

# Taking a neighbourly approach to prepare for the future

## Case Study: Auckland Airport

In 2014, Auckland Airport announced its 30-year vision to build a world-class airport of the future. As a result, its surrounding business community is growing at an unprecedented rate.

The current number of passengers passing through Auckland's airport is 20+ million. By 2044, this number is predicted to double.

Over the next 10 years, the airport will undertake a major expansion including the construction of a second runway, taxiway, hotel, additional retail, roads, walkways and warehouse facilities.

Today, more than 20,000 people work at and around Auckland Airport in more than 800 businesses. An estimated 27,000 more jobs will be up for grabs over the next 30 years.

For the airport to make its development plans a reality, it needed a solution to attract, recruit and retain a skilled workforce.

## Connecting and collaborating

Finding the right people with the right skills at the right time has been made possible by a community on its doorstep: South Auckland.

In 2015, the concept of a local jobs and skills hub, Ara, was initiated as a collaboration between government agencies, tertiary education providers, industry providers and Auckland Airport. Its purpose was to help address South Auckland's high level of unemployment by connecting local employers with people living in South Auckland.



In 2017, Auckland Airport established Ara as a charitable trust in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development; Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE); and the Tertiary Education Commission.

Ara is supported by its many partners which include: local businesses; schools; iwi; community groups; Auckland Council; the

Department of Corrections; Workbridge; Māori Pasifika Trades Training; industry training organisations and training providers; tertiary educators; and the South Harbour Business Association.

Not only does Ara place local people in local jobs (at no cost to employers), it works with employers and industry training organisations to identify the workforce's training needs. It also supports new recruits and existing staff into relevant courses. This ensures they have the right skills to take on specific jobs, and valuable and transferable skills to equip them for the future.

Employer Craig Treloar, Project Director at Hawkins Construction explains. "Since our inception, we've been involved in using Ara's skills hub and training on our site. Its team continues to support those people. We get them into roles with carpentry and steel companies. And a lot of them end up getting into apprenticeships."

Ara's Business Development Manager Lyn Amos says that initially the focus was on construction-based jobs and training. "To reflect the vast range of businesses in our airport and business precinct, we now support other sectors such as logistics, travel and tourism, hospitality, retail and administration."

## Good neighbours and goodwill

Having access to a skilled workforce is just one reason behind the airport's investment in Ara.

Being a small team of five staff, Ara collaborates closely with its many supporters and partners. "Working together generates an enormous amount of goodwill," says Lyn, "and gives us access to a community of talent we would otherwise struggle to reach."

For example, young people before they leave school."

**"Ara is a significant part of our long-term corporate social responsibility programme. We're determined to create sustainable employment for local people. Ara is one of the ways we can be a good neighbour."**

Auckland Airport CEO Adrian Littlewood

In partnership with five South Auckland schools, Ara offers Year 12 and 13 students work experience in local businesses for one or two days a week, for up to ten weeks per rotation. It gives local employers the chance to showcase their company and industry, while connecting them with potential employees.

Sophie Gavin, once a student and now an employee at Hargraves Homes explains how she has benefited from Ara. "Ara gave me a bit more confidence and made me realise how different it would be going straight from school into the workforce. Having a job and making money means a lot. I don't have to rely on my parents to support me. It's probably been the best opportunity of my life and working with Ara gave me that."

## Community-wide impact

To date Ara has placed 676 people (85% from South Auckland) in jobs. As a result, over half of those placements are no longer on benefits. In addition to finding sustainable employment for South Aucklanders, Ara has helped 206 students get work experience, 26 people take on apprenticeships and 3,514 complete training courses.

But Lyn is quick to point out that it's not just about the numbers and filling a gap in skills.



**“Everyone involved with Ara shares the same philosophy. We’re here to help people out of poverty in an enabling way. We want to make intergenerational change and have an impact on South Auckland’s community.”**

Lyn says that helping someone off a benefit and into a sustainable job obviously provides them with an income. “But we know a job counts for more than income. It provides people with a purpose and the opportunity to develop their talents. We want to help people into jobs that pay them well enough to support their families. And we want to see them stay in their job for at least 13 months. That’s why we offer them support once they’re in a job. All of these things add up and help improve the well-being of South Aucklanders.”

Tapu Brown, an employee at Land Solutions is hugely grateful for Ara’s support. “I’m the eldest of six siblings. I’ve got two parents at home still living on the benefit. I was sick of looking at my parents struggling. I just wanted to make a change to that. Ara helped me [get a job] and if it wasn’t for them I wouldn’t be the guy I am today.”

## Success breeds success

Ara has many long-term ambitions including for Auckland Airport and its surrounding

### **About Auckland Airport**

Auckland Airport is the third busiest airport in Australasia. More than three-quarters of all international visitors to New Zealand arrive in Auckland.

### **About the Sustainable Business Council**

SBC is a membership organisation, with a long-term aim to make sustainability mainstream within New Zealand businesses. They do this by inspiring businesses by creating a community of positive change, supporting members to go further and celebrating their leadership and success. SBC is part of the BusinessNZ family and is the New Zealand Global Network partner to the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

businesses to be seen by South Auckland as its ‘Employer of Choice’.

The jobs and skills hub has plans to work even more closely with local schools so that more students can see a pathway ahead before they leave school. “We want students to know there are opportunities for them in their local community without having to commute to the other side of Auckland every day,” says Lyn.

“While we can’t be certain of the future, we are certain of our ability to respond to the ever-changing needs of the airport and our community. Working on the ground - rather than top-down - with government, industry and community groups is key.”

Ara is one of three jobs and skills hubs in Auckland. Based on the success of its collaborative model, MBIE has committed to establishing two new hubs for other communities in Auckland.

