

## **Aquatics in Hot Water – Staff Recruiting and Retention**

6 September 2021

The aquatics industry is not alone when it comes to struggling to find staff when a position becomes vacant or to retaining the great staff that they have. Due to COVID-19, facilities are finding it harder to fill those positions, with an increase in opportunities out there for employees and a lack of international travellers coming to NZ.

Our Aquatics in Hot Water webinar looked at the challenges, shared some solutions and asked the industry about the challenges they are currently facing in this space. Below are the questions and the answers we received:

### **What challenges are you facing in recruiting?**

- Difficult to attract full time lifeguards.
- Don't want to work shifts and weekends.
- Lots of high school students apply but can only work part time.
- Police checks hold up recruitment process.
- Lack of applicants.
- Less migrants in NZ leads to fewer applications.
- People going through the training and then not starting.

### **What challenges are you facing with retention?**

- Don't see a career in aquatics.
- Leave for better pay and hours.
- Lack of development opportunities/supervisor roles available.
- People who tend to stay, stay for a long time not enabling others to come through to higher positions.
- Lack of vacancies in higher positions. Usually, staff stay in these roles for a long time.
- Don't realise the responsibility as a lifeguard.
- Retention is cyclical. You will have them for 3-5 years while studying then they move on.
- Lifeguards need to be seen as a specialised job and paid better due to the responsibility. Our lifeguards are on similar money as someone at a supermarket with less responsibility.

### **What Strategies do you currently have in place for recruitment and retention?**

- Recruitment campaign focussing on the good points of the working for the organisation. Selling the strengths of the role and the organisation and why they should come and work for you as opposed to asking the applicants to tell you why they should work for you. Bay Venues “Join the Crew” campaign is a good example. <https://bayvenuesjobs.co.nz/>
- Group interviews are great, and very useful.

### **What support have you received externally or internally and how can you share this?**

- Partnering with other agencies to provide pool of applicants and trainees.
- Some facilities have used WINZ in the past but have had little success.
- Connecting with local schools Gateway programme is popular and allows you to see the applicants before offering them a job.
- Partnering with the YMCA to deliver funded programs to students and adults a year with up to 10 in each group. The program delivered over 6 weeks will include police vetting, successful completion of the course will enable them to become a casual employee and then be available to move up into part time or full time shifts as they come available.
- ACE - Adult Community Education. Funding is available for training initiatives (specific criteria apply). [aceaotearoa.org.nz](http://aceaotearoa.org.nz)
- Word of mouth - getting our high schoolers to tell their friends has worked for us.
- Programs like [Welcoming Communities](#) and [Multicultural Councils](#) often have direct lines to communities that may not normally monitor usual channels of communications.
- Migrant newcomers group we have got on board with and trained a new member of staff recently
- Endeavouring to connect with work brokers as there's a few that have popped up besides WINZ. Some have been funded via the Provincial Growth Fund - still very early days.
- HR team do a lot of screening across 5 sites they can feel where people are best suited.
- HR staff who understand the needs of aquatic facilities and have a visual presence at the facility and are available to all staff for any issues.

### **How are you managing the Police Vetting process?**

- Police vetting submitted after a passed swim test.
- Applicants bring Police Vetting form to interview. This is then submitted if the applicant seems suitable for the next stage of recruitment.

- Unless its child-care related offer them a role dependent on a clean police check coming back. This is signed by applicant that they understand this provision.
- Immediate vetting whether we end up employing them or not. This may mean paying for checks for people you don't employ.

**Do you pay living wage? Has this improved interest in positions and numbers of applicants? Has it helped with retention?**

- Some facilities do pay this but have not seen an increase in either recruiting or retention.
- Little interest in high paid jobs advertised.
- Some improvement in retention seen by some facilities.
- Pool Attendant Development Plan so pay increases up the steps are directly related to work tasks, council values etc.
- Not living wage but a council determined fair wage scheme.