Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua

# Mid to Far North Employer Engagement

MPI Technical Paper No: 2017/12

Prepared for MPI
by Research New Zealand

ISBN No: 978-1-77665-501-4 (online)
ISSN No: 2253-3923 (online)

**July 2016**

New Zealand Government

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Mid to Far North Employer Engagement
Employers' perspectives from primary industry businesses operating in the Mid to Far North
(primary industry businesses include dairy, sheep and beef, forestry, horticulture and aquaculture)
Independent research prepared by Research New Zealand

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# 1.0 Executive Summary

This research provides the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) with a better understanding of the **motivations and barriers** to employing and sustaining the local labour force in the primary sector[1] in Northland, and what **changes** are seen as necessary to improve the current situation **from an employer perspective.**[2] The research also provides employers' responses to various **initiatives and engagement strategies** designed to enhance opportunities and improve the local labour market offering.

Two stages of qualitative research in the form of discussion groups, and a quantitative stage in the form of a survey (online, paper-based and telephone) were conducted with primary sector employers from all around the Northland region. This research was conducted between September 2015 and March 2016.[3]

A summary of key findings of the survey results is provided towards the end of this Executive Summary. The following discussion relates specifically to the findings from the qualitative group discussions.

## Motivations and barriers to employing local labour

While many of the employers involved in this research say they would **prefer to employ locally**, issues with attracting and retaining local labour from the Northland area continue to be hampered by **endemic social issues** and **training and skillset limitations** on the supply side, and **barriers to business quality, development and growth** resulting in **limitations in the demand for labour** on the demand side.

While these barriers present **challenges** with regard to increasing local employment in the region, employers can see many **opportunities** that they believe would overcome or mitigate these.

### Motivations

Motivations for employers to employ local labour are primarily driven by a **desire to support the community** and **increase the standard of living in the region**, which is often described as a *"social obligation"*. In fact, some larger businesses, as well as iwi trusts and Recognised Seasonal

[1] The key primary sector industries include: dairy, sheep and beef, forestry, horticulture and aquaculture.

[2] The limitation of this research is that it explored primary sector (dairy, sheep and beef, forestry, horticulture and aquaculture) employers' views exclusively. It does not include the opinions of the current or potential local labour force, educators, training providers or local authorities. Nor does it include the opinions of central government stakeholders.

[3] Importantly, the qualitative research was conducted prior to the launch of the Tai Tokerau Economic Growth Plan (in mid-September and early December 2015) and the quantitative research was conducted on the back-end of the launch in February-March 2016.

Employer (RSE) scheme participants, note that they have Board and other directives to employ local labour as much as practicable.

Other, more **pragmatic**, **drivers** to employ local labour, as described by both large and smaller employers, include:

- The difficulty of attracting people from outside of Northland to parts of the area.

  This is particularly pertinent to employers operating in more isolated areas in the region. In fact, some say newcomers to some less desirable areas where unemployment is particularly high often suffer what they call *"Northland shock"* and end up quitting prematurely.

- A lesser requirement for lengthy induction, due to local knowledge and affiliation with the land, or for individuals and their families to be assimilated into the community (especially in relation to partners'/spouses' job opportunities and children's schooling options).

- Not having to provide accommodation or pastoral care (especially on farms), due to residents living in close proximity to the workplace.

# Barriers and opportunities

A number of **barriers inhibit the employment of local labour**, including the quality of potential candidates for employment (including social, educational and training issues); competition from candidates from outside the region (New Zealand and overseas); the poor quality of some businesses in the sector; limitations in the demand for labour; negative public perceptions of the sector and issues related to community and stakeholders' disapproval or lack of acknowledgement or acceptance of any benefits accrued from primary sector activities (often referred to as social licence issues); as well as significant barriers to business growth.

While acknowledged as challenging, employers offered ideas as to how some issues could be mitigated or overcome, and prioritised action they would like to see taken in this regard in the short-medium and long-term.

## Quality of the potential labour offering

While there is a large pool of potential labour in the area (given the high level of unemployment), there are significant **social, educational and training issues** that get in the way of achieving a high quality and sustainable workforce.

**Social issues** resulting from **poverty and geographic isolation** include illegal activity (e.g. theft, violence), and issues in relation to alcohol and drug use, and conflict between iwi, as well as gang-related problems – all of which result in employers facing health and safety risks, lost productivity, and issues in relation to taking disciplinary action against employees.

In addition, the collective experience of having generations of beneficiaries in many instances is said to have resulted in a culture that lacks motivation and has a poor work ethic. As well as reducing the drive for locals to engage in employment per se, for those that do there are serious issues in relation to **absenteeism**. This issue is said to be due to whānau/family obligations taking precedence over work commitments, and/or a general tendency to rely on the Unemployment Benefit as a back-stop if employment doesn't work out or suit their lifestyle.

The ability to work is also said to be hampered by **practical barriers**, such as limited transport options and a lack of licensed drivers or warranted vehicles on the roads (incurring fines and being unable to drive machinery), as well as basic needs not being met, such as a lack of adequate clothing and nutrition getting in the way of work-readiness.

Although there is acknowledgement that the significant social issues are not able to be easily or quickly addressed, employers suggested that having **greater access to social support services** in the area would make a difference, such as easier access to alcohol and drug services for those who want to turn their lives around or who slip-up and **greater assistance with licencing and transportation**.

## Education

**Poor educational outcomes** in the region (especially with a high proportion of school leavers having failed to achieve basic literacy and numeracy) are said to be limiting the ability of young people to gain the skills and undertake current training modules which are necessary to participate in the workforce.

Employers are also said to be **struggling to promote careers in the sector** through the schools, due to a number of interrelated factors, including:

- Negative perceptions of the primary sector, including careers advisors' lack of promotion of career pathways; images of the sector as being unappealing (e.g. hard, dangerous work for little remuneration) and to be for low achievers only.

- Perceived restrictions in the current curriculum and reticence of schools to engage when the sector offers opportunities to involve students.

- Health and safety restrictions inhibiting businesses from offering opportunities for young people to have hands-on experience in their workplaces.

**Opportunities to attain greater engagement with schools and promote primary industry career paths, will go some way to address these issues**. As such, initiatives such as *Champions* and *Primary Industry Ambassadors in Schools* met with some approval.

Promoting the primary industry in a positive light through the schools is considered to be vital to encourage students (especially high achievers) to enter the sector. However, **business development and growth** is seen as a **prerequisite** to any initiatives designed to promote anything more than basic employment options in the short-term, due to current **limitations in job opportunities**.

While employers express a desire to be able to more easily offer youth hands-on experience in their businesses, if that could be made possible by **reducing the health and safety requirements** that inhibit this, they note that their participation in more structured initiatives (e.g. Careers New Zealand's *Work Inspiration*, *Kaikohe Growth Industries* and *Te Hiku Pathways*) needs to be **adequately funded**, due to lost productivity and other costs likely to be incurred to businesses, should they participate in such programmes.

In addition, in order to attend and feel their views are heard and taken on board, industry representatives say they need to be **coordinated and supported by MPI** to attend meetings with other relevant parties, such as that recently held by the Ministry of Education to discuss education and training initiatives and opportunities.

## Training

Currently, local training facilities are considered to be **expensive, driven by funding and failing to provide trainees with what is required from an industry perspective** for them to be successful candidates for employment. Issues in this regard include what is considered to be irrelevant course content and a lack of hands-on practical training components, and to be pitched in some instances at the *"lowest common denominator"*. Furthermore, the lack of drug testing or vehicle licensing in courses is said to be a failing in terms of ensuring potential employees are work-ready (i.e. are drug-free and holding a current drivers' licence). As such, trainees are said to come out with limited capability or to be unacceptable, regardless of the levels of achievement that are said to be gained through courses.

In addition, given the high proportion of poor educational outcomes for school leavers and the significant Māori population in the area, the industry believes **training methods** need to be **modified** so that they are **culturally engaging** for trainees. As such, a less classroom and paper-based and a more **hands-on approach** is likely to be more successful with all trainees.

There are also said to be **few leaving the region to undertake training**, due to costs and the reticence of some to leave the area per se. In addition, those who do undertake training elsewhere are said to be **unlikely to return**, due to the limited opportunities in the region.

As a result, when it is required, **skilled labour** often has to be sourced from **outside the region**, while a pool of motivated **migrant and immigrant labour** also competes with Northlanders for jobs.

To **enhance training outcomes**, employers would like to see **MPI take a lead role** in facilitating opportunities to work with industry representatives, iwi, relevant ministries and training institutes, to ensure content is fit-for-purpose, more practical in its application, and that the desired outcomes are actually achieved.

Ideally, employers believe opportunities for local **apprenticeship/cadetship schemes** and adequate funding and support for **on-the-job training** need to be provided, in order to really **enhance the potential workforce's capabilities**.

## Quality of some employers within the sector

**Poor quality employment conditions and lack of compliance** (e.g. lack of formal contracts, health and safety issues, poor remuneration), especially on smaller and older farms, are said to be an issue in the region. Not surprisingly, young employees are said to be particularly likely to be taken advantage of in this regard.

As such, employers believe there is a need for **greater support for those employers struggling with employment rights and the burden of compliance**, and that **MPI should take the opportunity to play a lead role** in assisting with this.

## Employment opportunities

As well as stagnant growth and mechanisation resulting in some businesses **down-sizing employment requirements**, economic fluctuations and seasonal and erratic workflows are also **significant barriers to sustainable** (fulltime, permanent) **employment** in the sector.

The variable workflow experienced by many businesses in the region is also said to be a disincentive for employers to invest in upskilling their workers, with some choosing to contract on a needs-basis, rather than employ labour. In addition, with the increased technical skills that will be required as mechanisation takes hold in some of the larger businesses, some employers say they will be more likely to source qualified specialists from elsewhere than train their existing staff, due to the skillset limitations of their current staff cohort.

An opportunity identified to address the adverse effects of fluctuating workflows on permanent or fulltime employment is to **better coordinate and encourage employers across the sector to 'share' employees/contractors** (e.g. utilising seasonal work opportunities in different sectors to continue employment throughout the year).

Again, employers see an opportunity for **MPI to facilitate the coordination of the industry**, as they admit they have historically failed to do so of their own volition.

## Public perceptions of the primary sector

**Poor public perceptions of the primary sector** is said to be adversely affecting the industry's ability to attract quality labour, as well as creating social licensing issues.

In particular, employers say that the focus in the media is very much on highlighting any negative aspects, such as environmental damage, damage to infrastructure, health and safety breaches and/or risks incurred by the sector, rather than promoting the benefits of the sector's contribution to the economy and efforts in relation to environmental development and sustainability.

Opportunities to **promote the sector** are said to be necessary to address this problem, as well as to feed into the promotion of career paths for youth in the primary sector, such as they exist now and will do in the future.

## Business growth and development

**Barriers to business growth, diversification and development** in Northland are said to be severely limiting employment opportunities in the region.

Particular barriers noted by employers include:

- Incrementally increasing compliance burden (including costs, administration and risks of fines) making it difficult for those without dedicated administrators to cope.
- Local authorities' slow, time-consuming and bureaucratic application processes slowing down businesses' plans for expansion.
- Zoning and restrictions imposed on rural and aquaculture sectors inhibiting business development.
- Rates for pre-productive land under development acting as a disincentive to develop or diversify new (e.g. Treaty of Waitangi settlement land) or under-developed land in the area.
- Economic pressures of an unstable economy and overseas competition affecting the viability of some businesses.
- Inadequate infrastructure (roading, shipping and broadband, in particular) in the region acting as a disincentive for new ventures and investment from outside parties or even from within the sector itself.

Given that employers say they are **struggling to work together** to find solutions to expedite growth and development across the industry, employers believe that **MPI needs to take the opportunity to act as a facilitator and an advocate for the sector as a whole**.

As such, employers see MPI's role as being to coordinate their business representatives, iwi and central and local government, in order to develop **long-term strategies and provide adequate investment** to increase the potential for businesses to thrive and grow and, thereby, offer greater employment opportunities in the Mid to Far North region.

## Key findings from Mid to Far North Employer survey

Key findings from the quantitative survey research conducted with employers also highlighted issues in relation to employing local labour in Northland.

The survey identified that having **access to suitable workers** is one of three factors impacting businesses' ability to grow and prosper in the Mid to Far North.

While the majority of surveyed businesses reported they preferred to employ local labour (73 percent) and three-quarters also reported that all of their permanent staff were from Northland, just under one-half of businesses rated the overall quality of the local labour force positively (47 percent) in relation to having the **skills and training** that their business requires.

Likely reflecting this, one in six employers (16 percent) who had advertised to fill a job vacancy in the last 12 months were not able to fill the role with someone who was local to Northland.

Northland employers are also **less likely to rate the local labour force as highly** as they rate workers sourced from outside of the region in relation to a number of key factors that are important to businesses:

- Sixty-five percent of employers rated Northland workers' **enthusiasm while working** as being *good* to *excellent* (a rating of 7 to 10 out of 10), compared with 75 percent for non-Northland workers.
- Sixty-four percent rated Northland workers' **dependability** as being *good* to *excellent*, compared with 80 percent for non-Northland workers.
- Sixty percent rated Northland workers' **work-readiness** as being *good* to *excellent,* compared with 72 percent for non-Northland workers.

In relation to Northland workers' work readiness, 56 percent of employers who had recently hired staff who completed training through an industry training organisation reported that the training such organisations provided was producing workers with the right skills that a business like theirs needs. However, 43 percent felt that the **ITO training does not meet all of the skill needs of their business**.

The survey findings also suggest that Northland employers view the **productivity** of non-Northland workers as being better than that of Northland workers, with 71 percent rating their non-Northland workers' productivity as being *good* to *excellent*, compared with 65 percent rating Northland workers' productivity as being *good* to *excellent*. However, the observed difference is not statistically significant and should be viewed as indicative only.

Importantly, 43 percent of employers reported that access to **suitable workers** from Northland was negatively impacting the Northland primary sector's ability to grow and prosper. Two other significant factors that were identified as having a significant impact on the sector's ability to grow and prosper in the Mid to Far North were the quality of Northland's **roads and transport infrastructure** and access to **reliable ultrafast broadband** (with both factors identified by 54 percent of respondents as impacting negatively on the sector to a moderate to large extent).

While most primary sector employers view their sector positively (with just six percent rating their personal attitude towards working in the primary sector as a career as negative), only **two-thirds** would currently **recommend working in their industry** to others.

The survey also identified that Northland primary sector employers do not believe the general public has a **good understanding** of their industry. Just nine percent rated the general public's understanding of what the primary industries do as being *good* or *very good,* while 62 percent rated the general public's understanding as being *poor* or *very poor.*

In addition, about one quarter (27 percent) said they think the **general public's attitude** towards the primary industries is positive, while 36 percent felt their industry was viewed negatively by the general public.

Twenty-eight percent of employers think the general public believes the primary sector engages in environmentally **sustainable practices** to a *moderate* or *large extent*, while just under half (46 percent) think the general public believe the primary sector provides **sustainable employment opportunities** to the local workforce to a *moderate* or *large extent*.

## Actionable recommendations

In the qualitative research, the overall finding is that employers want **support and advocacy from MPI**, in conjunction with other relevant ministries and agencies (local authorities, schools and training agencies, in particular), in order to facilitate business performance (especially compliance-related), promote the primary industries, improve training outcomes and, ultimately, invest in business growth and development and infrastructure in the region.

In order of prioritisation, employers consider the following action to be necessary in the **short-to-medium term**:

- Working with local authorities to **minimise compliance requirements and costs**, and ensure these are realistic and necessary. In particular:
    - Health and safety restrictions that inhibit employers' ability to offer local youth (students and trainees) hands-on experience in their industries.
    - Compliance restrictions and costs that are inhibiting business development, including:
        - Local authority regulations and inspections (which are said to have incrementally increased).
        - Application processes and restrictions on land and marine development.

    - Rates for pre-productive land, especially for those slow to yield earnings (e.g. forestry). This is particularly an issue for new enterprise, such as Treaty of Waitangi settlement initiatives, and diversification and utilisation of under-productive land in the area.

- Offering **support for under-performing/struggling businesses**, including:

    - Advice and mentoring targeting employers who are struggling with compliance requirements.

      Although challenging, such employers are said to be able to be identified by various means (e.g. local knowledge, repeat non-compliance issues/fines).

      Such advice could be provided in both formal (e.g. by experts) and/or informal ways (e.g. attendance at "cowshed meetings" and the like across the sector, or by "successful"/larger businesses teaming up with and mentoring smaller start-ups/older "less successful" businesses).

    - Addressing the administrative burden for businesses to meet their compliance obligations.

      For example, developing collective administration facilities (or employing administrators) for groups of smaller businesses who do not have dedicated administrative staff or expertise in these areas.

- Developing a **marketing campaign to promote the primary industries in a positive light**:

    - A public marketing campaign would need to dispel fears and myths that reduce local support for the sector (i.e. increase appreciation for the sector's economic contribution, and environmental development and sustainability) and enhance key influencers' (parents' and caregivers') consideration for their young people to engage in career paths that direct them into the local primary industry sector.

      Importantly, any promotion of career paths in the industry need to be cognisant of what opportunities actually exist now, and are likely to exist in the future environment, in Northland.

- Addressing issues within **schools** that inhibit engagement with the primary sector, as well as the quality and relevance of current training provided via the various **training bodies** (including educational and cultural issues), including:

    - Engaging with careers advisors and school leaders to encourage greater promotion of, and engagement with, the sector.

      However, as with the promotion of the primary industries in a public marketing campaign, school influencers need to be cognisant of the current limitations and future opportunities in the sector (i.e. to start driving students to train in appropriate areas now and in the future).

    - Working with training bodies to ensure they provide fit-for-purpose training.

This may involve tailoring training to include:

  - Relevant and applicable course material (including appropriate training components, driver licensing, as well as a requirement to be drug-free).
  - More hands-on and practical components to address literacy and numeracy issues, as well as being more culturally engaging.

  The preferred training model is a cadetship/apprenticeship style, as this is considered to be more likely to really engage trainees for the long-term (rather than trying to engage them in short-term sessions). Importantly, for employers to take on apprentices/cadets as well as provide hands-on experience in their businesses, such schemes need to be incentivised and adequately funded.

- Addressing **social issues**, including:
  - Increasing support for alcohol and drug services in the region.
  - Facilitating easier access to driver licensing (e.g. as above, incorporating licensing into training and/or supporting other options) and increasing access to transport generally (e.g. home pick-up, drop-off services for workers).

In the **longer-term**, employers want the following action to be prioritised:

- Real investment in **business growth and development**:
  - Investment strategies from central government need to be coordinated, socialised, and agreed to with industry stakeholders including business owners/managers and iwi stakeholders and managers.

    The industry believe that taking a collective approach, facilitated by MPI, will be necessary to reach agreement as to the prioritisation and direction of any such initiatives and investment, to ensure all parties are working together toward the same goals.
- Investment in **infrastructure** in the region, including specifically addressing broadband access and transportation (roading and shipping).

