

Hon Jenny Salesa

Minister for Building and Construction

MEDIA STATEMENT

22 January 2020

Construction workforce, apprenticeships hit record highs

Working with industry and committing to rebuild New Zealand's infrastructure has produced a record high number of Kiwis working in the construction industry and learning trades, says Minister for Building and Construction Jenny Salesa.

New figures available today from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and the Tertiary Education Commission show the building and construction industry workforce is growing and it's becoming more diverse.

"Since the Coalition Government came to power, there are an extra 11,000 Kiwis working in the construction sector helping to build the houses, schools, hospitals, roads and rail New Zealand needs."

"In just two years

- about a thousand Māori New Zealanders have joined the construction industry;
- over 2,700 women;
- 2,800 more Asian New Zealanders;
- and almost 600 more Pacific people on the tools, than there was just two years ago."

"We've achieved a record construction workforce this by working with industry through the Construction Sector Accord, delivering the Construction Skills Action plan, and pulling every lever to encourage more Kiwis into the trades."

"Our Government has made trades training fees-free for the first two years and over 3,900 Kiwis have taken up the opportunity to learn a trade without fees already. Many people don't know that you can get two years fees-free to study a trade now. What better way to learn and earn without taking on debt than learning a trade?"

"We've also raised the status of the trades through the Prime Minister's Vocational Excellence Awards where we supported schools to award 345 high school students \$2,000 each to recognise their passion for the trades at prize givings last year."

“By making training more attractive with fees-free and prioritising apprenticeships through our new Procurement Rules, our Government is already seeing a big rise in the number of apprentices. The number of construction apprenticeships in industry training is up 20 percent since 2017, with an 4,700 additional apprentices being trained in the construction trades at any one time.”

“Under this Government there are:

- 30 percent more Māori apprentices;
- 40 percent more Asian apprentices;
- 47 percent more Pacific apprentices;
- and 56 percent more female apprentices.

“It’s not only about the Government’s efforts to boost apprenticeships that’s achieved these fantastic record figures, the fact is that more employers are hiring because they’re finally getting certainty about the future of the industry and clear signals from the Government that we’re here for the long haul alongside them - we’ll keep investing in New Zealand’s future.”

“We set up the Infrastructure Commission and had it publish all the big projects for the next decade. That’s allowed us to issue the *National Construction Pipeline Report*, showing national construction activity over the next five years is forecast to total \$214.9 billion, with that figure set to rise following the Government’s announcement in December of a fresh \$12 billion in investment to tackle New Zealand’s infrastructure deficit over the next five years.”

“We can only get the construction workforce New Zealand needs by working with industry to tackle the long-term challenges. Later this week we’ll be releasing our *Construction Sector Transformation Plan* that lays out the concrete steps we’ll take together to turn our country’s construction sector into one of the most productive in the world, so we can build the houses, schools, hospitals, roads and rail New Zealand needs.” says Jenny Salesa.

New Zealand's growing construction workforce by group and total
(Source: MBIE, Dec 2019):

Type	Year			
	Sep 2017	Dec 2019	2017-19 Change	2017-19 % Change
Women	47,716	50,408	2,692	5.64%
Māori	37,638	38,626	988	2.63%
Pacific	14,920	15,508	588	3.94%
Asian	24,463	27,290	2,827	11.56%
Total construction workforce*	264,035	275,147	11,112	4.21%

* The sum of the various ethnic groups does not add to the total as apprentices are counted in each ethnic group they identify with, (eg and some categories are not shown here (eg 'European', 'Other', 'unknown'))

Number of construction apprentices by group and total (through ITOs)
(Source: TEC, Jan 2019):

Type	Year							
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 ²	2017-19 Change	2017-19 % Change
Women	371	412	435	486	651	762	276	56.79%
Māori	2,556	2,871	3,271	3,773	4,521	4,871	1,098	29.10%
Pacific	853	1,005	1,180	1,460	1,907	2,152	692	47.40%
European	13,463	14,529	15,469	16,519	18,310	19,485	2,966	17.96%
Asian	501	702	896	1,155	1,407	1,620	465	40.26%
Middle Eastern/La	229	319	396	443	548	614	171	38.60%
Total construction apprentices*	17,769	19,463	21,103	23,073	25,961	27,788	4,715	20.44%

* The sum of the various ethnic groups does not add to the total as apprentices are counted in each ethnic group they identify with, and some categories are not shown here (eg 'Other', 'unknown')

Sources:

1. Construction industry workforce figures (MBIE: 2019)
2. Apprentice figures are for combined construction apprenticeship numbers across all industry training organisations (ITOs) from the Industry Training Register (Tertiary Education Commission: January 2020). 2019 figures are provisional and subject to change.
3. Fees-free enrolments (Tertiary Education Commission: Two years to December 2019 [unpublished])
4. PM's Award for Vocational Excellence Recipient Numbers (Ministry of Education: December 2019 [unpublished])
5. Construction activity projections ([National Construction Pipeline Report: MBIE, 2019](#))

Media Contact:

Rory McCourt – 021 190 3642