



MEDIA RELEASE 27th August 2018

New Programme a 'Win-Win' For All

The local forest industry is another step closer to a more sustainable flow of trained workers with the imminent start of the Generation Programme.

Siobhain Fyall has been appointed programme manager and the first course is set to start on October 15, with another following in late April 2019. Participants will spend six weeks at a forestry base camp industry introduction programme followed by 'learn while you earn' work out with contractors complemented with part time courses through EIT Tairāwhiti, Turanga Ararau and Competenz. All the while students would receive pastoral care from First Choice Employment.

The new programme is set to produce 12 graduates in the first year, 30 in the second and 60 in the third.

Eastland Wood Council chief executive Kim Holland says the programme is a real collaboration between the region's key stakeholders that ensures trainees are qualified through a real world introduction to the different sectors within the industry.

"It's a multi-stakeholder approach with industry and training providers working together to ensure that the training meets industry's skills needs," says Ms Holland. "We all want to make sure the programme succeeds and I believe by doing this it will better prepare the young people and increase the uptake by contractors as they will have more confidence in the abilities of the young people to do the work."

The programme was launched in April with a \$220,000 boost as the first initiative to benefit through the Government's He Poutama Rangatahi Employment Scheme and the Ministry of Social Development.

Base camp trainees will work towards a New Zealand Certificate in Foundation Forestry Skills Level 2, which will then pathway into level 3 qualifications, with on the job training pathways across forestry and harvesting options. Very early on, trainees will get an industry introduction to careers with the ability to talk to people who are working in forestry.

"The base camp will ensure the trainees have the general requirements, including health and safety, site visits, practical skills learning and talking to people in the industry who are keen to share their passion for the work they do."

Ms Holland says it was a new way of preparing the workforce that would ensure they are ready to work from day one. Once trainees have completed base camp, they head out onto placement with contractors and companies from across the industry, including silviculture, harvesting, operations, transport and logistics.

“This is an exciting opportunity to give our young people a clear picture of the range of career and training opportunities across the forestry sector while experiencing it for themselves.”

Contractors Robert Stubbs and Wayne McEwan, Eastland Wood Council members, have both been involved with the establishment of the programme and are looking forward to trainees joining their crews.

Mr McEwan, a director of Black Stump Logging, has been in the industry for 24 years. It's a lifestyle he loves and is keen to encourage other contractors to embrace the programme to bring more on board.

“There are so many different avenues in forestry that people don't know about. It's not just chainsaws and cutting down trees.”

Mr Stubbs is rapt to see the new programme targeting high school leavers and enlightening them to the possibilities a career in forestry can offer. He has been in the industry for 25 years and is the owner of Stubbs Contracting, a company he established 16 years ago.

“We want to ensure people understand the career path that is available, so when they are making those decisions in the last year of school, they can do so with the right information in front of them. So much now is about internal training and education that can be done within the industry as they progress through a working career.”

Key for both men is people who want to work, have good attitudes, an openness to learn and are reliable.

First Choice Employment director Tony Murrell says the programme is an example of industry taking ownership of its own potential employee recruitment, training and development needs.

“Added to this is the clear messaging of the diversity and longevity of employment on offer, and opportunities for potential participants to gain a better insight into the ‘Big Picture’ and with it realistic aspirations of the industry,” says Mr Murrell.

EIT are putting considerable effort into ensuring the best possible chance of success for the pilot programme.

“We want to make sure that on top of all the other support that is provided, that we have set the students up so they have clear career pathways and that they are confident and knowledgeable about where they want to go in the industry,” says EIT campus director Jan Mogford.

EIT are working alongside Competenz to ensure the method around the career pathways is clear and consistent.

“We haven't seen such a combined effort like this before, that brings all the big players together.”

She praised the programme that was not just a collaboration between providers and contractors, but also one that provided a safe and secure environment for young people to participate and learn about forestry.

“It is a win-win for the students, community and forestry industry.”

Turanga Ararau forestry training manager Henry Mulligan grew up in a forestry family and knows the industry well. He started as a pruner before moving to education in the late 1990s.

“The key difference with the Generation Programme is that it works in close connection with contractors and the industry,” says Mr Mulligan. “There are so many options in the forestry industry – I use myself as an example. I came from a forestry family but got my degree from Auckland University.”

Turanga Ararau will be running courses with a focus on introductory units through forestry. “Young people have to experience the industry, rather than listening to hearsay. There is a lot of second-hand misguided information out there – we encourage our young guys to have a good look at it and experience it first hand. This programme is a good mix of theory and hands-on.”

The Generation Programme provides a direct pipeline of work ready, skilled and trained people into employment in the forest industry.

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