

## Mayoral Task Force for Jobs

*Digest of the address by Dale Williams, Mayor of Otorohanga, at Motueka Top 10 Holiday Park conference room, July 18 2013.*

Some of you may have heard second or third hand about my community and the journey we've been on for the last while so I'm going to share some of that with you, because it's a great story and it's quite relevant and topical. Then I want to talk to you a little bit towards the end about some of the context around why this conversation seems to be really gathering momentum, and some of the options that are going to be available to you in the near future.

I'm a motor cycle mechanic. I was terrible at school. I didn't pass anything. I still haven't got Level 2, and I know that would make me 'at risk' today, but I've powered through it; I'm okay with myself. I left school as quickly as I could because I didn't understand the classrooms, I just wanted to be a tradesman, a repairer. So half way through the sixth form I wanted to leave and they wanted me to leave so we shook hands and I bailed and left town, served an apprenticeship, graduated and opened my first dealership when I was 23. I went on and owned a number of businesses and did really well.

The reason I tell you that is because I started business I started really young and started employing people from day one, everybody I employed was a carbon copy of me. They were boys, they were rascals, they failed at school, but they were gifted with their hands. And because I was trying to grow an empire I had to learn an awful lot about understanding how boys work, because I was sending them out unsupervised around the country to fix motorcycles, and I had to understand what made them tick, so they would grow my business and not destroy it.

I had other life experiences like I fostered children for CYFS for a number of years. And I like young people; they inspire me, quite frankly.

Then I got involved in the council. I've been on the council for 18 years and been mayor for nine – just accidentally but it's a great role. My rohe, Otorohanga or Oto as we call it, is a district just south of Hamilton, population about 10,000. The main village is 2,700, with 300 others at Kawhia. We have one high school, about 400 on the roll, 50 per cent Maori.

And we have a number of really significant employers, such as Freightlines with 310 trucks, the Barker family which has been in Oto for 50 years, a huge finger-jointing factory which has been there for 80 years and four generations, the Giltrap Group that make farm equipment and export internationally, been there 54 years. Six businesses employ over 1000 people.

It's important because, regardless of the economy, every business has about a 5% churn every year, so there's about 50 jobs that turn up in those businesses alone.

Rewind back to 2004 and three things happened really quickly that began this for me. I became the mayor in October. I was so thrilled and proud. But it was only great for about a week because I had a number of those big employers come to visit me and say, well done, but in passing some of them happened to let slip that they were actually planning to relocate their businesses because we can't get staff. It was the start of a really busy skill-shortage period from about '02 to '08.

Then in the first week in December of '04 two of our 17-year-old boys took their own lives in town. In a community of 2,700 people. You can imagine: the community just exploded in grief. And everyone turned to the new mayor and said, what's going on?

I did what all good mayors do and called a meeting, and hundreds of people came. It was two weeks before Christmas and everybody was freaked out. And that included lots of young people. And when the spotlight went to them and asked what was going on, they said the Otorohanga sucks, and that if they couldn't escape when they left school they were doomed. And I've never forgotten that, because it's the worst possible thing I've ever heard. They're my babies, born and raised in my community, who truly believed that the community couldn't deliver.

But most importantly, what amazed me was how come in a community this big where everyone knows each other, how do you get six employers over here with 80-year histories believing there's no possible future employees, and over here 400 children at our high school truly believing there were no jobs? That's a community one-third the size of Motueka's! That's nuts! But that's what we had.

So I decided it was my job to ask the questions. I wandered down to the high school and met the principal. It turned out he wasn't not connected with the community. He lived elsewhere and commuted to the job, didn't know anything about our employers or much about the community. It was just a job. I asked what happened when our kids started talking about careers and he said they went to see the careers advisor.

So I went to visit him and found that he'd been at the school for 22 years but didn't know a single employer, and he didn't have a connection with any student. He even told me in conversation that he didn't like young people. I thought, that's tragic but surely it's unique. But the Ministry tells me that there's less than 20 fully qualified careers advisors in 280 high schools in New Zealand.

As an aside, my wife's a deputy principal at our school, and I get educators. I wouldn't have their job for quids. This is not a blame game. But I think that a careers advisor job is too big for one person appointed in a school, who is usually a teacher. We're all careers advisors; we should be encouraging our kids to do what inspires them, not what satisfies us.

