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# THE POWER OF PEOPLE

**IN CLEANING INDUSTRY**



This year, our visual theme for each of the Industry Action Plans has been developed with a Te Ao Māori context in mind.

For the Cleaning industry we lean into the symbolism of Wai Māori, symbolising the purifying and refreshing nature of cleaning services.

# BUILDING A FUTURE-READY WORKFORCE AMIDST UNCERTAINTY

## Future Vision

The Cleaning industry is one that can offer a variety of pathways for kaimahi to not only enter employment, but also owning their own businesses. The industry will continue to enable and empower kaimahi by providing them with opportunities to upskill and adapt. As well as helping businesses to operate more effectively and efficiently, the industry will help to shift the turn-over dial and smooth the pathways for people within the industry.

We can see that a growth in Māori-owned businesses and iwi influence (as commercial property owners) means the future will provide

more people with the opportunity to work in or own businesses built on Te Ao Māori values.

The Cleaning industry is expected to have steady growth across both commercial and domestic areas, with an expected workforce forecast of 14% over the next 5 years. For commercial cleaning, demand is expected to rise with more organisations deciding to outsource cleaning services providers.





TACKLE THE  
CHALLENGES

SEIZE THE  
OPPORTUNITIES

### About the Industry

The Cleaning industry supports a vast range of businesses, people and communities; it is an essential service that is becoming increasingly recognised and valued as one that ensures people can live and work in a safe and clean environment, whether that's in commercial, domestic, or other public settings.

The Cleaning Services industry contributes nearly \$1.4 billion to the nation's economy and has immense value to society as an essential service. As observed throughout the pandemic, without cleaners, the public is at risk of multiple health hazards and unsanitary living, working, and public environments.



### About the workforce

The Cleaning industry employs approximately 33,800 people, but this could be higher, if non-standard work patterns such as casual or very limited hours are included. These workers are diverse, comprising individuals from various demographic backgrounds, including students, part-time workers, and immigrants.

While some workers may enter the cleaning industry in entry-level positions, there are opportunities for career advancement and professional growth through training programs, mentorship, and internal promotions. Many cleaning companies offer training and development programs to help employees enhance their skills, knowledge, and performance.

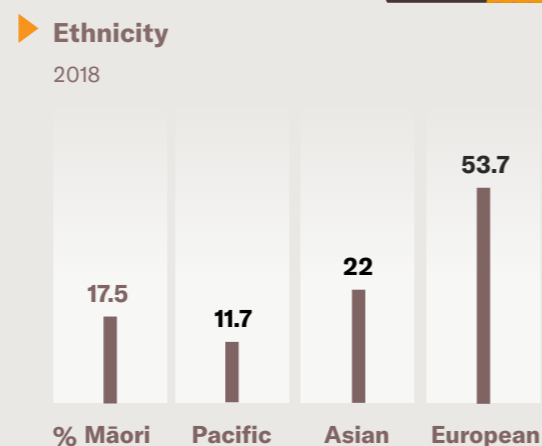
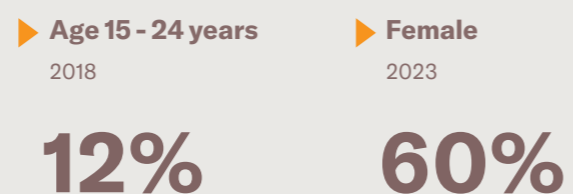
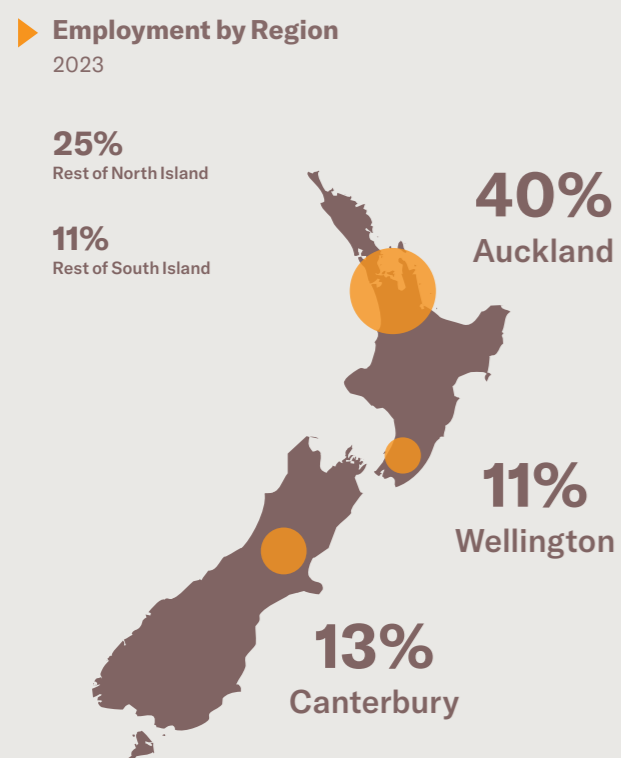
The labour shortages from last year have eased because of the influx of migrant workers. All main centres reported job vacancies are filled or able to be filled quickly.





