



MEDIA RELEASE

17 August 2010

WORK EXPERIENCE SCHEME A HAWKE'S BAY FIRST

A new initiative is offering a "leg-up" to Hawke's Bay people looking for work, giving them on-the-job experience while working towards a national qualification.

EIT Hawke's Bay, Work and Income and the Hastings District Council have teamed up to create the *Smart Start* scheme, and Hastings businesses are providing work experience for those taking part.

Hastings Mayor Lawrence Yule says participants are being placed in a business, at no cost to the owner, for four days a week and spend the fifth day studying towards a national qualification.

Work and Income and Council are coordinating employment placements, including interviewing of job-seekers to ensure the best possible match. A wide range of businesses will be involved through council employer networks, with the Hawke's Bay Chamber of Commerce endorsing the initiative.

"This scheme is not only a great way to give our unemployed new skills but offers exciting opportunities to local business. In some cases it will give a helping hand to businesses still shaking off the last effects of the recession," Mayor Yule says.

Prior to Christmas, two programmes of up to 20 participants each are being run for Hastings and Flaxmere job-seekers in receipt of either Unemployment, Sickness or a Domestic Purpose benefit.

Eighteen job-seekers have started the first *Smart Start* programme and the scheme may be extended and rolled out to other areas if it proves successful. Placements into full-time or part-time work will be key success factors.

Each intake begins with a three-day induction at EIT's Hastings and Flaxmere Learning Centres. Participants are offered various work experiences in tandem with mentoring and coaching classes run by EIT.

EIT Hawke's Bay's business relationship manager Paul Hursthouse says while offering a range of work experiences, *Smart Start* also identifies the need for targeted learning resources.

“EIT assists those taking part in work experiences by providing wrap-around mentoring support and coaching,” Mr Hursthouse says.

Businesses taking part are not required to pay participants as they are eligible to stay on existing benefits while doing the programme.

Work and Income Regional Director Annie Aranui says it’s great to see three agencies working so well together to come up with a concept like *Smart Start*.

“Ultimately we are all working toward the same goal; to help people gain new skills and experience so they can be successful in the workforce. *Smart Start* has some really exciting prospects,” Mrs Aranui says.

To get involved in *Smart Start* please contact Hastings District Council’s Economic Development Manager, Anne Rocard on ph. 871 5000.

For more information:

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