Then I found that in the Careers section of the library, every piece of literature available for young people to make a career choice on was academia – university, polytech, further education. Nothing about jobs. There was no pre-employment or pre-apprenticeship training available locally for young people – if they wanted it, they had to leave town to get it. And I found that most weren't coming back.

There was no transitional support available to young people. Back then, the Ministry of Education had a legal responsibility for the young people up to 16, then the Welfare Department could have a conversation with them after 18, but barring certain circumstances from 16 to 18, unless you had family support, you were pretty much on your own. And that was quite obvious, walking around our community. And I remember thinking – the kids were right, this place really did suck. We had nothing to offer kids in terms of supports.

So what to do? Three of us – me, a local businessman and a local educator – got together and decided to dream up what we called a "community ownership model". We reckoned we owned the

risk of our kids not transitioning correctly; we thought we'd apply some logic to it and develop some local solutions. One of the things I've learnt through all of this is that nothing created in Wellington works in my community. There it is. And I've spent a lot of time in Wellington these past six years in my role, and the reality is that in Wellington everything's created a one-size-fits-all to deliver around an average community, of which there are none. So everything that's delivered to my community has to be modified, and it's easier to create stuff.

The other thing we decided to do was based on what employers told us at the time that they were really frustrated with the model where education had first crack at kids. In other words, primary school, secondary, tertiary would weave their magic, and out the bottom would drop a fully educated product that in theory would fall straight in the lap of an employer at the same standard as their entry level. And employers told us consistently that isn't true. They're well educated but not work ready. And employers said we're so sick of trying to apply our own time and energy and money to re-educate someone who's supposed to be educated, and we just can't do it.

So we decided we'd flip the whole model on its ear, start with the job and work backwards. That's where it began. We went to the school and convinced the principal to replace the careers advisor with someone who did like kids. And we got our employers together and got resources off them to develop a series of employment brochures, point of sales material to put in front of kids alongside the tertiary stuff.

We learnt really early on that marketing to young people is selling the sizzle, not the sausage. Those brochures don't talk about it's a four-year apprenticeship, the wages are low and it's really hard work and hopefully something improves at the end of it. No, we tell the truth – if you become trades qualified in New Zealand you can travel the world because everybody wants you, which is true. We just say you'll make lots of money to get girls, and that's all they need to know – what else is there at that stage? But we also talk about how cool it is to live locally and remind them of all the advantages of their community.

Then we found that the school was putting the kids on a bus once a year to go to regional careers expos, with five times as many unis and polytechs and fewer employers, so we established a careers expo protocol before the regionals, and there's three simple principles. (1) No outside employers, only our local people, so all the builders get together and create one really cool stand and they work together. (2) No boring stuff, no Powerpoints, no lectures, it's tools, so the kids could smell and touch. (3) Nobody over 30 on the stand. Employers put their apprentices and trainees on the stand to talk to other kids about why they do what they do.

Then we developed a school leaver connections programme, where we employ a lady based at our youth centre, and she's developed a database, which she maintains, of every agency, employer and provider, everybody who has or claims an interest in young people in the community. And it's extensive, as you might imagine. So that's our resource of expertise.

We developed an accord with the Waikato Institute of Technology (Wintech). And that was hard. Nine years ago it was against the law for schools to share leaver details with anyone other than educators. What a nonsense! After some big arguments with the Ministry we found a way through it. So the school sends leaver details to Carol (our co-ordinator) and she makes contact within 14 days, because time is important at that stage. And she asks a simple question: what now for you?

For those who have sorted out their next steps, she contacts twice a year until they're 20 and checks progress, makes sure they know that we care about them, they're our babies. And it works because while these days such programmes are targeted at at-risk kids, ours are targeted at all kids, and some of our best successes are kids that wouldn't have appeared on any at-risk lists.



But the youngsters who don't know what they're doing she connects every 14 days for ever, until they're ready to engage. That might be 20 times she gets pushed back and the 21<sup>st</sup> time it's, oh cool, I've been waiting for your call, now I'm ready to go. For some of these kids it's their first regular reliable contact with an adult. And the value of that service is it's not connected to the police, or school, or family, or anything else that the young person may have already had an experience with, good or bad. It's completely community owned.

Also we set up a trades centre. We invited Wintech to set up local training in Otorohanga. We said we want local training here. They said we've just finished a major facility in Hamilton, we'll put on a bus for your kids, and we said no, we're not exporting our children. So we had to get a building and a tutor and a whole lot of stuff and we got there in the end.



