

# National Conversation about Work

## Otago Regional Report



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# Introduction

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Otago is a region rich in diversity. Mountains, lakes and historic goldmining towns, lush countryside and impressive architecture create a unique environment.

Major centres in the region include Dunedin (the principal city of the region), Oamaru (made famous by Janet Frame and Oamaru stone), Balclutha, Alexandra, and the major tourist centres - Queenstown and Wanaka. Kaitangata in South Otago is a prominent source of coal. The Waitaki and Clutha rivers also provide much of the country's hydroelectric power.

Initial settlement was concentrated around the port and city (of Dunedin), then expanded, notably to the south-west, where the fertile Taieri Plains offered good farmland. The 1860s saw rapid commercial expansion after the discovery of gold at Gabriels Gully in Central Otago. Further gold discoveries at Clyde and Arrow River around Arrowtown led to a boom, and Otago became for a period the cultural and economic centre of New Zealand. New Zealand's first daily newspaper, the *Otago Times*, originally edited by Julius Vogel, dates from this period.

Other notable firsts include New Zealand's first university, the University of Otago, founded in 1869 as the provincial university in Dunedin.

Today, five local economies make up the Region – Central Otago District, Clutha District, Dunedin City, Queenstown-Lake District, and Waitaki District.

At the time we visited Otago, Dunedin civic and business leaders were advocating unsuccessfully for a \$375 million bid to build new trains at Dunedin's Hillside railway yards with the promise of "significant economic benefit to the city". In addition the potential for offshore oil and gas exploration in the region, generating up to an estimated 4000 jobs was "more likely now than ever before", economic development commentators said.

The Otago Daily Times reported that the University of Otago, a major employer in Dunedin, would undergo its third major restructuring with the possibility of a fourth. This would inevitably impact jobs at the university.

Tourism in the region has continued to strengthen over the last decade, led largely by strong growth in the Queenstown-Lakes and Central Otago District. Expansion, particularly in the Australian tourism market, has led to explosive increases in visitor numbers helping grow a vibrant local economy.

Otago's creative sector has also shown strong positive growth. Film, video, television services and other creative industries have gained international recognition. The region's spectacular natural beauty, for example, has been promoted worldwide in recent cinematic blockbusters and the heritage precincts of the region are in constant demand as settings for film and television productions.

Education and research has always played a central role in the region's economy. The University of Otago and the existence of large primary processing businesses mean there is plenty of scope for research now and in the future. Education accounts for one in eight jobs in Dunedin.

The Central Otago area has expanded markedly in the viticulture industry in the last decade producing award winning wines, and securing its reputation as New Zealand's leading pinot noir region.

Manufacturing has now passed the primary sector as the leading employer in the Waitaki district. The average size of businesses grew, as did the number of businesses overall. This is remarkable given they were achieved with a flat population growth rate. Business services, recreation services and social services showed strong rises in employment. In the primary sector, dairy production rises had seen a contraction of sheep numbers and production.

## Employment

Dunedin accounts for more than half of the Otago region's employment and GDP, and more than two fifths of businesses. The recession has affected Dunedin. Employment fell sharply, mostly due to the reduction in machinery and equipment manufacturing, and Fisher and Paykel reducing operations in the city.

The Queenstown-Lake District has been one of New Zealand's top-performing local economies over the last year and the decade. The rapid growth of the District's population (and resultant urbanisation) has seen employment growth double in almost all sectors since 1999. While this is positive it has placed immense pressure on accommodation and local services.

Latest labour market data (March 2010) shows a labour force participation rate that is up from the previous year. The number of people in the labour force in Otago was 167,400 in the year to March 2010. The employment rate was 67 percent (112,000).

The region's unemployment rate increased to 5.3% in the year to March 2010, from 3.6% the year before. In comparison, the national average unemployment rate was 6.4% for the year to March 2010. The number of unemployed in the region was 5,900.

