

National Conversation
about work

Gisborne Regional Report



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Surf boards photo attributed to Tommy Dalton, The Boardroom

Introduction

The wider Gisborne region stretches towards the East Cape and incorporates a large stretch of pristine coast, inland high country and forests. The region is home to Mount Hikurangi which is recognised and accepted as the first point on the New Zealand mainland to greet each dawning day.

Gisborne is the main area of population growth and is the home of the major retail and business service industries. Agriculture-based industries drive the region's economy and its strongest performer is meat and wool production and processing. Forestry and wood processing is a substantial exporter for the region, while horticulture especially fruit and vegetable growing supported by food processing is a major contributor to the region's economy. Other key industries in Gisborne include tourism and viticulture.

Business and community leaders who attended a recent workshop on the region's economy agreed that the advantages of the region included a variety of land types which enjoy an excellent growing climate for both plants and animals, and which are comparatively well priced. There is stability of land ownership, particularly Māori owned land, which allows a long term view of the regional economy. Processing plants are well placed in relation to growing areas, and there is an engineering industry that supports both pastoral and industrial businesses.

The Gisborne region has a population of around 52,944 people. Ethnically, Gisborne is comprised of 54.3 percent European which is lower than the national average of 67.6 percent. Māori comprise 47.3 percent of the region's population which is far greater than the national average of 14.6 percent. The region's Māori population ranks 9th in size out of the 16 regions in New Zealand with a total of 3.5 percent of New Zealand's Māori population living in the area. People born overseas represent 8.7% of Gisborne's population and were mainly born in England.

The median age (half are younger, and half are older, than this age) is 34.7 years for people in the Gisborne region. For New Zealand as a whole, the median age is 35.9 years. Twelve

percent of people are aged 65 years and over, compared with 12.3% of the total New Zealand population.

Employment

The 2006 Census shows:

- Unemployment was 7.2% for people aged 15 years and over compared to 5.1% for all New Zealand.
- The most common occupational group in Gisborne is 'Labourers'.
- The median income was \$20,600 compared with \$24,400 for all New Zealand.
- Forty nine percent of people aged 15 years and over in Gisborne have an annual income of \$20,000 or less. Only 11.8 percent of people aged 15 years and over have an annual income of more than \$50,000.

Process of engagement

The Commission is targeting the following groups nationally: disabled people, organisations supporting the employment of people with disabilities and employers; Māori businesses; cleaners; women's groups with a focus on employment; young families; local government; migrant workers and sustainable businesses. Over the duration of the national conversation it has become more apparent that engagements around youth employment are vital.

We also seek meetings with employers and/or employees in at least one key industry and include meetings with local groups who have expressed an interest in the project and where possible "new voices" – individuals and community groups who may not have participated in dialogue with the Human Rights Commission before. Engagement is reliant on access to individual employers, employees and groups who want to participate and the following summary regional report follows discussion with the 118 people we met and focuses on employment patterns and trends.

Engagement with employers and employees for the National Conversation were structured around face-to-face meetings. The

view of Taupo retailers were captured by 'vox pop' involving walk-ins down one main retail street in the town.

The final, national report recommendations will also include information gathered from regional reports and on-line engagement.

This report summarises conversations held in Gisborne, Wairoa and Taupo in September 2009. The following groups and individual representatives were participants in these regions.

Taupo

- Rick Cooper, Mayor
- Taupo Moana Group
- Taupo District Council
- Enterprise Lake Taupo
- Taupo retailers: Mai Mai Surf Clothing, Wild South Clothes, C'est La Vie Gifts, The Chocolate Shop, ASB Bank, B. Jammin Surf & Streetwear, AMI Insurance, Little Delicatessen, Lake Gallery, Fred Online, Whitcoulls, Taupo Music Shop

Wairoa

- Wairoa High School
- New World, Wairoa
- Osler's Bakery

Gisborne

- LeaderBrand
- Cedenco
- Tairāwhiti District Health Board PSA Delegates
- USSCO
- Janet Mackey, Former MP
- Meng Foon, Mayor
- Gisborne District Council
- Economic Development Agency
- Gisborne Herald
- Te Unga Mai
- Career Connexionz
- The Boardroom
- Gisborne Girls High School
- Sports Gisborne

- Portside Hotel
- Richard Brooking, Consultant

Letters were sent to all MP's in the Taupo and Gisborne regions. List Member of Parliament Moana Mackey met with us prior to our visit to Gisborne.

