

# Kia mōhio

Issue 06 | September 2008

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Workplace productivity in the State sector

The recent launch of the New Zealand Skills Strategy Action Plan<sup>1</sup> has really helped raise awareness of the links between skills and productivity. Indeed, the link between the two was the theme of this year's Industry Training Federation Conference, prompting much discussion on how the impact of skills on productivity can be measured.

FOR THE PRIVATE SECTOR, one obvious measurement is the ratio of outputs to inputs – but the same method can't necessarily be used for the public sector. State Services productivity is different – State Services organisations operate under quite different conditions, producing services that, in many cases, are not for sale. Therefore, the question is – how do we measure productivity in the State sector, and what exactly determines how productive a State Services organisation is?

One answer to this comes in the form of the State Services Workplace Productivity Kit, developed by the Department of Labour, the New Zealand Public Service Association and the State Services Commission. The toolkit sits within the framework of the State Services Development Goals and the Partnership for Quality Agreement and Managing for Outcomes.

The resource kit offers a series of suggestions and resources that State Services organisations can use to improve their productivity. It explains that, although

the conditions are different to those in the private sector, State Services organisations still need to respond to the needs of New Zealanders in a responsible and economically efficient way. As the toolkit states, "State Services productivity involves the concepts of efficiency and outputs as well as effectiveness and outcomes."

The kit identifies seven key drivers of workplace productivity: building leadership; fostering a positive and healthy workplace culture; using technology to its full potential; investing in people and skills; putting effective workplace processes in place; networking and collaboration across agencies and sectors; and measuring what matters.

Of these, it's investment in skills that is most relevant to the work that we do here at Learning State. As the industry training organisation for the State sector, our core business is helping the State sector build the skills of its people. Research shows that putting the time and

**"People with the right skills are central to the delivery of high-quality public services to New Zealanders."**

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Leading workplace learning in the State sector

<sup>1</sup> New Zealand Skills Strategy Action Plan 2008, produced jointly by Business New Zealand, New Zealand Council of Trade Unions, Industry Training Federation and New Zealand Government, and launched at the 2008 Industry Training Federation conference. Copies available at [www.itf.org.nz](http://www.itf.org.nz)

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effort into building the capabilities of staff really does provide tangible benefits to any organisation – benefits that come in the form of more motivated staff, staff who feel more valued, staff who take on a wider range of tasks and, of course, staff who are more productive. As the toolkit states, “People with the right skills are central to the delivery of high-quality public services to New Zealanders.”

At Learning State, the concept of ‘partnership’ is at the core of everything we do – and, in fact, you’ll see some clear examples of ‘partnership in action’ in this issue of *Kia mōhio*. We believe that working in partnership with State sector agencies is the most effective way to build capability within individual agencies and across the State sector as a whole.

If you’d like to find out more about our services, and how we can work with you to improve the skills and productivity of the people in your organisation, please give us a call – we’d love to hear from you. You can download a copy of the State Services Workplace Productivity resource kit by visiting the Department of Labour website – [www.dol.govt.nz](http://www.dol.govt.nz). Click on Key Projects, then Workplace Productivity Resources.

In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this issue of *Kia mōhio*!



MICHELLE MANLEY  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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# Workplace-related assessment motivates higher achievement

A study by Learning State and two of its partners has shown that workplace-related assessment challenges are more motivating for the learner.

**THE STUDY**, *Retention and Success in Workplace Learning*, was undertaken by Learning State, Statistics New Zealand and the Auckland University of Technology. Its purpose was to examine the completion and success rates of State sector employees undertaking the newly developed National Certificate in Public Sector Services (Official Statistics).

“Research has found that when the assessment approach used is more closely aligned with the workplace, learners are more motivated and more likely to complete their training,” Learning State Senior Advisor, Research and Development, Karen Moses says.

Assessment is the process used to measure the competencies learners need in order to gain the qualification. Assessment of a qualification can take a number of forms – but as Karen says, it needs to cover a full range of theory and skills that can then be applied within the workplace context.

“The study showed that learners would put more effort into completing assessment requirements when the learning was transferred to the workplace – whether it was doing research, applying their skills to real-life situations or evaluating policy. It really showed that high-level skills application is basically motivating,” Karen says.

Karen says that taking a partnership approach to delivering a qualification in this way is central to Learning State’s way of working, and as well as providing insight into State sector learning trends, it offers some tangible, immediate gains for everyone involved.

“We put a lot of emphasis on working in collaboration with tertiary education providers and our member agencies. This is a great example of how we can actively work together to ensure that we’re getting the best outcomes for all,” she says.

This project has been developed with funding support from Ako Aotearoa – the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence.