Previous quarterly figures show only eight people in Queenstown were on the unemployment benefit in March 2009. By September that had increased to 116, dropping to 110 in December and 72 in March 2010.

In March 2009 in Central Otago, 27 people were on the unemployment benefit. That grew to 73 in September and peaked at 86 in December, before reaching 67 in March 2010.

No current Dunedin specific labour data was available at the time this report was written which is an issue according to some we met in the city. "Specific and up-to-date Dunedin labour data would be useful for economic development plans", we were told. "We could get a much better handle on labour market planning in the City as a result", the Economic Development Unit said.

## Process of engagement

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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 youth employment and the ageing workforce are increasingly important.

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. This summary report follows discussion with the 89 people we met in the region and focuses on employment patterns and trends. Engagement with employers and employees for the National Conversation were structured around face-to-face meetings.

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

This report summarises conversations held in Dunedin, Ranfurly, Clyde and Queenstown in May 2010. The following groups and individual representatives were participants in these regions.

### Dunedin

- Otago Forward – Economic Development Agency
- Fisher & Paykel
- University of Otago
- Student Job Search
- Dunedin City Council
- Otago Chamber of Commerce
- Silver Fern Farms
- Animation Research Limited
- Launchpad

- Cargill Enterprises

#### Ranfurly & Clyde

- Maniatoto Women's Community Group
- Contact Energy

#### Queenstown

- Mayor, Clive Geddes
- Queenstown Chamber of Commerce
- NZ Ski Limited
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Queenstown Hotels Council

Letters were sent to all MP's in the region.

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?

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 Otago

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Recent Business and Economic Research (BERL) data (2009) shows the economies of Dunedin and the Central Otago, Clutha, Queenstown-Lakes and Waitaki districts “punched above their weight during the recession”. Growth in employment and the creation of new business for instance, outstripped national rates.

Economic development commentators reported that lower numbers of unemployed compared to the national average showed “regional stability”, with education, health, manufacturing, agriculture, viticulture and tourism being the cornerstones of the region’s economy.

Work and Income figures show that for the first time in five years there was no labour shortage in the seasonal fruit picking industry in Central Otago the result of more New Zealanders taking up seasonal employment.

In Dunedin the city council provided funds to stimulate local businesses including discounted airline tickets to allow local businesses to visit key customers and to allow potential customers to visit Dunedin. These initiatives were extensively reported in a series of profiles of Dunedin businesses ‘doing well with DCC support’.

Redundancies in the construction industry, particularly following failed developments and the end of two school construction projects in Queenstown, had impacted on employment figures in the area. A construction business owner told us, “I’ve never had to lay off a large number of guys before, we’ll just see.”

“Queenstown is an unusual market because we have such a small base population yet we go through periods of huge demand because we have big bursts of development”, he said. “If it is the case that the work dries up then we will have to let staff go”, we were told.

There was optimism for the future of construction in the area he thought, “What we are fortunate with in Central Otago is that we having a growing base population which has stimulated some

demand on the infrastructure side of things. And there is still some commercial development planned and happening.”

The Queenstown Chamber of Commerce advised that visitor numbers had increased, mainly from Australia, but that travellers were spending less on retail. “Overall retail and accommodation had not done so well during the recession”.

## What do people like about their work?

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When employees, managers and business owners are asked what they like about their work, there is almost universal enthusiasm for its socialisation, genuine expressions of pride in products and services, appreciation of the variety of tasks undertaken in a working day and strong explicit and implicit acknowledgement of the value of work expressed in professional and personal satisfaction.

Employees in workplaces across the region highlighted the satisfaction they gained from having autonomy and flexibility. “I really like the autonomy and personal decision making power I have”, one worker said. “I can decide when I come and go”, another added.

In the manufacturing sector an employee told us, “I like doing things when I feel fit to do them”. Someone in another manufacturing organisation said, “I like being autonomous and prioritising my own time”.

