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To: Future of Work Forum participants
From: Rachel Simpson
Date: 5 November 2021
Subject: Māori and the Future of Work

Purpose

This note provides a starting point for ongoing discussion on utilising the Forum to achieve better education and employment outcomes for Māori in the Future of Work.

Comment

The insights provided in the accompanying officials briefing identify a number of education, economic and labour market indicators highlighting the persistent disparities in Māori outcomes. With unemployment currently at very low levels, it is not the availability of jobs that is a barrier to Māori succeeding in the workforce.

Employment outcomes are often the cumulative effect of broader systemic failings, and for Māori, there are significant disparities in other social indicators that are known to lead to poorer employment outcomes later in life – disproportionately high rates of tamariki in state care, high rates of early interactions of rangatahi with the justice system and lower rates of educational achievements all flow through to poorer education and employment outcomes.

While gains have been made, such as increasing NCEA achievement rates, this is against a backdrop of Aotearoa New Zealand more broadly slipping down international indicators such as PISA on educational achievement in key foundation areas needed for the future workforce, namely literacy, numeracy, science and digital skills.

There are significant opportunities however to grow the economic prosperity of Māori and the inherent strengths of Māori to participate in the global economy are clear. Connectivity is critical, both in terms of leveraging Māori networks and increasing global knowledge transfer.

Much of the Forum to date has focussed on those most vulnerable to economic shocks and the subsequent labour market impacts, with many that will be affected by changes to industry through Government initiatives like the Emissions Reduction Plan already in the labour market. In line with the principles of *Whano*, exploring Te wā mua (past), Te wā tu (present) and Te wā heke (future), BusinessNZ is mindful that the policy actions arising from the Future of Work Forum should not recreate past economic drivers that resulted in Māori urban migration; that we do not recreate current economic drivers that has seen approximately 20% of Māori migrate to Australia, and that we utilise lessons arising from Covid such as the effectiveness of the Māori health vaccination response. Te wā heke can be shaped by constructive relationships and new approaches which the Future of Work Forum can explore. Māori business and workers are critical to the long term prosperity of Aotearoa New Zealand.

A key theme of both the Māori strategies noted in the background papers and discussions with stakeholders has been skills. For the purposes of stimulating discussion, BusinessNZ has utilised Sir Mason Durie's *Te Whare Tapa Whā* model to pose some leading questions on whether the Forum's policy priorities are adequate to ensure that Māori succeed in education and employment.

Recommendations

BusinessNZ agrees that clear actions are needed to progress the discussion and suggests that:

- A Māori sub-group needs a clear scope and mandate, to avoid duplication of other work programmes. BusinessNZ notes that there is great opportunity in the 21 entities established in 2021 with iwi co-chair governance (Regional Skills Leadership Groups and Workforce Development Councils) and suggests that consideration is given to how to ensure their mahi is actively utilised in the Future of Work Forum. These entities are part of the Government's Reform of Vocational Education with mandates and associated funding and levers to develop long-term workforce development planning and skill system responsiveness.
- If the sub-group is established, their scope is expanded further than the Māori Employment Action Plan to provide guidance on all significant Future of Work Forum policy directives. This could encapsulate items like Social Unemployment Insurance and Active Labour Market Policies to ensure that policy mechanisms, delivery methods and connectivity to business and workers will meet the needs of Māori.
- The Future of Work Forum is reconstituted to specifically include Māori representation.
- In addition to a view of mahi tūturu, policy programmes are developed which support growing Māori enterprise. This could include items like (but not limited to) ongoing policy development to remove regulatory barriers for Māori business.
- A rapid deep dive is undertaken on how the Government's social procurement strategy has been implemented since being announced in 2020, including both open and exceptional procurement (not gone to open market) and whether it is delivering as intended. This is particularly pertinent given the significant stimulus and investment through the Covid Relief Fund.