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## And here’s what our partners in the study have to say...

“Performance criteria have been a useful starting point for planning assessment. The use of official statistics in government policy development is a complex high-level process. Our assessments need to reinforce that message if we are to motivate our best candidates.”

**Murray Black**, Associate Head of School, Computing and Mathematical Sciences, Auckland University of Technology.

“We will need to do more work to confirm these findings, but they have given us some evidence that we need to look more closely at the levels of statistical thinking we are demanding in assessment.”

**Professor Sharleen Forbes**, General Manager of Statistics Education, Statistics New Zealand.



Major Ian Bateman

# NZ Army and Learning State take partnership approach to learning

The number of soldiers gaining qualifications in areas such as first line management and adult education is on the rise – and the New Zealand Army puts the success down to its strong partnership with Learning State.

**MAJOR IAN BATEMAN** of the New Zealand Army's Linton Military Camp says although training and development is central to the New Zealand Army's philosophy, soldiers haven't always had the ability to have their non-technical skills and competencies recognised nationally, or outside a military environment.

"The introduction of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework was a real turning point for us. Together with Learning State, we've been able to get some clear learning pathways for our soldiers, and we're seeing more and more of them gaining nationally recognised tertiary qualifications as a result," he says.

Of the 250 soldiers graduating with Learning State each year, most are achieving qualifications in first line management and adult education. And although these qualifications are generally being put to use in combat situations or in the teaching of battle handling skills, they're still skills that are transferable across the State sector.

Patricia Pooley, a senior advisor with Learning State, says the relationship with the New Zealand Army has gone from "strength to strength" in the time that Learning State has been working with the New Zealand Army.

"For us, it's about really listening to our clients' needs and coming up with solutions. With the Army, we're constantly looking at how their needs are changing and finding innovative and tailored ways to align those requirements. It is a true partnership, and we work very closely together."

And as Ian says, "I have a great deal of faith in our training regime and the way we work with Learning State. We take our soldiers to

very high levels. The fact that we can now have this recognised outside the Army means our soldiers can leave the Army with qualifications that can be recognised in any industry or sector, and that's a real bonus."



Corporal Brett Sparkes

**INFANTRY RIFELMAN CORPORAL BRETT SPARKES** this year received his National Certificate in First Line Management and National Certificate in Adult Education and Training.

Brett, who has been in the Army for eight years, believes that the training he undertook for both these qualifications was "extremely relevant" to his role.

"It's so important in the infantry to keep a tight ship. If I have eight men under my command, I have to be the leader – we're working with live ammunition in a real-time situation. I can't really afford to have my men question my authority."

And, when it comes to training and education, he says that most people think of teaching as being "something in a classroom". However, his skills are being put to use in physical skills instruction and battle handling situations. Despite the different topics though, he says the principles of teaching are always the same.

"It's great to be able to gain these qualifications. It's recognition for my skills – and even though I'm using them in relation to my role in the Army, it's good to know they'll be recognised anywhere," Brett says.



Sergeant Tania Rickard

**SERGEANT TANIA RICKARD** joined the New Zealand Army as a full-time soldier in 1997. Like Brett, she has just graduated with her National Certificate in First Line Management and National Certificate in Adult Education and Training.

Although she chose truck driving as her first Army role, she soon realised it wasn't for her and moved into the role of an administrator. Now, she is responsible for a team of four, ensuring that the administration of the Second Logistics Battalion runs smoothly.

"I can definitely say that working towards these certificates has helped me. It's about taking on board all the material we learn and using that experience and training to be more efficient," Tania says.

"When you join the Army, you are sacrificing certain things. It does become your life – the physical side of it, the soldiering, the trade and professional development and the personal lives.

"However, they put such a lot into our growth and development – they really invest in us through training. For me, this is like gaining a formal qualification for just doing your job – it's a real bonus."

## Mark your diaries for Learning State's graduation ceremonies!

Learning State's graduation ceremonies will be held in Auckland on 12 November 2008 and Wellington on 19 November 2008.

EACH YEAR, many Learning State graduates from a range of State sector agencies take part in our premier graduation event for the year. It's an opportunity for those who have completed their certificate or diploma qualifications to celebrate their success with their family, managers and other government representatives.

If you've got staff who you think should attend, please let us know as soon as possible, so we can reserve them a place – call us on 04 495 1410 for more details!