Participants spoke about the support they received from colleagues and working in a collegial environment as being important. “If you sit there and are looking like a meerkat, people come over and ask if they can help”, one call centre employee said. In other workplaces too staff enjoyed “friendly and supportive” teams and a “good social atmosphere”.

“I like the variety my job gives me” is a popular catch phrase with those we met. Doing a variety of tasks at work is universally applauded. “No two days are the same here”, one worker said.

Another added, “There is a huge variety of work. I really enjoy that”, someone in the professional sector told us.

In the energy sector staff said they enjoyed “providing a service to the public and producing something useful”.

Some participants were more prosaic in stating what they enjoyed about their work. “This is the first job I’ve had where I can leave my work at work”, one participant said. “I don’t have to do hours of overtime”, another added. “Well, of course, there’s the pay”, a business employee told us.

## Issues

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

- Childcare
- Youth employment
- Work readiness
- Impact of isolation
- Disability
- Migrant labour
- Ageing demographic
- Leadership
- Health and Safety

### Childcare and Pre-school education

An action oriented group of ten women we met from the Maniototo community were committed to opening a kindergarten for the benefit of all. “If we had a pre-school facility we would have greater mobility, less stress and wouldn’t have to rely on family and friends”, one woman said.

Most of the women had young families and worked part-time or ran their own businesses or helped run businesses with their partners. Nearly all travelled substantial distances for work or for childcare.

“I could return to full-time work and increase our household income which would be good for my mental health”, one woman told us.

Five of the ten women in the group stated that they would work more if there was a pre-school and childcare facility. Many believed that there would be greater potential for economic growth having a facility in the community. “It would allow more people to set up their own businesses”, they said.

Others in the room spoke about the disadvantage their children and others, especially low socio-economic and Maori children faced in developing social skills and a consistent routine without a pre-school facility. “Kids in our community especially Maori are starting on the back foot when they get to school”, we were told.

Increasing numbers of migrant workers in the area meant there were more children “who just appear [at school] once they’re five years old. Before that there’s no contact. They do nothing”, the group told us. One woman who taught Maori in the area thought, “It’s a great idea to have migrant children then they and their families can become more involved in the community. It’s better for everyone”.

The group told us, “We have a very low participation rate for pre-school education regardless of ethnic origin. All children, but especially Maori are adversely affected”.

The women’s group was also concerned about the effect having no pre-school facility had on attracting people to the area. “People haven’t moved here because there is no kindergarten”, they said.

In Dunedin where childcare is available one working mother said she felt guilty, “It’s a real shame my kids are outsourced from 9 to 5, five days a week”, though she readily admitted that if they weren’t she wouldn’t have enough time to do her job.

## Youth employment

Youth employment is a key issue in Otago as it is in all regions across New Zealand. Access to employment and ongoing education opportunities pose significant barriers to youth employment as do employer attitudes towards younger workers.

One Otago business has won national recognition for its efforts to work with Gen-Y. The business demonstrates a healthy attitude

towards its younger workers and has somehow cracked a cultural norm which has eluded many other New Zealand employers.

The business has embarked on a project to attract and retain young staff by better understanding their motivations and needs. “Younger staff don’t come for the job necessarily, they come to ski and ride, so where we can, we give them that opportunity”. Managers we spoke to jokingly referred to Gen-Y as Gen-I. “I want this and I want that”.

The business engages with its staff to explore their career aspirations and supports staff to gain nationally-recognised qualifications. It utilises new technologies to keep track of training and career-related information such as pay increases and internal promotions as well as to learn the habits of employees so that it can reward them with “what matters to them”.

Other key initiatives include cross-utilisation of staff, so that employees broaden skills, meet people and undertake varied work; and increased staff benefits such as daily hot meals, passes for friends and family, transport on days off and reduced crèche rates.