And then they said, here are the courses that we teach at our other outlets, and which ones do you want us to teach at Ototohanga? We thought these courses would mean little to our kids. We'd read all the material and it seemed to us that academics had written the courses to be taught by teachers, and yet these were trade subjects. It seemed to us that employers weren't in the room when they were written. And we thought, if a young person's going to take a year out of their life and money out of their pocket and gain qualifications, they have high expectations it will take them somewhere.

Wintech said to us, that's how we do it, you can take it or leave it. And we said, we're not taking it, but we're not leaving it either, so we'll think of something else.

So we got our employers together, bribed them with a beer, downloaded the qualifications framework, spread it out amongst the trestles, gave them pens and asked them to tell us what skills kids needed to get jobs with you. And they all said the same stuff. They wanted work-readiness, work ethic, time management, tool identification, first aid, computer literacy, literacy and numeracy, drivers licence and so on. So all the courses were established that way, set up by the Employer Partnership Group.

And it was a two-way partnership. The employers had to provide the on-site training, and most important there had to be job guarantees attached. You must employ every graduate or stop training them. And that's where we got a bit of push-back, with some employers saying we get what you mean but we stopped hiring young people years ago, they're too much trouble, they don't work, lost their work ethic.

So we established mentors called 'camp mothers' – that's what we call them, and this is how it works. Every employer who hires a young person on an apprenticeship or training agreement in my community is provided free of charge a community-owned camp mother to manage that relationship in and out of the workplace for as long as it takes. The stats after nine years show that the average time is between four and seven months, which I don't think is a long time in the life of a person or a business. It's not setting them up for dependency – the kids don't want to have their hand held. But a workplace is a scary place, and these kids have never done work experience, never had a dad to work beside in the shed, never experienced the culture of a workplace, so it's impossible that they would be able to handle it on day one.

So our camp mother – actually a retired man – has 65 apprentices of all backgrounds on his books at the moment. His job is not to know everything, it's to connect them and be their mate. If they need counselling or budget advice he connects them through our transition people to provide that support. He runs weekly night classes, on a different philosophy to Wintech. Wintech runs a night class from 4 to 6pm, very regimented, no food, no cellphones, no talking; it's a classroom. Ray's runs from 3 till 9pm, they're asked to bring their food and their phones and iPads; they're not prisoners. So what happens is they help each other.

Across Aotearoa across all trades the average completion rate for apprentices is 35%. And for farming, forestry and fishing it's less than 10%. With Rays' help, 96% of all Otorohanga apprentices complete successfully on time. Some years it's 100%.

Now we have 12 programmes running, run in partnership with schools and ITOs, employers, churches and community groups – none of them involving the council.

And here's the results so far. We haven't had any youth unemployment now since 2006, and it's not expected to change. There are very high expectations now and the community demands that there is none. Stable, profitable businesses. No graffiti. When I started in council in 1995 we had a budget to clean graffiti and fix vandalism, and that's long gone. We never lined the kids up and said stop doing it; they just had more important things to do.

## Results So Far...

- Single figure registered unemployment for under 25 year olds since November 2006..... consistently **lowest** in NZ!
- Stable, **profitable** local businesses with access to work ready, well prepared and community supported young people!
- Tidy vibrant community – minimal graffiti, vandalism, crime!
- No problems from disconnected, frustrated, unemployed and under-appreciated young people!

This is youth crime stats. Some of these things take a long time to measure, but these are stats that we can measure. In '05 half of our resolved crimes were by kids and that dropped 75% in two years. Again, we didn't say 'stop', we just gave them something better to do.

## Crime Stats...

- In 2005 before the Youth Programmes began, one in two (48%) of all resolved crimes involved an under 25 year old!
- Within 2 years of the Youth Programmes operating, this reduced by **75%**
- Currently, less than one in five (19%) of resolved crimes in Otorohanga involve an under 25 year old!

And to those who say yeah but this is all social and security blanket stuff and warm cuddles, well it's actually economic as well, because all we've ever done is try to make our employers more attractive to our kids and make our kids more attractive to our employers.

When there *are* jobs, kids work. I haven't met a young person yet that doesn't want to work. I've met quite a few who don't know what work is, but that's different. I haven't met one that doesn't want the mana of earning their own money and supporting their whanau.

I chair the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs , which is all the mayors in Aotearoa who have committed to our kaupapa: 'Zero waste of youth', and the vision: That all young people under the age of 25 should be engaged in appropriate education, training, work or positive activities in their communities'. So your mayors are members, and all the information or resources you want to connect to are freely available to you through them.

