

Lessons learned from one of New Zealand's most challenging civil engineering projects: rebuilding the earthquake damaged pipes, roads, bridges and retaining walls in the city of Christchurch 2011 - 2016.

## Contractor Magazine April 2014 Article: SCIRT – changing the face of training

**Story:** SCIRT Training Centre

**Theme:** People and Culture

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A magazine article which describes SCIRT's approach to training.

This document has been provided as an example of a tool that might be useful for other organisations undertaking complex disaster recovery or infrastructure rebuild programmes.

For more information about this document, visit [www.scirtlearninglegacy.org.nz](http://www.scirtlearninglegacy.org.nz)



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The stronger Christchurch Infrastructure Rebuild Team (SCIRT) opened its Training Centre in mid-2012 to provide a service to the men and women who are working on the city's damaged infrastructure. So far, the centre has had 3100 attendees through its training courses, has assessed over 800 unit standards and, most importantly, provided one to one on-job coaching for over 150 trainees.

The SCIRT Training Centre Workplace Tutors (from left to right): Kingsley Hannah, David Tunbridge, Bill Hicks, Roy Parkin, Dennis Smyth. Tutor Alan Corbett is not pictured.

## SCIRT – changing the face of training

ABI KIBBLE talked to the SCIRT team about how the organisation is working collaboratively with key stakeholders to change the face of training in Christchurch – and the legacy it will leave for the sector-wide industry beyond the life of SCIRT.

**SCIRT WAS SET UP** to rebuild the city's publicly-owned, earthquake-damaged horizontal infrastructure (wastewater, fresh water, storm water, roads, bridges and retaining walls) following the devastating earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. The organisation is an alliance between three owner participants – Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA), the NZ Transport Agency (NZTA) and Christchurch City Council, and five non-owner participants who carry out the construction work – City Care, Downer NZ, Fletcher Construction, Fulton Hogan and McConnell Dowell. The work could not be done without the engagement of a number of civil construction sub-contractors.

There was (and still is) an unprecedented amount of work to be done, and a key focus for SCIRT has been to grow workforce skill levels to meet the demands of the rebuild and beyond. This has included upskilling people already working in the industry, and providing new entrants with a baseline skill level so they can work safely and efficiently.

The SCIRT Training Centre has engaged a team of Workplace Tutors, seconded from the non-owner participant organisations, who are dedicated to providing training and assessment for people working on the rebuild. A major point of difference is that the tutors go out on site and provide practical, work-based training free of charge. This enables site supervisors, managers and business owners to focus on the day to day running of their business, knowing that their staff are receiving expert tuition. The tutors can also add value for supervisors and managers by helping them gain the skills they need to manage their crews more effectively.

SCIRT is committed to raising standards in the industry by linking training to national qualifications. This commitment is realised through a programme-wide Key Performance Indicator (KPI) which encourages teams to enrol their field staff in qualifications. SCIRT training manager Mason Tolerton explains, "We are really focused on working with and for industry to assist in the here and now of the rebuild while also leaving some real legacies to the infrastructure training environment."

Many SCIRT field staff are currently engaged in qualifications with the newly merged Infrastructure Industry Training Organisation, as well as with a number of other ITOs. These qualifications are suitable for people working from introductory

through to front line leadership level and cover a wide range of work including civil plant operation, infrastructure pipelaying, excavation and reinstatement, horizontal directional drilling, pavement surfacing, roadmarking, surveying, health and safety.

Infrastructure ITO regional manager Fiona Malloch says, "Our partnership with SCIRT has really enhanced the learning experience for our trainees. My team's role is to provide support and guidance to trainees to keep them on track with their qualifications, while the workplace tutors add a more technical perspective. Their hands-on approach makes the training more relevant, and enables people to gain the practical skills and experience they need to achieve their qualifications."

Workplace tutor Kingsley Hannah agrees that making training functional and relevant is the key to success. He says, "This is a very practical industry. Most of the people working in it learn best by doing, rather than by reading a book or sitting in a classroom. All of our tutors have years of experience and that resonates with trainees and employers. We've forged some strong relationships with our clients and demand for our services has gone from strength to strength. We've gone from two tutors to six in order to keep up with demand."

Kingsley continues, "Our short courses are also popular, although we view them as complimentary to qualifications – not as a replacement. The qualifications are a benchmark of industry expectations and are vital to succession planning for the future. The short courses are ideal for people who need a basic level of knowledge quickly, or for those who need to update their skills because of changes to legislation or technology. We work closely with industry to make sure that we are meeting their needs. Our short courses have been developed in response to recurring issues or critical risk areas, such as cable location or slinging, lifting and placing."

Kingsley adds, "The SCIRT training model is helping to change attitudes towards training and qualifications. People are recognising the value of on-job training linked to qualifications and it is becoming an integral part of a company's culture. The way I look at it is that we're setting good habits for now and the future. When SCIRT ceases to exist in 2016, our aim is for the industry to pick up where we leave off."