# KEY

## Our workforce



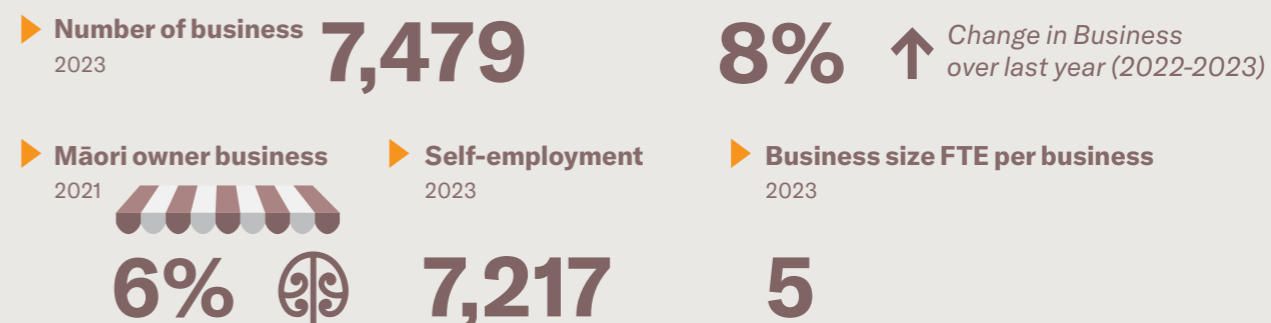
## Training & Qualification

Current NZQCF Products

	Qualifications	Programmes	Enrolments 2023
Cleaning	3	3	840
2			435
3			405
Laundry Processing	1	1	5
2			5

# INFORMATION

## Our businesses



## Our economy



## Occupation

	2023	2018	2027	Actual change over past 5 years 2018-2023	Forecast change over next 4 years 2023-2027
Commercial Cleaner	19,823	17,980	21,955	10%	11%
Laundry Worker (General)	1,130	1,219	1,181	-7%	5%
Domestic Cleaner	816	740	902	10%	11%
Window Cleaner	742	644	848	15%	14%
Chief Executive or Managing Director	692	701	710	-1%	3%

	Enrolment 2023 vs 2017	Enrolment 2023 vs 2022	Completion 2022	Completion 2022 vs 2017	Completion 2022 vs 2021
	-42%	-7%	335	-46%	-49%
			155		
			180		
	-89%	-50%	5	-80%	n/a
			5		



# TOP OF MIND

## Developing fit for purpose training



▲ It is imperative for training programmes to remain current with industry advancements and prioritise workforce safety. This includes adopting emerging specialised cleaning skills such as chemical decontamination, which is increasingly prevalent. Presently, there is a noticeable absence of clear and consistent industry standard guidelines regarding methodology and their application.