# 2.0 Introduction

Two stages of qualitative research in the form of discussion groups, and a quantitative stage in the form of a survey (online, paper-based and telephone) were conducted with primary sector employers[4] from all around the Northland region. This research was conducted between September 2015 and March 2016.[5]

## 2.1 Background

Employment issues in relation to both the current and **potential supply of local labour** in the Mid to Far North, and **demand for local labour** from primary sector employers, is an ongoing and significant problem for this part of the country. Given that the primary sector offers the greatest employment opportunities in this region, the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) wants to better understand the basis for this problem in Northland and the particular issues faced by employers that are inhibiting growth in local employment.

This research provides the Ministry with a better understanding of the motivations and barriers to employing and sustaining the local labour force in the primary sector, from an employer perspective.

A limitation of this research is that it explored primary sector employers' views exclusively. It does not include the opinions of the current or potential local labour force, educators, training providers or local authorities. Nor does it include the opinions of central government stakeholders. Furthermore, the qualitative research was carried out prior to the launch of the Tai Tokerau Economic Growth Plan (February 2016), whilst the quantitative survey research was carried out immediately following the launch of the plan.

Importantly, this research was commissioned to provide guidance as to what employers believe will create a more satisfactory and symbiotic relationship between the supply of, and demand for, local labour in order to move towards a sustainable future for both the industry and the community in Northland.

In reporting the findings, the thematic analysis of the qualitative research included combining anonymised quotes from the transcripts to illustrate common themes and nuances.

[4] The key primary sector industries include: dairy, sheep and beef, forestry, horticulture and aquaculture.

[5] Importantly, the qualitative research was conducted prior to the launch of the Tai Tokerau Economic Growth Plan (in mid-September and early December 2015) and the quantitative research was conducted on the back-end of the launch in February-March 2016.

## 2.2 Qualitative research

### 2.2.1 Objectives

The specific objectives of the qualitative research included identifying and exploring primary sector employers' opinions about the following:

- The current state of the employment market in the Mid to Far North region, including local employment opportunities in their industry as well as any barriers they perceive (on both the demand and supply sides) which inhibit these opportunities being realised.
- The changes necessary (on both the demand and supply sides) for there to be a better match between employers' and employees' needs, in order to support industry in the region in a sustainable way in the short-term, including recommendations for targeted action.
- Possible shifts in the primary industry which might impact on the future education and training requirements for employees in the medium and longer-term[6] (including recommendations for targeted action) so as to achieve a better match between the local labour supply and businesses' demands.
- A range of initiatives and engagement strategies[7] (see Appendix A – Stage 2 interview guide for brief descriptions of initiatives or strategies) that the Ministry is interested in developing as potential solutions for improving the local labour offering to better meet the primary sector's needs and engaging with stakeholders, including:
  - *Champions*.
  - *Primary Industry Ambassadors in Schools*.
  - *Enterprising Industries Career (EPIC) Challenge*.
  - *Work Inspiration*.
  - *Kaikohe Growth Industries Pathway*.
  - *Te Hiku Pathway*.
  - MoE-led Northland education sector meeting.

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[6] Comparing employer views of future labour needs with those identified in previous reports viz. *Tai Tokerau Northland Growth Study*, Jenkins, M. for the Ministry for Primary Industries, February 2015; *People Powered* for the Ministry for Primary Industries, June 2014; and *Future Capability Needs for Primary Industries in New Zealand*, Grimmond, D., et al, for the Ministry for Primary Industries, April 2014.

[7] Initiatives and strategies were tested in Stage 2 of the qualitative research.

### 2.2.2 Methodology

Two stages of qualitative research were conducted with representatives from Northland's primary sector employers from all around the area, between September 2015 and December 2016. In each stage, group discussions were conducted with employers from each of the five targeted primary industry groups (viz. dairy, sheep and beef, forestry, horticulture and aquaculture). Group discussions were employed deliberately, in order to encourage a greater rapport between respondents in support of overcoming the barriers they face in employing local labour.

Group discussions were facilitated by Jane Falloon (Research Director) and Mark Johnson (Partner) from Research New Zealand, using discussion guides as an aide memoire to ensure the key areas for discussion were covered with each group (see Appendix A for a copy of the discussion guides).

### 2.2.3 Stage 1 group discussions

In this initial research stage, employers from the different sectors were included in separate group discussions. The purpose of dividing up the different sectors was to fully understand the similarities and/or differences of needs both within and across these industry sectors.

Each group discussion was approximately two hours in duration. The dairy, sheep and beef and forestry sector groups were held in Whangarei (29-30September 2015) and the aquaculture and horticulture groups were held in Kaitaia (1 October 2015).

#### Sample

The final sample of n=23 respondents included the following numbers of respondents per sector:

- Dairy: n=4
- Sheep and beef: n=6
- Forestry: n=5
- Horticulture: n=4
- Aquaculture: n=4

Potential participants for the group discussions were initially identified by the Ministry, but were directly recruited by Research New Zealand. The Ministry was not provided with information pertaining to the final group composition.

The final sample of employers included representatives from a range of business sizes and structures including: small owner-operators employing just casual or contracted labour; large cooperatives operating out of Northland and elsewhere in the country and overseas, that employ significant numbers of staff; and iwi Trust representatives with a determined focus on employing whānau from the region.

Businesses also varied in terms of management style. While some operations were traditional in their approach, others were starting to mechanise or planning to diversify their businesses, particularly in the Forestry and Aquaculture sectors and some of the larger Horticulturalists.

Some businesses were wanting to expand, while others were stable and some were downsizing. Iwi participants dealing with new Waitangi Treaty Trust settlements also offered a unique perspective in terms of the potential this affords for business growth and development in the region.

### 2.2.4 Stage 2 group discussions

Given the first stage of the research revealed that the barriers and motivations to employing local labour in Northland were common across primary industry sectors, Stage 2 group discussions were held with a mix of employers from the different sectors from all over the Northland area.

Group discussions were held in Whangarei (2 December, 2015) and Kerikeri (3 December 2015). Each group lasted approximately four hours, with a break for lunch, and included 6-7 respondents, some of whom had attended the initial group discussions held in September/October 2015 and some of whom were new to the discussion.

To further facilitate the discussion, MPI provided a description of each of the initiatives that were tested in the groups (see Appendix A – Stage 2 interview guide for a brief description of each initiative or strategy).

#### Sample

The final sample of n=13 respondents included the following numbers of respondents per sector:

- Dairy: n=3
- Sheep and beef: n=3
- Forestry: n=5
- Horticulture: n=2

To facilitate this, MPI again passed on contact details of further potential participants but, as with the first stage, these, along with original group participants, were recruited (depending on interest and availability) directly by Research New Zealand, and MPI were not provided with information pertaining to the final group compositions.

As for the initial sample, employers participating in Stage 2 also represented a range of business sizes and structures. Participants included: small owner-operators employing just casual or contracted labour; large cooperatives operating out of Northland and elsewhere in the country, which employ significant numbers of staff; iwi Trust representatives; a farm consultant working with a range of employers from the beef and sheep sector; and a rural financial advisor working with employers from the dairy sector. Businesses also, again, varied in terms of their management style and stability.

### Limitations of the qualitative research

As noted, a limitation of the qualitative research is that it explored primary sector employers' views exclusively. It does not include the opinions of the current or potential local labour force, educators, training providers or local authorities. Nor does it include the opinions of central government stakeholders. Furthermore, the qualitative research was carried out prior to the launch of the Tai Tokerau Economic Growth Plan (February 2016).

The qualitative sample included primarily larger-end business representatives.

Given the small sample size and small size of the region, employers may be well known for their views and opinions. As such, in order to ensure respondents' anonymity, any quotes used to illustrate themes in the report are conglomerates of like-minded views.

# 2.3 Quantitative survey research

## 2.3.1 Objectives

In line with the qualitative research, the overarching objectives of the quantitative survey research were to explore employers' opinions about the motivations and barriers to employing local labour in Northland.

Specific question lines were developed in line with the qualitative research findings. See Appendix B for a copy of the survey questionnaire.

## 2.3.2 Methodology

The third stage of the research was a quantitative survey of Mid to Far North primary industry employers, conducted between 15 February 2015 and 25 March 2016 (see Appendix B for a copy of the survey questionnaire).

The quantitative stage of the research was undertaken as a mixed-method survey, with respondents able to complete a paper version of the survey questionnaire, or complete it online (via a purpose-built secure https:// encrypted website hosted by Research New Zealand), or by telephone.

The design of the survey questionnaire was completed on an iterative basis and in conjunction with key stakeholders in MPI. As noted, the results of the two stages of qualitative research also informed the survey design process.

The sample for the survey was sourced from ACC's database of levy payers, under an agreement between MPI and ACC. To facilitate this process, ACC was provided with a detailed sample specification of the types of businesses in scope (viz. primary industry businesses operating in the Mid to Far North which, based upon administrative data held by ACC, were likely to employ one or more staff). This sample specification was developed in consultation with our client at MPI.

When the sample was received it was cleaned and records with insufficient contact details for the purposes of the survey were removed, leaving a working sample of n=960 unique businesses.

In order to ensure that the invitation to the survey was addressed to the correct person, pre-calling was undertaken to:

- Confirm that the business was still in operation, currently operated in the Mid to Far North geographic area (i.e. Whangarei and northward) and was involved in a primary industry.

- Identify the owner or manager in the business who deals with employing staff.

- Confirm the postal, email and telephone contact details of the owner or manager in question.

As a result of the pre-calling stage, a number of businesses were removed from the sample due to the business not meeting one or more of the above criteria, or if the person contacted asked that the business not be contacted for the purposes of the survey. This resulted in a final sample of n=732 unique businesses.

These prospective respondents were sent a pre-notification letter on MPI letterhead that explained the purpose of the research, Research New Zealand's involvement as an independent contractor, and that participation in the research process was on a voluntary and confidential basis. Accompanying this letter was a paper copy of the survey questionnaire and a reply-paid envelope. The letter also included information on how to complete the survey online, should the respondent so wish, the survey website's URL and a unique login and password.

As noted above, the survey was open between 15 February 2015 and 25 March 2016. As of the survey's close-off date, n=302 respondents had completed the survey (165 respondents completed the paper version of the survey, 30 completed the survey online and 165 were interviewed by telephone). As a result, the survey achieved a 47 per cent response rate, based on the standard calculation method approved by Statistics New Zealand.

Results based on the achieved sample of n=302 respondents are subject to a maximum margin of error of ± 5.6 percent (at the 95 percent confidence level).

## Limitations of the quantitative research

As with the qualitative stages of the research, the quantitative survey does not take into account the opinions of the current or potential local labour force, educators, training providers or local authorities.

It should also be noted that a number of respondents who completed the paper version of the survey did not answer all of the survey questions. Where this was the case, the missing responses have been coded as 'no response' and no attempt has been made to impute the missing data.

This is due to the researchers not knowing if the missing data is due to a respondent intentionally choosing to not answer particular questions, feeling the question was not applicable to their business, or as a result of the respondent not following the questionnaire routing instructions. The statistics in the following report exclude these cases. However, the number of 'non-response' cases for each question has been noted as part of each table's footnotes in Appendix C.

Unlike the qualitative research, which included representatives from a range of business sizes, most of which were large, the majority of employers who responded to the survey were from small businesses.

# 3.0 Current state of the employment market in the Mid to Far North

Issues with employing and retaining local labour from the Northland area continue to be hampered by endemic social issues, training and skillset limitations on the supply side, and barriers to business quality and growth and limitations in the demand for labour on the demand side.

The demand for labour and the ability to attract and retain employees from the local area appear to be consistent across the primary sector industries operating out of Northland, with most employers expressing a strong desire to employ locals but, in many instances, being unable to overcome the significant barriers to realising this (including limitations in terms of the number of available permanent roles).

## 3.1 Use of labour from the local community

### 3.1.1 Use of local workers to fill permanent roles

Survey respondents in the quantitative research were asked a series of questions about the types of workers that their business had employed during the 12 months prior to the survey, and the types of different arrangements used to employ those workers.

Three quarters of the respondents (75 percent) reported their business employed one or more permanent full-time employees (30 plus hours per week), and 29 percent employed one or more permanent part-time employees (less than 30 hours per week) (Table 1). However, the majority of these employers (81 percent) employed just five or fewer permanent workers, while 12 percent employed between six and nineteen permanent staff. Just four percent employed 20 or more permanent staff (Table 2).

Positively, the three quarters of these employers (77 percent) said that all of the business's permanent staff were from Northland (just four percent said that none of their permanent staff were from Northland) (Table 3).

Agriculture sector employers were significantly less likely to report that they currently employed 10 or more permanent full-time or part-time staff (one percent, compared with eight percent of all surveyed businesses).

### 3.1.2 Use of local workers to fill casual and seasonal roles

Fifty percent of surveyed employers had employed casual staff (i.e. staff from the local community, but with no set hours) in the last 12 months, and almost one quarter (23 percent) reported employing seasonal workers (Table 1). Almost half of the respondents (45 percent) reported they had used self-employed contractors as well.

Compared with all businesses, horticulture sector employers were significantly more likely to report their business had employed casual staff (67 percent, compared with 50 percent of all surveyed businesses) or seasonal workers (70 percent, compared with 23 percent of all surveyed businesses) in the last 12 months. In contrast, significantly fewer agriculture sector businesses reported employing seasonal workers in the last 12 months (12 percent).

About six in ten of those employers who used casual, seasonal or self-employed contractors, reported the business had employed between one (13 percent) or two to five (49 percent) such workers during the last 12 months (Table 7).

The majority of employers (78 percent) who used seasonal and/or and casual staff sourced their workers from the local community (but not through Work and Income (Table 8).

Smaller proportions reported sourcing their seasonal and casual workers from the local community through Work and Income (six percent) and/or other sources including the Working Holidays Scheme (six percent), by word of mouth (six percent) and/or labour contractors (such as PickNZ) (five percent). A small proportion of employers also used family members or sourced seasonal workers through the Recognised Seasonal Employers Scheme (RSE).

As was the case with the survey respondents who had employed permanent staff, three quarters (75 percent) of employers that had employed seasonal/casual workers reported that all of their seasonal/casual workers were from Northland, while just four percent said that none of their seasonal/casual workers were local (Table 9).

## 3.2 Motivations to employ local labour

### 3.2.1 Most primary sector businesses in Northland prefer to hire local Northlanders

The survey respondents in the quantitative research were asked, when their business was looking to employ someone, whether they tried to fill the role with a local Northlander. Three quarters (73 percent) said that they did prefer to employ a Northlander if possible, while seven percent said it would depend upon the nature of the role the business was trying to fill (Table 4). Nine percent reported that, generally, the business had no job vacancies that it actively tried to fill.

As a follow up question, employers in businesses that did periodically have job vacancies were asked if their business had tried to fill a vacancy in the last 12 months, but was unsuccessful in finding a suitable Northland candidate (Table 5). Just 13 percent of the sub-sample reported their business had tried to fill a role but were unable to fill the vacancy with a local Northlander.

When asked whether they still tried to employ a New Zealander when they were not able to fill a role with local labour (Table 6), just under eight in ten (78 percent) expressed a preference to employ a New Zealander, while five percent said that it would depend upon the nature of the role the business was trying to fill.

Of note, horticulture sector employers were significantly less likely to report they try to fill roles with a New Zealander when they could not employ someone who is local (64 percent, compared with 78 percent of all surveyed employers).

The qualitative research revealed that, given a choice, the key motivations compelling employers to employ people from within the region are principally driven by a strong desire to support the local community.

> *We've got a strong sense of community and there's a strong desire to give the locals the opportunity. You want to build up and strengthen your community.*

Motivations in this regard include:

- Enhancing the standard of living by reducing the level of unemployment in the local area, especially amongst youth and iwi, which is often seen as a *"social obligation"*.
- A desire to encourage youth to remain in the region and work on the land, including instilling a sense of pride and connection for tangata whenua.

> *It's more of a pride thing. They're working their own land.*

- Iwi trusts and some other businesses' Board directives to employ local labour when possible.

> *The focus is on employing local Māori labour, but we need the right skills.*

- The RSE scheme requiring participating employers to employ a proportion of local labour.

### 3.2.2 Benefits of employing local Northlanders

Survey respondents in the quantitative research whose businesses periodically have vacancies were asked, on an unprompted basis, what they believe are the benefits of employing local Northlanders instead of employing workers from outside of the region (Table 10).

About four in ten employers (43 percent) feel that employing someone who was already settled in the region and available for work was a particular benefit. Many of these employers also noted that someone who was already settled and available was also more likely to stay in the region. Of note, businesses that currently had permanent employees working for them were particularly more likely to identify the greater likelihood of the employee staying in the region as being a benefit (between

43 and 51 percent), when compared to those employers whose business did not currently have any permanent staff (27 percent).

The second most frequently mentioned benefit (30 percent of the sub-sample) was that locals understand Northland. A belief that locals better understand Northland was more likely to be reported by those business who had only one permanent employee (43 percent) or between two and five permanent staff (32 percent), when compared with those businesses who did not have any permanent staff (14 percent) or larger businesses with six plus permanent employees (19 percent).

Other, less frequently mentioned benefits included: supporting the local community/economy; locals are already a known factor and/or that it is easier to check references; or the proximity between where locals lived and the business's location.

Businesses that currently employed one or more permanent staff were more likely to identify employing someone who was already settled and/or their being familiar with the region as benefits, compared with those who did not currently have a permanent staff member.

There were no statistically significant differences of note in relation to the above findings when viewed by the age of the business or different sub-sectors in the primary industry.

The pragmatic benefits employers raised in the qualitative research include:

- Avoiding the challenges that come with importing labour from outside of the region which are said to be an issue, especially when encouraging workers to move to some of the more isolated areas of Northland that are considered to be undesirable (e.g. areas said to have high levels of unemployment and a strong gang presence, poor quality schooling, housing and limited job opportunities for other family members, e.g. spouses).

  *They're here for six months and then it's, bugger this, they're heading home. So, you're having go through it all again… We recruit locally to avoid the "Northland shock"*

- A shorter induction time, including both taking advantage of local knowledge and affinity with the land and not needing to assimilate individuals and their families into the community.

  *Locals have a knowledge and common sense. It's a shorter induction. There's a natural affinity.*

- Not having to provide accommodation for employees already domiciled in the area, versus pastoral care costs for non-local labour, due to workers already living in close proximity to the business.

  *There are advantages to hiring locals. There are no pastoral care costs… They're settled.*

## 3.3 Barriers inhibiting the employment of local labour

### 3.3.1 Percentage of businesses not able to fill an advertised vacancy with a local Northlander

Survey respondents in the quantitative research were asked whether their business had any vacancies (permanent or otherwise) in the last 12 months (Table 12) and, if so, whether they were unable to fill the vacancy with a suitable local (Table 13).

