

ETNZ 2019 Conference Session Transcript

26 June 2019 – Celebrating the Industry

with special guest, the current Minister for Arts, Culture, and Heritage, and our Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Jacinda Ardern.

Vicki Cooksley

Good morning everyone, I hope everyone had a great night last night and a great day yesterday here at conference. And also this morning I hope you've enjoyed your site visits to Te Auaha, the production managers' breakfast, and the miniature tour out at Weta Workshop. So, this morning we've arranged for a session to celebrate the industry and what we do backstage. As people involved in the Technical aspects of the Entertainment and Event Industry, we sit behind the scenes and often go about our business quietly and without fuss. With our broad membership and nationwide spread, it's rare that we meet as a group, so here we all are today, once every two years. In 2003, at our first conference, that was opened by our Minister for Arts, Culture, and Heritage, Helen Clark. And today here at our ninth conference, I'd like to welcome to the stage, the current Minister for Arts, Culture, and Heritage, and our Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Jacinda Ardern.

Jacinda Ardern

Kia ora. Kia ora koutou katoa. Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou. And thank you very much for the opportunity to come and join you today. I do feel like I'm following in some quite intense footsteps, having had Helen Clark join your first conference in 2003. So I'm sorry it's taken a little while for someone to come back, but it is a real privilege to be here with you today. I thought I'd share just a couple of insights, more broadly for the space and environment that you're working in with my hat as Minister for Arts, Culture, and Heritage on, which I hope has a positive flow on effect for you and for your industry. But before I do that, I just wanted to share just a little appreciation for the industry that you work in.

While this is a particular insight I don't often talk about, and you'll probably soon see why, I spent a little bit of my time as a youth involved in amateur dramatics. And the Morrinsville Little Theatre was the place that I co-opted as a second home; stage productions like Aladdin and other things that we'd all best forget. But I remember during that time that it was absolutely clear to me that anyone who was wearing black were the important people. They were the ones – I see it's a uniform that sticks – you know whether it was someone working in sound, or stage management, or rigging, lighting... And then I'd say across the board, and it's not just obviously for theatre, but our events – you know some of the most fantastic events that we have in our music industry – they just wouldn't happen without that level of skill that we have in New Zealand and people who work across all those areas. And I also became very aware that the acknowledgement of the people who wear black usually comes at the end of a performance or an event, and it's acknowledged with a simple nod or arms up

to the rafters or to the side of stage. And so, to all of you I give you my acknowledgement for the work that you do.

It's not enough to give a nod though, and one of the things that I've become particularly aware of in this role is, and has become a focus for us as a government in this space, is actually what we can do to improve the career pathways for those who work broadly speaking in the creative sector. Because there are sustainable careers there, but we don't do enough to support those sustainable careers. And we don't do enough to ensure the viability of some of those careers as well. And so for the work that you've done as an industry, to actually answer those questions yourself, I want to acknowledge the fact that today you'll be celebrating the first recipients of the brand new qualification: the New Zealand Certificate in Entertainment and Event Technology. That's no mean feat, to be able to have pulled that together. So I congratulate ETNZ, and obviously your ITO who's been involved as well, a commitment to putting in place the structures for formal recognition of the important skills in your industry.

But also then the question is well, what can we do? Given that I know many who have a career in these areas are often based on self-employment, often portfolio of different projects, and that means no two years can be the same, or necessarily will be as productive as the next. What can we do to try and build that sustainability in the industry? Well, a couple of things we've started with. In the last budget for instance, we established our Fairer Wage for Artists and Art Practitioners initiative. That puts \$4 million to improve the incomes for art practitioners. So those who are receiving funding through Creative New Zealand's arts grants will receive a fair wage. Now that should be a given, but it wasn't. We've put in \$4 million to make that a reality. Creative New Zealand are matching that. So that means an extra \$8 million going into the creative industry, the creative sector that Creative New Zealand delivers grants to.

