

## Young participants find Licence to Work powerful

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EMOTIONS were worn on sleeves at the recent Licence to Work graduation, as 38 young participants celebrated completing a programme designed to get them work-ready.

Speaking after last week's graduation ceremony of Activate Tairāwhiti's Licence to Work programme, Activate Tairāwhiti chief executive Steve Breen said the emotions shown by graduates and family members showed how powerful the programme was.

"When the team first encountered this programme in Hawke's Bay last year, they knew it would have an impact in our region."

The programme, which is run as part of Activate Tairāwhiti's Youth Employment Strategy, is designed to improve employability skills that enable participants to get and keep a job — entering the workforce with confidence.

"Employers have been essential to the programme's delivery, and those in attendance expressed a desire to be more deeply involved in the next iteration of the programme.

"Employers truly engaged in the programme. With a rapidly ageing workforce being replaced by fewer but younger people, investing in our youth to be better employees is smart thinking. And the fact that they turned out en masse to support our graduates shows how seriously each took their roles as mentor," he says.

"The positive feedback from family was the most gratifying part of the event.

"This achievement is the start of a positive journey — whether it be into further education, training, study or employment. And we will follow their progress to support their success as they take their next steps," he says.

Mr Breen says Jake Bailey's presentation was outstanding.

The young Cancer survivor spoke about the life lessons surviving cancer had taught him and how he had found a passion for public speaking.

"Jake spoke a lot about resilience and taking every opportunity that comes your way — really well-aligned with the values we instil as part of the programme."

Of the 38 students who attended graduation, 19 of them fully graduated. This cohort included 11 young mothers from the TRONPnui Wahine Activate programme — several of whom have already moved into employment.

Another 19 received participation certificates, having completed three-quarters of the programme by the end of the school year — this cohort will complete the programme early next year.

Certificates were presented by Shirley Johnson from Comet Auckland, special guest Jake Bailey and Mayor Meng Foon.

Asia Apiata and Taryn Jonassen (both from Gisborne Girls' High School) received special awards for outstanding participation and achievement.

Organisers wish to acknowledge the support of volunteer organisations, the Gisborne Volunteer Centre and the many employers who embraced the programme.

Licence to Work will double in size next year, with the following organisations confirming their participation: Te Karaka Area School, Tolaga Bay Area School, Te Whare Whai Hua (the teen parent unit at Lytton High School), Turanga Ararau and Wairoa College.

They will join existing participants: Gisborne Girls' High School, Gisborne Boy's High School, Lytton High School, Ngata Memorial College, Champion College, TRONPnui and Matapuna Training Centre.

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