Conversations with groups of employees were structured around the following key questions:

1. What do you like about your work?
2. If there was one thing you could change about your work what would it be?

In some cases the questions were preceded by the DVD *Making a Difference*.

These questions were followed by a general discussion about equality and fairness at work and what was needed to effect the desired change. Typically these discussions elicited a wealth of personal work experiences, stories both positive and negative, and highlighted a number of issues related to fairness at work.

Conversations with employers focused on key questions which included;

1. What is your biggest employment issue?
2. What would make a difference for you as an employer?

We also asked about possible impacts of the global recession and recruitment issues given projected labour and skill shortages in the region.

Responses from employers and managers portrayed a variety of views and experiences.

Weathering the recession in Taupo

To learn more about the economic conditions in the Taupo district, we travelled to the Gisborne region via Taupo.

Mayor Rick Cooper commented upfront “we don’t have a recession here”. Business in the town has been buoyed by several major infrastructure projects including the building of a Hilton hotel, significant investment in geothermal energy, construction of a main arterial road and further promotion of the region as an events destination. “We have some big businesses here; geothermal is worth \$1.5 billion. There’s nothing Taupo hasn’t got. Everyone wants to live here”.

Trans-Tasman flights to Rotorua later in the year will bring positive economic benefits to Taupo. Flights “will drag people in from Australia. It’s quicker to get a car from Rotorua to Taupo than Auckland airport to Queen Street. Everyone is doing adventure holidays now and the world motocross is coming to town”.

Enterprise Lake Taupo agreed that the region has weathered the recession well and that the town’s three major projects have provided immediate and future job opportunities. A number of those employed on the projects were local, though a shortage in skills meant that some highly technical workers had come from outside the region and overseas.

There have been no major redundancies in Taupo. However, the retail and services sector have seen some tightening during the recession. According to the economic development agency “there have been a few outlets that have shut, though the premises have not remained empty for long”.

Retailers we spoke to confirm the impact of the recession on consumer spending. “Because of the recession more people are looking and not buying. Our figures are down”, one clothing outlet said. “Less people are buying in the recession. Business is not as good as this time last year”, another retailer said.

Good snow falls have meant record numbers on the central North Island ski fields, softening the economic impact on retail and service businesses as travellers passed to and from the ski fields.

There is no option for trades training in Taupo with most going to Hamilton, Rotorua or elsewhere. According to the mayor, “130 kids are leaving next year. We desperately need a polytechnic to keep them”. Capped funding has meant that Waiariki in Taupo with a smaller campus “is turning people away” and a shortfall in capital funding means that “plans looking at a big new polytechnic campus have stalled”, the economic development agency told us.

Several people commented on the impact that youth leaving town would have on the labour market. The hospitality and service sector in particular looked set to suffer from a youth exodus. “We’re building the new Hilton and need trained people we can keep. There are about 100 backpackers employed under the table because we simply don’t have the youth to do the jobs”, one source told us.

Employment in Taupo has remained steady. One car dealership has been advertising two mechanics jobs for over a year but has yet to find suitably qualified and experienced people. An administration position in Council had attracted up to 20 applicants and we were told that there were a large number of administration and clerical roles with lots of people applying. The view of several commentators was that spouses accompanying partners who had travelled to the area, particularly to work on infrastructural projects, were looking for employment. Many were over qualified for the roles they were applying for.

Māori we spoke to told us that despite Māori being 32% of the town, there was little leverage with local authorities. “Council management is willing to engage but its governance is not”, we were told. The recent Treelords deal and substantial Māori land assets has not resulted in increased investment or opportunities for Māori in the region. Disparate interests amongst Māori stakeholders meant progress was slow.

The mayor indicated his willingness to work directly with Tuwharetoa but mooted that currently the council had to deal with iwi and central government agencies in tandem. “It’s like having

four people in a double bed”, he said. “You can’t get anything done”.

Disaggregated regional data is a “real issue” for planning and forecasting we were told. “At one point we had to employ an economist to pull some data for us as it was not readily available”, Enterprise Lake Taupo said. “Census data does not accurately portray Taupo’s fluctuating population base, particularly in peak seasons”, the mayor told us. This has led to inadequate funding of necessary infrastructure by central government.

Weathering the recession in Gisborne

In the week that we visited Gisborne the local paper reported Gisborne at the top of the list of regions hardest hit by the recession. Gisborne’s economy did not stand out as exceptionally poorer than other regions in New Zealand but a higher proportion of unskilled, low-income and at-risk families in the region were contributing to its position.