But we realize there is much, much more room for improvement and it is about a whole ecosystem. So even things like bringing back Creatives in Schools – and we talk a lot about STEM subjects in New Zealand; we talk a lot about making sure that people are learning science and technology and mathematics – but my absolute view is that the thing that's going to set us apart in the future is also the degree to which we encourage creativity. And alongside that, demonstrating that there are careers linked to that sector as well, including careers in your sector. So we've brought back Creatives in Schools. That's a \$7 million initiative run out of the Ministry of Education where, instead of just the old version where we're only putting in musicians, that actually we broaden out the careers that young people get exposure to in schools. I can't see why, for instance, we wouldn't do more to demonstrate the kind of workforce and career opportunities that exist in your area to our school students so that they can pick early their career pathway, and perhaps even go into an area where they might choose to study towards the Certificate in Entertainment and Event Technology for example. But as I say there is a lot more to do. And I feel that acutely: the expectation of being both Prime Minister and having the Arts, Culture, and Heritage hat on. And that is something that we'll keep progressing our work in over the next year and a half.

While I'm here though, I do want to put a plug in for a particular program that you might not have heard of, but I see as also being another opportunity to bring more people into your sector but also support you in doing that. And it's called Mana in Mahi. I understand that they

might have a presence here today as well. Let me give you a little background to that scheme in case you haven't heard about it. It was a scheme established last year by the Ministry of Social Development, and it's about trying to encourage sustainable, meaningful, employment, so that young people who are in the program get training on the job. But it also acknowledges that an employer who's training a young person in a new area, be it an apprenticeship in a building site, or be it someone who's working in event management, actually they cost you money. For that first year of training, they come at a cost because you are investing in them. We decided that it would make a lot more sense therefore, if we are trying to find work for young people who might be otherwise unemployed, why wouldn't we give the amount of money that the government would be paying that young person if they were on the dole, directly to an employer who chooses to take them on and train them. So it, in effect, becomes then a subsidy that acknowledges the cost of taking on someone while you're training them and it incentivizes, we hope, employers to give a few more young people a chance. So our Mana in Mahi is funded for 2000 places, and essentially all we're looking for is a commitment to train a young person, and we in return will give that equivalent of the dole to that employer for the equivalent of a year, so long as you commit to training them. I've made a specific request that Work and Income not just look at traditional areas like building and construction, like for instance forestry; that they expand out and look into a range of different sectors and that's why they're present here today. So please anyone who's interested in hearing a little bit more about that program, do make yourself known.

Finally though, I want to finish by acknowledging ETNZ for your leadership in the sector, your commitment to professional development and new qualifications, and not to mention continuing to pull this conference together, as you have since obviously 2003, and a special acknowledgement of the fact that there are some Kiwis from abroad who I understand have come home to be part of your guest speaker line up. I just hope that we have even more talent that we grow here domestically, that we export, that we bring back, and that we show the incredible talent that we have working in this sector. For now though, I believe I have the great privilege of handing over the first ever New Zealand Certificates in Entertainment and Event Technology. So once again, thank you for having me. Nā reira, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tātou katoa.

Vicki Cooksley

Thank you. So this morning as part of the session, we'd like to present the first Level 4 New Zealand Certificates in Entertainment and Event Technology. It's been a seven year journey to get to this point, so this is a big day. I'd like to invite Skills Active Industry Development Advisor for Performing Arts, Linda Dorrington to the stage to announce these recipients for us.

Linda Dorrington

Kia ora everyone. It is my absolute privilege to announce the first trainees who have gone through this qualification. We all know it's been a very long time, and we have six of them who have completed today. Unfortunately two of them can't be with us, but there are four in the industry. And I know that you guys are used to just being in the background and wearing

the black shirts, but please, today is the opportunity to show your industry that you have achieved this, and we're very proud of you. So I'd like to call up to the stage,

Matt Mard,

Steve Sanders,

Sam Johnston,

Vicki Cooksley.

There are two more trainees who I'd like to acknowledge who can't be with us today. And that is Jo Kilgour, who a lot of you will know from Auckland, and also Andrew Gibson, who you all know as Gibbo.

Thank you very much and next conference hopefully there's at least a line of 20 of you out here getting it.

Thanks very much.