▲ Continual introduction of new surface materials requires regularly updating knowledge on suitable cleaning products for these surfaces.

▲ Given that a significant portion of the workforce comprises English as a Second Language (ESL) speakers, there is a need for training materials to be simplified, employing less technical language. Also explore bilingual options. A greater emphasis needs to be placed on literacy and numeracy training.

# CLEANING

## Qualifications



▲ Industry professionals find the duration of qualification processes too lengthy especially for those who are already in work and would like to explore approaches to fast-track completions while upholding rigorous standards.

▲ Employers shoulder the full responsibility for training, yet the scarcity of qualified assessors poses a significant challenge, particularly for small to medium-sized businesses unable to afford dedicated assessors. Becoming an assessor proves cumbersome, a concern highlighted by employers. Streamlining this process could incentivise more individuals to assume this vital role.

## Addressing retention rates



▲ Despite a projected 12% growth in employer numbers from 2023 to 2028, the industry grapples with a persistent high turnover rate among workers, largely stemming from a significant level of transience and a preference for short-term employment.

▲ Shortages persist in leadership positions such as team leaders, supervisors, and management roles, with industry knowledge and expertise.

▲ Cleaning roles could appeal to tangata whaikaha due to the flexible nature of the work, including work hours and locations.

▲ The industry faces an aging workforce with fewer young entrants. Strategies to enhance retention rates include providing training investment and support, job stability, flexible work hours, competitive pay rates, diverse work locations, and fostering a positive team culture.



# COST OF BUSINESS

Many cleaning businesses in New Zealand achieve profitability through careful expense management, leveraging technology, and offering specialised services.

The affordability of operating costs is relative, influenced by each business's specific circumstances and strategies. Effective cost management and strategic planning are essential for cleaning businesses to thrive in a competitive and dynamic market.

## Factors Affecting Cost Affordability

- ▲ The cleaning industry in New Zealand faces significant competition from companies that employ their own in-house cleaning staff. Some larger organisations prioritise the need to control costs and the convenience of managing employees and cleaning schedules and procedures directly. In-house cleaning teams create substantial competitive pressure on independent cleaning businesses, challenging their market positions.
- ▲ Cleaning businesses must invest in staff training, covering costs associated with time away from work and the financial investment in training programs. Ensuring employees are well-trained is crucial for service quality and compliance with health and safety regulations, but it adds to operational costs.
- ▲ Smaller cleaning businesses face greater challenges in managing costs compared to larger firms. Larger businesses benefit from economies of scale, allowing them to negotiate better rates for supplies and equipment and distribute fixed costs over a larger revenue base. This advantage helps maintain competitive pricing and profitability. High-quality equipment, essential for efficient cleaning, can be expensive.
- ▲ Labour costs are a major expense for cleaning businesses. This includes wages, influenced by living wage requirements, and employee benefits such as holiday pay, sick leave, and KiwiSaver contributions. In combination these have lifted the overall labour costs, impacting affordability. In addition, high turnover rates in the industry force ongoing recruitment and training, further increasing costs.



# INDUSTRY PRODUCTIVITY

Businesses with high productivity are more resilient, viable to adapt to changes more easily and promote growth and innovation. High business productivity per capita means an improved well-being by increasing the nation's income and our ability to produce and afford the goods and services that underpin a happy, healthy life.

