

Social Impact

Sustainable
Business Council

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SKYCITY – Supporting young sole parents into work

April 2016

SKYCITY has been leading work around the Sustainable Business Council's Welfare to Work programme, which aims to increase the number of young, sole parents in work.

Employing young, sole parents makes sense for SKYCITY. The company is focussed on growing future talent and SKYCITY's Group Manager of Talent Acquisition and Development, Amanda Tolley, says the Welfare to Work programme fits nicely with the business' work on sustainability.

"We needed to find a way to get more young people thinking about hospitality in a different way. We wanted to encourage more young people to understand the career prospects."

She said the company and staff are beginning to understand more about young people not in employment, education or training (NEETS).

"We are now looking at young, sole parents as a new channel for talent."

"We've got a group of young women in employment with real talent and they're showing their strengths in the workplace.

"Our first two employees through the programme, Pola and Perisia, have been fantastic. They have stayed in their jobs at the Koru Lounge at Auckland Airport which is wonderful. They've been praised by customers for their strong customer focus.

"We've put in some of the right work up front to understand their circumstances and respond to those better. Now, these two workers are looking for opportunities to progress within the business – that's a great result for SKYCITY."

With about five new hotels opening in Auckland over the next five years, Amanda says hospitality is a very competitive labour market. But working with young, sole parents hasn't been without its challenges.

"Seeing the successes, like we have done for our first few employees, is what makes it all worthwhile."

Some of the challenges can be as simple as a parent being unable to find childcare to cover their shifts or having photo ID available.

"You need to change your processes to overcome some of the barriers to bringing this group into work. We're really fortunate to have a great team of employee support advisors available as part of our wider HR team. It takes perseverance, but it's worthwhile when you stay focussed on the outcomes. We are making a difference not only to the young women we're working with, but hopefully their families too."

Working with government has also been a learning curve for SKYCITY.

"We've developed the way we relate to government. We needed to be more flexible in how we recruit. As a result, the Ministry of Social Development has done a fantastic job in screening candidates. They now provide good volume, regularly and the candidates are absolutely ready and fully understand what the expectations of them will be before walking through the door. That has saved us plenty of time on candidates who might not be right for the role."

SKYCITY intends to continue working with young, sole parents to employ them in roles across the business.