

### MESSAGE FROM THE RSLG CO-CHAIRS

The Waikato RSLG has elected to place significant weight on achievement through building strong relationships and partnerships. By doing this we can better work to ensure our region shares prosperity equitably among all our communities by facilitating the development of stronger and more resilient workforce pipelines. Since launching the plan back in July, we have focussed on co-ordinating regional efforts collectively making a larger overall impact than we could as individual actors. While this update does not provide consideration of all our actions, it will hopefully provide a sense of what our mahi around regional workforce co-ordination and influence has yielded so far. Broadly, this is in terms of developing a Futures Academy (a platform to support communities to build skills that reflect current and future needs for the farming, horticulture, aquaculture and other sectors), Construction and Infrastructure (taking a collaborative approach, the sector will be enabled to develop people capacity across all levels of the industry), and Rangatahi (development of capable, confident young people is essential for economic prosperity in the region). We will continue to engage with our communities and industry with an eye on the region's future forging on with the advancement of our regional workforce plan.

### PROGRESS ON ACTIONS FROM THE REGIONAL WORKFORCE PLAN

The [Waikato Regional Workforce Plan](#) sets out the actions for the RSLG. This update covers the actions that are the Group's current focus.

ACTIONS	KEY MILESTONE	ANTICIPATED OUTCOME
<p><b>Primary Industries:</b> Establish the 'Waikato Futures Academy' that supports both current and future skills need, of the primary industries and added value manufacturing sectors, including Agritech, Biotech, Agribusiness, Environmental and Future Foods capabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaboration work discussions of a Futures Academy are underway – serving Dairy, Beef-Lamb, Aquaculture and Horticulture. In the first instance engagement with key stakeholders to be held on how best to tackle workforce skill challenges in the short, medium and long term ultimately building an education identity for the region (with a technology component to it) where people can go to gain skills desired by the Primary and other sectors (e.g., Manufacturing).</li> <li>Starting with Dairy, the Group is confident that many of the relevant skills programmes (practical and more formal) across the region already exist and that co-ordination, enabling relationships, connections and communication are key to pulling the sector pipeline together through schools (a "taster" across the region on farm and how it relates to the classroom, science, and other associated subjects. There is no follow on from that in schools with an example of how it might work in Dairy) into the Primary sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The approach focusing on education would offer a structured programme (including a pilot) at scale for the region, enabling schools to partner with employers rather than individual schools trying to connect with individual employers. Further, those schools with significant capability/capacity issues to partner would miss out on implementing a new way of teaching in line with community/industry desires. This work could pathway into a Futures Academy.</li> <li>RSLG will be engaging with Te Pukenga and Muka Tangata to shape a workforce planning approach. This will be an activator for projects such as the Futures Academy (currently at the information gathering stage) synthesizing meaningful planning between communities/industry and the requirements set down by learning standards including for those who may wish to transfer between sectors.</li> <li>The intention is to build a unified skills system in the Waikato. To this end, a detailed definition of what a Futures Academy is, will be arrived at by April 2023 along with next steps including financial implications in the development of an Academy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Construction and Infrastructure:</b> Develop broader professional standards for the industry that build capability and capacity and support a career in construction.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with industry partners to identify critical skills (e.g., literacy and numeracy); skills in contracts, risk and business management; and life skills and make sure the Waihanga Ara Rau micro-credential programme aligns with real sector needs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Group is engaging with industry and schools to gain a clearer "picture" of workforce needs across the Waikato as they relate to Construction and Infrastructure and in particular to understand what appears to be arising out of the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Labour market competition:</b> This requires scrutiny of whether investment policies held by firms are aimed at attracting talent/retain skills – including knowledge that can be passed on by older to younger employees – and if this is not the case then the reasons why this is not so.</li> <li><b>Communications strategy with schools:</b> Does industry need to become more contextualised in the education system? If so, how would this be achieved? This revolves around what schools are doing to make the C&amp;I industry more visible and interesting enough for students to want to pursue it as a pathway to employment.</li> <li><b>Support for businesses:</b> Medium sized firms in C&amp;I appear to be trading off apprenticeships and training schemes in favour of meeting client demands for increased efficiency and productivity. This is because they do not have the capacity and sometimes foresight to realise concurrent skills development and output continuities.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The crux of this work is to understand the workforce skills gap in the Waikato C&amp;I sector to help develop a clear problem definition along with suggested solutions.</li> <li>There will likely be work with Waihanga Ara Rau to ensure that any micro-credential programme that is developed aligns with C&amp;I sector needs when applied regionally.</li> <li>Removal of any barriers in relation to workforce participation in C&amp;I will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attract and retain staff through skills development building resilience and future ready workers in C&amp;I.</li> <li>Facilitate changes in the mindsets of students such that they can see themselves in C&amp;I ensuring a strong school to industry worker pipeline.</li> <li>Enable workforce participation and skills transition making workplace learning function better especially within small to medium sized businesses or within clusters of these businesses primarily achieved by leveraging relationships with companies who have successful recruitment/training/skills development programmes for guidance.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Rangatahi:</b> Expand on existing mentoring programmes that support young people entering education, training, or work</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RSLG has collaborated with MSD, Youth Training and Employment, and the Ministry of Education to research and create a stocktake of high performing Waikato-based providers who offer education to training/employment transition support services for youth across the region. Feedback from employers indicated a need for more young employees to develop 'work-ready' skills and there appeared to be duplication and fragmentation of support services offered in the Waikato. The stocktake/research showed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the current provision of services did not match geographical need and were heavily focused in the city centre</li> <li>work-ready support made up the largest proportion of support services</li> </ul> </li> <li>Therefore, services were least accessible to the people who needed them the most (e.g., Māori and young people), often leading to rural communities creating their own place-based services, to accommodate the needs of young people and their whānau.</li> <li>The stocktake was geared towards completing the workforce "picture" across the region to understand how the current support provision is impacting education, training and employment outcomes as these relate to rangatahi.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After much consultation with stakeholders in the youth support space, the stocktake and research identified the need to work towards: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing visibility and connectivity of current support services – helping rangatahi to find the support they need facilitating transition into higher education, training and employment</li> <li>Optimising provision of services – to help prioritise resources and industry connections for areas and groups with high need and identifying what is required for current support provision to make services more accessible, relevant and impactful for rangatahi</li> </ul> </li> <li>Addressing these gaps will lead to improvement in the quality and impact of the education to employment support services provision for youth in the Waikato.</li> </ul>