## Improving Productivity

- ▲ **Technology:** Introducing advanced cleaning machines, such as robotic vacuum cleaners and automated floor scrubbers, to handle routine tasks efficiently, reducing manual labour. Implementing smart sensors for monitoring cleanliness levels and equipment status, enabling proactive maintenance and quality control.
- ▲ **Improving Staff Training:** Developing kaimahi through training programs that cover cleaning techniques, equipment usage, and safety protocols to ensure staff are well-prepared and efficient. Utilising online training modules and e-learning platforms to provide continuous education and upskilling opportunities, making training accessible and flexible.
- ▲ **Supporting Staff Well-being:** Ensuring a safe working environment by providing appropriate protective gear, ergonomic equipment, and regular health and safety training. Offering mental health resources, counselling services, and wellness programs to support staff well-being and reduce stress. Creating recognition and reward programs to acknowledge and incentivise outstanding performance, fostering a positive and motivated workforce.
- ▲ **Future-Proofing the Industry:** To future-proof the industry, there is a strong push for upskilling and reskilling workers. Providing training in the operation and maintenance of cleaning robots, as well as in other technical skills, can help workers transition to new roles that are created by automation rather than be displaced by it. Other innovative areas to explore include the creation of new job opportunities such as the design and manufacturing of cleaning robots that complement robotic cleaning.

Productivity in business means being able to do more with fewer people.

## Technology for training and assessment

- ▲ The current paper-based qualification content poses accessibility challenges. Moving to an online platform accessible via iPads, tablets, and smartphones would greatly improve accessibility. This shift would streamline registration, enable real-time progress monitoring, and enhance communication among learners, assessors, and employers.
- ▲ Employers would also benefit from logging into the platform to track their commercial cleaners' progress. Importantly, learners' assessments, particularly in video format, should be uploaded for easy reference by assessors, employers, and learners themselves. This centralised approach fosters transparency and accountability throughout the qualification process.
- ▲ Introducing virtual reality (VR) into learning modules offers an innovative method to engage learners. VR simulations provide immersive experiences where learners can practice skills in realistic environments. This technology enhances learning outcomes by allowing for hands-on training in a controlled setting before applying skills in real-world scenarios. Integrating VR ensures that learners develop practical competencies effectively, meeting industry standards with confidence.





# MĀORI

Approximately 6,000 workers in the cleaning industry are Māori. This is around 18% of the overall cleaning workforce, which is higher than the overall New Zealand workforce percentage of 13%.

## Business ownership

Creating training opportunities for Māori cleaners to own their own cleaning businesses is a powerful strategy to future-proof the industry and empower workers, especially in the face of technological advancements.

## Whānau Well-being and support

Whānau Well-being: Recognizing the importance of whānau (family) and providing support for workers' family and community responsibilities.

Community Networks: Facilitating access to Māori community support networks and resources.

## Literacy and numeracy

Many Māori workers have the industry experience and competency within their roles. In order for Māori workers to pursue higher-level credentials and leadership roles, literacy and numeracy training opportunities in the industry need to be more accessible.

## Health and Safety

Ensuring workers have access to appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to safeguard against hazards.

Providing regular health and safety training to prevent accidents and injuries on the job.

Maintaining high standards of hygiene to protect both workers and clients.

## Professional Development

Implementing on-going training programmes to improve skills and knowledge, ensuring staff are up-to-date with the latest cleaning techniques and technologies.

Creating clear pathways for career advancement which will motivate workers and reduce turnover.



# PACIFIC

Approximately 4,000 workers in the cleaning industry are Pacific Peoples. This is around 12% of the overall cleaning workforce which is higher than the overall New Zealand Workforce percentage of 6.5%.

## Business ownership

Creating training opportunities for Pacific cleaners to own their own cleaning businesses is a powerful strategy to future-proof the industry and empower workers, especially in the face of technological advancements

## Tailored training

The cleaning industry benefits from a significant number of Pacific workers, many of whom are second-language English speakers. To fully support their growth, it is essential that training materials are tailored to meet their needs. By understanding and addressing the specific needs of Pacific workers, and offering other support such as pastoral care, the industry can effectively support and retain this workforce.

Pacific are visual people. To demonstrate competency, industry is strongly encouraged to consider use of technology, such as video recordings for training and assessment purposes.