While one in five respondents reported they had not had any job vacancies, 80 percent reported that their business had advertised or tried to fill a job vacancy in the last 12 months. Of those employers who had advertised or tried to fill a role, roughly one in six (16 percent) had not been able to fill the role with someone who was local to Northland.

While indicative only, due to the relatively small sub-sample size, the survey results suggest about one in three larger businesses (i.e. with six or more permanent employees) that had vacancies in the last 12 months were unable fill the role with someone who was local to Northland.

The nature of the roles that employers were unable to fill with a local Northlander were varied. Forty-one percent reported they had been unable to fill a general labour role, while 32 percent had been unable to fill a role requiring skill and/or experience. Twenty-four percent had not been able to fill a management position.

### 3.3.2 Perceived disadvantages to employing local labour

As follow-up questions, survey respondents in the quantitative research whose businesses periodically have vacancies were also asked, on an unprompted basis, if there were any particular disadvantages to employing local Northlanders as opposed to workers from outside of the region (Table 11).

While about one third of the sub-sample said that there were no disadvantages into employing local Northlanders (37 percent) and 18 percent were unsure, a number of the survey respondents identified *a poor work ethic* (14 percent) and/or *lack of skills and work experience* (also 14 percent) as being a disadvantage – both of which are issues that were also highlighted in the qualitative stages of the research.

Of note, horticulture sector employers were significantly more likely to identify *a poor work ethic* as being a disadvantage when employing local Northlanders (30 percent, compared with 13 percent of all surveyed employers). This suggests that many employers in the horticulture sector may view the work ethic of workers sourced from outside of Northland as being better than that of workers they can source locally.

Only a small percentage of employers identified *drug and alcohol* issues (seven percent), *employees from outside of Northland being better workers* (six percent) or *the small labour pool in Northland in general* (four percent) – issues that featured more prominently in the qualitative stages of the research.

This disconnect between the qualitative and quantitative research findings may, in part, be a function of the nature of businesses that participated in the different stages. Many of the qualitative participants represented larger businesses and/or multiple business entities and as a function of employing a larger number of staff and greater staff turnover, would be more likely to encounter these issues than would a small employer. In contrast, the majority of the quantitative survey respondents reported employing five or fewer permanent employees.

Another explanation for differences in responses may be due to differences in data collection methodologies. The qualitative focus groups were conducted as group discussions, wherein, if one respondent raised an issue, other participants were more likely to report experiencing it as well. In contrast, the survey respondents were asked to identify the disadvantages of employing local Northlanders on an unprompted basis, and without the benefit of hearing other employers raise issues that they may have encountered but that weren't top of mind.

The qualitative stages of the research identified a number of barriers that were seen as inhibiting the employment of local labour in Northland. While there is a large pool of **potential labour** in the area, given the high level of unemployment, there are significant issues that get in the way of achieving a high quality and sustainable workforce sourced locally, including:

- Work readiness, trainability and dependability of the local workforce.
- Competition from outside the region.
- The poor quality of some businesses in the sector.
- Negative public perceptions of the sector and social licence issues.
- Barriers to business growth and the resulting limitations in the demand for labour.

These issues are explored in depth in the following pages. Where relevant, findings from the quantitative survey are also included.

### 3.3.3 Work readiness, trainability and dependability of the local workforce

All survey respondents were asked to rate the quality of Northland workers who had worked for their business during the past few years (excluding those employed through Work and Income), using a number of key attributes: work readiness, trainability, enthusiasm while working, dependability and productivity. They were asked to use a rating scale from 0 to 10, where 0 equals *extremely poor* and 10 equals *excellent* (Table 16 through Table 19).

Significant differences between non-Northland and Northland workers were found in relation to three of the five key attributes:

- Seventy-five percent rated non-Northland workers' **enthusiasm while working** as being *good* to *excellent*, compared with 65 percent rating Northland workers' enthusiasm as being *good* to *excellent*.
- Eighty percent rated non-Northland workers' **dependability** as being *good* to *excellent*, compared with 64 percent rating Northland workers' dependability as being *good* to *excellent*.
- Seventy-two percent of employers rated non-Northland workers' **work readiness** as being *good* to *excellent* (a rating of 7 to 10 out of 10). In contrast, 60 percent rated the work readiness of Northland workers as being *good* to *excellent*.

The survey findings also suggest that Northland employers view the **productivity** of non-Northland workers as being better than that of Northland workers – 71 percent rate their non-Northland workers' productivity as being *good* to *excellent,* compared with 65 percent rating Northland workers productivity as being good to excellent. However, the observed difference is not statistically significant, and should be viewed as indicative only.

One aspect that employers rated the local Northland workforce similarly to non-Northland workers was in relation to **trainability**. Sixty-four percent rated the trainability of workers from the local Northland workforce as *good* to *excellent.* The equivalent percentage of employers who rated non-Northland workers' trainability as being *good* to *excellent* was 68 percent.

There were no statistically significant differences of note in relation to the above findings when viewed by the age of the business, business size or different sub-sectors in the primary industry.

## Social issues resulting from poverty and geographic isolation

While some larger employers involved in the qualitative research said they are able to deal with social issues that result in absenteeism and failed drug tests, others (especially smaller businesses) struggle to find solutions and/or simply avoid employing locally, because of these issues.

> *Managers of farms are stressed out, because of terrible labour… Issues are more around reliability and attendance.*

Issues in relation to drug and alcohol use and failed drug tests in high risk occupations are a serious disincentive to employ locals. These problems result in employers facing health and safety risks and lost productivity, as well as presenting a minefield in relation to disciplinary action for employers.

> *They had a spot check drug test and, out of nine that were working that day, seven failed and the other two ran away. So, you could say, that's 100 percent! So, that operation had to stop… That's one of the big issues.*
>
> *And then you've got to go through disciplinary. That's just a torturous road full of peril. It's a minefield.*

Illegal activity and other crimes committed against the employer (e.g. theft, damage to machinery, animal slaughter), as well as violence (especially gang-related problems) and conflict between different iwi also put the employer and other employees at risk.

> *If you inadvertently employ someone with gang affiliations, you've got big problems.*

> *There are also issues with inter-family dynamics where you can't have members of one family working alongside another.*

Other issues associated with the high level of poverty in the region include:

- Employers facing difficulties in attracting beneficiaries, due to what is described as a common preference for a "lifestyle" on the Unemployment Benefit and its normalisation as a result of inter-generational role modelling.

  > *The example was that you went out to work every single day. That example has gone away, and until that example comes back, not going to work is the norm. So, for 50 or 60 years. It's failed for that length of time. So, for generations.*

  > *We recently advertised a job. Thirteen applicants and only one was local… Some of them don't want to work… I see a barrier being locals have an easy option of going back to the benefit. Having the attitude of, well, if I don't really want this job, I'll just go back on the benefit.*

  In addition to both the normalisation of life on the Unemployment Benefit, as well as attractions such as Working for Families' subsidies hiking up potential incomes to match what could be earned as a paid employee, there are some reports of elders pressuring the young ones to underperform so as not to outshine them.

  > *Their families are pulling them back too. They don't see the value in training. "Why do you want to do that? Do you want to be better than me?" I've heard people say it about their kids, even. Pull them back down.*

  As such, when Work and Income requires clients to attend courses or apply for jobs, they are said to be only doing so to 'tick the box', in order to remain on the Unemployment Benefit.

  > *They'll get told, if they want their payment, they'll be in class. Then, the minute it's done, that ticks the box. Yes, they say, I applied for that job but it didn't work out.*

- A general lack of motivation or work ethic and, in particular, a lack of commitment and reliability, resulting in high rates of absenteeism and poor retention, which compromises business productivity.

  > *Absenteeism is our big thing… We'll have eight guys away. It's just, "Well, what are we going to run today? What are we going to do?" Because all your planning goes out the window and it's difficult. We have very few days when we have a full crew… Absenteeism up here in winter is shocking! Diabolical!*

While acknowledged as important, the tendency to prioritise whānau commitments (especially tangi and children's needs and events) well above employment obligations is said to further increase absenteeism.

> *Whānau and family issues come first; work is second or third on the list.*

There is also a disincentive to employ people from the same whānau, as a number of employees may be off at the same time due to mutual commitments.

> *We avoid employing too many people from the same families, because of tangi absences… You lose one family member and you lose them all.*

- Health and fitness problems, including not being adequately fed or clothed and lacking the strength to carry out the job requirements.

> *They come with no lunches; they haven't got any shoes… It brings in other issues, such as health, eating, seeing the doctor.*

- Limited transport options, unregistered/unwarranted vehicles and unlicensed drivers incurring numerous fines, as well as prohibitive fuel costs for travelling long distances to and from remote areas.

> *They don't have a drivers' licence. Then they get caught without a licence… they build up massive fines that then impact on their income.*

The government fine accrual process is also said to be inequitable, as this is much lower when taken from the Unemployment Benefit versus a salary or wage packet.

Employability is also affected by the lack of licensing, as this prohibits potential employees from operating machinery on the job.

> *They need to be work-ready with a driver's licence. They've done primary industry blah blah, health and safety, and everything like that, but I've [only] got two with a driver's licence.*

## Educational issues

There are said to be significant issues due to a high proportion of poor education outcomes in the region, notably resulting in numbers of school leavers having very limited literacy and numeracy skills, let alone secondary school or tertiary qualifications.

> *The standard of education, and it starts in primary schools. Why are we getting kids who have finished school and are not able to handle core things, like reading, writing and basic maths? We know it's happening on a large scale. So, that's not something we can address as an industry, but it's an issue that has to be addressed.*

At this stage, internet connectivity is said to still be very limited. Although schools in the region are said to have broadband, the lack of general (especially household) connectivity is said to be limiting young people's options (e.g. for job searching, learning online) and world view.

> *Kids here will never catch up to the kids that have connectivity in Auckland and other cities, in terms of knowing what's going on in New Zealand, let alone the world. Even in Whangārei, there's heaps of places that don't have internet.*

Furthermore, careers advisors within local high schools are said, in the main, to steer high achieving youth into higher learning in Auckland and elsewhere, focusing on entrance into other professions or industries rather than to pursue a career path in primary industries.

> *I think they want to get the kids off to university and not to be farmers or horticulturalists. I think the point they're missing is that there's a ton of university degrees tied up in all of this. That's the bit they're missing.*

In fact, the primary industries are said to be pitched as being unappealing (e.g. an image of dirty, dangerous, hard work for little remuneration), and to be the way for underachievers rather than an aim for high-achievers.

> *One of the big barriers is secondary schools. Careers people and teachers steer the bright kids into careers like engineering and law, and the less bright into building, and what's left, "You can go onto the farms".*

It was also noted that there is an apparent disinterest from some of the schools in the region to engage with the sector, which some employers believe is due to restrictions in the current curriculum.

> *Schools don't teach the skills that connect with the local employment opportunities and needs. So, there's a total disconnect between the education in schools and what's required for employment in the Mid to Far North.*

Some employers also had direct experience of such disinterest, having had their invitations for students to come along to open days, or offers to speak at the schools or career evenings, met with a negative response.

> *We ran evenings where we wanted to get careers advisors along and we tried to get people into the schools. It was like, we're too busy. So, that was a barrier in schools… We've invited kids from all the schools in Northland to a particular spot, where they can experience a whole range of farm activities, from drenching and shearing, through to dissecting animals. In some cases, it doesn't get past the headmaster's office.*

As well, there are said to be issues in relation to the sector's ability to offer opportunities for youth to gain hands-on exposure to their businesses, due to health and safety restrictions in some areas.

> *God forbid should anything happen to one of those children and the company is gone, that's it! We're trying to nurture them and get them into it, get them excited about it, but it scares me because I'm so apprehensive.*

*Health and safety bureaucracy stops workplaces from doing some of the good things for the community that they used to do, like open days, so locals and teens can see what actually happens.*

## Training and skillset limitations

Employers' views regarding the quality of skills and training of local Northland workers was also explored in the quantitative survey.

All respondents were asked to rate the quality of the local labour force in relation to having the skills and training that their business requires. They were asked to use a rating scale from 0 to 10, where 0 equals *extremely poor* and 10 equals *excellent* (Table 25).

Just under half of employers (47 percent) rated the quality of the local labour force as being good to excellent (rating of 7 to 10), while 40 percent said the local labour force was average (rating of 4 to 6) and 13 percent rated it as being poor (rating of 0 to 3).

Among the sub-sample of respondents who did not rate the quality of the local labour force's skill and training very positively, 41 percent reported that their business was being negatively impacted to some degree as a result of the quality of the local labour in Northland (Table 26).

The issues these employers raised were varied, and included: having to provide additional training to Northland workers to better meet the business's skill requirements (noted by 13 percent of the sub-sample); an inability to find workers with the skills the business required (11 percent) or workers who were reliable (nine percent); and/or poor productivity and increased costs (eight percent).

The qualitative research found that the fundamental social and educational issues affecting the region are such that a proportion of the potential labour force are ill equipped and/or unwilling to undertake training or successfully complete courses (including a general lack of commitment or confidence, and limited literacy skills) that are necessary for employment in the primary sector. As such, there is said to be a dearth of locally available employable labour with the required skillset to work in many businesses in the primary sector.

*There's a disconnect. If you want to make a profit out of it, you need to have a skilled, trained workforce… The people that we're getting applying for jobs haven't got the qualifications.*

For those who are involved in upskilling, local training institutes are considered to be expensive and are criticised from an industry perspective for failing to provide employers with the outcomes they require for trainees to be desirable employees.

Specific issues raised by employers include:

- The costs involved and very many courses that are required, before potential trainees can be certified and able start in the business.

*Especially with the way the country's going forward with health and safety, you do have to do a fair few courses before you can even look at coming onto the properties.*

*By the time you put them through a chainsaw ticket, quad course, tractors, off-road four-wheel driving, first aid, GrowSafe, pesticide handling and so on; like, they all cost $500, $600, $700, $1000 each, so you're looking at eight or nine grand to get someone upskilled with all the proper safety training.*

- What is perceived to be unnecessary recertification (e.g. ATV training).

  *These trainers are making a lot of money recertifying things that people don't forget, like driving an ATV. Then it becomes a bit of a racket too. It's an extortion business!*

- Courses containing what is perceived to be irrelevant content.

  *We want to train for one specific thing, and they'll put together a course worth eight Unit Standards, meaning the employer is paying for training for several days in non-productive training areas that will be of no use to the business. It's just ticket clipping by the ITOs…*

  In addition, some relevant courses have been withdrawn (e.g. aquaculture), some courses were noted to have the wrong industry focus (e.g. including dairy in a course meant to be focused on training for the beef sector), and some course content is not considered to be relevant to the local area (e.g. teaching students about crops that might thrive in Waikato but would fail in Northland).

- Training outcomes not meeting industry needs.

  Some training institutions are believed to be facilitating their training to suit the *"lowest common denominator"*, which is seen as compromising the industry requirements for adequate skillsets to be achieved by trainees.

  *Standards are lax. They aren't doing them any good. They pass the courses, but they don't have the skills… The training just isn't meeting the businesses' or workers' training needs.*

  Trainees are also said to be lacking the hands-on training that the sector needs, which is available in training facilities elsewhere in the country.

  *They can have all the book side of things for the certificate, but still have no practical experience… The ideal is to put them in and train them from within… ITO is good on management skills, but not teaching practicalities… There are some great training facilities, but not in this part of the country.*

  Some also hark back to the solid foundations laid by apprenticeship programmes in the past (e.g. those carried out by the Lands and Surveys, or farm cadetships), which held employees in good stead for future employment opportunities.

*Our best farm workers are people from the older age group who have been through the Lands and Surveys and have learnt real skills hands-on, back in the apprenticeship days.*

- Given the issues facing youth who have fallen through the cracks in the education system (i.e. failed to achieve basic numeracy and/or literacy levels), there are said to be fundamental problems with the paper-based classroom style of current course delivery.

  *Trainers are good at reading out of the book, but they need training that is structured with guys who have literacy issues. Putting them in a classroom is like putting them in the Colosseum! …Paper-based doesn't work.*

- Some employers also raised the issue that the training institutes do not appear to require trainees to be drug free, which is a pre-requisite for many in relation to hiring and maintaining staff (i.e. having zero tolerance for drug or alcohol use).

  *To be honest, those training facilities hold no credibility with myself and many, many other Northland farmers. I said I'd hire them all, if they can pass a drug test. Guess how many could pass? None, zero. Well, why bother teaching them? One failed drug test and they're out. It's zero tolerance.*

- The local training providers are also believed by some to be driven by funding. Often this observation was illustrated by employers' perceptions of the less than optimal trainee cohorts on various courses, particularly those said to be *"forced"* to participate in training by Work and Income as part of their requirements.

  *The toughness of some of these guys… sitting there with their hats and their sunglasses and attitude written all over them. But if they kick them out, they don't have enough people on their course and they lose their funding, so they lose their jobs. So, they put up with it.*

The quantitative survey research also explored employers' perceptions of the quality of training provided by primary industry training providers in Northland. Respondents were asked whether their business had employed any staff in the last two years that had undertaken training through one of the primary industry training providers (Table 27) and, if so, whether they felt the training that these organisations provide was producing workers with the right skills that businesses like theirs needed (Table 28).

Just over one-third of respondents (37 percent) reported that the business had employed staff in the last two years who had undertaken training through one of the primary industry training providers, with larger businesses (those with six or more permanent employees) being much more likely to have done so (61 percent) than smaller businesses with permanent staff (31 percent of those with one permanent staff member and 47 percent of those with two to five permanent employees).

Of those respondents who had workers who had undertaken training through one of the primary industry training providers, 55 percent felt that the training provided was suitable, while 44 percent reported that the training these organisations provided was not meeting all of the skill requirements that their business required.

There were no statistically significant differences of note in relation to the above findings when viewed by the number of years in business or different sectors within the primary industry.

## Restrictions in the sector's ability to provide hands-on training

Although some employers themselves would like to be able to provide on-the-job training, employers included in the qualitative research said there are significant barriers for them to do so.

The limitations of the industries in the sector's perceived ability to provide hands-on training include:

- Compliance restrictions and risk (e.g. health and safety restrictions and potential fines if accidents occur), akin to those restrictions prohibiting their ability to offer hands-on experiences for school students.

- The cost to the business in getting new workers up to speed.

  *It takes a lot of time to train and it's a cost to the business… A new worker isn't free labour. It costs you money to get them up to speed.*

- Limited support from government agencies, particularly funding, is said to limit businesses' ability and incentive to take on trainees.

  *Support from WINZ subsidies is insufficient to cover the cost of bringing on and training up a new worker and to offset the impacts on productivity.*

- Insufficient business capacity to provide opportunities for hands-on training. This is particularly pertinent to small businesses, but is also a relevant disincentive to seasonal operations.

  *There aren't enough big farms. It's hard for a small farm to employ a kid and train them.*

## Issues associated with accessing training elsewhere

With limited training facilities in the region, some potential employees who want to gain higher quality training are leaving the region to do so (e.g. to Lincoln). However, those who do undertake training elsewhere in the country are said to be unlikely to return to Northland for a variety of reasons, including new social connections and, importantly, a lack of job opportunities back home.

