

# PUKEKOHE BUS AND RAIL STATION 2017-2018



In partnership with



## Creating a window for on-site work experience and training via a station redevelopment

### The story

The rapid upgrade of a railway station delivers on-site training for young people, equipping them for future work opportunities.

Over 2017, the Pukekohe bus and rail station underwent a \$9 million upgrade. It offered a great opportunity to bring on board social procurement practices, but with some important constraints. The site itself is a fully functioning station, therefore there were a range of important health and safety constraints that needed to be considered in any local training or development opportunities. The scale of the development was smaller than other public transport projects, such as the Manukau Bus Interchange, and ran for only four to five months.

The tender for the station included three areas of additional benefits, in particular how they would participate in the delivery of an infrastructure training course managed by MPTT team at no cost to Auckland Transport under the tendered price. The tender also sought commitments for waste minimisation and reducing the carbon footprint.

The successful tenderer, Downer Construction, indicated strong willingness to deliver additional benefits from the works programme, through delivering training to MPTT participants.

With learning from past successes in this space, TSI could specify a core set of expectations for the successful tenderer, which included the following:

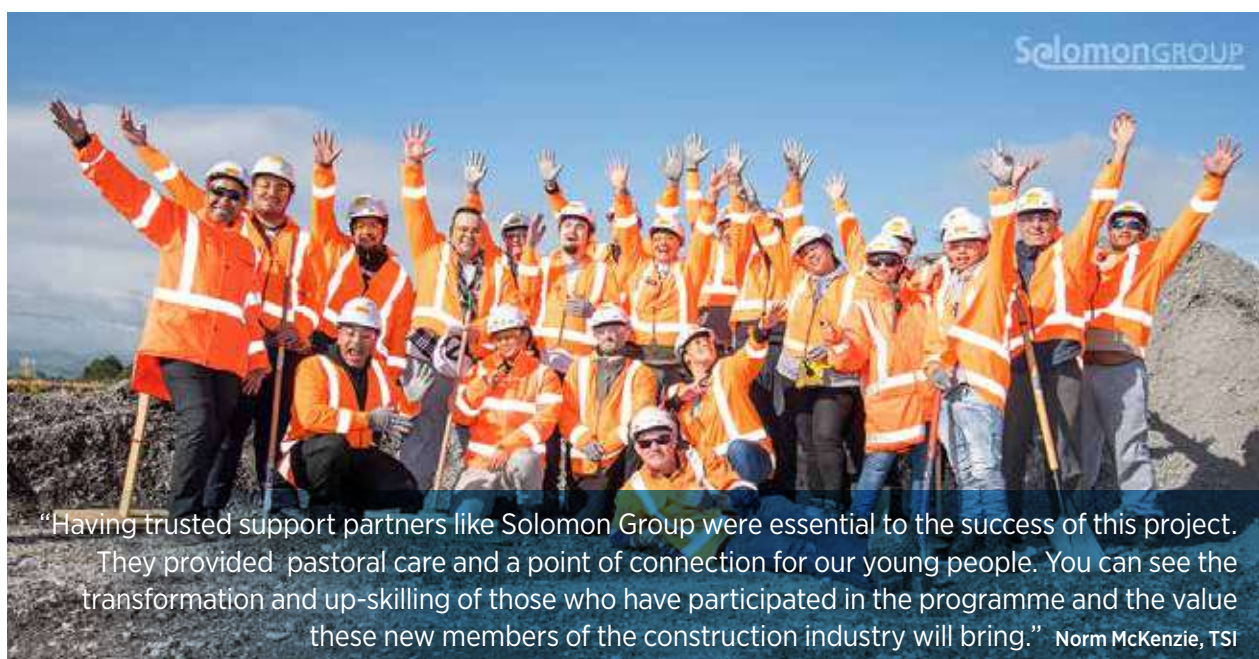
- To participate in the delivery of a 12-week pre-apprenticeship training course in infrastructure skills, provided by Solomon Group as part of MPTT, at no cost to Auckland Transport under the tendered price, and which may include the participation of sub-contractors.
- To participate in delivering both classroom-based learning and on-site experiences, to cover both theory and practice. Trainees will have relevant health and safety requirements prior to any on-site learning.