## Literacy and numeracy

Many Pacific workers have the industry experience and competency within their roles. In order for Pacific workers to pursue higher-level credentials and leadership roles, literacy and numeracy training opportunities in the industry need to be more accessible.

## Cultural sensitivity and respect

Ensuring workplaces are inclusive of Pacific cultural practices and traditions, including appropriate observance of culturally significant events.

Providing cultural competency training for employers and managers to better understand and support Pacific workers.



# ACTION

## Putting this into action for the Cleaning industry

Transformational change in the Service sector workforce will take time but to achieve that change we need to start taking action now. The following plan includes the key areas of focus, medium term actions and short-term initiatives. These initiatives and actions can be thought of as individual threads that weave together to achieve workforce transformation.

	Māori succeeding as Māori	Attracting and retaining the future workforce
<b>Actions</b> Where we would like to be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>Māori business</b> and workforces have opportunities to connect.</li> <li>▲ <b>The Service sector</b> and vocational education system understands and acts on Māori views of success.</li> <li>▲ <b>The vocational education</b> system is shaped by a Mātauranga Māori lens.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>Improve the availability</b> and use of high-quality information about Service sector businesses and workforce.</li> <li>▲ <b>Improve participation</b> of Māori, Pacific peoples, tāngata whaikaha, and other population groups.</li> <li>▲ <b>Industry is visible</b> and promoted to a wide range of potential ākonga and kaimahi.</li> <li>▲ <b>Roles and responsibilities</b> of system level players are understood and have arrangements in place to work well together.</li> </ul>
<b>Initiatives</b> What we can do to get there <b>Service sector initiatives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>Establish and grow</b> the Māori Service Sector Forum.</li> <li>▲ <b>Ohu Ahumahi collaboration (Rōpū Kaitakawaenga)</b> to build relationships with iwi and hapū to better understand Māori aspirations.</li> <li>▲ <b>Te Kāhui Mātauranga Māori</b> to provide Mātauranga Māori lens to Ringa Hora product design and quality assurance approaches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>Undertake the Future Workforce</b> project that aims to understand work, skills and training in New Zealand in 2040.</li> <li>▲ <b>Amplify work</b> that aims to grow participation of particular groups such as, Pasifika Navigators of Tomorrow or Jobs for Mums.</li> <li>▲ <b>Promote the use</b> of Te Mata Raraunga, a collection of vocational education and workforce data.</li> </ul>
<b>Contact Centre</b> Specific initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>Improve cultural competency</b> to support the adoption of contextually appropriate cultural practice e.g. observing tikanga when cleaning in morgues.</li> <li>▲ <b>Create opportunities</b> to develop business skills that are specifically targeted at the growing number of Māori business owners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>Advocate for cleaning</b> as an important entry point for people entering the workforce for the first time.</li> <li>▲ <b>Support and collaborate</b> with existing organisations that provide pastoral care to new entrants, such as Work and Income and, community organisations.</li> </ul>

