of distinction, celebrating our Emerging Director Award winner Angela Davis, runner-up Emily Walker, and our Distinguished Fellow Kathy Grant, followed by an insightful interview with Linda Robertson.

Capability Building

With the support of Central Lakes Trust, Otago Community Trust and Community Trust South, the branch delivered three Not-for-Profit Governance Essentials courses across the region — in Queenstown, Invercargill and Dunedin — supporting 75 individuals working in the not-for-profit sector to strengthen their governance capability. The strong uptake reflects a real appetite for governance development across our region.

As noted, our branch also continues to champion the Emerging Director and Mentoring for Diversity programmes.

We also congratulate Kate Keddell and Louisa Homersham, who were selected for the national Mentoring for Diversity programme — initiatives that help build self-awareness, clarify purpose and support the next generation of governance leaders.

National Highlights

Nationally, the Institute of Directors continues to expand its impact, supporting directors through a period of significant governance reform and legislative change. Key developments during the year included reforms affecting the Companies Act 1993, changes relating to the Charities Act and Incorporated Societies Act, and growing expectations around directors' duties, accountability and transparency.

The Governance Leadership Team released its Top 5 Issues for 2026, highlighting the challenges and opportunities shaping the governance landscape:

1. Governing for growth in a low-productivity economy
2. The impact of the geopolitical climate on market access, strategy and risk
3. The rise of AI agents of change and the governance of automated decision-making
4. The critical role of the chair-CEO dynamic in board effectiveness
5. The evolving use of committees and advisory boards, and what good design looks like

These themes will help inform our branch activities in the coming year as we continue to support directors navigating an increasingly complex governance environment.

Acknowledgements

None of our achievements would be possible without the steadfast support of our local sponsors: Anderson Lloyd, ASB, Deloitte, and Platinum Recruitment. Thank you for your commitment to raising the bar in governance across our region.

Thank you also to Sally Rae and the Otago Daily Times team for your excellent coverage of our events and speakers. Your storytelling helps connect our work with the wider community.

To our branch committee—Jeff Broughton, Sarah Brown, Sina Cotter Tait, Rowena Davenport, Jeff Grant, Rei Ishikawa, Clare Kearney, Rachel McLauchlan, and Trish Oakley my heartfelt thanks. Your energy, networks, and insights are invaluable.

I'd also like to acknowledge the outstanding contribution of Sarah Ottrey, who completed her term on the committee following the AGM last year. We were incredibly fortunate to have someone of Sarah's governance experience, extensive networks and deep industry insight supporting our branch. She gave generously of her time — supporting events, sharing her connections and serving as a judge for our local Emerging Director Award. Her contribution to the committee and branch community was significant. Sarah is greatly respected and very much missed.

And of course, to our branch manager Michelle Branford: thank you. Your tireless efforts and attention to detail are what make this branch run so smoothly. I know our members value your guidance as much as I do.

Closing

In summary, the Otago Southland Branch is in good heart—engaged, evolving, and looking forward. On behalf of the committee, thank you for your continued support. We're always open to feedback and welcome your input as we shape the year ahead.

Here's to 2026—a year in which the Chinese curse or blessing “May you live in interesting times” is truly coming to the fore.

Ngā mihi nui,

Scott Mason

Chair, Otago Southland Branch
Institute of Directors New Zealand