In learning more about Gen-Y the organisation is able to cater to their needs. “They [Gen-Y] want constant feedback, so we give it to them. We also reward the behaviours we want from them, for example giving good customer service”, one manager said. “We hire for attitude and train for skill”.

Representatives from Student Job Search (SJS) were keen to champion the positives of younger workers and to dispel some of the myths of Gen-Y to employers. “Employers have a misperception about Gen-Y”, they said. “Gen-Y want to know how they fit into the scheme of things when they are at work”.

Employment rights queries were common amongst students who were sent out for job assignments. “Students know some things about their employment rights and are confident enough in coming forward to ask us questions. They know we give impartial advice”.

Discrimination towards students was discussed. “Basically employers are good but sometimes you get “I don’t want a girl, I don’t want a criminal, I only want to help out Kiwi students, or I

want someone who speaks English”. These were common examples according to SJS work consultants.

Attitudes towards young workers varied. Youth advocates told us “We are meeting employers who are very reluctant to take on adolescent workers. They would rather take on slightly older workers.”

When discussing the expectations of young workers one employer said, “Young people need to be cuddled and praised these days. If you don’t tell them they’re doing alright they think they’ve done something wrong.” They continued by adding, “In our day if you weren’t given a clip around the ears you were doing OK.”

Others we spoke to believe young workers have a different work ethic today. “Young people have an expectation that they will be provided for because parents have given them everything”, we were told.

## **Work readiness**

Successful programmes aimed at making youth work ready, depend greatly on the commitment and dedication of individuals to foster sound business relationships and build confidence between youth and employers.

Launchpad is a successful programme that works with businesses, polytechnics and schools to create employment and training opportunities in office administration for school leavers and other young people. Launchpad’s success in Dunedin is due largely to the dedication of its Regional Manager.

Scholarships are awarded to recipients who attend compulsory business administration courses with a local tertiary provider. Recipients, who are mostly female, are also placed with an employer and are assigned an on-the-job supervisor to oversee completion of an in-house training workbook.

Now in its seventeenth year the programme has had 125 scholarship recipients who have been placed with 53 participating employers. In 2009, 20 of 21 young people graduated from the programme. “We have a very high success rate”, the Manager told us.

At the end of their scholarship year, graduates are offered permanent or fixed term employment opportunities, a number receive promotion with their Launchpad employer, some go onto either fulltime or part time tertiary study and the remaining graduates successfully gain employment in other related areas.

Modern apprenticeships and trade training opportunities also provide increased employment exposure for youth and help to plug skills shortages. In Dunedin, 4Trades is an apprenticeship programme designed to reduce the compliance issues and costs that prevent businesses from taking on apprentices. “4Trades is adding hugely to the skills base in Otago”, Programme Co-ordinators told us.

Since 2002, 214 trade training apprentices have gone through the programme with an overall success rate of around 80 percent. Co-ordinators spoke of differing success rates across the region. For instance, “South Otago seem to have a different and better work ethic than those in Dunedin”, one co-ordinator thought.

4Trades Co-ordinators assist employers with recruitment and selection of apprentices, support negotiations and implement Apprentice Employment Contracts and Training Agreements. In addition the programme administers all compliance cost payments including ACC, PAYE and ITO fees.

For apprentices, 4Trades will manage all aspects of the apprentices’ theory training including liaison with ITO’s and Polytechnics and even go so far as to organise and pay for travel to block courses. “Most importantly we ensure that they [apprentices] complete and pass their courses!”, a co-ordinator told us.

Two young apprentices we met were enthusiastic about their roles and future job prospects. Both were very appreciative of the programme and co-ordinators. One female apprentice was the only woman in the workplace. “It doesn’t bother me; I just fit in like one of the boys”, she said. The other apprentice was awarded a State Insurance Scholarship that helped pay for his MITO fee and new tools. “Both are really flourishing”, the co-ordinator said.

