

Media release – 17 June 2013

Drilling students trained for Christchurch rebuild win awards

Three drilling students who took part in a special programme to train drillers to help with the Christchurch rebuild have received Awards of Excellence by the NZ Drillers Federation.

Two of the three are now working on the Christchurch rebuild with the third working in Motueka. Drillers Federation President Iain Haycock says while they had planned to only present one award they could not choose between the three winners.

“The calibre of the group was exceptional and all three of the students demonstrated a level of competence that made it too difficult to select just one. It is unusual to be in that position,” he says.

The three students are Rotorua man Jimmy Brown, John Makakea from Auckland and Mike Walls from Motueka. Mr Brown is now the driller operator for McMillan Drilling Ltd in Christchurch, Mr Makakea is the driller for LandTest’s sonic rig in Christchurch and Mr Walls is working for CW Drilling and Investigation Ltd in Motueka.

The men were part of a group who completed a special 14-week drilling programme in 2012 through Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) rather than the polytechnic’s regular 24-week drilling programme. The polytechnic designed the training programme in response to the need for drilling personnel in Canterbury and offered it to students who already had a strong mechanical or practical skill background.

“The students who undertook the special training were already highly skilled in fields like auto engineering, the army and project management. Because of their backgrounds they have all progressed fairly quickly in the industry and as hoped a lot are working in Canterbury,” says TPP Drilling Programme Leader Michele Cox.

Award winning student John Makakea had an army background and says he was looking for a new challenge.

“I was spending too much time in front of a computer and wanted to get back into working outside. I now work with some really passionate drillers and am one of two running a sonic drill rig for LandTest. It is a really great industry to get into,” he says.

The students completed the National Certificate in Drilling Non-hydrocarbon (Driller's Assistant) (Level 2). Tai Poutini Polytechnic's next 24-week drilling programme begins on 17 June 2013 in Greymouth.

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Photo : From left to right NZDF President Iain Haycock, Jimmy Brown, John Makakea, Mike Walls and NZDF Councillor, Ken Mears.