*I think the big shortfall in Northland is the lack of opportunity for the young ones to get this experience. Down South, there's a whole array of training institutions.*

*Young people have to go out of the area to get the training. But then they may not want to come back. They meet friends and get girlfriends. Why would they come back? There's also a lack of jobs to come back to, in many instances.*

A further driver for young farmers to stay away once their training is completed in other regions is that there are limited opportunities for young farmers to really thrive in Northland, due to a lack of industry groups that offer collegial support, networking and socialising.

*They're not coming back to Northland. There's not the youth up here in farming. There's not the Young Farmers. You get down there and there's quite a social interaction. There's a lot more young people in agriculture.*

The bottom line is also that, for many of those living in lower socio-economic situations, the expense of training and limited potential to pay back student loans is said to be a real disincentive for some young people to undertake tertiary education or other costly training options.

*Costs of training are a barrier to young people. A 38 week course at [training institute] and you come out of it with a $15K student loan.*

Some also mentioned that there is a level of reticence from some locals to actually leave Northland to train, due to family/whānau commitments. As such, many Northland youth are said to have a parochial view of the world and to lack the drive to explore further afield.

*I think a barrier is also that the local people up here won't go away either. We try to encourage people to go down to the South Island and get the skills down there and come back as a manager. But they don't want to leave mum and dad and the cousins.*

## Industry's response to local skillset limitations

Given the limited pool of skilled local labour in the region, or even those able and willing to be upskilled, in the region, employees with both general and specialist skills are consequently being sought from outside the region, including overseas.

*It's not easy to get people with the skills… We would love to employ local people, but getting them at a higher skill level has been difficult… The good workers get snapped up and there's not enough skilled locals to fill the roles, so overseas staff are filling the gap. There's just not a big enough pool of talent here.*

As well as needing to seek labour from outside the region, keen and able immigrant and migrant labour, as well as the RSE scheme participants (in spite of the scheme requiring the employment of local labour as well) are also said to be competing for jobs against locals. In this regard, employers are cognisant of the risk that this has for the Northland community, and express dismay in many instances that this is what they are forced to do if they want to run a profitable business.

*There's a lot of external competition… It's a huge risk, because the main competitors for our lowly educated kids is that they're competing with a market place that will work 15-18 hour days. The local backpackers advertise for you. They help them with bank accounts and they want to work… They are drug free and hard working.*

Around one-third of the quantitative survey respondents reported sourcing some of their permanent and/or casual/seasonal workers from outside of Northland. These employers were asked to rate the quality of their workers sourced from outside of Northland in relation to a number of attributes, using a rating scale from 0 to 10, where 0 equals *extremely poor* and 10 equals *excellent* (Table 20 through Table 24).

Notably, many employers' ratings of workers sourced from outside of Northland were higher than their ratings of Northland workers who had worked for their business.

- Seventy-two percent rated non-Northland workers' *work readiness* as being *good* to *excellent* (a rating of 7 to 10) – a mean rating of 7.3, compared with 6.6 for Northland workers.

- Sixty-eight percent rated non-Northland workers' *trainability* as being *good* to *excellent* (a rating of 7 to 10), while 26 percent rated them as being *average* (a rating of 4 to 6) and seven percent as being *poor* (a rating of 0 to 3) – a mean rating of 7.1, compared with 6.8 for Northland workers.

- Seventy-five percent rated non-Northland workers' *enthusiasm while working* as being *good* to *excellent* (a rating of 7 to 10), while 19 percent rated them as being *average* (a rating of 4 to 6) and six percent as being *poor* (a rating of 0 to 3) – a mean rating of 7.7, compared with 6.9 for Northland workers.

- Eighty percent rated non-Northland workers' *dependability* as being *good* to *excellent* (a rating of 7 to 10), while 12 percent rated them as being *average* (a rating of 4 to 6) and eight percent as being *poor* (a rating of 0 to 3) – a mean rating of 8.0, compared with 6.8 for Northland workers.

- 71 percent rated non-Northland workers' *productivity* as being *good* to *excellent* (a rating of 7 to 10), while 21 percent rated them as being *average* (a rating of 4 to 6) and eight percent as being *poor* (a rating of 0 to 3) – a mean rating of 7.4, compared with 6.8 for Northland workers.

### 3.3.4 Quality of some employers within the sector

Poor employment conditions offered by some, particularly smaller and older employers who haven't kept up with the times or compliance requirements and expectations, are said to be resulting in negative experiences of working in the primary sector for some employees.

Particular issues in this regard are said to be due to inadequate facilities (including housing, and equipment posing health and safety risks) and poor remuneration. Youth are said to be particularly vulnerable to being taken advantage of; often working long hours on poor wages without formal contracts.

*A lot of small farms are crappy employers. Just because they are the boss of a farm doesn't mean they know how to be an employer. Great farmer, but don't know how to be an employer… A bad first time experience and that first timer is off farming for good. How do we teach those kinds of employers to be better?*

### 3.3.5 Limitations in the demand for labour

As noted earlier, most Northland employers are small businesses with five or fewer permanent employees. As such, the small size of these businesses puts certain constraints on the demand for labour in the Mid to Far North.

Other factors which can limit the demand for labour in the primary industries include economic fluctuations and seasonal and erratic workflows, which are evidently a significant barrier to sustainable employment in the sector. Employers note that they have tried to coordinate fluctuating workflows and seasonal peaks and troughs, but have had little success to date.

*In the small contractor sector, it's the volatility of work, which is driven by price. When it's high, everyone wants to cut, but when it's low, things shut down. So, the inconsistency in the market is really bad for employment.*

*I think the big issue for anyone in the primary sector is, first of all, you're driven by your markets and they fluctuate; you're driven by your seasons; and you're driven by the different activities that occur at different times of the year… we've absolutely struggled to get some cohesion and cooperation in it. There's just not enough work in Northland; really there's not.*

Fluctuations in the demand for labour also present some employers with a disincentive to provide training to upskill workers, because long-term employment opportunities may not be a reality in their businesses.

*There's a fairly big chunk of the market that's job-by-job. So, consequently, there's little investment in people, other than, get this job done, because I'm not going to invest a whole lot of time and energy in health and safety, in terms of training, because we won't be here next week and we need to be the cheapest right now, to get this job.*

Mechanisation in a few of the larger businesses (which is anticipated to increase in the near future in the forestry and horticultural sectors) is also a threat to the employment of local labour for two key reasons:

- Firstly, this is seen as a way of avoiding the burden of compliance in employing labour per se.
- Secondly, current staff or potential employees from the local area generally lack the technological skills that will be required moving forward, with increased mechanisation and the resulting changes to the business model.

*All the limitations around different changes to the H&S Act, it's getting prohibitive from an employer's perspective. Mechanisation is the easy route, because it takes the people component out of it… While staff are your greatest asset, they are also a big liability.*

*A percentage of staff will not be retained as a result, as they won't have the right skills and training for the new business model.*

### 3.3.6 Public perceptions of the primary sector and 'social licence issues'

Employers in the qualitative research believe the public generally have negative perceptions of the primary industry sector, which both limit support for the sector generally and affect their ability to attract quality employees. These are generally referred to as 'social license issues', in which public acceptance of certain practices and/or outcomes determine the level of public support for such endeavours.

In particular, negative public perceptions of the sector and issues related to community and stakeholder approval or acceptance of the benefits accrued from primary sector are noted to be key deterrents. In particular, these include public perceptions of the sector's responsibility for environmental damage, damage to infrastructure (e.g. roading), poor health and safety practices, coupled with a lack of appreciation of the economic contribution of the sector. While such issues apply to the sector generally, they are said to be particularly pertinent in relation to the forestry and dairy industries.

*This is not perceived as a sexy industry. Well, the industry is more than unsexy, certainly in our community anyway. It's more seen as public enemy number two! We haven't got the social licence… We have a bad image. The newspapers are all about negativity, not positivity.*

*The perceptions are that forestry degrades the land and destroys the roads. It's a de-motivator to attracting young people into the industry. People forget all of the money and employment that the industry is bringing to the region… All the PR around dairy farming is that we're all dirty; we're all wrecking the environment, and our cows fart… It's very hard to get a positive message out there and employ people.*

Issues relating to public perception and misconceptions about the primary industries were also explored in the quantitative survey (Table 27 through Table 29).

Just nine percent of the survey respondents felt that the general public has a *good* understanding of the primary industries, while 62 percent said the general public's understanding is *poor* (39 percent) or *very poor* (23 percent).

In a series of follow-up questions, the survey respondents were also asked to what extent they felt people in Northland believe the primary industries engage in environmentally sustainable practices (Table 30) and provide sustainable employment opportunities for the local workforce (Table 31).

- Just 28 percent of respondents felt that people in Northland believe the primary industries engage in *environmentally sustainable practices* to a moderate or large extent.

- Less than half (46 percent) felt that people in Northland believe the primary industries provide *sustainable employment opportunities* to the local workforce.

When asked if they think the general public's attitude towards the primary industries is positive or negative overall, just over one-quarter of respondents (27 percent) said they feel the general public has a positive attitude towards the sector (Table 32). In comparison, more than one-third said they think the general public has a negative attitude (36 percent).

There were no statistically significant differences of note in relation to these findings when viewed by business size, duration in business or different sub-sectors within the primary industries.

Survey respondents who believed that the general public's overall attitude towards the primary industries was generally negative most frequently cited reasons such as:

- A belief that people in non-urban areas have a very poor knowledge of the primary industries (noted by 37 percent of the sub-sample).

- Negative portrayals of the sector by the media (33 percent).

- Perceptions that the primary industries damage the environment (11 percent).

- The general public's lack of appreciation of the primary industries contribution to New Zealand's economy (eight percent).

In contrast, of the survey respondents who believed the general public's attitude towards the primary sector was generally positive, almost half made comments in relation to the general public recognising that the primary industries provide employment opportunities to New Zealanders and support the economy in general (noted by 46 percent of the sub-sample).

The other main reason that these respondents felt the general public viewed the sector positively was that Northlanders just have a positive attitude towards the primary industries (noted by 22 percent of the sub-sample).

## Primary industry employers' personal attitudes towards a career in the primary industries

Primary industry employers promoting the sector as a good career choice can be an important factor in attracting young workers into the industry. The quantitative survey research found that the majority of primary sector business owners hold positive views of their industry as a career (Table 34), with 82 percent rating their personal attitude towards working in the industry as *positive* (48 percent) or *very positive* (34 percent). Larger employers (those with six or more permanent employees) had the most positive views, with 92 percent saying their personal attitude was *positive* or *very positive.*

Just six percent of the survey respondents reported having negative attitudes towards working in their industry and 12 percent said they had neither positive nor negative views about their sector.

Among those respondents who rated working in their sector positively, the most frequently mentioned reason for this was that working in the primary sector was enjoyable from either a work or lifestyle perspective (noted by 40 percent of the sub-sample). Other reasons noted included a view that that working in the primary industries was a respected career path with good opportunities (18 percent), that the pay was relatively good (11 percent), and that they wouldn't be working in the sector if they didn't enjoy it (10 percent).

In contrast, the most frequently cited reasons provided by the small number of survey respondents who said they had unfavourable personal views about working in the sector (just 17 percent of respondents), were the low pay (53 percent of the sub-sample), that a career in their sector was hard work (18 percent) and/or that the sector being viewed negatively by others (eight percent).

In relation to the above findings, there were no statistically significant differences of note when viewed by duration in business or primary industry sector.

When asked if they would recommend working in their industry to others, 62 percent said that they would recommend their industry to others, while nine percent said they would not recommend it (Table 36).

A further thirteen percent of respondents said it would depend on who the person was, and seven percent said it would depend on external factors (e.g. the economic conditions) but they wouldn't recommend it to others at the moment.

There were no statistically significant differences in relation to primary industry employers' propensity to recommend their sector as a career to others when viewed by size, sector or duration of years in business. Rather, their personal attitude towards working in their industry was a more significant factor.

Three-quarters (74 percent) of respondents who reported having a positive attitude towards working in their sector said that they would recommend working in the industry to others, while half of those with negative views said they would not recommend it.

### 3.3.7 Barriers to business growth

Barriers to business growth in the Northland region are said to be very much hampering employment opportunities.

Aside from some employers looking at increased mechanisation in their businesses (as discussed), in employers' opinions the need for highly skilled labour, as projected in the MPI commissioned publications[8], is unlikely to become a reality in Northland in the current environment in the short-medium term. As such, an increased demand for highly skilled labour is considered to only be really likely in the region if and when the plans for economic development come to fruition, and there is sufficient support for business growth and diversification (i.e. via the Tai Tokerau Economic Growth Plan).

> *I think the restrictions for us are more a function of the lack of economic growth in the area. When there's growth, only then there'll be more employment, as a result of it.*

Although some respondents expressed a willingness to upskill their current staff, the negative state of the current potential local labour market is such that, as those businesses that do intensify or diversify in the future and require a different skillset from employees, many believe they will need to source staff from outside the region to fill these gaps, as they currently do.

> *We've just brought in two [overseas experts] to run the business management side. They've got the experience we need to bring in to develop the business.*

A number of factors are said to be adversely affecting business growth and development in the current environment, including a lack of cooperation within the sector, the burden of compliance, economic pressures and inadequate infrastructure in the region.

## The lack of cooperation within and between businesses in the sector

Within their individual industries, as well as between the primary sector industries, there is said to be little coordination of businesses. As such, the sector say they are struggling to work together to look at long-term strategies to increase the economic resilience of the region.

> *There needs to be a concerted effort to help the governance capabilities within the sector in Northland, in order to grow business. We need to have a more long-term strategy to get industry to buy into a partnership of supply and demand chain of employment.*

Some employers also noted that, in fact, government compliance sometimes works against any efforts to create a more cooperative, sustainable environment. For example, the Commerce Commission's regulations against cartels appear to thwart, or at least minimise, the industry working together to collectively deal with issues.

> *We've absolutely struggled to get a cooperative model within our sectors and between them. What frustrates us at a high policy level is the Commerce Commission competition rules. Sometimes the competition works against us. Sometimes, government is so focused on ensuring there is competition, there's more focus on being sure everyone is complying by the rules than working together.*

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[8] *Tai Tokerau Northland Growth Study*, Jenkins, M. for the Ministry for Primary Industries, February 2015; *People Powered* for the Ministry for Primary Industries, June 2014; and *Future Capability Needs for Primary Industries in New Zealand*, Grimmond, D., et al, for the Ministry for Primary Industries, April 2014.

## Compliance burden

Local body fees and regulations are believed to be inconsistent, restrictive and incrementally increasing, which is said to be making business growth prohibitive and the future uncertain.

In particular, some employers identified that, due to the increasingly regulatory environment, they are reticent to invest and are looking more toward downsizing than growing their businesses.

> *There's forever more rules, regulations, compliance that pull money out of the farms. Less money in it for the farmers, less employment opportunities for anyone, including locals... There's a lack of confidence to invest in the industry at a farm level… It just seems easier not to, in what seems like a really uncertain regulatory environment. There's so much lack of confidence, it's really widespread.*

Specific areas that are said to be resulting in significant expense and administrative burden, especially for smaller businesses, include:

- Council inspection fees and reporting (e.g. for septic tanks, engineer's reports for bringing farm housing up to compliance).
- Administration and documentation for animal welfare and food safety regulations.
- Compliance requirements with regard to health and safety and employment law.
- Risks of fines (e.g. for employee non-compliance and injury) and difficulties disciplining or exiting employees.

  As such, some smaller businesses say that they simply avoid employing permanent staff for these reasons; instead opting to employ contractors on a needs-basis.

> *For Northland, the small farms are a disproportionately large number. If all those farms employed one person, it would add up to a lot of jobs, but there's a lot of people desperately trying to avoid it… The biggest risk you ever take with a small business is to employ somebody. If they bugger up, you don't get a pay packet that year. It's pretty much that simple. Nowadays, you could get a criminal prosecution too. Your hair would stand on end with what someone making a mistake can do for you… So, when people do come on the farms, they are contract labour.*

As a result, compliance requirements are said to be often simply put in the too-hard basket and, for some businesses, are said to be sorely lacking.

> *I mean, if I was to do everything that I'm supposed to do, I'd never get any work done… The tendency for the small operator is to just shut their eyes to it and plug on as best they can… Demands from compliance organisations are very paper-based.*

For those businesses that were looking at expansion, local government consent processes are said to be slow, time-consuming and bureaucratic, and therefore hold up business development and employment opportunities.

Particular areas of contention raised in discussions with employers include:

- Zoning and restrictions imposed on the rural sectors that are said to be inhibiting development of some of the larger businesses (e.g. restrictions imposed water space allowance is said to be hampering the development of the aquaculture sector in the region and restrictions on the expansion of industry in non-designated areas, such as building or expanding forestry mills).

- Rates, especially for pre-productive land under development (e.g. slow to yield forestry and horticulture plantations).

  The level of rates was raised as a significant barrier to new and developing businesses (including iwi decisions about how to utilise new Treaty of Waitangi settlement land). As such, much land in Northland is said to remain underdeveloped, because of the tax burden that would be attracted prior to any income being generated.

  > *The minute you are a land owner and you want to start looking at commercial opportunity, but with no prospect of income in the short-to-medium term, the council wants the rates. But how can we, before we make an income?*

## Economic pressures

The effects of an unstable economy and competition from overseas are such that parts of the sector are facing a downward turn, resulting in cost-cutting, including cutting labour costs.

With dairy and forestry sectors said to be hardest hit in this area, this seriously affects employment opportunities in the region.

> *Forestry is limited by the growth of the economy affected by overseas competition from the US and Asia… Dairying has taken a huge hit lately... There's no money at the moment, so here's a shortage of jobs with the dairy downturn. It's hurting the local economy.*

## Inadequate infrastructure

Also affecting the economic development of the area is the fact that Northland is said to be seriously lacking the infrastructure required to support real, sustainable economic growth. In particular, poor roading, lack of a viable port and limited internet coverage are said to be key barriers to the current facilitation of business in the area, business growth and development and future investment.

> *Our basic infrastructure in Northland is not adequate to encourage business growth. The infrastructure; the roads… We haven't got broadband in the area. We're trying, but we're a long way off it … We're on catch-up all the way.*

One of the objectives of the survey was to quantify Northland employers' perceptions regarding the degree to which these factors were having a negative impact on their industry or sector's ability to grow and prosper *(*Table 37 through

Table 39).

This was carried out by asking respondents to rate the extent to which each issue was having a negative impact on their sector on a scale of one to five, where one equals *not at all* and five equals a *large extent*.