The success of the programme is due largely to the dedication of its Co-ordinators and its association with local businesses through

the Chamber of Commerce. Co-ordinators are adamant that programmes like this, “have to be grown in the region, be parochial and nurtured, and have key people driving it.”

Co-ordinator’s see themselves advocating in the same space as Industry Training Organisations (ITO’s) and Modern Apprentice Co-ordinators. “There are some very good ITO’s. However, some aren’t so good and don’t advocate for young people like they’re suppose to”, one co-ordinator said. These views are similar to those held by youth employment advocates the Commission has met.

We were told by SJS representatives that some students were naïve when it came to being “work ready”. “There is a requirement to be work ready. Students need to learn about tailoring approaches to work and turning up in appropriate attire”. We heard of stories where students had presented in hot pants, jandals and other inappropriate clothing for interviews. There was support for a National Youth to Work strategy by SJS representatives.

## Impact of isolation

There is recognition that people living in more geographically remote and isolated areas have greater difficulty retaining and maintaining services, or participating in cultural or social activity, compared to people living close to large centres of population.

While Dunedin is Otago’s largest population centre, many we met spoke of the limited career opportunities the city presented. One manager said, “I think we are the only Head office I know of in Dunedin. Everyone else has moved to the bigger cities”.

Lower wages, fewer large employers and limited career pathways were considered the norm by most, although these were offset by cheaper living costs, housing prices and lifestyle choices many said.

“The scope for growth and further career progression is pretty limited here”, a business professional told us. “It’s not a town for career progression. But on the other hand there’s no traffic, house prices are cheaper and work-life balance is better”.

A communications professional we spoke to had remained in his role for 20 years in Dunedin and had never received a pay rise. “I just didn’t ask and hadn’t really thought to”, he said.

Rurally isolated communities felt the limitations imposed by inadequate broadband and mobile coverage. “We need decent access to communications for business”, we were told. “It limits business and also our social inclusion”, concerned communities said.

A professional woman felt that the isolation of pockets of workers in remote areas limited professional development. “If you’ve got to travel 250 kilometres for training, then that’s too expensive”, she said.

People moving to or returning to rural locations had limited job opportunities. “If you move here or come back here you are lower paid and if you want a job, you have to take what is available”, one concerned worker said.

In the construction industry labour tended to move where the work was. Queenstown Mayor, Clive Geddes spoke about a transient workforce that comes to Queenstown from surrounding towns and districts.

## Disability

Disabled people are among the most marginalised in employment in New Zealand. The value of work for people with disabilities is life changing as demonstrated by a group of disabled workers in Dunedin.

Cargill Enterprises has a long history of producing and supplying quality products and services to Dunedin, Otago and the rest of New Zealand and employs more than 100 staff with disabilities.

The Manager of Cargill Enterprises told us, “We have developed and established a proven and respected footing in the business community and private sector for producing not only top quality products and services, but also providing work for people with disabilities and to help build self esteem, work skills and personal development”.

When asked what they like about work, disabled staff spoke about the social aspect of being with friends and also the immense satisfaction gained from applying technical skills such as those required for sign-writing and wood turning. Everyone we spoke to said work “gives you something to get up for” and “I need something to do to keep me occupied”.

Without work disabled staff overwhelming said that they would be “bored and annoyed” and would probably “just sit there” at home.

The controversial issue of minimum wage exemptions for people with disabilities was discussed during our visit. All disabled employees on site had minimum wage exemption permits and this helped “to keep the place going”, management said. ‘Raising wages to the minimum wage would have a huge effect on staff numbers. We would have to let a lot people go, we’d only end up employing about 20 or 30 if that happened”.

Funding and business margins were two limiting factors in keeping the business afloat.

During the recession Cargill’s suffered from the general downturn in business and consequently lost two major contracts worth almost 30 percent of annual turnover. When we visited, the company had considered letting people go because of the downturn, “It wasn’t disabled workers we were going to make redundant, but senior staff”, the manager said. “This is a fantastic place to work”.

