



Kick for the seagulls: NorthTec's new approach for the 'kids up North'



"Sport is the best language we have here in New Zealand. It is using sport as the hook into education that will link them [young people] to employment."

Graham Lowe

NorthTec is taking a new approach to its support of the 'kids up North' by strengthening its links with the major employers in the region, and with iwi, to build a more coherent journey between education and employment.

As part of the new approach, NorthTec has joined forces with the famed rugby league coach and administrator, Graham Lowe, in a Youth Guarantee education venture. The newly established Graham Lowe Sports Performance Centre intends to use sport to hook young people into education. An educational partnership between NorthTec and the Australian National Rugby League (NRL) franchise, the Gold Coast Titans has been formed to introduce Titans 4 Tomorrow Limited, an established community engagement programme, to Northland.



Ngāti Hine Forestry, Moerewa



"The tutor was the best part of the course. He promised us he would help us get through and stay motivated – and he did. He's a real cool guy and he has the industry connections to help us."

Kyle Durack, Forestry Student, NorthTec



Council role

"It's about lifting the aspirations of the community and enabling our people to gain their education and skills in the North, and NorthTec will cooperate with everyone to do that." Chair, NorthTec.

From the NorthTec CEO's perspective, the change in council governance structure has been positive. The council's smaller size has enabled it to be more focused, and the governance changes have brought in new skills that increase the commercial and employer focus of the council.

The new council began holding its meetings in different locations across the region. This gave council members the opportunity to meet and hear first-hand from local employers about what they wanted. Employers reported they were looking for 'work-ready' employees, particularly in the forestry and agricultural sectors. Job shortages were not the issue; it was just that people were not ready for work.

"...so the council said what are you – the management team – going to do about it to better meet the needs of employers?" CEO, NorthTec.

This question, how to better meet the needs of employers, planted the seed with the NorthTec management team and generated thinking outside the box.



Initiatives to lift the aspirations of the 'kids up North' and strengthen the education to employment pathway

Employer and iwi involvement

NorthTec has worked with employers and iwi to establish career pathways that integrate educational options with business so that students who wish to go directly into work after leaving school can progress their careers in conjunction with studying at NorthTec.

By bringing together the forestry industry, the log transport industry, primary industry science and engineering (particularly mechanical), NorthTec has increased choice for learners, and opened up options for them to progress in their careers rather than remain in relatively low-level jobs. These options enable learners to have high aspirations and motivate them to stay on track. The approach has been piloted with a group of unemployed young people, with 80 percent moving into work after completing the forestry course.

"The idea of reorganising my businesses to give young kids options in careers and education rather than a single industry option has demonstrated that it can really work for both business and the student."
Andrew Chalmers (of Ngāti Pu), Executive Director and Chairman, Kiwi Forestry International Limited.

Establishment of the Graham Lowe Sports Performance Centre

Sport was seen as an effective way of reaching young people, as opposed to focusing on a work-readiness approach that was about 'needing to get kids up on time'.

The Graham Lowe Sports Performance Centre will be based on Graham Lowe's 12 principles for life and sport, and the pathways created by life skills, work skills and sports skills. It will provide a pathway to a level of performance training and potential employment for the often neglected and under-utilised young talent in the Northland region.

Important principles are:



"Graham speaks a language that kids can understand; he provides hope in a tangible way." Director Educational Strategy, NorthTec.

The Performance Centre will open in October 2014, with an initial intake of up to 25 students aged between 16 to 19 from all sporting codes, both male and female, and who do not have an NCEA Level 2 qualification. These students will study for a Certificate in Foundation Studies (Level 2).

Through participating in the sports performance programme, students will learn skills for budgeting, personal health and wellbeing, teamwork, time management and self-awareness. They will also develop communication skills and gain the literacy, computing and numeracy skills required to confidently progress to higher tertiary training or employment. The course will be delivered in a sports performance context allowing students to also develop their athletic potential and to understand the requirements of professional sport.

NorthTec will provide study pathway opportunities through a network of courses. The aim is to 'make the kids shine like never before'. The programme will be designed to enable progression with various exit options to employment opportunities and to progress in Northland.

"This will provide a pathway to a level of performance training and potential employment for the often neglected and under-utilised young talent in the Northland region."

CEO, NorthTec



Graham Lowe's 12 principles for life :

- + *Plan for a successful year.*
- + *What is a winning team? Understand the causes of happiness.*
- + *Let the dog see the rabbit. Show them what is expected of them.*
- + *There is no such thing as can't.*
- + *Practise until the lights go off.*
- + *Look for the man in the dinner suit. Nurture leadership qualities.*
- + *Never die wondering.*
- + *Kick for the seagulls. The playing field of opportunity is wide and full of space.*
- + *Run for fresh air. Don't be afraid to step up and make the most of opportunities.*
- + *Keep shifting the attack. Don't get stuck in your ways; if something isn't working, try something else.*
- + *Put up with the pain.*
- + *Discover the power of your team.*



"We are excited about this joint venture with NorthTec and are looking forward to a long and successful relationship. I have been impressed by potential future NRL stars from Northland, many of whom only need an opportunity to shine. Hopefully some of these upcoming stars will play for the Titans in the future"

Michael Searle, Founder and Executive Director of the Gold Coast Titans, and Founder and Managing Director of Titans 4 Tomorrow

"It is by helping one child achieve his or her personal dream that we come one step closer to our shared dream for the future of all our children."

Preston Campbell, Titans 4 Tomorrow Ambassador and Mentor

Titans 4 Tomorrow partnership



Alongside the establishment of the Graham Lowe Sports Performance Centre, NorthTec has entered into an educational partnership with the Gold Coast Titans NRL Club. The Gold Coast High Performance Centre of Excellence in Australia is world class and will be of huge benefit to NorthTec's new performance centre in both the initial stages and beyond.

The Gold Coast Titans will bring to the partnership the Titans 4 Tomorrow Limited, a non-profit charitable organisation that delivers the Gold Coast Titans community programmes. Disadvantaged youth who have become disengaged from education are the focus of these programmes, which have had a positive impact particularly in smaller rural communities.

This collaboration between the Titans and NorthTec will use the Titans' experience and expertise to help develop similar community programmes in the Northland region.

"NorthTec is now taking a continuous improvement approach. We have listened to local employers and now are seen as an exciting centre contributing to the economic development of Northland."

Chair, NorthTec

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This case study is the third in a series that the TEC is publishing as part of a wider project to review the 2010 governance changes in the polytechnic sector. www.tec.govt.nz/Funding/Monitoring-and-reporting/Evaluation-of-changes-to-governance