- The quality of Northland's *roads and transport infrastructure* was rated by 54 percent of respondents as negatively impacting their sector's ability to grow and prosper to a *moderate* or *large extent.* A further 23 percent felt the quality of roads and Northland's transport infrastructure was hampering the industry to *some extent*, while a similar proportion said it was not an issue at all (11 percent) or only impacting their sector to a *small extent* (12 percent).
  - Larger businesses in particular were more likely to identify Northland's roading and transport infrastructure as being an issue for their sector, with 49 percent rating it as impacting their sector to a *large extent*.
- *Access to ultrafast broadband* was also identified by more than half of the survey respondents as negatively impacting on their sectors ability to grow and prosper to a *moderate* or *large extent* (54 percent). Seventeen percent of respondents said this was the case to *some extent*, while 30 percent said the issues was not impacting on their sector (15 percent) or only impacting on their sector to a *small extent* (15 percent).
- Among the survey respondents, the *location of the nearest seaport* was less likely to be identified as being a significant issue, when compared with Northland's roading and transport infrastructure or access to ultrafast broadband.
  - While 26 percent of respondents said the location of the nearest seaport was impacting their sector to a *moderate* or *large extent*, with 43 percent of respondents saying it was not having an impact at all. Eighteen percent said the location to the nearest seaport was negatively impacting their sector to a *small extent*, while 13 percent said it was having a negative impact to *some extent*.
  - The location of the nearest seaport was more likely to be identified as being an issue for larger businesses with six or more permanent employers, however; 43 percent said it was impacting on their sectors ability to grow and prosper to a *moderate* or *large extent* (30 percent felt it was impacting on the sector to a *large extent*).

Survey respondents were also asked to identify the extent to which they felt *access to suitable workers* and/or the *distances between where workers live and where businesses were located* negatively impacted on the primary industry's ability to grow and prosper.

Forty-three percent reported that access to suitable workers from Northland was having a negative impact to a *moderate* or *large extent*. A further quarter (24 percent) felt access to suitable workers was impacting the sector to *some extent*. One in three either felt that access to suitable workers was not impacting the sector at all (16 percent) or just to a *small extent* (18 percent).

Notably, there were no statistically significant differences in relation to respondents' views regarding whether access to suitable workers was having a negative impact on the industry's ability to grow and prosper.

The issue of the distance between where Northland workers live and where businesses are located was not viewed by the survey respondents as having as big an impact on the industry's ability to grow and prosper, when compared with access to suitable workers from Northland. About one half of the respondents (53 percent) said the distance between where workers live and businesses were located was having either *no impact at all* (31 percent) or that was only impacting the sector to a *small extent* (22 percent). However, 17 percent of respondents said the distance between where workers live and businesses are located was negatively impacting the sector to *some extent*, while 30 percent said it was impacting the sector to a *moderate* or *large extent*.

As a follow-up question, the survey respondents were asked, on an unprompted basis, if there were *any other barriers* that were having a negative impact on the primary industry's ability to grow and prosper in Northland. Just over half identified one or more issues, while 42 percent said there were no other barriers that they could think of, or that they did not know.

Most of the issues discussed previously in this report (compliance burden, poverty and other social issues, the quality of education, etc.) were identified on an unprompted basis by small proportions of survey respondents. However, as the survey question was framed on an unprompted basis, it is not known whether greater proportions of the respondents would have identified these issues as significant barriers on a prompted basis.

# 4.0 Opportunities to enhance local employment

Employers suggested a number of possible opportunities that could assist in closing the gap between the local labour market offering and primary sector employment demands, as well as enhance business growth and employment opportunities.

In the qualitative research, there was a general consensus that an integrated approach, involving industry representatives working together with iwi, decision makers from MPI and other relevant central and local government agencies, would be necessary to overcome current barriers

> *It needs to be a joint-venture: the Ministry of Education, MPI, MBIE, MSD… Why aren't they talking to each other and coordinating their efforts?*

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked, on an unprompted basis, what they thought that was the one thing that would have the biggest impact in helping the primary industries in Northland to grow and prosper (Table 43). The four most frequently identified areas were:

- Better economic conditions (identified by 20 percent of respondents).
- Greater government action and investment in the primary sector and Northland region in general (19 percent)
- Changes to legislation/policy (e.g. in relation to minimising the burden of compliance) (identified by 19 percent).
- Better education for potential employees (identified by 16 percent).

## 4.1 Opportunities to promote career paths and improve the quality of the workforce

There are believed to be significant opportunities for MPI to work with the industry, other government agencies, and schools and training institutions in the region to promote career paths in the sector and to better match the quality of local labour with business demands.

### 4.1.1 Promoting and facilitating primary sector career paths

Although promoting the industry in a positive light via schools is considered to be essential to encourage a better quality of students entering the sector, current job shortages and limitations in career opportunities will need to be factored into any promotional endeavours, until such time as the industry has greater capacity and diversity of job opportunities.

That said, opportunities that employers identified to better engage students by engaging with schools and relevant ministries to encourage the promotion of primary industry career paths, include:

- Facilitating a commitment from relevant ministries and schools in the region to offer vocational pathways into the primary sector within the curriculum.

- Raising awareness and educating careers advisors, so that they are able to offer students information and advice about career opportunities in the primary sector and are willing to encourage them (especially high-achievers) to pursue relevant training and tertiary education.

  > *Biodiversity and technology and fuels and, I mean, it's really funky, but nobody knows that stuff.*

  While the sector wants to attract a higher quality of applicants for what opportunities currently exist, this will be especially relevant in the future, if and when diversification and specialisation takes hold, and skilled workers will be in higher demand.

- Supporting employers to bring students into their businesses, by addressing barriers to this (e.g. health and safety restrictions) and/or offering school-based initiatives. As well as government funding, it was noted that there are other streams of revenue that could be tapped into, as was the case with Northland College's Trust-run farm.

  > *Employers need to get out there into the schools… Creating opportunities to offer local youth hands-on experience of the industry when they are making choices that will affect their career paths.*

- Industry representatives and role models accessing schools to actively promote work in the sector.

  > *It's getting the guy with the bling-bling and the boy racer car to turn up at school and go, hey, look at me, I'm a dairy farm worker! Because, they think a dairy farmer is going to be covered in shit and overalls and drive an old dunger ute; not like, I go to the gym after work. You need them to be able to connect, eh?*

### 4.1.2 Enhancing training outcomes and increasing hands-on training in the sector

Given criticisms of the lack of relevance and quality of current training offerings, and the lack of practical experience afforded to trainees in current programmes, a number of opportunities were identified that employers believe might enhance the training environment and trainee outcomes to better meet their needs. These include:

- MPI taking a lead role in coordinating and working with relevant ministries, the various training institutions and industry representatives, to better fund and tailor training.

*If MPI had more involvement and used people with internal sector knowledge, it would make all the difference… What do we need to do to get these people skilled for the task? …An industry group needs to be driving this, but be supported by the funders.*

- Modifying the current training model to take into account learning and cultural issues (e.g. providing support for trainees who struggle with paperwork and classroom-based exercises, and incorporating more hands-on, practical components).

  *Sit a kid in a classroom and teach them how a tree grows? A kid that has not done well in the education system and is having trouble reading and writing? No good to sit them in a classroom and give them Level 2.*

  Employers believed that if training could engage students on a cultural (not just educational) level, this would empower trainees to really learn, by increasing the relevance of the information and tying it in to their commitment to the community and the land.

  *They also need to make it connect with cultural needs… We need to get the right trainers who can recognise the needs and limitations of the guys needing the training and tailor the content and how it is delivered appropriately.*

- Supporting and adequately funding the industry, so that they are both incentivised and enabled to provide apprenticeship/cadetship models of training within their businesses. This style of training is considered to be the ideal method to provide trainees with the practical experience the industry needs and wants from its new entrants.

  Along the same lines, some would like to see more training options offered in Northland, comparable to those available in other areas.

  *An area like Northland deserves more funding… All those outfits are based south of Auckland. I think it's a big shortfall of Northland.*

  *Give two young people per year a chance to come and have the opportunity to do a cadetship… Put the money on the table and let industry decide how it should be spent to train the workforce they need.*

### 4.1.3 Providing greater social supports for those who want to work but struggle to do so

Although issues in relation to the endemic poverty in region are well known and will require addressing in the long-term, some basic inroads were suggested by the industry that would assist them to better support those employees who want to work but struggle to do so.

Opportunities identified in this regard include:

- Providing more local health support for those with alcohol or drug problems who want to make a lifestyle change or who slip up.

*If you try to get assistance to get someone on a drug programme, they're just non-existent. They're crying out for programmes.*

- Finding ways to overcome the issues in relation to transportation and licensing.

  Given the topography of the area, there are significant problems for people needing to travel long distances for work, often to and from very remote areas. The key problems include licensing drivers and warranting and registering vehicles, as well as access to vehicles per se.

  Although Work and Income has endeavoured to address this via various initiatives (e.g. providing buses), there continue to be problems (e.g. workers being unable to get to the bus stops).

  For example, employers suggested that solutions might involve funding home pick-up buses (rather than at collective bus stops) and incorporating driver licensing into training courses.

## 4.2 Opportunities to support better employment conditions and options

### 4.2.1 Improving employment conditions

Given the issues raised with regard to poor business management from some employers in the region (especially smaller and older businesses), employers identified a need to provide support for under-performing employers to enable them to better manage their employees and compliance requirements (i.e. to become 'good employers').

*If we're going to attract the right people into the industries, we're going to have to make sure that they've got jobs that are worth going to… We need to provide the support to get up there. I mean, these guys don't even know what they need to do. I think we can coordinate it, but I think we need support from the likes of MPI and MBIE to help us get the message across.*

Particular suggestions include providing regional workshops to address the problems, and one-on-one sessions via a mentoring system, which could be formal (e.g. via MPI advisors, Rural Support) and/or informal (e.g. via sector meetings/groupings, "cowshed meetings").

*They need someone who is down-to-earth to go out and say, hey, look, this is what you need to be compliant, and if you want your workers to stay, this is what you have to do. Because, no one sets out to do a bad job. So, if they get that in their heads then they can work on it, but they need the support to do it.*

The challenge will be how to engage those in greatest need. As such, some suggested using industry knowledge to identify which businesses are struggling in the region and/or targeting those who have incurred fines in various areas.

### 4.2.2 Addressing fluctuating job opportunities

An opportunity identified to address the adverse effects on employment resulting from fluctuating workflows due to economic and seasonal peaks and troughs, would be to coordinate and encourage employers to 'share' employees/contractors.

For example, some employers suggested that it may be possible to better manage variable employment needs across the sector and offer ongoing employment, rather than employees being unemployed for periods of downtime within one industry. This would, however, require significant coordination and for employees to engage in a range of training to be fit-for-work across a range of industries.

> *There's the seasonal fluctuations but there's ways of doing things, if you work together, so that we can spread the load to keep people employed and trained throughout the whole year.*

## 4.3 Opportunities to improve public perceptions of the primary sector

While engaging with schools will be a very important step in improving the image of the primary sector (e.g. by promoting careers in the sector as a positive choice), a broader marketing campaign to promote the benefits of the primary industry sector to the region is also necessary to increase public confidence.

In particular, a marketing campaign would provide the opportunity to target key influencers (parents and caregivers) and encourage them to consider career opportunities in the industry for their children in a more positive light.

> *We need to deal to the misconceptions of the damage that the primary sector is inflicting on the environment, and perceptions of bad health and safety practices.*

Furthermore, given the industry's current "bad press", employers believe a broad public campaign would be a prime opportunity to address social licence issues and gain wider public support for and appreciation of the sector's contribution to the local economy, including employment, and the industry's efforts to enhance environmental benefits and sustainability.

> *There is a need for a concerted, large scale marketing campaign, driven by central government, of the value of the industry in money to the community; what good is being done in relation to the environment; social good from the flow-on effects of employment, education and training of workers.*

## 4.4 Opportunities to support business development in the primary sector

The industry would like to see MPI take the opportunity to better support them, by advocating for them and working more closely with them to engage with central and local government to identify and implement ways to enhance business development, mitigate the impact of compliance requirements and improve the infrastructure in the area to encourage business growth.

*Let's talk about who would do what, and how to build the infrastructure to support it.*

Importantly, as noted, the industry believes business development and growth is a prerequisite to any initiatives designed to promote employment in the sector, due to the limitations of current job opportunities.

### 4.4.1 Facilitating collaboration within and between primary sector employers

Given that efforts to coordinate and collaborate within and between industry sectors is said to have proven to be ineffective to date, employers identified a role for MPI to act as a facilitator in this regard. During the group discussions it was quickly apparent that many of the issues that businesses were facing were common across the sector, and that there would be significant value in MPI working with sector representatives, including iwi decision makers, and across government and other agencies to collaboratively develop initiatives.

*So, if the sector says, "This is what we want to achieve and these are the barriers to doing that", then it's their job to remove those barriers. They need to do it in a really quick way, as opposed to saying, "Which department is going to take care of this or that problem?"*

*Talking about the linkages between the different parts of our industry; this is the first time we've sat in a room together. Really, we've got some common issues, but what I don't see is an organisation to bring us all together to sort it out. There's a need for that, because it needs to be a facilitated round table sort of thing.*

Some suggested that such discussions should be ongoing (*"not a one-off"*), in order to gain traction and continue moving forward in a positive direction.

*It should be a continuous thing. This is what we've done; this is what we've achieved; this is where we're going. That's how you move forward.*

### 4.4.2 Increasing central government support

Increasing the level of support from central government is considered to be essential by employers, in order to make any real and lasting inroads to develop and grow the primary sector businesses in Northland.

However, the current and historical approach government agencies have taken is believed to be *"disjointed and bureaucratic"*, with individual government agencies working in silos rather than together, and foisting initiatives into the area without due consultation with local industry.

Specific opportunities for government to better support the sector include:

- MPI engaging with other relevant government agencies and working closely with the industry and iwi to identify and invest in what industry believes needs to happen to facilitate business growth in the region.

  Importantly, while they want and need government investment in the region, employers believe that solutions need to be identified and owned by the industry themselves, rather than by *"Wellington based"* government agencies. As such, they see the government's role as being an *"enabler"* to facilitate change, rather than to direct it.

  > *MPI, MBIE, MoE, MSD, there's no relationship between those Ministries and the primary industries in place. They're all driving for solutions from different spaces… Government should take on board what we say we need and are trying to achieve and work with us to remove the barriers.*

- MPI acting as an advocate for the industry (e.g. at Environment Court hearings, where they are noted to be absent whereas other agencies are said to have a strong presence, e.g. DoC).

  > *MPI need to be seen to be publically advocating for the primary sector, boots and all… They sit in their policy positions in Wellington producing things, but they're not out there as a voice in support of farmers, of primary industries.*

- As well, some noted that MPI has very little presence in the region, which would be highly valued. For example, some employers discussed the benefits of having the MAF presence that was in the area in the past, delivering advice and support to the sector.

  > *We used to have a MAF office here. They provided free advice and research and development too.*

## 4.4.3 Mitigating the compliance burden

The industry would like to see MPI working alongside them to find ways to mitigate the compliance burden they currently experience and anticipate will incrementally increase moving forward.

Opportunities identified in this regard include:

- Identifying ways to reduce the costs and administrative burden of compliance requirements (e.g. for employment and health and safety).

  For example, employers discussed the possibility of groups of smaller businesses who do not have dedicated administrators, getting together and employing someone to carry out all of their compliance administration.

- Working with the industry and local authorities to ensure compliance requirements are realistic and appropriate, as well as costs being fair and reasonable.

  In particular, employers believe the councils should involve industry representatives as consultants, especially when they are implementing changes or bringing in new restrictions and requirements.

  > *There needs to be a farmer representation on council, providing input as to what is feasible, from a farming perspective. A voice who is a practical farmer with experience, to provide a reality check… Working with local bodies to address compliance issues, to ensure these are promoting rather than inhibiting, business growth… Somebody has got to sit down with the MPs and say, get rid of these bloody regulations, because they're stifling everyone!*

- Removing/reducing barriers to business expansion. In particular:

  - Eliminating or at least minimising the cost of rates on land under development until income is generated.

    > *To grow the primary sector in Northland, you need to focus on growing the crops or sectors that are appropriate to the climate, but it takes a long time from start-up to having a commercially viable harvest… there's a lot of under-utilised land in the North, but they need to address the rates issue so that the land can be used.*

  - Looking at ways to minimise the consent burden and restrictions around expanding or creating new enterprises (e.g. waterways, new plant).

### 4.4.4 Improving infrastructure in the region

Working with local authorities and government agencies to improve and develop Northland's infrastructural systems is also considered key to business growth in the region. In particular, taking the opportunity to invest in transportation (specifically, developing a port and improving the state of the region's roading system) and communications (e.g. improving access to broadband).

> *Economic development will occur when the right infrastructure is put in place, so that individual businesses can see an opportunity to create business and make it a success. It comes back to creating the infrastructure, so that you've got the transportation, the communication and the social support that makes people want to live and enjoy life in Northland, and then people will invest in business. Our businesses will grow too.*

> *There were plans to build a port at Marsden Point, but that's never happened, despite ongoing promises. A port would transform Northland.*

# 5.0 Responses to initiatives and engagement strategies

During Stage 2 of the qualitative research, participants were invited to respond to a range of MPI and other government-led initiatives and strategies designed to engage various stakeholders (see Appendix A, Stage 2 Discussion guide for a brief description of these initiatives and strategies).

## 5.1 Overall response to the initiatives and strategies

The overall response to the initiatives tabled and discussed within the groups was relatively neutral.

Reasons for a mainly lukewarm response centred around the fact that, as the sector sees it, government agencies continue to operate in silos and present policy-driven ad hoc initiatives, rather than taking a more coordinated and longer-term approach. They would prefer to see inter-agency support from central and local government working in collaboration with the sector to drive real economic growth and development (as discussed in the previous section)[9].

> *You've got all these agencies saying, "We can solve the unemployment problem in Northland", but the infrastructure and support is not there. There's no overarching economic development plan driving the agenda.*

Furthermore, employers reiterated their concerns about promoting the sector as a positive career choice, given the reality of job shortages and limited opportunities in the current environment and uncertain future.

> *These initiatives we're talking about are latching onto an economic opportunity that is coming. But the industry isn't developed yet to take advantage of these opportunities. These projects have everyone going, "Let's get prepared for what's coming." But then what's coming doesn't come.*
>
> *Shouldn't there be an alignment in promoting and developing those sectors first, before promoting jobs that don't exist yet? It should be part of the whole strategy, but the industry needs to get there first before you can start promoting choices and pathways that aren't there yet.*

[9] It should be noted that the Tai Tokerau Economic Action Plan was yet to be launched in Northland at the time of the qualitative interviews, and had just been launched at the time of the survey.

The survey also included a number of questions regarding whether Mid to Far North employers were aware of any of these initiatives and, if so, whether they felt they were having a significant impact in helping the situation in Northland. However, given these initiatives were relatively new at the time of the survey, or were just in the process of being launched, none of the survey respondents were aware of the specific initiatives.

A very small number of respondents identified other initiatives they were aware of, but none of these are directly associated with the Ministry for Primary Industries.

