

Tomorrow's Workforce Award Entrant: AccorHotels Academie

Video Link: <https://vimeo.com/141140074>

Building Futures for those seeking new horizons. The hospitality industry with its mentally and physically demanding nature, is an industry that is synonymous with high staff turnover rates. However, it can also offer the right candidate a fulfilling career with many opportunities for training and advancement.

It was this idea that stuck firmly in Caroline Miller's mind when she attended an AccorHotels recruitment presentation at the Mt. Albert Work and Income Centre on the "Building Futures" programme, an initiative that was developed from a partnership between AccorHotels and the Ministry of Social Development.

The programme, led by AccorHotels Academie, the training and development division of AccorHotels, was developed with the goal of creating career opportunities for Kiwi's facing unemployment whilst at the same time generating a pool of highly skilled employees for AccorHotels' talent pipelines.

Despite the fact that she had never worked in the hospitality industry, Caroline Miller could see the opportunity in the programme and weeks later started on the first step in her journey: AccorHotels Academie's Fast Track Pre-Employment Training Programme. She had no idea how far this one decision would take her.

From the moment an employee starts on the Building Futures programme, they are taught the foundations of hospitality and encouraged to use their initiative whilst expanding their hospitality skill set.

It is made up of three "strands" of training programmes and qualifications: 'Fast Track'- a five week pre-employment training period for Front Line positions, 'New Horizons'- a six month qualification programme that is offered to Work & Income recipients which provides intensive support, and the Level 3 National Certificate qualification, available to all employees.

The Building Futures Programme seeks to empower underprivileged minorities, namely Māori and youth participants. While 2014 figures from Statistics New Zealand indicate that the unemployment rate for Māori has fallen, that figure still remains twice as high compared to all other ethnic groups. Since the conception of Building Futures, the programme has trained 73 participants of Māori and Pacific Island descent. Each year the number of trainees increases with life changing results for those who graduate.

Although beneficiaries of all ages can attend the programme, it has been most popular with younger people, with two-thirds of trainees under 30 in the last two financial years.

AccorHotels has pledged to play its part in combating youth unemployment in New Zealand, particularly in the Rotorua and Hamilton regions. There are plans in the works to extend the Building Futures Fast Track programme to the Waikato, with the outcome of generating a sustainable programme with ongoing relationships between the four Accor

hotels in Waikato, in partnership with local Work & Income offices. This is a demonstration of AccorHotels' commitment to supporting younger people into the workforce and assisting them to gain sustainable career options.

The project coordinators have also catered the programme to enable solo parents to get back into the workforce. This is especially important to those who are on benefit support through the Building Futures Programme, solo parents are taught specific skills training that will enable them to take on roles in a part-time capacity such as housekeeping; that functions between the hours of 9am and 3pm. This allows parents the time to meet their family and school commitments.

Furthermore, AccorHotels Academie works with the Ministry of Social Development to ensure that the successful trainees are receiving the support necessary such as travel allowances and uniform allowances so they can arrive on day one without financial limitations.

The programme results speak for themselves: over the last two years, AccorHotels Academie has found that seventy per cent of the trainees are no longer receiving benefits.

Building Futures Alumni are found throughout AccorHotels with graduates making up almost 13% of total staff in New Zealand. Many of the graduates have continued to upskill and are taking on more responsibility in the organisation.

Caroline Miller is a prime example of that: 18 months after coming through the Fast Track programme and being employed at Pullman Auckland, Caroline Miller went on to represent New Zealand at the 2014 International AccorHotels Professions Challenge in the 18 - 25 year old, food and beverage section held in Paris, France. The challenge was to greet guests, explain the menu, recommend wines from their own country, and then serve it. Caroline was the only non-European country winner which makes her achievement even more outstanding. This win capped off a fantastic year for her, as she was also Barista of the Year in 2014!

Caroline is proof that by offering trainees the chance to gain meaningful skills, employment, and purpose, the Building Futures Programme really can change people's lives for the better.