Barnados child advocate Geraldine Callender said social services were feeling the effects of the recession. “Already there has been an increase. All the social services are completely stretched”. Mayor Meng Foon and the economic development agency confirmed this view. “The shelves at the food bank are definitely low”.

Despite the social effects of the recession, businesses in the region had generally fared well. Both the mayor and economic development agency told us the forestry sector was in good shape but that wood processing had slowed down. This had impacted on two mills in the region resulting in a number of redundancies, and the closure of one mill.

A \$120 million investment in forestry including the building of a new wood processing plant due to be commissioned in 2011 meant 800 to 1000 new jobs would be created in the region.

Tourism numbers were up and while lower than last year “people were staying longer”, we were told. The education sector was also up due to a large youth population in the region.

Horticulture remained steady but production costs have increased. Those in viticulture with contracts seemed to be faring well. Several horticultural businesses reported that demand for grapes is down, with one business reducing vine numbers.

“The recession has caused psychological stress. Some people are up-skilling and some people are saying ‘what recession’”, the mayor said. Numbers of unemployed have increased and social services and government sector support are being well utilised in Gisborne.

Reportedly in the newspaper housing remained steady, advertising was down and situations vacant were also down.

Over the past year rate defaulters have increased from 5% to 10%, according to the mayor. “If people lose their jobs they might default but we have a number of remission policies. Some can pay when they get their jobs back. There is an option for some people to pay out of their estate when they die”, he said.

Māori economic development in the region has great potential with a possible treaty settlement of \$90-\$100 million, but “in-fighting” had hindered progress. “Negotiation skills and strategic skills were not necessarily available in the same people” a commentator on Māori in the area told us.

Māori in the area were “asset rich but cash poor” according to several employers and commentators we met while in Gisborne. “There is potential for economic development but this is hampered by relationships. There are some good models but it’s whether we can grow that thinking”.

What do people like about their work?

When employees, managers and business owners are asked what they like about their work there is almost universal enthusiasm for the socialisation aspects. People also appreciate the variety of tasks undertaken in a working day and strong explicit and implicit acknowledgement of the value of them as a person, their views and the work that they produce. Work provides professional and personal satisfaction.

Local government employees are enthusiastic about their work citing good teams, flexible work arrangements, work variety and a positive learning environment as key motivators. In addition, “working for a small council means there is lots of variety and opportunities to move around to different jobs”, one employee said.

Horticultural sector workers were passionate about their work and in one workplace staff appreciated their working environment. “People like the environment they are in and the people they work with. The organisation is fair, they look after people”, we were told.

Across sectors employees enjoyed flexible work practices where available. A process worker said, “This is a flexible working environment. If I need time I can take it – I can start and finish when I want”. In other workplaces the same sentiment was evident. One working mother told us, “The flexibility is good; I have two kids to care for as well”.

Retailers we spoke to enjoyed meeting customers and working with their respective products and services. Others were keen to talk about job security, job satisfaction and autonomy as factors that they liked in their work.

Issues

The following issues were raised by both employees and employers alike. They have been grouped by themes:

- Skill shortages
- Low pay

- Youth
- Work hours
- Employment equity (gender issues, harassment and bullying)
- Family business
- Absenteeism
- Leadership

Skill shortages

Employers in Gisborne are struggling to find people with the right employment skills. “Our biggest issue is getting basic skills. There are plenty of people; they just don’t have the right skills”, one employer said.

Discussion with employers uncovered that even the most rudimentary skills were difficult to find. “Someone we interviewed turned up in their pyjamas. Another had no communication skills and texted the entire time they were being interviewed”, said managers at a process plant.

In the horticultural sector finding employees with a basic knowledge of machinery and health and safety is difficult. “If you put a townie on a tractor you end up with a completely different result than the guy who’s grown up on a tractor. This is the same all throughout the country”, a large horticultural employer said.

Good seasonal workers were in high demand with agricultural and horticultural businesses competing from the same pool of labour. When asked, competing companies agreed that they were “trying to recruit the same staff” and that made things “tough”.

In both Gisborne and Taupo we learned that people with technical skills were being recruited from overseas. “A number of people employed on infrastructure projects are local, but there is a high number of technical staff that are imported, from places like South Africa”, an economic development agency said.

Low pay

The predominance of primary industries in the region particularly in horticulture and agriculture, and the nature of seasonal work meant many workers earned little more than the minimum wage of \$12.50 per hour.

