



Watercare Services Limited

TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE FINALIST



THE STORY

With 1.7 million Aucklanders depending on Watercare Services Ltd to provide their water, the organisation needs trained and capable people to maintain its assets.

But that's not always easy in an industry that is facing significant shortages for trade skills and an ageing workforce.

Watercare owns and manages \$10 billion worth of assets, including its water and wastewater infrastructure such as plants, pipes and reservoirs. It's critical that those assets function reliably, and that there are trained and capable people to carry out their maintenance, which is why Watercare developed an apprenticeship programme.

People and Capability Systems Administrator Larisa Kamysheva says, "By developing people on the job, we are building capability and resilience that we can use to continue doing what we do as a lifeline utility, as well as offering that talent to the wider industry."

Watercare's maintenance function has two aspects; the maintenance of large assets (treatment plants, reservoirs, transmission lines and pump stations) and the maintenance of the service network, comprising of tens of thousands of kilometres of pipes and fixing leaks and clearing up blockages on the network. The team maintaining the big assets (Maintenance Services Operations or MSO) and the team maintaining the service network (Maintenance Services Networks or MSN) employ close to 100 people each. They each have their own apprenticeship programme, fully funded by Watercare and based on NZQA standards.

Chief Customer Officer Amanda Singleton and Chief Operations Officer Shane Morgan are both champions of the programme and support and expect their MSN and MSO teams to continually up-skill and enrol in training courses.

Training is an important part of MSN field crew's career development and core key performance indicators. Everyone in the team is expected to complete a minimum of Level 2 - NZ Certificate Infrastructure Works qualification and there is a support structure in place to ensure learning happens proactively.

Watercare's award-winning training centre at Māngere, complete with a live water reticulation network, mini wastewater network, a residential façade and typical streetscape, was set up to facilitate a proper learning environment. There is also a smaller training and study room at the MSN warehouse in Penrose. Trainers in the team make themselves available for extra tuition and catch-up sessions for those who have fallen behind or are struggling with some of the course content.

Richie Rameka is an example of the success of the apprenticeship initiative. He started in 2014 as a reactive water supervisor with no qualifications. He then went onto complete level 2, level 3 and level 4 qualifications in water utility maintenance. Earlier this year, he was promoted to head MSN's field operations.

In just a short time at Watercare, Mike Grindlay has achieved two national certifications, a Level 4 - NZ Certificate in Utilities Water Maintenance and most recently become a registered assessor for Connexis. He will be trade-certified later this year.

"Being able to do these courses and get these certificates will ensure that I can have a long career in the water industry," says Mike. "Every course I pass makes me want to continue to strive for success and helps me be a better role model for my kids."

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THE CHALLENGE

Watercare was faced with significant shortages for trade skills and an ageing workforce.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Watercare's two maintenance teams (Maintenance Services Operations, MSO, and Maintenance Services Networks, MSN) each have their own apprenticeship programme, fully funded by Watercare and based on NZQA standards. MSN's apprentice programme began in 2015 and is delivered by Connexis (Infrastructure industry training) and MSO's one-year-old programme is administered by Apprentice Training New Zealand (ATNZ) and delivered by Competenz.
- A supportive framework including group workshops and paid training days are part of the course outline
- An award-winning training centre was developed to facilitate a proper learning environment
- The expectation that all new recruits attain a trade certified qualification is discussed during the recruitment programme



RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- MSN's apprenticeship programme has seen 45 qualifications completed with 77 qualifications being worked on
- MSO's programme has two people working towards their three-year qualifications

KEY LEARNING

By developing people on the job, Watercare is building capability and resilience within its business, as well as offering talent to the wider industry.

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AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

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