

LEARNING ON THE JOB

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FAST-TRACK APPRENTICESHIP WITH FONTERRA

ZOE ARMITSTEAD is an apprentice mechanical engineer at Fonterra's Whareroa plant in Taranaki.

Focused on machinery maintenance across the dairy cooperative's Hāwera site, Zoe's role involves everything from replacing mechanical seals on pumps, to attending plant breakdowns.

"It's really fun to be able to go into work and not know how to do something and then come out and you're like, 'I actually know how to do that now!'"

One of the things Zoe enjoys most about her job is the variety.

"I could come in in the morning and be inside the factory pulling a pump out to be replaced, and I could end the day in the workshop re-kitting valves."

This variety of hands-on experience enabled Zoe to complete the paperwork for her apprenticeship 18 months early. Last month she clocked up the minimum apprenticeship hours needed, and she now holds a New Zealand Certificate in Mechanical Engineering (Trade) Maintenance Engineering, Level 4.

Zoe is currently working towards a New Zealand Certificate in Mechanical Engineering (Advanced) Level 5.

"Fonterra is playing a major role in my apprenticeship by offering further training to me after I finished my apprenticeship early," says the 22-year-old. "They have also offered further training to develop my in-depth knowledge of different things within Fonterra by bringing in outside companies to develop their people's knowledge."

The variety and breadth of knowledge Zoe is gaining means she will be qualified to work in a wide range of roles in the future.

"Once you've finished your apprenticeship, you can pretty much do anything because you've had experience within every plant."

Growing up on a dairy farm in Taranaki, Zoe learned how things work and how to fix them from her dad. "We have old farm cars that I would spend weekends pulling apart."

She enjoyed practical subjects at school, and in Year 13 at Stratford High School took Home Economics, Geography, Wood Technology, Maths and Gateway.

Through the Gateway programme Zoe worked at a local engineering firm one day a week and during the school holidays. This gave her an understanding of what engineering involved before committing to an 8,000-hour, four-year apprenticeship.

Maths has also been helpful, she says, and Design & Visual Communication (DVC) and Metal Technology would have been useful subject choices too.

"I would have had a baseline of reading and creating drawings and more of an understanding of fabrication practices."

If you have a curiosity to learn and an interest in hands-on engineering work and solving problems, go online to learn more about mechanical engineering apprenticeships at Fonterra.

If you're successful in becoming an apprentice, Zoe's advice is to make sure you ask questions, take photos as evidence for your papers and ensure you keep on top of your paperwork.

"And take all the opportunities you can," she adds.

"You never know what might come of them. It's okay not to have a set plan but have an idea of what you would like to do and ask questions."



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ZOE ARMITSTEAD

KEY FACTS



- **ZOE ARMITSTEAD** IS AN APPRENTICE MECHANICAL ENGINEER AT **FONTERRA'S WHAREROA PLANT** IN HĀWERA, SOUTH TARANAKI.
- SHE HOLDS A **CERTIFICATE IN MECHANICAL ENGINEERING (TRADE) MAINTENANCE ENGINEERING LEVEL 4** AND IS WORKING TOWARDS A **CERTIFICATE IN MECHANICAL ENGINEERING (ADVANCED) LEVEL 5**.
- THROUGH THE **SCHOOL GATEWAY PROGRAMME**, **ZOE** GOT EXPERIENCE WORKING AT A **LOCAL ENGINEERING FIRM**.

ONLINE



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