Those we spoke to in food processing agreed that wages were low and that everyone wanted more money for the work they did. One employer agreed and stated, “We are looking at an hourly rate for people who have been here for a long time. We realise this is a problem and we want to do something about it”.

Others we spoke to thought that wages should be based on experience. “At the moment you can get \$15 per hour for operators and a person off the street can get \$14 per hour. We get nothing for training a new person. The hourly rate goes from \$12 to \$18 per hour for contract workers”, we were told by a group of workers. “We get paid a flat rate regardless of the amount of time we work”, a worker said.

Housekeeping staff we spoke to thought they deserved more money. “It’s different to cleaning commercially, this [cleaning] is really particular work”. Staff earned \$12.50 currently and supervisors \$13.00. The housekeeping manager thought \$14.00 was a fairer rate of pay.

An independent commentator told us that low rates of pay and the high cost of travel was an issue in the region.

Youth

Youth employment was the single most talked about issue in the Gisborne and Taupo regions. School education, workplace preparedness, access to higher education and trade training opportunities as well as attitudes to work dominated discussions.

On several occasions we were told that education attainment levels were poor and that schools needed to “better equip kids for work”. Commentators in Taupo agreed that parents had limited choices of where to educate their children and that most youth would have to leave town for higher education and employment opportunities. “If Taupo had a tech or uni it would grow hugely. I will probably go to Hamilton and study. If Taupo had somewhere to study I would stay”, a young retail worker told us.

Employers and employees at several work sites were less than complimentary about young workers. One worker told us, “the young ones need a kick up the bum, they’re hopeless”. Another said, “the younger ones don’t turn up”. An employer in the process sector said their biggest issue was finding people with the right

skills for work. “Kids are leaving (school) without even being able to fill in an application form”, they said.

Others were more sympathetic towards young workers. “We need young people to keep us on our toes”; one group of workers said while youth career advocates told us “their [youth] work ethic is not like the baby boomers. They are a little more informed now. If you give them the right job, they’ll perform”.

Some employers recognised that employment was different for youth. “We have to accommodate the different values of the younger generation”, a process manager said.

Gisborne’s youth transition service agreed that employers were not looking to employ young people. “Some employers won’t employ 16-17 year olds because there is too much turnover. Employers are looking for older people. They think young people are less reliable.

Many of the employers we spoke to openly admitted they were considering mature workers over the young. “We had employed a young male who turned up for work drunk or late, so now we try to get older workers”, a small business owner said.

Youth career workers thought that job re-design may be a way to accommodate the needs and expectations of youth. “If they [employers] had 12 hour shifts then why don’t they employ two young people for six hours each?” Others agreed that the way work is organised today does not suit youth.

Apprenticeships in the region are hard to get according to a construction business owner. “There’s been reduced numbers and no consistency from government, the rules keep changing. Government needs to stick to one system”, he said. Another issue with apprenticeships in a small town is that “one employer trains them and others snap them up”, we were told.

Disengagement of youth while still at school is one of the root causes affecting youth employment issues according to Youth Transition workers. “I’ve never seen so much disengagement in the last five or six years for young people. There’s far too many disengaging at school. Too many kids go through till year 13 [when they shouldn’t be]. If a boy at 14 is good at some kind of work he

needs to be able to do it somehow with a mentor. If they are told they must go on [with school work] regardless they just disengage earlier. We need to let go of the idea that there is only one place that kids can go to learn”.

Career staff told us young people need to be developed in ways that allow them to be themselves. “How do we work with them when they are not doing the work they love? Squash picking is a trade but what happens when it is not the season, they become idle.

Young workers we met with were keen to shake off negative criticism by employers. “Unreliable kids, that’s a load of shit. If it’s the right job we’ll turn up. It’s really about what they [employers] put across at the start, how they treat us”.

Other young workers pointed out that development and pastoral care was important to engagement. “Here we are encouraged to learn things. They put us through first aid and training for life. It’s not just talk talk”.

The District Health Board in Gisborne said it had a “close relationship with schools which appeared to be bringing youngsters out of the woodwork. It is called an incubator programme. Human Resources is looking at the statistics to see if it is working”, one DHB staff member said.

“The young people here are different in our workplace. We don’t have any issues. It would be dealt with quickly if there was. Young ones rejuvenate the place. Nursing graduates are often second chance nurses”, we were told.

Several people we spoke with praised education programmes like Gateway. “Gateway works well but those who leave school early don’t benefit. Maybe it should be started at an earlier stage before year 12 for school kids who don’t want to do tertiary”, a careers advisor said.