Developing broad skills for the future	Creating mana-uplifting jobs and opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>Vocational education and training</b> is flexible and adaptable to current training, and emerging industry requirements.</li> <li>▲ <b>Workforces and businesses</b> are well prepared to adapt and innovate.</li> <li>▲ <b>Investment decisions</b> are transparent and based on high quality advice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>Workplaces are accessible</b> and attractive to the current and future workforce.</li> <li>▲ <b>The workforce</b> is recognised, valued, and safe.</li> <li>▲ <b>The workforce and businesses</b> move through the cycle of employment (recruitment, on-boarding, retention, and progression) in ways that suit them.</li> <li>▲ <b>The range of roles</b> is articulated and available.</li> <li>▲ <b>Learning and skills</b> development supports upwards and lateral progression.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>Create a package</b> of short, sharp, stackable credentials that meet industry needs through Waihangatia te Āmua Ao   Shaping the Future of Service Skills project.</li> <li>▲ <b>Amplify work</b> that supports people to learn about broad skills for the Service sector, such as MBIE's Digital Boost initiative.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>Develop an 'employer hub'</b> that shares resources, information, and case studies of Service sector excellence – Targeted at SMEs.</li> <li>▲ <b>Amplify approaches</b> that improve diversity, equity and inclusion, such as Diversity Works NZ, Disabled Persons Assembly Information Exchange resources for employers, and Rainbow Tick.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>Improve the accessibility</b> of training by providing choices of delivery modes:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ online,</li> <li>▲ in other languages, or with the support of an interpreter,</li> <li>▲ That have flexible hours for completion,</li> <li>▲ That allow for the demonstration of aptitude, rather than written tests.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▲ <b>Support industry</b> to recognise micro-credentials, qualifications and on-the-job training.</li> <li>▲ <b>Refine existing courses</b> and training to ensure it prepares people for the cleaning industry.</li> <li>▲ <b>Industry, in conjunction</b> with Ringa Hora, to further explore support for industry specific Language Literacy and Numeracy initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>I Promote and endorse</b> 'Thank Your Cleaner Day', an initiative by BSCNZ that aims to increase the visibility of cleaners across Aotearoa, and to encourage businesses that employ cleaners to establish a stronger relationship with them.</li> <li>▲ <b>Articulate and promote</b> pathways to leadership for Māori and Pacific Peoples.</li> </ul>



# PROGRESS

To support progress with these actions, we have monitored what has been achieved in the last 12 months and what more will be delivered in the future.

## Contact Centres Workforce Action Plan

## What has been delivered in the last 12 months

<p><b>Improve cultural competency to support the adoption of contextually appropriate cultural practices e.g., observing tikanga when cleaning in morgues.</b></p>	<p><b>Potential for micro-credential. Upskill industry</b> to support Māori is needed. A Training and Cultural Committee has been set up in conjunction with BSCNZ. The aim is to prioritise areas to support Māori and Pasifika in the cleaning workforce.</p>
<p><b>Advocate for cleaning as an important entry point for people entering the workforce for the first time.</b></p>	<p><b>Ringa Hora have presented at the CATE conference</b> for school career/pathway coordinators. All the service sectors including cleaning were showcased as career options to be shared at schools. Ringa Hora have also share at all commercial cleaning association regional AGMs the Cleaning Gateway Programme offered to school students as part of their level 2 NCEA studies. Ringa Hora have also held stalls at career expo's including, Porirua, Waiariki and Northland.</p>
<p><b>Support and collaborate with existing organisations that provide pastoral care to new entrants, such as Work and Income.</b></p>	<p><b>Continued engagement with organisations that offer work-ready training programmes</b> designed to support kaimahi new to employment. This has included MSD and the Central Economic Development Agency which have created successful programmes already. Additionally, engagement has taken place with providers of such training including Education Unlimited and organisations modeling best practice for personal and professional development of their staff.</p>
<p><b>Improve the accessibility of training by providing delivery modes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▲ <b>Online</b></li> <li>▲ <b>In other languages</b>, or with the support of an interpreter</li> <li>▲ <b>That have flexible hours</b> for completion</li> <li>▲ <b>That allow for the demonstration of aptitude</b>, rather than written tests</li> </ul>	<p><b>Delivery Mode – online or written only:</b> Careerforce continue to offer their learning resources and assessment material for level 2 and level 3 cleaning are in written format and online.</p> <p><b>Delivery Modes – Other languages</b> or use of an interpreter: Careerforce considered multilingual translations but found costs and ROI unfeasible. They suggested using bilingual staff as interpreters, though staffing shortages and job demands complicate this approach.</p> <p><b>Delivery Modes – flexible hours</b> for completion: Careerforce allows written assessments to be done at work or in personal time, placing the responsibility on employees unless employers allocate work hours. Logistical and workload challenges arise, particularly for working mothers, balancing assessments with home life after a full day of work.</p> <p><b>Delivery Modes – practical rather than written:</b> Ongoing discussions with Careerforce, the sole cleaning certificate provider, reveal a preference for practical over written assessments. These require video documentation or observation by a qualified assessor. Challenges include a shortage of assessors, senior staff shortages, and logistical difficulties, especially for employees covering multiple locations compared to single-site roles in hospitals.</p>