### 6 MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

#### Digital Technology

A Local Insights Report on Digital Technology was completed this month. The demand for tech skills in the Waikato will continue to grow as the region's primary sector automates in robotics and Artificial Intelligence and with the emergence of innovative tech start-ups such as Waikato Milking Systems, Agrismart, Modusense and Farmgate. The region has enough graduates in the tech sector but is short of skilled workers (including at the migrant level) with more senior skills (e.g., experienced software engineers and ICT management roles). Further, tertiary tech-related qualifications offered across the region do not cover enough practical application learning to meet industry expectations concerning overall skill set requirements. All of this is in line with the considerations of the "futurist" the Group brought on to help identify how the application of technology will transform the Waikato economy. These were in areas including climate, logistics, food, and rising inequality. The insights will be used to inform future recommendations and relevant actions under the RWP.

#### Manufacturing and Infrastructure

Te Pae o Waimihia Charitable Trust, through the He Ahi Limited Partnership will develop an industrial park with geothermal process heat options in Taupō, Waikato (He Ahi). The RWP identifies manufacturing as a key contributor to the economy and is a priority sector as it contributes considerably to employment and GDP to the regions, including Waikato. The RSLG aims to provide training and employment opportunities to retain young workers in specialised roles and assist the Waikato workforce in adapting to climate change. Businesses based at He Ahi would create training and employment opportunities in manufacturing with geothermal process heat, helping people in Waikato build up skills and capability beneficial for the transition to a low-emission economy.

### LOOKING FORWARD TO 2023

Regional Workforce Plan focus areas for the first quarter of 2023: January – RWP Consideration and 2023 planning. February – Construction and Infrastructure. March – Freight and Logistics, Manufacturing and Engineering.

During the time of writing the RWP and developing the actions, many hapū and iwi were engaged in frontline COVID response across the region. The Group acknowledges that it was not able to adequately consult with iwi on these actions. The RSLG also acknowledges the tino rangatiratanga and mana motuhake of whānau, hapū, iwi and Māori communities in the region, their skills and workforce aspirations and existing plans. In the new year, the RSLG will look to actively support them.