## 5.2 Responses to specific initiatives and engagement strategies

### *Champions*

While in the current environment employment opportunities may not meet with a renewed demand, the industry see significant value in the *Champions* project in raising the profile of the primary industry sector.

As such, employers voiced enthusiasm for the initiative, as long as it is targeted at the right audiences, at the right time.

Two audiences targeted by different types of industry *Champions* were identified as being key to the successful promotion of the primary industries:

- Young people, who are believed to be best targeted by enthusiastic young role models selling the benefits of working in the primary sector.

  > *Use Young Farmer winners as Champions… They're still young enough and they speak from experience. They've got a career path and they've only got good things to say.*

- The general public, using industry spokespeople to engage and sell the economic, social and environmental benefits of the primary industry to the region, as well as nationally. In particular, key influencers (parents, caregivers and educators) should be targeted, in order to gain buy-in for youth to enter the primary sector.

  > *I think, in a greater sense, one of the things I would like to see in Northland is that the community trust us and believe that their children can come and work for us and they'll be safe; they won't be killed; they won't be ripped off and we'll genuinely look after them. That's the message I want to get out to the parents.*

### *Primary Industry Ambassadors in Schools*

Again, while there is considered to be significant value in the promotion of the sector within schools, the opportunities need to be out there in the first instance.

> *I think we can influence by having a form of ambassadorship, or businesses getting into schools to talk about what's available out there. I still think there's value in that, but you can't sell it too hard, because the jobs are not going to be there for them necessarily, when they come out. So it comes back to the big macro scale of providing the infrastructure and the communications and social supports that the community and businesses need to thrive.*

In addition, the more technical career paths that are to be promoted through this programme are considered problematic, given the limitations of job opportunities in these specialist areas currently available in the primary sector in Northland.

> *On the info sheet, it's a bit disturbing to see they are promoting the technical jobs. So, right away, the focus is on driving kids to the high echelon areas, but how many openings are there in these fields?*

The promotion of more entry level job opportunities is, therefore, considered to be a more practical and realistic measure in the current environment.

> *We've got to make sure the jobs are there. The biggest impact would be in relation to the core roles, where most of the work in the sector is.*

As discussed in Section 3, this initiative raised issues for employers in regard to the difficulties they have experienced in trying to engage with schools in the region, including:

- Employers who had approached local schools in the past, offering to provide students with exposure to aspects of working in their industry, had met with limited success.
- Barriers in engaging with teachers, due to curriculum restrictions.
- Careers advisors driving high achievers into other occupations.

> *So, we're going to the teachers, or the Ambassadors are going to the teachers, and saying, these are the opportunities, this is what the world looks like in the primary sector. Great, we're having a conversation, but nothing's going to change unless the curriculum changes.*
>
> *The schools are focused on encouraging students into university and city careers. They don't seem to realise that there are degree and career paths in the primary sector… You have to convince the careers advisors.*

As such, some suggest that the schools need to be engaged in the first instance and be the drivers of such an initiative, rather than for *Ambassadors* to try to gain access to the schools.

> *If it were the schools looking for somebody to come in and provide these opportunities to show them what's there, I think it would be better.*

That said, the ideal *Ambassadors* (as for the *Champions* project) are considered to be young people who have succeeded in making careers in the local primary industry sector.

## *Enterprising Primary Industries Career (EPIC) Challenge*

Although this programme again raises issues regarding the reluctance of many of the local schools to engage with the primary sector, employers thought the short-term focus of the *EPIC Challenge* was more likely to engage young people and to be realistic for both large and smaller businesses to support (e.g. as some do with the Science Fair).

> *All of these programmes work well, if you have engaged enthusiastic partners in the schools.*

> *We all put money into the Science Fair, because it's the only avenue into the school that we've ever been asked to contribute to. We'd be quite keen for it to be able to focus on our sector too.*

However, some commented that employers should be incentivised to participate.

## *Work Inspiration*

Ideally, some employers believe that something along the lines of *Work Inspiration* needs to start the ball rolling in terms of engaging with high achieving youth, rather than repeatedly being asked to take on Work and Income clients, who are said to be generally disengaged.

> *Well, we have to do something, don't we? There's no staff out there for us to employ. Even if we all tried one person each and we got one decent worker out of it, that's one step forward. The next time, we might get two decent workers. But, I think you have to target those better kids that want to take the step.*

This employer-led programme introduced by Careers NZ is, however, considered to be a big commitment on behalf of employers which comes at a cost, impacting on time and lost productivity within their businesses.

As such, it was considered to be only of interest to larger businesses with the resources to manage it. However, even larger businesses say they would expect sufficient funding to be offered to make this a viable proposition. If smaller businesses were to be involved, they would not only require sufficient funding, but administrative support.

*You need a lot of resource to have these people really get the best out of it. If you had a scholarship in there and there was money available so the kids could come along who really want to know more about the industry, and it's funded, that would be great*

Again, employers raise the problems involved in giving young people (Year 10s) access to many of their workplaces, due to health and safety requirements and equipment.

*So, to get them on site, there's things that they have to do and go through for all the health and safety side of it. Then there's the clothing they have to wear and safety equipment. So, how is all that supported?*

Other pragmatic problems were raised in taking on young people and giving them access to work experience. These included transportation, effects on productivity, quality of the participants, and limitations in what exposure young people can gain in just a few hours at a time.

*There are effects on work productivity. It actually slows down your day a fair bit, because you have to wait for those kids, because they're used to turning up at 9 o'clock and then at 3 o'clock, they have to be back in. So, you've got to hoon back in with them.*

*Though, we haven't been approached for a number of years. We've found that they tend to give us the kids that are a pain in the arse, but they don't have much of a future in anything else. Very low skills. They weren't giving us the ones that might go on in the industry.*

Some also thought that such an initiative was relatively short-sighted and believe that what is really needed is a curriculum change that would enable and encourage more young people, including high achievers, to pursue a career in the primary sector.

*Most would struggle to see how that one is going to make a blind bit of difference to things overall anyway. Me taking one student over 12 months, you know, if everybody did it, we might get 50 or 100 people and, you know, in the grand scheme of things, it's not going to change things. From a value point of view and what it would cost you to manage that process, I think that money could be better spent. So, until someone has got the power to make the curriculum changes and there's an understanding of our needs, and Year 10 students have the opportunity, you're pushing it uphill, because nothing is changing.*

### *Kaikohe Growth Industries Pathway* and *Te Hiku Pathway*

Again, while admirable in attempting to engage disenfranchised (NEET) youth in the region and endeavouring to encourage them into employment in the primary industries, only the very large businesses will be in a position to take on a handful of participants. As such, the scope of such initiatives is considered to be relatively limited in what they will potentially achieve.

*Industry should be building a bigger strategy first that provides the opportunity to open the doors to let people in on a mass scale, as opposed to these small scale* *approaches. It's pretty expensive to run programmes like that for what's coming out. A handful, if you're lucky.*

Unfortunately, there was also a degree of cynicism voiced by some employers, in terms of such schemes' historical failings and/or their repeatedly negative experience in taking on Work and Income clients or students.

*You've got a whole lot of government departments saying, "We're going to solve unemployment up here by initiating all of these projects", which is really cool, but they're not linked to anything else. So, you're getting the same-old, same-old, and just getting nowhere, really.*

## MoE-led Northland education sector meeting to engage stakeholders

Although industry want to partake in discussions with regard to education and training, and this forum is said to have merit, the conversation continued to return to the importance of economic development in the region and the availability of employment opportunities as being a first priority.

*It's one group that is appropriate for industry to go into and have our say, but it's not going to result in the development of an economic strategy.*

# 6.0 Actionable recommendations

In the qualitative research, the overall finding is that employers want **support and advocacy from MPI**, in conjunction with other relevant ministries and agencies (local authorities, schools and training agencies, in particular), in order to facilitate business performance (especially compliance-related), promote the primary industries, improve training outcomes and, ultimately invest in business growth and development and infrastructure in the region.

In order of prioritisation, employers consider the following action to be necessary in the **short-to-medium term**:

- Working with local authorities to **minimise compliance requirements and costs**, and ensure these are realistic and necessary. In particular:
  - Health and safety restrictions that inhibit employers' ability to offer local youth (students and trainees) hands-on experience in their industries.
  - Compliance restrictions and costs that are inhibiting business development, including:
    - Local authority regulations and inspections (which are said to have incrementally increased).
    - Application processes and restrictions on land and marine development.
    - Rates for pre-productive land, especially for those slow to yield earnings (e.g. forestry). This is particularly an issue for new enterprise, such as Treaty of Waitangi settlement initiatives, and diversification and utilisation of under-productive land in the area.
- Offering **support for under-performing/struggling businesses**, including:
  - Advice and mentoring targeting employers who are struggling with compliance requirements.

    Although challenging, such employers are said to be able to be identified by various means (e.g. local knowledge, repeat non-compliance issues/fines).

    Such advice could be provided in both formal (e.g. by experts) and/or informal ways (e.g. attendance at "cowshed meetings" and the like across the sector, or by "successful"/larger businesses teaming up with and mentoring smaller start-ups/older "less successful" businesses).
  - Addressing the administrative burden for businesses to meet their compliance obligations.

For example, developing collective administration facilities (or employing administrators) for groups of smaller businesses who do not have dedicated administrative staff or expertise in these areas.

- Developing a **marketing campaign to promote the primary industries in a positive light**:

  - A public marketing campaign would need to dispel fears and myths that reduce local support for the sector (i.e. increase appreciation for the sector's economic contribution, and environmental development and sustainability) and enhance key influencers' (parents' and caregivers') consideration for their young people to engage in career paths that direct them into the local primary industry sector.

    Importantly, any promotion of career paths in the industry need to be cognisant of what opportunities actually exist now, and are likely to exist in the future environment, in Northland.

- Addressing issues within **schools** that inhibit engagement with the primary sector, as well as the quality and relevance of current training provided via the various **training bodies** (including educational and cultural issues), including:

  - Engaging with careers advisors and school leaders to encourage greater promotion of, and engagement with, the sector.

    However, as with the promotion of the primary industries in a public marketing campaign, school influencers need to be cognisant of the current limitations and future opportunities in the sector (i.e. to start driving students to train in appropriate areas now and in the future).

  - Working with training bodies to ensure they provide fit-for-purpose training.

    This may involve tailoring training to include:

    - Relevant and applicable course material (including appropriate training components, driver licensing, as well as a requirement to be drug-free).

    - More hands-on and practical components to address literacy and numeracy issues, as well as being more culturally engaging.

    The preferred training model is a cadetship/apprenticeship style, as this is considered to be more likely to really engage trainees for the long-term (rather than trying to engage them in short-term sessions). Importantly, for employers to take on apprentices/cadets as well as provide hands-on experience in their businesses, such schemes need to be incentivised and adequately funded.

- Addressing **social issues**, including:

  - Increasing support for alcohol and drug services in the region.

- Facilitating easier access to driver licensing (e.g. as above, incorporating licensing into training and/or supporting other options) and increasing access to transport generally (e.g. home pick-up, drop-off services for workers).

In the **longer-term**, employers want the following action to be prioritised:

- Real investment in **business growth and development**:
  - Investment strategies from central government need to be coordinated, socialised, and agreed to with industry stakeholders including business owners/managers and iwi stakeholders and managers.

    The industry believe that taking a collective approach, facilitated by MPI, will be necessary to reach agreement as to the prioritisation and direction of any such initiatives and investment, to ensure all parties are working together toward the same goals.
- Investment in **infrastructure** in the region, including specifically addressing broadband access and transportation (roading and shipping).

# Appendix A Qualitative research discussion guides

DISCUSSION GUIDE |

**Ministry for Primary Industries – Mid to Far North Employer Engagement – Stage 1 (#4782)**

## Introduction (5 min)

- Researchers to introduce themselves and describe the purpose of the research:
  - Research New Zealand has been commissioned by the **Ministry for Primary Industries** to seek a better understanding of the **motivations or barriers to employing the <u>local labour force</u> in the Mid to Far North** and what needs to **change** in the short, medium and longer term for there to be a **closer fit between their <u>employment demands and the local supply of labour</u>** now and in the future.
- Explain how the interview will proceed – an informal discussion lasting approximately 90 minutes; **emphasise confidentiality** and that reporting will in no way identify individual participants or their businesses (Research Code of Ethics).
  - Any references to respondents' specific comments will be **anonymised** in any reporting to the Ministry.
- Ask for agreement for the groups to be **audio recorded** for the purposes of analysis only. Emphasise that recordings remain the property of research New Zealand and are not passed on to the Ministry.
- Housekeeping and ask participants to turn off mobile phones and be **respectful of others' opinions**, as well as taking the **<u>opportunity</u>** to **voice their own opinions**, in order to provide the Ministry with a **candid picture** of how they can work towards **optimising the employment of the local labour force in the primary industry sector in the Mid to Far North**.

## Perceptions of the <u>current state</u> of the local employment market

## (20 min)

***Objective: Identifying and exploring employers' opinions about the current state of the employment market in the Mid to Far North Region.***

***Discussion points:***

- Businesses' current employment situation, including:
  - Proportion of skilled/unskilled labour. Incl. what particular skills.
  - Proportion of local vs. non-local labour and where is non-local labour sourced from?
- Current demand for labour in their business vs. local labour force offering, including:
  - Current **demand** for skilled/unskilled labour and what specific skills are required?
  - Ability to **attract and retain** quality employees.
  - Current employee offering in the local area, including the **appropriate 'fit' and any 'gaps' between the labour supply available and their demands**.
- Motivations/barriers to employing local labour, including:
  - **Perceptions** (vicarious, word of mouth) and **experiences** (positive and negative) of employing local labour.
  - Level of **appropriate training and qualifications** and value of these (skill sets, capability, value of training outcomes, i.e. can they do what their training says they can?).
    - What **specific skills** are sought after and **where are the gaps**?
  - Satisfaction with **employee characteristics and qualities** (e.g. reliability, mental and physical wellbeing).

**Employers' opinions and perceptions about current business opportunities, as well as any barriers they perceive (on both the demand and supply-sides) which inhibit these opportunities being realised (15 min)**

***Objective: Identifying and exploring the effects of the current state of the local labour market on businesses realising opportunities/aiming for and reaching goals.***

***Discussion points:***

- Awareness of any **initiatives, projects, grants and investments in the local area** aimed at **improving** the availability/quality of the local labour force and/or primary production[10].
- **Involvement** of their business in any such initiatives.
- Perceptions and experiences of the **outcomes of such initiatives** (positive/negative) for the local labour force, their business and the industry, as well as the local community and economy.
  - Specifically, the **impact on their businesses' interest in/employment of local labour**.
- What impact any 'gaps' in the local labour supply not meeting business demand has on their **business sustainability, growth and diversification**, including:
  - Areas most affected.
  - Impact this has on the local community and economy.

[10] Māori Agribusiness programme, Northland Training Hub, Sustainable Farming Fund grants, Primary growth partnerships (Farming IQ, steepland harvesting, precision seafood harvesting, investing in Māori owned land and Treaty Settlements, investment in R&D) and support and collaborating from Northland Inc. and industry representatives (e.g. the regional Forestry Advisory group and Focus Farms and Dairy Push).

## **<u>Changes</u> required to close the <u>current</u> gaps and optimise business opportunities in the short-term (20 min)**

***Objective: Changes necessary (on both the demand and supply-sides) for there to be a better match between employers' and employees' needs, in order to support industry in the region in a sustainable way in the <u>short-term</u>.***

***Discussion points:***

- **Changes necessary** for the local labour market to better 'fit' with current industry/business needs/demands **currently**:
  - **Particular population groups** that may need to be targeted and how.
  - **Particular skills/training** they require employees to have.
  - **Changes to public perceptions** necessary to enhance the appeal of the primary industries as an employment option (e.g. promotion/support of career pathways and opportunities).
- **Changes necessary within the industry/businesses** to enhance opportunities for local employment to be realised, including how to better **attract, support and develop** potential and existing employees (e.g. on the job training, career development).
- **Partnership opportunities/need for support/investment** from other bodies/organisations (industry bodies, NZ Institute of Primary Industry Management, trainers/educational institutes, local iwi, district/regional councils, central government).
  - How such partnerships/support might impact **positively** on the labour supply and business demand for local employees.
- Impacts such changes might have in the **shorter-term** on their business, the industry and the local economy.

## <u>Future opportunities</u> in the industry/business and changes in demand for labour in the medium to longer-term and recommendations for targeted action (25 min)

***Objectives: Possible shifts in the primary industry, which might impact on the future education and training requirements for employees in the medium and longer-term[11], including recommendations for targeted action, so as to achieve a better match between the local labour supply and businesses' demands.***

***Discussion points:***

- Where businesses see their business and the industry going in the next **5, 10, 20 years**:
  - Opportunities that exist for **growth/diversification** in their business and the industry (innovation across the value-chain, technological developments (e.g. automation, robotics), optimised land/aquatic use, increased productivity, specialisation, use of indigenous resources).
  - Future **compliance requirements** that might impact on their employment requirements, in particular, environmental and resource management and employment related compliance requirements.
  - **Greater customer demands for assurance** regarding: environmental sustainability, animal welfare, social license, food safety, etc.
- Impact such changes might have on the **skillset and qualities** they demand from employees (what does the future-scape of their workforce look like?).
  - **Targeted action they envisage will be necessary** for the local labour force to 'fit' with their demands and for both employees and businesses to reap the benefits of these opportunities, including:
    - **Changes in public perceptions** to enhance the appeal of the primary industries to attract quality employees (e.g. promotion of career pathways through schools).
    - Particular **local population groups** that will need to be targeted with strategies/initiatives to achieve a positive fit between the local labour supply and industry/business demand (new and existing employees).

[11] Comparing employer views of future labour needs with those identified in previous reports viz. Tai Tokerau Northland Regional Growth Study, People Powered, The Future Capability Needs for Primary Industries in New Zealand.

- Particular **areas they will require employees to be skilled/trained in** (industry specific and generally) **to meet the future needs of increasingly diversified markets and discerning customers**:

  - For example, scientific, engineering and technical skills (automation, new technology), language and cultural skills (e.g. to target the Asian market), business and people management, financial management, supply-chain management, food safety, quality assurance, biosecurity, animal welfare, other.

- Their **role as employers in supporting the development of the local labour force** to fit with their changing demands (e.g. job training, career development).

- The **industry's role in supporting the development of the local labour force** to fit with their changing demands (e.g. training, sponsorship, promotion of primary sector careers).

- **Partnerships that will need to be established/further developed** (and nature of these) and with which bodies/organisations (public/private sector) will be required to achieve a positive shift in employee availability and fit with business demands.

  - **The type of support** they believe may be necessary to achieve positive outcomes (e.g. funding, incentives, education/training).

- **Broader reaching impacts** this will have on their business, the industry, the local community and economy.

## Wrap up (5 min)

***Objective: To summarise key points.***

- Invite final comments.