As with other training opportunities developed through TSI, course costs were funded by the Tertiary Education Commission.

TSI and the Solomon Group sourced MPTT participants from the Franklin Local Board area, mana whenua and other parts of South Auckland, to ensure that local people can access quality training opportunities in Auckland Transport projects.

“We also approach it with being a win-win situation, so when we’ve spoken with the project manager out there, the first thing we said is we don’t want to put Downers at risk, we’re really flexible, we know sometimes you have to change plans, we can deal with that, and they were really appreciative of that.”

Jenny Solomon, Solomon Group



“Having trusted support partners like Solomon Group were essential to the success of this project. They provided pastoral care and a point of connection for our young people. You can see the transformation and up-skilling of those who have participated in the programme and the value these new members of the construction industry will bring.” Norm McKenzie, TSI

## The impact

At the time of writing, 45 people had been through on-site training, and 41 have become employed following training. Overall, 150 people are committed overall by Downer. Their training included:

- New Zealand certificate in infrastructure works Level 2
- Site safe, traffic management and drivers license training
- Drug testing and employability skills
- Experiential hands-on learning at or around the station, and classroom-based learning.



It's not just a qualification, the qualification is part of the course to actually help them work out if they're a match in the industry, and give them some basic skills to allow them to enter that type of employment.

**Jenny Solomon, Solomon Group**

These were undertaken at no additional cost to Auckland Transport or the employer, and therefore the ratepayer. Because the training is a short course, participants can continue to receive unemployment benefits and so do not suffer financially. Overall these trainings support up-skilling in the construction industry which is a win for all.



It wasn't at any cost to the employer, so the training was going to be delivered by us at no charge to them, it was more about a partnership, about allowing locals in the community to actually have access to the realities of the industry.

**Jenny Solomon, Solomon Group**

The training appears to be appreciated and valued by young people taking part.



We've just been told by the school that they're attending us more than they're attending school so, it's about giving them something they actually want.

**Jenny Solomon, Solomon Group**

One area that did not go to plan was an intention with this initiative to make use of nearby council facilities as training rooms. This failed to materialise and other local venues were found.

## The lessons

The Pukekohe rail project is another example of the pliability of social procurement tactics when considered strategically and constructed specifically for a project. This project equipped people for future work opportunities, which TSI working with Downer and Solomon Group successfully brought about.

While the weighting in this contract for social outcomes was 5%, this can often be the difference in many cases between winning and losing a tender. Increasingly, tenderers have shown willingness to express a point of difference in this space from other suppliers.



As a result of learning from this project and other projects, drug testing approaches are being re-thought. This was prompted by a realisation that employers and trainers need to work with the complexity of people's lives, not apply it in a way that it deepens their poverty and exclusion. This approach treats drug use as a health and wellbeing issue, with those who test positively stood down and referred to services rather than sacked.



Employers themselves are starting to look at what else they can do, so Downers for example are looking at offering a strategy whereby they ask anyone whose interested in the job to come through. For those who are on drugs, they're looking at how will it work if we said to them, in 8 weeks' time we will guarantee you a job if you can be clean.

**Jenny Solomon, Solomon Group**

## The future

The response of the tenderers to this project, which followed the Manukau Bus Interchange, clearly signalled a market shift to embracing the social procurement challenge and opportunity. For teams across Auckland Council and CCOs, there is a major opportunity to take advantage of this shift to help create transformational change in Auckland's communities.

The market is willing to enrol in approaches like these, and see this as an opportunity to offer a competitive edge. In many cases, this approach resonates with the contribution they want to make to Auckland's communities.

The experience of the Pukekohe and other projects has prompted Solomon Group to look with Downer at a friends and whānau programme to connect people into work.



Downers have however many thousands of employees, they're the employees that are 'Downerised', they like the environment, they like working for Downers, so do they have any friends or family who they think would also be good to work for Downers. It kind of harks back to how Maori were a couple of generations ago, where it was like grandfather worked there, father worked there, son comes and works there, and you get that loyalty and longevity.

**Jenny Solomon, Solomon Group**