We currently have 53% of mayors following what we call a Youth to Work strategy. For a long time we've been going to communities and chatting with them, and most communities eventually come back to me and say, it sounds really great Dale and we get all that, but what does it look like? What would we apply in our community that would get results like you? So I came up with this one-pager, and basically you can apply that to any community and you'll get results. These are the seven principles (also in the diagram below):

1. Community Ownership and Leadership involving employers, schools, young adults, training providers, agencies and iwi.
  1. Identify employer staffing requirements and employment opportunities for young people by developing relationships with employers.
  2. Connect with and support school leavers and young unemployed people by building relationships with young people, secondary schools and youth providers.
  3. Facilitate the education and training of youth to meet the needs of employers by coordinating activities with schools and training providers.
  4. Employers provide employment opportunities and pathways, through providing work experience, gateway opportunities, full/part-time employment, apprenticeships, cadetships.
  5. Community supports youth employees and employers by developing apprenticeships and training, pastoral and study support, mentors, employer incentives.
  6. Community celebrates youth and employer achievements by establishing graduation ceremonies, awards, scholarships, business awards.

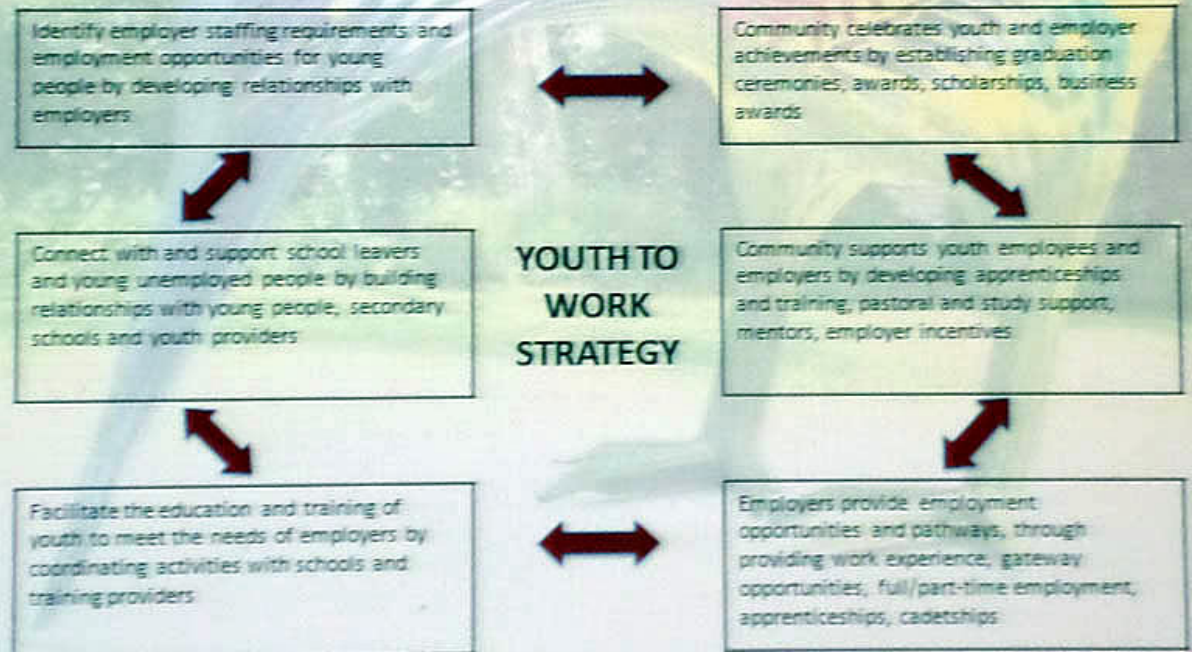
It's not easy, but it works. It means communities working together towards a common goal. Everybody's doing their best, within their own institutional goals. The community goal is pretty much the same but slightly extended. If you want the perfect result in your community then it involves a little extension at critical times.

## MAYORS TASKFORCE FOR JOBS YOUTH GOAL

"That all young people under 25 be engaged in appropriate education, training, work or positive activities in their communities"

### COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP

**Employers    Schools    Young Adults    Training Providers    Agencies    Iwi**



Principal Youth Court Judge Andrew Becroft said "If you cut through the b-s, the answer to youth crime and frustration is employment ..... when a young person has a job they have three things: routine, self esteem and Income. And when you have them all in your life at the same time, you're going to be okay!"