- Potentially - ideas for **next groups to interview** – business types (e.g. smaller businesses/sub-contractors) and/or topics that would be most valuable to include in the research.

*Thanks and close*

DISCUSSION GUIDE |

**Ministry for Primary Industries – Mid to Far North Employer Engagement – Stage 2 (#4782)**

## Introduction (5 min)

- Researchers to introduce themselves and describe the purpose of the research:
  - Research New Zealand has been commissioned by the **Ministry for Primary Industries** to seek a better understanding of the **motivations or barriers to employing the <u>local labour force</u> in the Mid to Far North** and what needs to **change** in the short, medium and longer term for there to be a **closer fit between their <u>employment demands and the local supply of labour</u>** now and in the future.
  - This second stage of the research will focus on **suggested solutions** – beginning with a **recap of suggestions made during the discussions** that took place in late September/early October with the different sectors; followed by **testing a range of initiatives** the Ministry is interested in developing as potential solutions to improving the local labour offering to better meet primary sector needs.
- Explain how the interview will proceed – an informal discussion from 10.30-3.30pm, with a break from for lunch; **emphasise confidentiality** and that reporting will in no way identify individual participants or their businesses (Research Code of Ethics).
  - Any references to respondents' specific comments will be **anonymised** in any reporting to the Ministry.
- Ask for agreement for the groups to be **audio recorded** for the purposes of analysis only. Emphasise that recordings remain the property of research New Zealand and are not passed on to the Ministry.
- Housekeeping and ask participants to turn off mobile phones and be **respectful of others' opinions**, as well as taking the **<u>opportunity</u>** to **voice their own opinions**, in order to provide the Ministry with a **candid picture** of how they can work towards **optimising the employment of the local labour force in the primary industry sector in the Mid to Far North**.

## Recap ideas for changes/solutions to reduce the gap between supply and demand for local labour (90 min)

*__Objective:__ Recap and add to previous stage findings re: employers' ideas about __changes necessary__ for there to be a better match between employers' and employees' needs, including recommendations for __targeted action__.*

***Discussion points:***

- **Increasing job opportunities** by **better supporting the development and growth** of the primary sector in Northland, particularly for small businesses.
  - What support would be of value?
  - Which agencies would ideally be involved in providing such support?
  - What role could industry play in supporting development and growth, including across sector support?
- Promoting **career opportunities** within the primary industry sector, including:
  - Engaging with schools to encourage the promotion of primary industry career paths.
    - What would this involve?
    - Which agencies would ideally be involved, and in what ways?
    - What role could industry play in this, including what barriers would need to be overcome?
  - Enabling youth to gain hands-on experience in the sector and supporting school-based initiatives.
    - What would this involve?
    - Which agencies would ideally be involved, and in what ways?
    - What role could industry play in this, including what barriers would need to be overcome (e.g. health and safety)?

- Developing a **marketing campaign** to promote the benefits of the primary industry sector to the region.
    - What would this involve (key messages that need to be sold in, key attitudes that need to change the negative impression of working in the primary sector)?
    - Who could be the positive influencers and role models?
    - Which agencies would ideally be involved as sponsors/supporters?
    - What role could industry play in this?
- **Working closely with iwi** to promote/create job opportunities within the primary sector.
    - What would this involve?
    - What opportunities exist?
    - Which agencies would ideally be involved, and in what ways?
    - What role could industry play in this?
- Improve the **quality of training**, including addressing the needs of businesses and tailoring a model of delivery to engage disenfranchised youth, particularly Māori, and address literacy issues.
    - What needs are not being met through current training?
    - How can trainees be better engaged/encouraged/supported to achieve the qualifications?
        - Could the introduction and facilitating of apprenticeship/cadetship models of training be a potential solution?
        - Which agencies would ideally be involved, and in what ways?
        - What role could industry play in this?
- Supporting smaller businesses to offer **better employment conditions** (health and safety, compliance, pay rates, etc.).
    - How can ‘good employer practices’ be encouraged?
        - Which agencies would ideally be involved, and in what ways?

- What role could industry play in this?

- Finding ways to overcome the issues in relation to **transportation**.

  - How can issues with regard to employee travel be addressed (e.g. unlicensed drivers, unwarranted cars, etc. resulting in fines, as well as lack of transportation per se)?

    - Which agencies would ideally be involved, and in what ways?

    - What role could industry play in this?

## Testing initiatives and strategies as potential solutions (2.5 hours)

***Objective:*** *To test **a range of initiatives and strategies** the Ministry is interested in developing as potential solutions to improve the local labour offering to better meet primary sector needs, as well as better engage sector employers.*

***Initiatives:***

**Education and training**

***MPI led education initiatives at a national level of relevance to Northland***

- Skills and labour market shortages have been identified across a range of professions and sectors within the primary industries. MPI is attempting to address this by engaging in and with schools, as a part of a range of policy and programme initiatives.

- The aim of this schools work is to better embed primary industry contexts in the teaching and learning experience, with the goal of supporting achievement and improving knowledge and interest among teachers and students about the sector.

***Primary Industry Ambassadors in Schools Programme***

- **The Primary Industries Ambassadors in Schools** programme is a pilot initiative to inform teachers and students of the range of roles in the primary industries, to attract young people to the industry, and to support student achievement. This initiative supports and builds on the Futureintech programme funded by Callaghan Innovation and administered by the Institution of Professional Engineers (IPENZ).

- **<u>Futureintech</u>** was established in 2003 to encourage secondary school students to take up science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects at tertiary institutions. The programme is delivered by nearly 900 voluntary ambassadors from different industries working alongside teachers to promote STEM careers, foster interest and support learning in STEM subjects.

- **MPI will fund the pilot initiative for the 2016 academic year to triple the number of primary industry ambassadors nationally**, to increase awareness of career opportunities in the primary sector, and to include working with teachers involved in such programmes as agri-business, agri-science and agri-technology.

- Currently, there are no 'Ambassadors' in Northland schools.

- Discuss the programme and level of interest in it being instituted in Northland schools and becoming involved.

    - What are the potential benefits of this programme going ahead?

    - Any potential downsides?

- Who would be interested in becoming an Ambassador (themselves? Others?)?

- What schools would be ideal to engage in the delivery of this programme?

***Enterprising Primary Industries Career (EPIC) Challenge (Provide Flyer)***

- This challenge is managed by the **Young Enterprise Trust** and has been developed for year 10 students, prior to them making NCEA subject choices. **EPIC is currently sponsored by the Ministry for Primary Industries and DairyNZ**, and provides resources and support for teachers, to increase their students' understanding of careers in this sector. Undertaking the challenge provides an excellent context for learning in a range of learning areas – including science and technology.

- Discuss the programme and level of interest in it being instituted in Northland schools.

    - What are the potential benefits of this programme going ahead?

    - Any potential downsides?

- What schools would be ideal to engage in the delivery of this programme?

- Are they willing to step up and promote the *EPIC Challenge* in these schools?

- *The Ministry for Primary Industries will provide further information and facilitate involvement in the programme.*

***<u>Non-MPI initiatives of relevance to Northland</u>***

***Work Inspiration – year 10 initiative with Careers NZ (Provide Employers web page and discuss the map in broad terms)***

- **Work Inspiration** is an internationally recognised programme that **Careers New Zealand** will introduce to employers and schools in 2016.

- Young people who experience just four or more contacts with employers while at school are five times less likely to be unemployed. (From a UK research report undertaken by the UK Employer and Education Taskforce, 'It's who you meet that stops you from becoming a NEET', 2012.) Careers New Zealand Chief Executive, Keith Marshall, says "this compelling 2012 research confirms the importance of creating meaningful work exploration opportunities for school students, which is why **Careers New Zealand is proud to bring Work Inspiration to New Zealand**."

- **Work Inspiration is an employer-led programme** that gives students valuable insights into how a business runs. Work Inspiration helps improve the awareness of young people in a range of cross-industry career pathways. It provides young people with an experience of the workplace that they can reflect on when making choices about their own futures.

- MPI has held initial conversations with Careers NZ and have been told that **there is opportunity to begin Work Inspiration in Northland in early 2016 if a group of employers were available to work with**.

- *See http://workinspiration.nz/ for more info and a short video from an employer and teacher perspective.*

- Discuss the programme and level of interest in it being instituted in Northland schools.

    - What are the potential benefits of this programme going ahead and involvement?

    - Any potential downsides?

- What schools would be ideal to engage in the delivery of this programme?

- Are they interested in being involved?

- *See http://workinspiration.nz/ for more info and a short video from employer and teacher perspective.*

***MPI co-led Northland specific initiatives led by MPI and MSD (with involvement of MBIE, TPK, MoE and the Tertiary Education Commission)***

***Kaikohe Growth Industries Pathway***

- The Kaikohe Growth Industries Pathway project is under development for implementation in 2016. It aims to better connect local youth to available jobs in growth industries.

- Primary Industries, tourism and specialised manufacturing have been identified as key growth industries by the Tai Tokerau Regional Growth Study. The report also identified skills shortages across these industries as a key barrier to economic growth in the region. A critical interdependency exists between the education system, the social sector and the economic sectors, where a number of goals are shared, such as creating employment opportunities, increasing the number of youth in education or training, and supporting economic growth.

- Kaikohe is one of the areas of great economic deprivation in the North, where a range of social, educational and economic initiatives are already being delivered. This provides an opportunity to leverage existing resources to create a pathway for young people that focuses on the growth industries identified in the Tai Tokerau Regional Growth study, by:

  - **Providing a stronger link between employers/business/industry and schools.**

  - **Developing prototypes to test models that may better support youth into employment**.

- The key components of the Kaikohe Growth Industries Pathway project will be:

  - The continuation and integration of MSD's 'Kaikohe, Opportunities, Dreams and Experiences' (KODE) programme. **This will run in early 2016 for young people who are not in education, employment or training** (NEETs). **Some of the participants will be selected to take part in the growth industries pathway project**.

  - **A network of local employers who will help shape the initiative.** Currently, Carter Holt Harvey, Turners & Growers are involved.

  - The design of **training which is industry and employer specific**.

  - **Placement in paid employment and training** (part-time or full-time, based on seasonality of industry) **with a duration of 12-14 months**. Working with the project co-ordinator, ongoing pastoral and post-placement support will be provided by an employer for each young person selected.

  - A centralised co-ordination and management of funding.

- A comprehensive evaluation framework which encompasses social, educational and economic measures.

- Discuss the project and level of interest in becoming involved.

  - What is the value of the project gaining momentum?

  - Are there any potential downsides?

***Te Hiku Pathway project***

- MSD led project, but focussed on Kaitaia, with basically the same target audience and goals.

- The training and initial work experience are expected to be provided by a single community based provider. The RFP for this work was released in late August.

- Pastoral care will involve Work Readiness preparation, involvement in Projects in the Community and then employment/tertiary study.

- Are they interested in being involved?

- Any other areas that they believe should be targeted with similar initiatives?

***MoE led Northland education sector meeting***

- Skills Education and Employment in Te Tai Tokerau mid-North Workshop held in Kaikohe on Friday 13th Nov. The purpose of the workshop was to explore **how education organisations can collectively maximise achievement and establish pathways to future employment prospects**. It was well attended by Schools, Tertiary Education Providers, MPI, MSD, MoE and some iwi based groups.

- Introductory presentations:

  - Defining the opportunity – a Data story:

    - MoE introduced the workshop, defined the challenges and opportunities in growing pathways from school to employment and further training in the mid-North region using a range of statistics to support the case that much stronger systemic pathways to employment are needed.

    - Employers' perspectives – Primary Industries (Morag McConnell, MPI)

    - Morag presented the background of an Industry Engagement project by MPI with early findings from focus groups.

- Current Curriculum – current L2/L3 offerings (Nicky Glasgow & Megan Jowsey, MOE)
  - Template provided with a draft version of the current L2/L3 curriculum available in the mid- North area – shows the current overlaps, gaps and opportunities for providing more cohesive pathways
- Participants discussed three questions in breakout groups:
  - 1. Supply (of young people to training & employment) /demand side (from employers): issues and opportunities
  - 2. Level 2 provision – how/what is needed to maximise the numbers getting the core foundation?
    - Literacy and numeracy
    - Employability skills
    - Sense of personal opportunity/pathway
  - 3. What is needed at level 3 to launch pathways that work for employers, students and providers and what could level 4+ look like.
- Next Steps
  - 1. The information about what is on offer at Level 2/3 for 2016 in the Kaikohe – Bay of Islands area is being collated by MoE.
  - 2. Self-selecting groups of attending organisations will work together to develop partnerships in 6/12 mth plans.
  - 3. The group to meet again in early March 2016
  - 4. **There was a request for a meeting with employers & community influencers**.
- Are they interested in being involved?

**Public understanding of and attitude towards the primary industries – Northland specific and nationally**

***MPI promotional initiative at a national level of relevance to Northland***

***Champions Project***

- The Champions project will capture people (champions) talking about the primary industries, including career opportunities (where appropriate). The purpose of the project is to provide a resource to use to improve public understanding of, and attitude to, the primary industries. The project will focus on economic, environmental and socio-cultural issues.

- The key audience for the project is the general public.

- Champions will be chosen over the first six months of 2016.

- The champions will be:

    - People doing great things in the New Zealand primary industries who deserve greater exposure; and/or

    - High-profile people with an interest/strong link with New Zealand primary industries.

    - The project has begun with an initial three people identified. If this is successful we will increase the number to approximately 20. At this stage – **one of the potential 20 people identified is from Northland (not yet approached)**.

    - Each champion will be videoed talking for approximately two minutes, and the clips made available through a number of channels including the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) YouTube channel. However, we expect aspects of the clips will also be used in the production of careers related material for schools and linked to the Primary Industry Ambassadors in Schools programme. The clips will also be a useful resource to support MPI-wide and Ministerial events.

- Discuss the project.

    - What are the potential benefits of this project going ahead?

    - Any potential downsides?

- Who would be interested in being a Champion (themselves? Others?)?

## Industry interest in working together (15 min)

***Objective:*** **Identifying industry interest in working together** to move the current and future state of local employment into a more positive space.

***Discussion points:***

- Discuss interest in working together to take ownership of this forum and continue cross-sector engagement, including:
    - Identifying who will take leadership roles.
    - *Specifically, the Ministry is looking for ways it can support the sector with regard to Food safety and biosecurity compliance and import standards verification.*

*Thanks and close*

# Appendix B Survey questionnaire

# Appendix C Survey Tables

**Table 1:**

*Q4. Excluding the business owner(s), which of the following types of people worked for your business at any time during the last 12 months?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>302<br>% |
|---|---|
| Permanent full-time employees (30 plus hours per week) | 75 |
| Permanent part-time employees (less than 30 hours per week) | 29 |
| Self-employed contractors | 45 |
| Casual staff | 50 |
| Seasonal workers | 23 |
| Other | 2 |
| Did not employ any staff in the last 12 months | 6 |
| Don't know | 0 |
| Would rather not say | 0 |

Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.

**Table 2:**

*Q6. Excluding the business owners how many permanent staff are currently employed by the business? Please include full-time and part-time employees but do not include contractors or the business owners.*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>238*<br>% |
|---|---|
| 1 | 33 |
| 2 - 5 | 48 |
| 6 - 9 | 8 |
| 10 - 19 | 4 |
| 20 - 49 | 2 |
| 50 - 99 or more | 2 |
| No employees | 3 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample based on those respondents whose business employed permanent full-time and/or part-time employees during the last 12 months. Sub-sample also excludes 3 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 3:**

*Q7. Roughly what percentage of your permanent employees are from Northland?*

| Unweighted base = | Total 232* % |
|---|---|
| 100% - All of them | 77 |
| Up to 90% | 6 |
| Up to 80% | 3 |
| Up to 70% | 2 |
| Up to 60% | 1 |
| Up to 50% | 4 |
| 0% - None of them | 4 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample based on those respondents whose business employed permanent full-time and/or part-time employees in the last 12 months. Sub-sample also excludes 3 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 4:**

*Q10. In general, when your business is looking to employ someone, does it try to fill the role with a local Northlander?*

| Unweighted base = | Total 300* % |
|---|---|
| Yes | 73 |
| No | 9 |
| Depends upon the role | 7 |
| Business generally has no job vacancies | 9 |
| Don't know | 1 |
| Would rather not say | 1 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes 2 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 5:**

*Q14. In the last 12 months, did your business advertise or try to fill a job vacancy, but was unsuccessful in filling the role with someone who was local to Northland?*

| Unweighted base = | Total 274* % |
|---|---|
| Yes | 13 |
| No | 68 |
| Business had no job vacancies | 19 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes those respondents whose business generally has no vacancies. Sub-sample excludes 1 respondent who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 6:**

*Q11. And if your business isn't able/doesn't want to employ someone who is local, does it try to fill the role with a New Zealander?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>270*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Yes | 78 |
| No | 11 |
| Depends upon the role | 5 |
| Don't know | 6 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes those respondents whose business generally has no vacancies. Sub-sample also excludes 5 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 7:**

*Q5. And roughly how many seasonal and casual workers, and self-employed contractors did the business employ in the last 12 months?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>218*<br>% |
|---|---|
| 1 | 13 |
| 2 - 5 | 49 |
| 6 - 9 | 14 |
| 10 - 19 | 12 |
| 20 - 49 | 4 |
| 50 - 99 or more | 2 |
| No employees | 0 |
| Don't know | 6 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample based on those respondents whose business employed casual/seasonal workers and/or and self-employed contractors in the last 12 months.

**Table 8:**

*Q8. Which of the following did your business source its seasonal/casual workers from during the last 12 months?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>172*<br>% |
|---|---|
| The local community, but not employed through Work and Income | 78 |
| Work and Income | 6 |
| Seasonal workers under the Working Holiday Scheme | 6 |
| Word of mouth | 6 |
| A labour contractor (e.g. PickNZ) | 5 |
| Friends and family members | 4 |
| Seasonal workers under the Recognised Seasonal Employers Scheme | 3 |
| Other | 7 |
| Don't know | 1 |
| No response | 3 |

Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.
*Sub-sample based on those respondents whose business employed casual workers or seasonal workers in the last 12 months.

