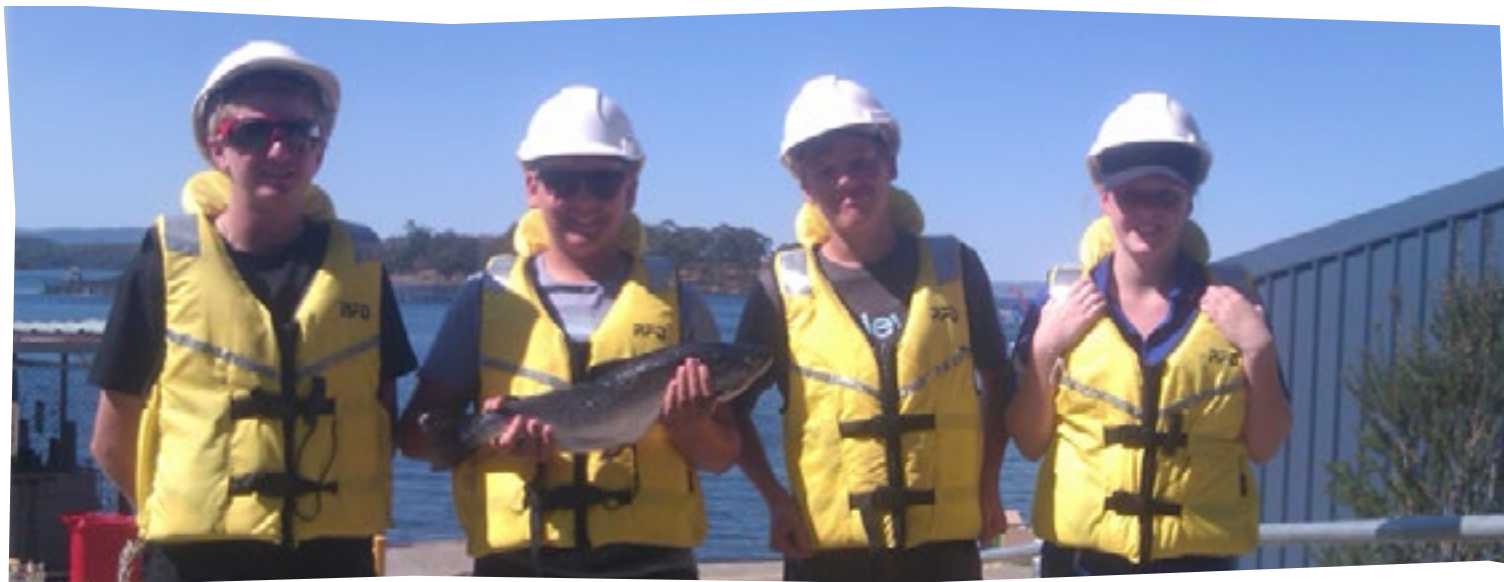


Work Inspiration Case Study: Tassal Group Ltd



1. Pilot Name and Location

The Tassal/Huon Valley Trade Training Centre pilot was located in the Huon Valley and Dover districts of rural Southern Tasmania.

2. Lead Employers and their Purpose

The pilot was led by a partnership between the lead employer Tassal Operations Pty Ltd and the Huon Valley Trade Training Centre regional facility. Tassal and the centre had an existing and strong partnership, supported by the Beacon Foundation, which is based upon their shared commitment to aquaculture in the region. Tassal is well known for its production of salmon. Both Partners saw Work Inspiration as a possible vehicle to raise the profile of their contribution, and to innovate and become more strategic in their pro-active partnering.

Students were about to start a Certificate I in Aquaculture, and Tassal wished to expand this group of young people's knowledge of the industry and their business. Apart from the recruitment pipeline rationale, which targeted VET students, Tassal were keen to try Work Inspiration as a development tool for their staff, who were currently undertaking leadership training.

The contact persons for the two pilot partners are Steve Harrison, Education Programs Leader Huonville High School/HVTTC - email contact steve.harrison@education.tas.gov.au and Danielle Purdon, HR Manager Tassal – email contact danielle.purdon@tassal.com.au

3. Students and Schools Involved

Ten students from the Huon Valley Trade Training Centre (HVTTC) who were about to commence their Certificate I Aquaculture subject participated in the pilot program. These students were in years 9 and 10 and had clearly declared an interest in aquaculture.

4. Partnership Brokers and Evaluator

The pilot was supported by the Beacon Foundation as part of its continuing work in facilitating business engagement and employer – education partnerships with Huonville High School. The HV TTC contact person also is the Beacon Foundation Coordinator within the school.

- ▶ The Tassal evaluation clearly indicated that the aims of Work Inspiration and the local goals for their pilot were achieved. Students had moved from a low level of knowledge about the industry to a point where they wanted to learn more, identified a potential career path and decided that Tassal was an employer of choice; one with exciting opportunities that were both accessible and interesting. "I liked and learnt about all the company had to offer, not just one thing".
- ▶ Tassal felt that the company had truly partnered with the HVTTC, taken a proactive and creative stance to partnering with schools and now created a foundation stone for moving forward work experience programs in the company. In addition, Tassal noted the keen interest of staff in the presentations by young people and felt that the company had further learnt about the nature of work life at Tassal from the students.
- ▶ Tassal also acknowledged that Work Inspiration as well as being a contributor to their recruitment pipeline, was also a vehicle to maintain community reputation and getting closer to schools. The company strongly felt that Work Inspiration was a way to assist young people to develop their career direction, motivation to learn and their employability. The Tasmanian state manager of Beacon supported the pilot and the evaluation process was shared between Beacon, the HVTTC and Tassal.

