

Summary

Regulating vehicle safety inspections



Why we did this work

Vehicle owners must have their vehicles regularly inspected to confirm the vehicles meet minimum safety standards before they can be driven on New Zealand roads. After passing an inspection, a vehicle can be issued with a warrant or certificate of fitness.

To help provide Parliament and the public with assurance about the integrity of the vehicle inspection system, we wanted to see whether the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) has effective measures in place to ensure that its requirements for vehicle inspections are being met - and that timely and appropriate action is taken when they are not.



What we found

- The application process for new vehicle inspectors and inspecting organisations is clear and thorough. In 2024, NZTA appointed on average about 60 new vehicle inspectors and 20 new inspecting organisations each month. After a vehicle inspector or inspecting organisation has been appointed, NZTA monitors their work to ensure that they continue to comply with requirements.
- When NZTA has concerns, it acts quickly. For serious cases, NZTA can suspend or remove authorisation for inspecting vehicles. In the worst cases, where deliberate fraud is involved, NZTA has prosecuted people under the Crimes Act 1961. As of January 2025, nine people had been prosecuted.
- Some improvements could be made. These include NZTA making the requirements for vehicle inspections easier to find and understand for those carrying out inspections, and modernising the information technology it uses. NZTA also needs to strengthen how it assesses its own performance and reports to the public. In our view, there should be publicly available information that makes it easier to see how NZTA's regulation of vehicle safety inspections contributes to vehicle safety.



What next?

As vehicles become more automated, their safety features are less likely to be covered by existing safety standards. Vehicle safety inspections will need to have an increased emphasis on vehicle software and sensor systems. The vehicle inspection industry might need a different approach and different skill sets.

We consider that it will also be important to consider how best to create a flexible and future-proof system that supports greater consistency and makes it easy for inspectors and inspecting organisations to understand and comply with requirements.

