



Dempsey Wood Civil Limited MĀTAURANGA MĀORI AWARD

MEDIUM-LARGE ORGANISATION HIGHLY COMMENDED



It was no accident that Dempsey Wood Civil Limited chose Waitangi Day to launch a policy to solidify its commitment to Māori and a diverse workforce.

Dempsey Wood is a civil construction company with more than 500 employees working from offices in Auckland and Waikato, a satellite office in Warkworth, and long-term projects in Northland, Manawatū-Whanganui and Lower Hutt.

Its diverse workforce includes more than 39 different ethnicities, with 45.74 per cent identifying as 'New Zealander', either New Zealand Māori or New Zealand Pakeha/European. Currently, 15.7 per cent of the workforce is Māori, higher than the industry average of 12 per cent.

Nurturing that diverse workforce was the intent behind the organisation's Tiriti Policy, launched in February this year. Social Responsibility Manager Sophia Olo-Whaanga says the policy encourages all Dempsey Wood kaimahi and the wider community to embrace and appreciate Aotearoa's cultural diversity. It champions an equitable, inclusive and safe workplace.

"It is about respect, compassion, and engagement, honouring all people while simultaneously acknowledging the unique role of Māori as tangata whenua," she says. "Guided by Article 3 of Te Tiriti o Waitangi, our Tiriti Policy commits Dempsey Wood to act in good faith and set the intention to 'work together on tomorrow.'"

The Tiriti Policy was developed in consultation with several groups within Dempsey Wood, including Manaaki Tangata, its Māori-led and focused support group, senior leaders, and broader staff. It was presented to the workforce through multiple platforms, communicated both onsite and within the offices through toolbox briefings and workshops, and conveyed through email, social media, and quarterly newsletters.

The organisation's learning management system provides an introduction to tikanga, information on engagement with Māori, and learning resources about the policy and how to honour Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

"We hold workshops for our staff on Te Tiriti o Waitangi to ensure that our team understands the importance of upholding the partnership between tangata whenua and tangata tiriti. Critical components of these workshops include understanding how to be a good treaty partner and the consistent development of cultural competency," says Sophia.

In order to support the policy, while also providing genuine advancement for staff, Dempsey Wood recently established Whakapuāwai, a Māori cadetship programme, to grow Māori staff into leadership roles through a te ao Māori and tikanga lens.

There has been significant support for the policy, from employees through to shareholders, with leadership promoting and supporting the initiatives.

Project Manager Richard Bresgi says upskilling in tikanga has positively impacted his professional relationships.

"The skills and knowledge I gained during the tikanga classes proved invaluable with my position here in Whangārei, working closely with tangata whenua on the Summerset site and developing a great working relationship. The recent announcement of our Te Tiriti policy, along with the knowledge gained from the tikanga course, means that I have the company's backing to approach each situation with tikanga in the forefront of my thought process."

Sophia says implementation of the policy has seen kaitiaki appointed on some sites, particularly on Waikato sites, where Dempsey Wood works in partnership with Te Riu o Waikato (TROWL) and Waikato-Tainui.

This feedback was received from Te Ataahau, kaitiaki on Ohinewai, a large scale commercial and residential development project, "The overall attitude of all the people currently working on this site has been positive. The willingness to comply with our requirements as tangata whenua makes working alongside Dempsey Wood so easy. I feel comfortable talking to anyone on this site, regardless of their position or ethnicity. The respect shown for my culture on this site is huge, and I especially love the new signage on the smoko hut, which implements kaitiakitanga and tikanga Māori into every working day. It's great to see tangata whenua working on their ancestral lands, working close to home, providing for their families and returning home safely."

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THE AIM

Through the implementation of a Te Tiriti o Waitangi policy, Dempsey Wood Civil Limited wanted to solidify its commitment to Māori and a diverse workforce, and to provide a foundation to their aspirations and visionary goals as a company.



STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- The Tiriti Policy outlines the organisation's commitment to live out the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi via "the three Ps" – partnership, participation and protection.
- Kaiaronui Isaac Rakena was appointed to help guide, support and challenge Dempsey Wood to implement effective engagement with Māori staff, iwi, hapu, Māori communities and Māori-owned organisations.
- Workshops were held for staff on The Treaty of Waitangi and tikanga.
- Whakapuāwai, a Māori staff development programme, provides Māori employees with the tools to reach the next level of their careers, and increase Māori in leadership roles.
- Tikanga courses were rolled out in partnership with Te Wananga o Aotearoa to enhance cultural competency across all staff

RESULTS AND BENEFITS

- While still in its early days, the feedback from employees and stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive.
- Other organisations have reached out keep to implement similar initiatives.

KEY LEARNING

"With a diverse workforce, subcontractor network and supply chain, we have a responsibility to ensure respect and understanding across cultures. It is an exciting time for Dempsey Wood; this policy is not the end of a process but the next step in our journey," Operations Director Simon Lunjevich.

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