

# Prime Minister's Vocational Excellence Award

**Our economy needs more skilled trades workers. In particular, there is an urgent need to increase the size of our construction workforce to increase house building to meet demand. Treasury has forecast that the residential construction sector will shrink in the current year due, in part, to “capacity constraints in the construction sector (particularly for skilled labour).”**

Despite the needs of the Canterbury rebuild and rapid population growth, the number of apprentices getting qualified has fallen under the current government. A dramatic increase in work visas for trades workers has not filled the gap in domestic training.

There is a growing recognition of the importance of vocational education alongside academic subjects in schools, but it still often plays second-fiddle to traditional core subjects.

So it makes sense to encourage pupils with a talent for vocational subjects to pursue them at school, and on to post-school qualifications and employment.

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► **To increase the number of people pursuing trades qualifications and employment, Labour will:**

- **Offer a \$2,000 Prime Minister's Vocational Excellence Award for the top Year 12 or 13 student in vocational courses in each public secondary school, as selected by the school.**

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It is intended that the Prime Minister's Vocational Excellence Award will encourage schools to support students who favour vocational courses and help award recipients to pursue their talents after school, along with Labour's three years free policy and \$50 a week boost to student living support.

The Prime Minister's Vocational Excellence Award will be received by up to 500 students a year, one for each public high school, an investment of up to \$1,000,000 a year.

**The Prime Minister's Vocational Excellence Award will sit alongside Labour's other plans to increase trades training:**

- paying employers who take on an apprentice off a benefit the equivalent of the unemployment benefit for one year as a wage subsidy
- and introducing the KiwiBuild Visa to allow construction firms to bring in a skilled immigrant without the labour market test if they also take on an additional apprentice
- three years' free post-school education and training, with the first year starting in 2018 and phased in to a full three years over time.

Together, these policies will boost the number of people taking vocational subjects at school and after school before going on to careers in growing sectors such as construction.

**Let's do this.**

