



## MEDIA RELEASE

Saturday 7 March 2026

### **Bunnings to introduce facial recognition technology to combat retail crime**

Bunnings is introducing facial recognition technology (FRT) in stores across New Zealand to protect team members and customers and to reduce serious harm and high-value theft by repeat offenders.

The rollout has been designed in a phased approach to introduce FRT carefully and to test that safeguards and processes are working properly. In phase one, FRT will be in use at two Hamilton stores - Te Rapa and Hamilton South - by mid-April, before rolling out progressively to all stores across the country.

Bunnings has carefully considered the Office of the Privacy Commissioner's findings on Foodstuffs North Island's trial of FRT, and has undertaken its own assessment focused on privacy, responsible use, and engagement with our team, customers, and communities.

Bunnings has consulted with customers, team members and the community as well as a Māori sovereignty expert, and this engagement will continue as the technology rolls out nationally. Tikanga Māori principles have been considered and built into the approach.

Independent research found strong public support for the technology. Nine in ten respondents (93 per cent) said they supported FRT if it improved safety by more than 10%, while fewer than one in ten (seven per cent) opposed it. Support is strongest when people understand how FRT works and the safeguards are in place.

**Bunnings New Zealand General Manager, Melissa Haines, said:** "Our number one priority is keeping team and customers safe, and we believe that FRT can play an important role in helping to protect people from violence, abuse and intimidation in our stores by repeat offenders.

"The scale of retail crime in New Zealand is accelerating and shows no signs of stopping. Threatening incidents have more than doubled over the past four years, with each year worse than the last. Repeat offenders now account for 34 per cent of all threatening incidents, up from 26 per cent in 2022, meaning they are driving much of this harm.

"Proceeding with FRT in NZ was not a quick decision. We've undertaken a thorough assessment process, with privacy, safety and community expectations at the forefront, and we are taking a phased approach to get this right.

"FRT gives us a proactive warning when a serious repeat offender enters the store, so we can act before something happens. It adds one more layer to the safety tools we are already using, such as security guards, team member training, body-worn cameras and serious incident response processes."

**ENDS**

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