## **Skill shortages**

Employers we spoke to at a business lunch in Dunedin pointed to the fact that particular skills in the region were still very difficult to find.

One larger employer, despite re-structuring and integration of some roles, was finding it difficult to find environmental health and safety officers. Another large employer told us, “There are no metallurgists in New Zealand. We have to recruit them from overseas”.

One professional spoke to us about the partners of those recruited either nationally or internationally. “Partners also need jobs”, she

said. The issue of attracting professionals to the region had to be considered alongside complementary roles for spouses often described as “trailing spouses” and partners if it was to be a viable recruitment strategy. The example of academics whose spouses were also academics and needed work was discussed.

A recruiter in the region confirmed that skills shortages “especially in the trades” was an issue. Economic development experts agreed, “Skilled staff attraction is an ongoing problem”.

In the creative digital industry skilled staff were not difficult to find, however, “finding people with the experience we need is difficult”, a manager in the industry said.

## **Migrant labour**

“Inherent conservatism in business and parochial attitudes meant some employers in the region have difficulty with employing migrants”, a business commentator told us.

Just prior to visiting the region newspaper reports indicated a number of complaints to the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) by migrant workers.

When visiting Queenstown we met with CAB and two migrant volunteers who shared their employment experiences with us. Typical complaints by migrant employees included not being paid holiday pay, being told they had lesser rights because they were on working holiday visas and being told they were not entitled to leave.

While complaints to CAB had increased, advocacy workers thought that this was just the “tip of the iceberg”. We were told that migrants were less likely to complain because they were in the area for a short period of time or would simply leave and “find another job elsewhere”.

Migrant workers make up a sizeable portion of seasonal workers in Central Otago. The transient nature of migrants made it difficult for the hospitality and hotel industries to keep a hold of a stable workforce. Hoteliers we met in Queenstown wanted “a steady supply of stable workers, who will stick around”. Initiatives such as

making accommodation available to workers were being trialled as a means of holding on to staff.

The Brazilian community had increased considerably in Queenstown in recent years we were told. “The South American community have filled room attendant roles and really value the work they do”, the Mayor said. Hoteliers agreed though they felt, “the demographic is changing”.

Mayor of Queenstown, Clive Geddes spoke about an early migrant employment scheme he and others instigated in the region. “What we started off with was not about seasonal labour but was about social and economic improvement”, he said. “We went to one village in Vanuatu and asked what is it that your village needs?”

Under the business umbrella of ‘Seasonal Solutions’ workers from Vanuatu undertook seasonal work in New Zealand as well as being trained in basic building and mechanical skills that they then could apply in their own villages. “We saw it as a different form of New Zealand aid”, Geddes said.

Geddes says he and his colleagues gave their intellectual property to the Department of Labour from which the Registered Seasonal Employment Scheme was born. “They [Department of Labour] dropped a number of our original principles which we weren’t happy about. We need to return to and re-establish those original principles of philanthropy around social and economic improvement”, he felt.

In Dunedin, the council’s Economic Development Unit is taking proactive steps to assist employers recruit, settle and retain migrant labour. “Settle My Staff” is a website established by the Unit and is dedicated to providing assistance with migrant employment issues in the city.

All commentators we spoke to saw the need for better “immigration and visa processes” to help the situation for migrant workers.

## Ageing demographic

Otago like the rest of New Zealand has an ageing demographic that will have a significant impact on the labour market. “This is a ticking time bomb”, economic development officers told us.

Succession planning work in the region has been undertaken by a partnership of economic development bodies as a vanguard to impending future problems. “It is about what is good for business”, one expert said.

The programme works mostly with those who are looking at a three to five year timeframe before exiting their businesses. “Anyone looking to exit earlier is probably cutting things fine”, the programme’s Advisor said. “I assist people develop good processes to prepare their businesses for sale and strongly advocate the use of professional expertise to help maximise value at the time of sale. Positive motivation is essential, so I also concentrate on getting the psychological and emotional barriers to succession planning sorted. Unlocking with that key makes a real difference”.