## What will be delivered in the next 18 months

## Who is responsible?

<p><b>A continuation of the discussion</b> and potential outcomes of the Training and Cultural Committee. Looking to raise awareness of the opportunities in the cleaning sector including three levels of training, 1. Basic cleaning; 2. Train the trainer; 3. Leadership and business management.</p>	<p><b>Industry</b></p>
<p><b>More opportunities to highlight cleaning as a career</b> including hosting a stall at the Clean Expo 2024 in Christchurch. The World Federation BSC will be hosted in New Zealand in March 2025. This is a huge opportunity to showcase the industry with an international contingent arriving to showcase cleaning.</p>	<p><b>Joint Ringa Hora and Industry</b></p>
<p><b>Industry will continue to engage</b> with organisations that are modeling best practice in supporting their staff both new and existing.</p>	<p><b>Industry</b></p>
	<p><b>Joint Ringa Hora and Industry</b></p>



<p><b>Support industry to recognise micro-credentials, qualifications and on-the-job training.</b></p>	<p><b>Ringa Hora continues to engage</b> with industry to support issues that are top of mind including on-the-job training, qualifications and micro-credentials. Careerforce has created a level 2 micro-credential in a Gateway programme. A recent qualification review of level 2 and 3 Certificates in Cleaning received positive feedback and the advice by industry was that the current qualifications are appropriate and fit for purpose.</p> <p><b>The current vocational training system</b> for cleaning is complex. Hospital-employed cleaners benefit from salary increases and a supportive environment, with on-site training managers and assessors. However, commercial and private cleaners face challenges due to dispersed locations, a shortage of assessors, and logistical issues, limiting access to accredited training.</p>
<p><b>Industry, in conjunction with Ringa Hora,</b> should further explore support for industry-specific Language, Literacy and Numeracy initiatives.</p>	<p><b>Funding opportunities for literacy and numeracy</b> programmes are holding the industry back from upskilling staff in this space. Ringa Hora have provided advice to TEC to increase funding for qualifications that support literacy and numeracy in Cleaning.</p>
<p><b>Promote and endorse 'Thank Your Cleaner Day'</b>, an initiative by BSCNZ that aims to increase the visibility of cleaners across Aotearoa, and encourage businesses that employ cleaners to establish a stronger relationship with them. Promote and endorse 'Thank Your Cleaner Day', an initiative by BSCNZ that aims to increase the visibility of cleaners across Aotearoa and encourage businesses that employ cleaners to establish a stronger relationship with them.</p>	<p><b>'Thank Your Cleaner Day'</b> was promoted to all of Ohu Ahumahi in 2023 across both offices in Wellington and Auckland. Kaimahi were asked to promote via their own social media platforms as well as externally with their own networks. The feedback received indicated this was a worthy kaupapa that could have greater emphasis in 2024 and beyond.</p>

	<p><b>Joint Ringa Hora and Industry</b></p>
<p><b>Ringa Hora will continue</b> to provide advice to TEC to increase funding for qualifications that support literacy and numeracy in Cleaning.</p>	<p><b>Joint Ringa Hora and Industry</b></p>
<p><b>This year 'Thank Your Cleaner Day'</b> is October 16. Plans are underway to create more awareness of the role cleaners play in our daily lives. Opportunities include inviting office cleaners into the office for a shared lunch provided by Ohu Ahumahi staff. More promotion across all media platforms to raise awareness.</p>	<p><b>Joint Ringa Hora and Industry</b></p>





**RINGA HORA**  
Services  
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