For more details contact Mr Anthony Stewart,
State Manager Beacon Foundation astew@beaconfoundation.net

5. Pilot Summary

A series of informal briefings and partnership conversations brokered by Beacon determined that Tassal and the HVTTC would jointly develop the pilot program in southern Tasmania. On the 4 – 8 March 2013, the ten students participated in a four day program that entailed visits to the Tassal's Processing Facility in Huonville, the Tassal salmon farms in Dover and the Tassal Hatchery at Ranelagh. Following the placement the students reviewed, and then presented their learning and experience of the pilot to Tassal and HVTTC employees.

The first day was primarily introductory, health and safety induction and the same orientation as any new employee to Tassal would receive, along with conversations 'about me'. The next two days saw the students' pair up and visit various sites and have career conversations with Tassal employees. In addition and whenever possible, the students also participated in such hands-on tasks as fish health testing, gill checking, feeding, processing and packing.

6. Key Successes and Success Factors

- ▶ The students enjoyed the activities and conversations with employees, and found them helpful – in terms of finding out what was on offer, and the range of roles in the industry. Responses ranged from "I liked looking after the fish best" to "it helped me know what I want to do". The visits to sites and the engaging conversations were valued.
- ▶ Eight of the ten students completed evaluations and agreed or strongly agreed that the pilot program had helped them to think about their careers, to learn about how careers develop and to become more aware of options (student average score of 4.4 or 88%). All but one student agreed or strongly agreed that the range of

careers in Tassal had inspired them. Six out of eight students similarly felt that the program had increased their motivation to do well at school, and helped them to set goals and aspirations for the future. The Tassal Human Resources Manager strongly agreed that Work Inspiration could make work placements a more satisfying experience for both students and their own staff, and bring the company closer to collaborative schools:

"We are not only interested in Work Inspiration as an induction to VET, we would like to be available to students, whether they wish to focus upon a University qualifying subject or because they want to find out more about what they want to do".

- ▶ The School and HVTTC evaluation revealed a very strong sense of satisfaction with the pilot program. Students were treated as potential employees and they were challenged to learn and present their findings back to Tassal – making it a particularly authentic learning experience. Their evaluation confirmed the students' feedback, in that the school strongly agreed that students had been inspired, and their career planning developed. On a more specific and practical level, the HVTTC felt that Work Inspiration had offered students an engaging and motivating start to their aquaculture studies.
- ▶ The overall perspective of the Beacon Foundation can be summarised as follows – the Work Inspiration experience enabled an existing and healthy partnership to become stronger, more proactive and strategic. The positioning of the program at the front-end of a VET course is worthy of replication.

7. Key Learnings

For next time: local application

- ▶ Highly value and repeat the process of students working in pairs for the visits, conversations and presentations. It made the experience less threatening for year 9 and 10 students. This team based approach helped develop an ethos of teamwork and peer support which will be helpful to the VET course.
- ▶ With such young students it may be helpful to work through guides and materials about interviewing and career conversations before they participate in the actual program – offer some tools and structure to the dialogue which is clearly so valuable.
- ▶ Offer the lead employer an employer information package before the program that may include the benefits of an internal Big Conversation event, or similar process.

The long term future of Work Inspiration: national

- ▶ Build upon existing partnerships where the employers and schools want to become more strategic and creative. The solid foundation stone is laid, yet innovation and shared effort can invigorate and revitalise their collaboration. Trade Training Centres which have built strong links with related industries could be a great starting point to promote such an opportunity for both the Work Inspiration program and their own local partnering.
- ▶ Associated with the above mentioned point is using Work Inspiration as a motivational induction process to learning in a VET course. Tassal and the HVTTC deliberately set out to achieve this goal, placing the pilot in context with the core operations of the HVTTC i.e. accredited Vocational education and training.

8. Special Feature

The strategic and creative partnership between education and a business that jointly planned, designed, implemented and evaluated the pilot stands out as a special feature. The employer Tassal invested its creativity, knowledge and business expertise into the design, resourced time for program planning, delivery and evaluation, however it was partnership that truly led. The company and the HVTTC thought and acted together. They had a shared and longer term goal; seeking some systemic change in the way they collaborated on the key issue of the future of work experience.

10. Reflecting Upon the Evaluation

The evaluation process has been driven by the HVTTC and Tassal together. The role of a local independent evaluator is still important. Although Beacon, not the Partnership Broker monitored and commented upon the pilot, the writer of the case study, who was also close to the development of this pilot program, documented and externally evaluated the pilot. That resource will not always be available, so highly value the local evaluator and a broker plays a key role in such a process.

9. Recommendations to National Partners

- ▶ Promote the TTC/Business partnership and induction to VET approaches to Work Inspiration through Trade Training Centres across Australia – using this pilot as an exemplar. The national VET networks may also be a helpful promoter of such an approach. Explore in resource materials, how such a partnership led approach can still be employer led, yet have the potential to embed Work Inspiration activity in the core operations of education.
- ▶ This pilot confirms the emerging Australian thinking about the need for nationwide Work Inspiration development to be underpinned by a healthy partnership between education and employers – far more explicitly referred to than in the UK Experience.