## Succession Planning

Beyond Business Succession Planning Service is a joint venture between key Dunedin business advisory professionals (accountants and lawyers), the Economic Development Unit of the Dunedin City Council and the Otago Chamber of Commerce. It aims to maximise the economic impact of business succession and retain maximum value in businesses where key owners/managers are considering exiting.

Many business owners procrastinate when it comes to Succession Planning according to programme literature and are unable to confidently answer basic questions such as:

Do you know when and how you want to exit your business?

Are you getting on well with the putting in place of a succession planning process that will make the most of your business for you and your family down the track?

Do you know what you will do when you move on from your business?

Do you know how to identify and engage with the quality of succession planning expertise that will most benefit you and your family when the time comes?

Beyond Business provides an impartial mentoring service to help business owners overcome the “personal procrastination barriers” that delay the development of their succession planning with professional business advisors. The Otago Chamber of Commerce administers the service.

Beyond Business is currently working with around 70 active clients, of which around 20% will look to exit their businesses in the next two years. “The feedback I have received from people using the service has been uniformly positive”, we were told by the Manager of the programme.

Workforce data of one major employer in the Meat Processing industry showed a deficit of younger workers between the ages of 25 and 50, and a proportional increase of older workers. “There is a definite blip in the 50 to 60 year bracket”, we were told.

In seasonal work there was an increase in “Grey Nomads”, older travellers typically in campervans, seeking employment though numbers were not significant.

## Leadership

Organisations where good leadership is evident demonstrate closer more collegial ties we were told. A large employer we visited, “Has a strong culture of trust between management and staff”, workers said.

One Manager we met was extremely mindful to provide good leadership. “Managing staff and building an environment that allows them to work better is vital. Keeping the communication lines open leads to a more collegial approach”, she said.

Fairness was also a feature of good management. “People work hard and long and I try to give them every hour back that they work over and beyond what they should be doing”, one Manager told us.

Engineering staff at one site felt the need for better communication with senior management. “Greater discussion between employees and management is required. Decisions are being pushed down the line without any consultation which only frustrates staff”.

At another remote worksite staff felt insulted at the edicts handed down from corporate head office hundreds of kilometres away. “They’re [Head Office] eroding the social aspect of the workplace”, we were told. “We’re not allowed Friday drinks anymore which is a real shame because it helps build cohesion.”

One large employer in Dunedin is up-skilling its supervisors and managers to get seasonal workers developing and working towards mutually agreed goals. With seasonal workers making up some 6000 of its employees, and 21 processing plants spread around the country, business objectives were not being effectively conveyed to frontline staff. Communication, the company decided was the problem.

Building on the success of its performance development programme for permanent staff, the company trained all supervisory staff in coaching, and then invited every process worker to a one-on-one meeting with his or her direct supervisor. These meetings have now become a regular event where supervisor and process worker discuss expectations for the season, decide on personal, team and company targets and crucially underline the importance of the employee's roles on achieving such targets.

According to the Manager responsible for the initiative, "This has done much to improve worker engagement and foster team spirit at all processing plants. With good communication you get people working more closely together and that brings business improvements".

## Health and Safety

Pre-employment and on-the-job drug testing was a feature of one workplace we visited in the processing industry. The use of drug dogs and testing, particularly after worksite accidents was par for course. "Our workers have knives so you can't have the use of marijuana or P or anything else as toxic as that being used on site", management said.

Workers at another remote site in Central Otago felt offended when their employer unilaterally introduced drug and alcohol testing and counselling. "I can understand why we do it, it's about health and safety – but the way it's been introduced is not very good", one long time employee said. "We're made to feel a little like we're criminals", a colleague added.

## Recommendations

Employment packs including 'Knowing your Rights' should be made available as early as possible to working holiday visitors.