

CHRIS BARLOW

AI-ERA ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY LEADER ·
PEOPLE · DELIVERY

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PROFILE

A technology leader with 25 years across New Zealand's public sector and private industry at home and abroad. I lead the Ministry of Social Development's 24-person Architecture practice, one of the country's most comprehensive Architecture functions, accountable for architecture delivery across MSD's Technology group, with a track record of award-winning innovation from NZ's first multi-tenanted Desktop-as-a-Service platform to a trophy-winning startup.

For the past four years I've worked hands-on at the AI frontier: building open-source multi-agent systems, codifying modern engineering practice (TDD, Architecture Decision Records, specs) for AI-assisted delivery, and coaching practitioners from AI-curious through to seasoned engineers.

I lead by example: listening, creating clarity, and growing capability in others. I co-founded the New Zealand chapter of the Agentics Foundation and grew it into a nationwide community advancing practical, responsible agentic engineering across Aotearoa.

“Technology is changing faster than at any point in our careers. The teams that thrive will be the ones whose people are ready first.”

25 yrs

IN TECHNOLOGY

24

ARCHITECTS LED

\$9.6m

SUPPLIER PANEL

1

NATIONWIDE AI
COMMUNITY

KEY SKILLS

Engineering & Practice Leadership

Leading a 24-person practice: recruiting, coaching and growing technologists; designing team structures and operating models; bringing people through change.

Technology Strategy & Architecture

10+ years as a practising architect across the end-to-end lifecycle; technology roadmaps aligned to business strategy.

AI-Era Capability Building

Hands-on agentic engineering; upskilling developers and specialists from AI-curious to advanced practice; nationwide community leadership.

Modern Engineering Practice

TDD, ADRs, specs and feature-branch workflows codified for AI-assisted delivery; agentic code review and automated verification with quality and safety controls built in.

Delivery Governance at Scale

Decision frameworks and guardrails adopted as standard practice; \$9.6m supplier panel; SAFe / Scaled Agile.

Commercial & Consulting

Pre-sales and RFPs; trusted-advisor roles across government and commercial clients; startup co-founder with a successful exit.

EXPERIENCE

Architecture Practice Manager · Ministry of Social Development

Jan 2022 – present

Leading MSD's 24-person Architecture practice

- Lead the entire Architecture practice of 24 direct reports, accountable for architecture delivery across MSD's Technology group; designed the practice's blended operating model in response to the 2024 IT restructure, bringing Enterprise, Domain and Solutions Architects into cross-functional teams aligned closely to the business.
- Navigated the practice through five successive change processes: from founding the unified practice, through a new delivery model, to a significant headcount reduction managed while sustaining team morale and delivery.
- Built capability and career pathways: rewrote all Architecture position descriptions, designed a gamified Architecture Progression Framework (the "Architect's Role Compendium") and a matching coaching and mentoring framework.
- Lead voice for AI enablement across the practice: building responsible-AI capability through the Community of Practice, surfacing high-value use cases, and advising the Director of Emerging Technology on AI; recognised with MSD's 2023 "AI Whisperer" and "Creative Talent" awards.
- Introduced Architecture Decision Records (ADRs) as standard practice with Executive Leadership endorsement, and built a SharePoint/PowerApp Decision Log that streamlined governance.
- Formed MSD's Architecture Panel as nominated Contract Manager: shortlisted 30 RFP responses to a 5-member panel under a \$9.6m three-year budget, adding 4 architects to date.
- Presented MSD's guardrails approach to the Government Enterprise Architecture Group (GEANZ) via the GCDO, growing inter-agency collaboration across Stats NZ, Te Whatu Ora and DIA.

Co-founder & Regional Ambassador · Agentics Foundation, NZ Chapter

Aug 2025 – present

- Co-founded and lead the New Zealand chapter of the Agentics Foundation, a not-for-profit advancing applied agentic engineering, responsible AI and education, grown into a nationwide community of contributors.
- Run monthly hands-on "AI Hackerspace" sessions and in-person meetups, coaching practitioners from AI-curious users through to experienced engineers.
- Build open-source, multi-agent systems with quality and safety controls built in, including 'unsorry' (autonomous theorem-proving in Lean 4) and 'iris' (AI-assisted architecture modelling), engineered with the same ADR-governed discipline I introduced at MSD (140+ ADRs across the two projects).
- Promote sovereign, human-centred AI through talks, the Agentics NZ YouTube channel and a LinkedIn article series including "A practical model for implementing generative AI within teams"; development portfolio at chrisbarlow.nz/projects.

Infrastructure Architect · Ministry of Social Development

Sept 2018 – Dec 2021

- Worked with Enterprise, Solution and Infrastructure Architects to shape MSD's technology direction; supported Technical Product Managers with business cases and product strategies.
- Grew the Architecture Community of Practice from an aimless gathering into a sought-after weekly event for knowledge exchange.

- Developed the Platform Architecture Reference Model and secured Architecture Council endorsement for a container-based delivery model; facilitated the Java server platform roadmap and redeveloped team engagement workflows using SAFe.

Co-founder · Barlovska Craft Liqueurs, Lower Hutt

2016 – 2021

Alongside full-time roles

- Co-founded and bootstrapped a craft-liqueur startup from a Lower Hutt garage to national recognition; owned copywriting, compliance, operations and manufacturing, and co-developed the brand strategy and product range.
- Won Gold and Silver at the 2019 NZ Spirits Awards; sold the business in 2021.

2022 NZ Spirits Awards Trophy: Best Liqueur in Aotearoa. Our original recipes also won NZ Liqueur Producer of the Year at the Melbourne International Spirits Competition.

Solutions Architect · Fujitsu NZ Limited

Nov 2013 – Aug 2018

- Trusted advisor across government and commercial clients, shaping technology strategies through discovery, design, presentations and RFP responses.
- Led the Citrix consultancy practice across New Zealand and helped architect Fujitsu's GoDaaS; designed and built its unified self-service portal automating approval and deployment of virtual apps and desktops for subscribed agencies.
- Restored Statistics NZ's secure digital workplace within four days of the November 2016 7.8 earthquake through GoDaaS, helping them meet critical deadlines.
- Served as Lead Architect on the Stats NZ IT-as-a-Service programme; contributed to Fujitsu NZ's 2017 Citrix Partner Innovation Award and led the winning team at the 2017 Fujitsu Oceania Hackathon; built key client relationships including Fire and Emergency NZ, the Ministry of Justice and Hamilton City Council.

Recognised by Citrix in 2017 as one of the world's most advanced multi-tenanted architectures.

Further work history available on request.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & EDUCATION

Leadership

- MSD Leading People Programme (2025)
- MSD Leading Through Change (2024)
- MSD Leader as Coach (2021)
- MSD SAFe for Architects (2020)
- MSD Systems Thinking and Intervention (2019)
- Open Polytechnic business papers: Organisational Behaviour; Organisations and Management (2023)

Technical

- Citrix Certified Expert: Architect (2017)
- Earlier certifications: Microsoft, Fortinet, Prince2 (2000–2013), details on request
- Ongoing: Victoria University “AI in Society” lecture series; conferences; continuous hands-on generative-AI prototyping

INTERESTS

I enjoy spending time in nature with my wife and two young children, daily meditation, and rock climbing. I am deeply interested in human-centred AI and how it can benefit society.

Nationality: New Zealander