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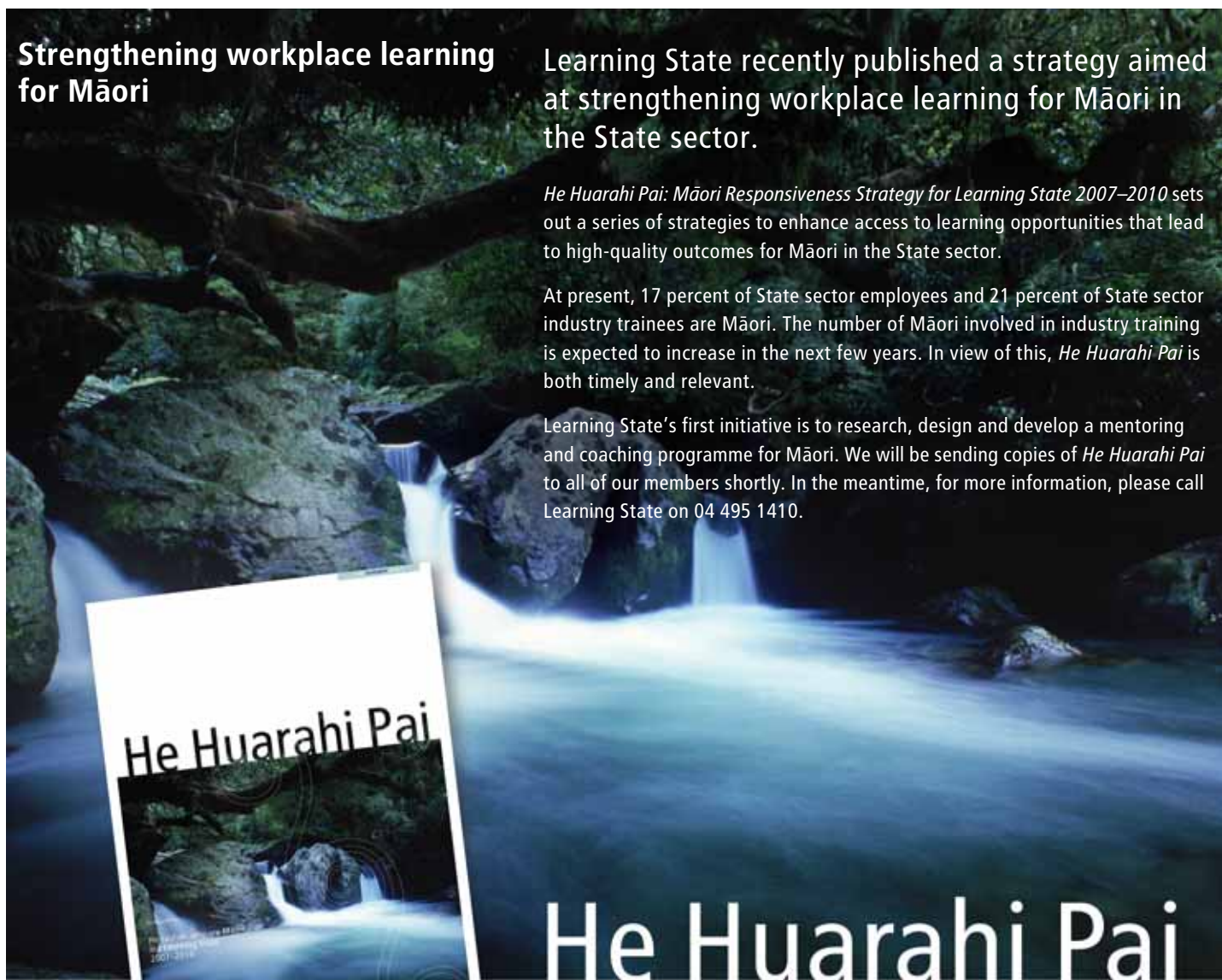
## Strengthening workplace learning for Māori

Learning State recently published a strategy aimed at strengthening workplace learning for Māori in the State sector.

*He Huarahi Pai: Māori Responsiveness Strategy for Learning State 2007–2010* sets out a series of strategies to enhance access to learning opportunities that lead to high-quality outcomes for Māori in the State sector.

At present, 17 percent of State sector employees and 21 percent of State sector industry trainees are Māori. The number of Māori involved in industry training is expected to increase in the next few years. In view of this, *He Huarahi Pai* is both timely and relevant.

Learning State's first initiative is to research, design and develop a mentoring and coaching programme for Māori. We will be sending copies of *He Huarahi Pai* to all of our members shortly. In the meantime, for more information, please call Learning State on 04 495 1410.



# He Huarahi Pai

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### DEVELOPMENT GOALS



**LEARNING STATE**  
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for the State Services

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Contact us at [feedback@learningstate.govt.nz](mailto:feedback@learningstate.govt.nz) to let us know your comments on this newsletter. Your suggestions for improvements or future articles are welcome.



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