The idea of a tertiary high school with polytechnic has been mooted in the Gisborne region. “There is a very enthusiastic response from high schools. Kids as young as 13 could attend but there are no extra resources so we can’t do it”, the co-director of career services told us.

One suggestion by the youth transition service is that funding criteria for transition to work grants be looked at. “It is rigmarole just to get gear to start work. The programmes are working we just need better accessibility and for them to be pitched at the right level”.

An independent commentator thought that Māori families used to look after low income kids however with more people working this has meant that kids have not been as supported into the work environment as they used to be. The government he said has consistently failed to match the skills of youth with the work environment. “There is a lack of flexibility in planning from the government, a desire to drive for efficiency. Getting the best provider doesn’t necessarily match what’s needed in the work environment. The focus and ability of the Ministry of Social Development to put policy at the front end has not really worked. There is a lack of flexibility to respond to labour market conditions as they arise. Also they are very risk adverse”, he said.

Work hours

Long work hours are a regular feature of seasonal work and often governed by harvesting schedules and the need to process fresh produce quickly or get it to markets.

One worker told us, “I’m up till 10pm every night. My average hours are 8am to 8pm six or seven days a week”. Another said, “I do 12 hours a day six days a week. We do split shifts, depending on the harvest”.

Despite long work hours, many employees are prepared to willingly give their time. “We have a passion and pride in doing the job properly”, one woman worker said. Additional hours meant some people sacrificed time with family. “I have spent more time at work than I’ve spent with my family”, a male process worker told us.

“A lot of field workers work very long hours, up to 80 hours a week in spring, it slows in winter. Younger people find this difficult”, one food producer told us.

Shift work in the food processing industry was high pressured according to staff. “Shifts can be 8 to 12 hours. Some supervisors would do 14 to 16 hours per day. During the season I’d average 10

to 12 hours per day”, one supervisor said. “Three 8 hour shifts operate 7 days per week. I could be working 60 days in a row”, a colleague added.

Not all workplaces thought that employees are happy to do the extra hours. “It’s long hours but just getting people to turn up for 40 hours is hard. They don’t want extra hours”, one employer said.

Pay and Employment Equity

In 2008, Gisborne District Council volunteered to be the first local government organisation to use the Department of Labour’s streamlined pay and employment equity review process.

The purpose of the review was to investigate and assess whether women and men:

- Have an equitable share of rewards (including pay but not just pay)
- Participate equitably in all areas of the Council
- Are treated with equal respect and fairness.

Prior to the review the Chief Executive said, “When the idea of the Gisborne District Council participating in the pay and employment equity project was first mooted, I was a bit sceptical. None of us set out to create injustices and inequity in our workplaces. Intuitively then, there’s no problem...however I’ve realised it’s not enough to rely on intuition, hard data is needed”.

Findings from the review identified a number of gender equity issues within the council. Only 14% of Tier 1-3 positions in the Council are occupied by women even though women constitute 46% of the total workforce. Other key findings show women are less confident than men that the promotions process and performance management system is as fair to both women and men, and women are more unsure than men that their opinion matters to their supervisor.

Staff we spoke to wanted “greater transparency” to combat unfairness. We met the first appointed and only senior women manager in the council and her colleagues told us, “Having one female manager is great! It’s a start. It’s like a boys club around here sometimes”.

As part of the review, response plans aimed at making the council a fairer place to work were adopted for action. They included ensuring there is no gender bias in job evaluations; addressing the low proportion of women in management positions; improving participation in KiwiSaver amongst lower paid staff; building women's confidence in the fairness of training and development, promotions processes, performance management and use of discretionary supervisors; building awareness and confidence in flexible work arrangements; and building a more positive work environment.

Human Resources staff told us, "We're moving along as best we can – our timeframes have been pushed out a bit", when asked about the implementation of the response plan. "We have already made some changes. For example we have appointed a female senior manager, KiwiSaver numbers have increased, we implemented an anti-harassment policy and new code of conduct, and we have more feeder positions into management".

When speaking about the process of the review, staff commented, "the process wasn't that smooth. We were doing several surveys within a short period of time".

An internal professional women's group supported by the CEO had helped to "push things forward". Other practices that were working well as a result of the review included flexible working arrangements and a survey of staff childcare requirements.