**Table 9:**

*Q9. And during the last 12 months, roughly what percentage of your seasonal and casual workers were from Northland?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>169*<br>% |
|---|---|
| 100% - All of them | 75 |
| Up to 90% | 4 |
| Up to 80% | 4 |
| Up to 70% | 2 |
| Up to 60% | 1 |
| Up to 50% | 6 |
| Up to 40% | 1 |
| Up to 30% | 0 |
| Up to 20% | 0 |
| Up to 10% | 2 |
| 0% - None of them | 4 |
| Don't know | 1 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample based on those respondents whose business employed casual workers or seasonal workers in the last 12 months. Sub-sample also excludes 5 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 10:**

*Q12. From your perspective, what are the benefits of employing local Northlanders instead of employing workers from outside of the region?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>266*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Settled and available (have support network/more likely to stay) | 43 |
| Locals understand the region | 30 |
| Support the local community/economy | 10 |
| Already known to me/worked for us before/easy to check references | 9 |
| Proximity/short travel time | 8 |
| Reducing unemployment in local area | 5 |
| Not having to provide accommodation for employees already living in the area | 5 |
| No benefits/No preference | 6 |
| Other | 4 |
| Don't know | 6 |
| Would rather not say | 2 |

Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.
*Sub-sample excludes those respondents whose business generally has no vacancies. Sub-sample also excludes 7 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 11:**

*Q13. And are there any disadvantages in employing local Northlanders instead of employing workers from outside of the region?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>263*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Poor work ethic | 14 |
| Lack of skills/experience | 14 |
| Drug problems | 7 |
| People from outside the region are better workers | 6 |
| Small labour pool in Northland | 4 |
| Some have a bad attitude/sense of entitlement/no respect for authority | 3 |
| Some are not trust worthy/dishonest/problems with theft | 3 |
| Not reliable/don't show up | 2 |
| Some are poorly trained/less qualified | 2 |
| Access to transport/distance between where live and work | 1 |
| No disadvantages | 37 |
| Other | 3 |
| Don't know | 18 |
| Would rather not say | 2 |

Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.
*Sub-sample excludes those respondents whose business generally has no vacancies. Sub-sample also excludes 7 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 12:**

*X14. In the last 12 months, did your business advertise or try to fill a job vacancy?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>272*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Yes | 80 |
| Business had no vacancies | 19 |
| Don't know | 0 |
| Would rather not say | 0 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes those respondents whose business generally has no vacancies and 1 respondent who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 13:**

*XX14. In the last 12 months, did your business advertise or try to fill a job vacancy, but was unsuccessful in filling the role with someone who was local to Northland?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>220*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Yes | 16 |
| No | 83 |
| Don't know | 0 |
| Would rather not say | 0 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample based on those respondents whose business tried to fill a job vacancy in the last 12 months, also excludes 2 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 14:**

*Q15. And what type of roles did your business try to fill, but was unsuccessful in filling with local labour?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>34*<br>% |
|---|---|
| General labour | 41 |
| Skilled/experienced labour | 32 |
| Management | 24 |
| Other | 3 |
| Don't know | 0 |
| Would rather not say | 0 |

Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.
*Sub-sample based on those respondents whose business tried to fill a job vacancy in the last 12 months, but was unsuccessful in filling the role with someone who was local to Northland, also excludes 2 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 15:**

*Q16. Overall, how would you rate workers from Northland who have worked for your business in the past few years, but excluding those employed through Work and Income, in relation to the following statements - Work readiness*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>283*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Extremely poor | 2 |
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| *Poor (0 – 3)* | *10* |
| 4 | 7 |
| Neutral | 15 |
| 6 | 9 |
| *Average (4 – 6)* | *31* |
| 7 | 20 |
| 8 | 18 |
| 9 | 10 |
| Excellent | 11 |
| *Good/excellent (7-10)* | *60* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes don't know and not applicable responses plus 7 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 16:**

*Q16. Overall, how would you rate workers from Northland who have worked for your business in the past few years, but excluding those employed through Work and Income, in relation to the following statements - Trainability*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>272*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Extremely poor | 0 |
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 1 |
| 3 | 5 |
| *Poor (0 – 3)* | *8* |
| 4 | 6 |
| Neutral | 12 |
| 6 | 11 |
| *Average (4 – 6)* | *28* |
| 7 | 28 |
| 8 | 20 |
| 9 | 7 |
| Excellent | 9 |
| *Good/excellent (7-10)* | *64* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes don't know and not applicable responses plus 8 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 17:**

*Q16. Overall, how would you rate workers from Northland who have worked for your business in the past few years, but excluding those employed through Work and Income, in relation to the following statements - Enthusiasm while working*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>281*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Extremely poor | 1 |
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 4 |
| *Poor (0 – 3)* | *9* |
| 4 | 5 |
| Neutral | 11 |
| 6 | 11 |
| *Average (4 – 6)* | *27* |
| 7 | 19 |
| 8 | 24 |
| 9 | 11 |
| Excellent | 11 |
| *Good/excellent (7-10)* | *65* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes don't know and not applicable responses plus 8 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 18:**

*Q16. Overall, how would you rate workers from Northland who have worked for your business in the past few years, but excluding those employed through Work and Income, in relation to the following statements - Dependability*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>283*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Extremely poor | 2 |
| 1 | 3 |
| 2 | 3 |
| 3 | 5 |
| *Poor (0 – 3)* | *14* |
| 4 | 5 |
| Neutral | 10 |
| 6 | 8 |
| *Average (4 – 6)* | *23* |
| 7 | 16 |
| 8 | 17 |
| 9 | 17 |
| Excellent | 14 |
| *Good/excellent (7-10)* | *64* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes don't know and not applicable responses plus 7 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 19:**

*Q16. Overall, how would you rate workers from Northland who have worked for your business in the past few years, but excluding those employed through Work and Income, in relation to the following statements - Productivity*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>282*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Extremely poor | 1 |
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 3 |
| *Poor (0 – 3)* | *8* |
| 4 | 5 |
| Neutral | 12 |
| 6 | 10 |
| *Average (4 – 6)* | *27* |
| 7 | 22 |
| 8 | 23 |
| 9 | 10 |
| Excellent | 10 |
| *Good/excellent (7-10)* | *65* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes don't know and not applicable responses plus 8 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 20:**

*Q18. Thinking about workers your business has sourced from outside Northland during the last few years. As a group overall how would you rate them in relation to their...? - Work readiness*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>105*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Extremely poor | 1 |
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 0 |
| 3 | 4 |
| *Poor (0 – 3)* | *7* |
| 4 | 3 |
| Neutral | 11 |
| 6 | 8 |
| *Average (4 – 6)* | *22* |
| 7 | 24 |
| 8 | 23 |
| 9 | 10 |
| Excellent | 15 |
| *Good/excellent (7-10)* | *72* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes those respondents who stated that 100% of both their permanent employees and seasonal/casual workers were from Northland. Sub-sample also excludes don't know and not applicable responses plus 9 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 21:**

*Q18. Thinking about workers your business has sourced from outside Northland during the last few years. As a group overall how would you rate them in relation to their...? - Trainability*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>105*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Extremely poor | 1 |
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 1 |
| 3 | 5 |
| *Poor (0 – 3)* | *7* |
| 4 | 4 |
| Neutral | 10 |
| 6 | 12 |
| *Average (4 – 6)* | *26* |
| 7 | 26 |
| 8 | 24 |
| 9 | 8 |
| Excellent | 10 |
| *Good/excellent (7-10)* | *68* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes those respondents who stated that 100% of both their permanent employees and seasonal/casual workers were from Northland. Sub-sample also excludes don't know and not applicable responses plus 9 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 22:**

*Q18. Thinking about workers your business has sourced from outside Northland during the last few years. As a group overall how would you rate them in relation to their...? - Enthusiasm while working*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>105*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Extremely poor | 1 |
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 1 |
| 3 | 3 |
| *Poor (0 – 3)* | *6* |
| 4 | 5 |
| Neutral | 3 |
| 6 | 11 |
| *Average (4 – 6)* | *19* |
| 7 | 17 |
| 8 | 27 |
| 9 | 13 |
| Excellent | 18 |
| *Good/excellent (7-10)* | *75* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes those respondents who stated that 100% of both their permanent employees and seasonal/casual workers were from Northland. Sub-sample also excludes don't know and not applicable responses plus 9 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 23:**

*Q18. Thinking about workers your business has sourced from outside Northland during the last few years. As a group overall how would you rate them in relation to their...? - Dependability*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>105*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Extremely poor | 1 |
| 1 | 1 |
| 2 | 3 |
| 3 | 3 |
| *Poor (0 – 3)* | *8* |
| 4 | 1 |
| Neutral | 4 |
| 6 | 8 |
| *Average (4 – 6)* | 12 |
| 7 | 19 |
| 8 | 25 |
| 9 | 15 |
| Excellent | 21 |
| *Good/excellent (7-10)* | 80 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes those respondents who stated that 100% of both their permanent employees and seasonal/casual workers were from Northland. Sub-sample also excludes don't know and not applicable responses plus 9 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 24:**

*Q18. Thinking about workers your business has sourced from outside Northland during the last few years. As a group overall how would you rate them in relation to their...? - Productivity*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>105*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Extremely poor | 1 |
| 1 | 0 |
| 2 | 2 |
| 3 | 5 |
| *Poor (0 – 3)* | *8* |
| 4 | 1 |
| Neutral | 8 |
| 6 | 12 |
| *Average (4 – 6)* | 21 |
| 7 | 24 |
| 8 | 26 |
| 9 | 12 |
| Excellent | 10 |
| *Good/excellent (7-10)* | 71 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes those respondents who stated that 100% of both their permanent employees and seasonal/casual workers were from Northland. Sub-sample also excludes don't know and not applicable responses 9 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 25:**

*Q19. Including any seasonal or casual workers you have employed, overall how would you rate the local labour force in relation to having the skills and training that your business requires?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>258*<br>% |
|---|---|
| 0 - Extremely poor | 2 |
| 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 3 |
| 3 | 6 |
| *Poor (0 – 3)* | *13* |
| 4 | 11 |
| Neutral | 16 |
| 6 | 13 |
| *Average (4 – 6)* | *40* |
| 7 | 14 |
| 8 | 22 |
| 9 | 5 |
| Excellent | 6 |
| *Good/excellent (7-10)* | *47* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes don't know and not applicable responses plus 18 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 26:**

*Q24. And currently, is your business being negatively affected in any way due to the local labour force not having all of the skills and training that your business requires?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>163*<br>% |
|---|---|
| /Need to provide additional training to staff | 13 |
| Difficult to find adequate staff | 11 |
| Can't rely on staff | 9 |
| Poor productivity/increased costs | 8 |
| Inhibits business growth | 2 |
| Other | 6 |
| No | 56 |
| Don't know | 4 |
| Would rather not say | 1 |

Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.
*Sub-sample based on those respondents who rated the local workforce as 0 to 7 in relation to having the skills and training their business requires. Sub-sample also excludes 5 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.
**Caution: low base number of respondents - results are indicative only.

**Table 27:**

*Q21. In the last two years, have you employed any staff who have completed training through one of the industry training organisations?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>298*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Yes | 37 |
| No | 59 |
| Don't know | 3 |
| Would rather not say | 0 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes 4 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 28:**

*Q22. And based on your experience as an employer, is the training that these organisations provide producing workers with the right skills that businesses like yours need?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>100*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Yes | 56 |
| Could be better | 32 |
| No | 11 |
| No response | 0 |
| Don't know | 1 |
| Would rather not say | 0 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample based on those respondents who have employed staff who have completed training through one of the industry training organisations, also excludes 14 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 29:**

*Q31. How would you rate the general public's understanding of the primary industries and what they do? Would you say...?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>299*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Very poor | 23 |
| Poor | 39 |
| Neither poor nor good | 24 |
| Good | 9 |
| Very good | 0 |
| Don't know | 4 |
| Would rather not say | 0 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes 3 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 30:**

*Q32. To what extent do you think people in Northland believe the primary industries engage in environmentally sustainable practices? Would you say...?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>299*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Not at all | 8 |
| To a small extent | 26 |
| To some extent | 30 |
| To a moderate extent | 23 |
| To a large extent | 5 |
| Don't know | 7 |
| Would rather not say | 0 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes 3 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 31:**

*Q33. To what extent do you think people in Northland believe the primary industries provide sustainable employment opportunities to the local workforce?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>298*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Not at all | 5 |
| To a small extent | 14 |
| To some extent | 27 |
| To a moderate extent | 33 |
| To a large extent | 13 |
| Don't know | 7 |
| Would rather not say | 0 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes 4 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 32:**

*Q34. And overall, do you think the general public's attitude towards the primary industries is...?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>298*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Extremely negative | 7 |
| Negative | 29 |
| Neither negative nor positive | 31 |
| Positive | 27 |
| Extremely positive | 0 |
| Don't know | 6 |
| Would rather not say | 0 |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes 4 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 33:**

*Q35. And why do you say this?*

| Unweighted base = | Negative/ extremely negative<br>89<br>% | Positive/ extremely positive<br>59<br>% |
|---|---|---|
| City people have poor knowledge of the industries | 37 | 2 |
| Negative portrayal by Media | 33 | 0 |
| Perceived or real environmental damage | 11 | 0 |
| Economic contribution not appreciated | 8 | 2 |
| Not seen as a respectable career | 3 | 2 |
| Poor Health and Safety reputation | 1 | 0 |
| Source of jobs/supports the economy | 0 | 46 |
| Northlanders have a positive attitude | 0 | 22 |
| Rating based on personal interactions | 6 | 7 |
| Necessary for food production | 0 | 5 |
| Comment about MPI | 7 | 2 |
| Other | 3 | 2 |
| Don't know | 4 | 8 |
| Would rather not say | 3 | 7 |

Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.
*Sub-sample based on those respondents who felt the general public's attitude towards the primary industries is either negative or positive. Sub-sample also excludes 43 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 34:**

*Q36. How would you rate your personal attitude towards working in your industry as a career?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>289*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Extremely negative | 2 |
| Negative | 4 |
| *Negative/extremely negative* | *6* |
| Neither negative nor positive | 12 |
| Positive | 48 |
| Extremely positive | 34 |
| *Positive/extremely positive* | *82* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes don’t now and would rather not say responses and 5 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 35:**

*Q37. Can you explain the reasons for your rating?*

| Unweighted base = | Positive/ extremely positive<br>197* | Negative/ extremely negative<br>17* ** |
|---|---|---|
| | % | % |
| Enjoyable work/lifestyle | 40 | 0 |
| Respectable career path and opportunities | 18 | 0 |
| Good pay | 11 | 6 |
| It's my job/I wouldn't do it otherwise/I have to be positive | 10 | 0 |
| Necessary for food production/economy | 8 | 0 |
| Other positive reasons | 5 | 0 |
| Low pay | 3 | 53 |
| Hard work | 4 | 18 |
| Negative reputation of the sector | 1 | 18 |
| Fluctuations in income | 3 | 6 |
| Other negative reasons | 2 | 6 |
| Other | 5 | 6 |
| Don't know | 5 | 0 |
| Would rather not say | 5 | 0 |

Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.
*Sub-sample based on those respondents who rated their personal attitude towards working in your industry as a career as either negative/extremely negative or positive/extremely positive. Sub-sample also excludes 48 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.
**Caution: low base number of respondents - results are indicative only.

**Table 36:**

*Q38. And based on your experience, would you recommend working in your industry to others?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>298* |
|---|---|
| | % |
| Yes, would recommend | 62 |
| No, would not recommend | 9 |
| Depends on the person | 13 |
| Depends on external factors (but not at the moment) | 7 |
| Other | 5 |
| Don't know | 3 |
| Would rather not say | 1 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes 4 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 37:**

*Q28. Thinking about your industry/sector, to what extent are the following having a negative impact on its ability to grow and prosper - The quality of Northland's roads and transport infrastructure*

| | Total |
|---|---|
| Unweighted base = | 290* |
| | % |
| Not at all | 11 |
| A small extent | 12 |
| *Not at all/a small extent* | *23* |
| Some extent | 23 |
| A moderate extent | 26 |
| A large extent | 28 |
| *A moderate/large extent* | *54* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes don't know and would rather not say responses and 8 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 38:**

*Q28. Thinking about your industry/sector, to what extent are the following having a negative impact on its ability to grow and prosper - Access to reliable ultrafast broadband*

| | Total |
|---|---|
| Unweighted base = | 278* |
| | % |
| Not at all | 15 |
| A small extent | 15 |
| *Not at all/a small extent* | *30* |
| Some extent | 17 |
| A moderate extent | 23 |
| A large extent | 31 |
| *A moderate/large extent* | *54* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes don't know and would rather not say responses and 8 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 39:**

*Q28. Thinking about your industry/sector, to what extent are the following having a negative impact on its ability to grow and prosper - Location of the nearest sea port*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>278*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Not at all | 43 |
| A small extent | 18 |
| *Not at all/a small extent* | *61* |
| Some extent | 13 |
| A moderate extent | 13 |
| A large extent | 14 |
| *A moderate/large extent* | *26* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes don't know and would rather not say responses and 7 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 40:**

*Q28. Thinking about your industry/sector, to what extent are the following having a negative impact on its ability to grow and prosper - Access to suitable workers from Northland*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>278*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Not at all | 16 |
| A small extent | 18 |
| *Not at all/a small extent* | *33* |
| Some extent | 24 |
| A moderate extent | 22 |
| A large extent | 21 |
| *A moderate/large extent* | *43* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes don't know and would rather not say responses and 7 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 41:**

*Q28. Thinking about your industry/sector, to what extent are the following having a negative impact on its ability to grow and prosper - The distances between where workers live and where businesses are located*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>281*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Not at all | 31 |
| A small extent | 22 |
| *Not at all/a small extent* | *53* |
| Some extent | 17 |
| A moderate extent | 20 |
| A large extent | 10 |
| *A moderate/large extent* | *30* |
| Total | 100 |

Total may not sum to 100% due to rounding.
*Sub-sample excludes don't know and would rather not say responses and 7 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 42:**

*Q29. Are there any other major barriers in Northland that are affecting your industry's ability to grow and prosper?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>287*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Economic pressures | 11 |
| Issues with availability and quality of local workforce | 8 |
| Compliance burden | 7 |
| Inadequate/poor infrastructure | 7 |
| Weather issues | 7 |
| Geographic features of Northland (including isolation and distances) | 6 |
| Poverty, unemployment and social issues (including drugs, alcohol, crime, etc.) | 5 |
| Educational issues | 4 |
| Lack of investment in Northland by central and local government | 4 |
| Poor sustainability practices | 3 |
| Lack of cooperation within and between businesses (and agencies) in the sector | 2 |
| Competition from outside the region | 1 |
| Negative public perception of the sector | 1 |
| Poor quality of some employers with the sector | 0 |
| Other | 6 |
| No | 30 |
| Don't know | 12 |
| Would rather not say | 4 |

Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.
*Sub-sample excludes 14 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.

**Table 43:**

*Q39. And finally, what is the one thing that would make the most positive impact on helping the primary industries in Northland to grow and prosper?*

| Unweighted base = | Total<br>294*<br>% |
|---|---|
| Better economic conditions | 20 |
| Greater government action/investment in primary sector/region in general | 19 |
| Changes to legislation/policy (e.g. compliance) | 19 |
| Better education for potential employees | 16 |
| Address public's perceptions about the primary industries | 5 |
| Cooperation amongst employers/communication with government | 3 |
| Better use of land | 1 |
| More competition for large organisations | 1 |
| Other | 5 |
| Nothing | 1 |
| Don't know | 16 |
| Would rather not say | 1 |

Total may exceed 100% because of multiple responses.
*Sub-sample excludes 8 respondents who did not provide an answer in the paper version of the survey.