By conducting the review the council was "Happy to take part in this exercise as a first for Councils. We get more recognition for what we've done by other councils now. We have a better understanding of the issues than other councils because we did the pay and employment equity review. We will continue to take action. I believe we are nearly there. We are doing behaviour and culture change".

Issues of bullying and harassment reported in the review process were a surprise to the CEO. "He was surprised with the number of people that said they have been bullied but because we didn't ask people how long ago they were bullied, it might not be occurring now", human resources told us.

One of the major tasks was to do job evaluation reviews which proved difficult for a lot of staff. “People don’t like change. The senior management did not have the tools to assist people managing change and there was a lot of resistance”, Human Resources said.

The District Health Board (DHB) also did a pay and employment equity review 18 months ago, but contrary to the council’s positive experience, DHB staff said the review amounted to little or no action in their organisation. “Action was blocked by the CEO or Board”, one worker said.

Another employee told us the review showed “there were jobs for the boys”.

DHB workers pointed out that women with 20 years experience might only be getting \$10,000 per annum more than a new graduate. This was a major concern for them.

Like the Gisborne District Council issues of harassment and bullying were identified by the DHB’s review. One worker described how “there is bullying here, especially if you raise issues people don’t like. I was subject to bullying today with one senior manager screaming at another, and I was bullied myself yesterday”.

Interestingly, no information about pay inequity in either organisation was made available to us when we discussed the reviews.

Family business

We spoke to three long-term family businesses in the Gisborne region to learn more about their work success.

Family legacy was a major factor in the success of these businesses. “It is a passion. My grandmother is thought to be the first baker in the country”, one owner told us. “Dad’s been doing this [making surfboards] for 25 years, he’s made a really good brand”.

The owner of a bakery business said, “I’ve tried to create a friendly, trustworthy environment and encourage participation. Being a family business is part of the success”. Another owner

mentioned, “Being a family business means we have a long term view”.

Employees were full of praise for their employers. “I love being here and enjoy being at work. I like the bosses and love the family, it’s just lovely, down to earth and caring”, a café assistant told us. Newspaper staff said, “We go through it all with them [the family]. You can talk to them, especially the older ones. They care about us; we’re more than just a number”.

A major issue facing business is succession planning. “Our succession plan is around me, my sister and our brother. I’m getting married next year. So we’d better start breeding as soon as possible”, a family staff member told us.

In another business the owner told us that “There’s my wife, three kids and son-in-law. We’re all bakers and will stay in it”.

Absenteeism

Absenteeism was a significant issue for several employers we met. “Our top employment issue is absenteeism through sickness, family sickness and just not turning up”, one retail owner said.

Another retailer told us, “Absenteeism is our biggest issue. They just don’t turn up. We pay five days sick leave per year and after that’s gone if they don’t turn up, they don’t get paid”.

Employers were open in their criticism of younger workers talking about their lack of work ethic and commitment to be at work when required.

One employer put the onus on staff as a way to combat absenteeism. “I get staff to say to other staff make sure you’re here because it makes work harder if you’re not”.

Leadership

Employees were united in their support for good leaders and leadership practice.

“It’s not a question of I’m the boss here, there is an open-door policy. Management is good”, a food processor told us. “The

relationship between management and staff is great. It's hierarchy on paper, but it's really a flat structure".

In one workplace the introduction of Total Production Management had been well received by employees. "We brought in TPM a couple of years ago. At the time we were autocratic and were not getting engagement from staff", managers admitted to us.

Since the introduction of the programme staff onsite have become more engaged. "The little fellow down there gets to learn from the big fellow up there", one worker said.

Conclusions

Lower rates of pay dominate the employment landscape in the Gisborne region. Primary industries such as forestry, horticulture and food manufacturing are notoriously low paying, long hours industries. On top of this, high rates of seasonal and casual work mean that there is employment uncertainty for many people throughout the year.

Young people's experience, qualifications and attitudes are being questioned by many employers and employees. Absenteeism is occurring and commitment is questioned. Some young people are saying that work needs to be re-structured to accommodate their needs and lifestyle and that they want their views and the work that they do to be more highly valued by employers. There are also a number of views about transition to work programmes that are needed in the area.

The youth issues in the Gisborne region confirm the need for a national youth to work strategy.

Recommendations

- Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) should promote Gisborne District Council's Pay & Employment Equity Review as an example of what other local authorities should be doing.
- Government should index the minimum wage to the cost of living and regularly increase it to improve income and equality.
- Given that the Tairāwhiti District Health Board has undertaken a pay and employment equity review, the CEO must ensure implementation of its response plan.