NZAGE Summit and Awards 2026

Final Programme
Thursday 29 & Friday 30 October 2026



NZAGE Summit

Thursday 29 & Friday 30 October 2026



Grand Millennium Auckland
71 Mayoral Drive

Day 1:
9:30am - 4:00pm
Day 2:
9:00am - 3:45pm

Dress Code:
Smart Business Casual

Principal Summit Partner

talent SOLUTIONS
Your early talent programme experts

NZAGE Awards Evening

Thursday 29 October 2025



HI-SO Rooftop Bar
SO/ Auckland
Level 16
67 Customs Street East

6:00pm - 10:00pm

Dress Code:
Formal/Cocktail

Awards Evening Partner

amberjack

nzage

Summit Day 1 Agenda | 9:30am - 4:00pm Thursday 29 October

9:30am	***Registration, Morning Tea + Exhibitor Area Open***
10:30am	**Day 1 Mihi Whakatau** (Welcome)
10:40am	**NZAGE Board Co-Chairs Address** | Siobhan Warren & Shailan Patel
10:50am	**Principal Summit Partner Address** | Seren Wilson, Talent Solutions
10:55am	**Day 1 Keynote: The Future Is Now: *Have we spent too much time talking about the future and not enough time focusing on the present?*** | Maddie West, Arup
11:45am	**From Campaign to Career Panel** | Daz Gagau (Fonterra), Jacqui McKeown (EY) & Kate Coley (CDES, University of Auckland) | Moderator: Andrena Corby (NZAGE)
12:25pm	**What They Really Think: Student & Graduate Panel** | Canaan Setefano (Graduate, Watercare), Ishrit Khangura (Student), Matthew Tegg (Student) | Moderator: Chantelle Haywood (Graduate, 2degrees)
1:05pm	***Lunch + Exhibitor Area Open***
1:50pm	**Energiser** | Team Up
2:05pm	**NZAGE Surveys 2026** | Naomi Houston and Samantha McDiarmid, NZAGE & Aron Chantelau, Talent Solutions
2:35pm	**Future-ready graduates: How the tertiary education and careers systems work together for employability** | Victoria Metcalf, Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)
3:15pm	**Stop running a graduate programme. Start building an early talent ecosystem.** | Seren Wilson, Aron Chantelau & Harsheeta Nandani, Talent Solutions
3:55pm	**Day 1 Closing Remarks** | Shailan Patel, NZAGE
4:00pm	***Summit Day 1 Concludes*** *| Free time before Awards Evening at 6pm*

NZAGE Summit
Day 1 Keynote
10:55am - 11:45am



Maddie West

Senior Early Careers Specialist - APAC
Arup

The Future Is Now: *Have we spent too much time talking about the future and not enough time focusing on the present?*

We've spent years talking about the future of work, the rise of AI and what comes next for the world of work. Yet many of the challenges facing students and employers today remain unresolved.

Rising economic pressures, rapid technological change and growing uncertainty are shaping how students navigate their careers and how employers attract, assess and develop talent. While students and employers experience these pressures in different ways, the challenges they face are increasingly interconnected.

This session explores the evolving early careers ecosystem through both perspectives, uncovering how seemingly separate challenges are often part of the same system and where opportunities exist to build confidence, develop capability and create better outcomes for everyone involved.

Presented by talent SOLUTIONS
Your early talent programme experts

nzage

Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) Session
2:35pm - 3:15pm

Future-ready graduates: How the tertiary education and careers systems work together for employability

When we think about the pathway for young people from school to study or training and into employment, we often focus on the education system, from formal schooling to tertiary education. Graduate readiness and employability, however, depend on the combined contribution of both the tertiary education system and the careers system.

This session will provide an integrated view of the learner-to-employment pathway. We will demystify how the tertiary system works, including how the new Tertiary Education Strategy is intended to shape outcomes, and outline the role that learner success approaches in tertiary organisations play in supporting achievement and successful transitions. The New Zealand careers system provides careers education, information, advice, and guidance to equip people with the skills, knowledge, tools, support, and confidence they need to make career decisions and transitions throughout their lives.

We will explain what the careers system is and highlight its role as a key enabler of positive outcomes for individuals, employers, and New Zealand. We will highlight current labour market challenges and opportunities. Finally, we will showcase practical initiatives and tools such as Inspiring the Future events, Tahatū Career Navigator, and the Career Practice Hub, including new and upcoming features, that can support both graduates and employers as they navigate the rapidly evolving world of work.

Victoria Metcalf, Tertiary Education Commission (TEC)

Tertiary Education Commission
Te Amorangi Mātauranga Matua

nzage

Principal Summit Partner Session
3:15pm - 3:55pm

Stop running a graduate programme. Start building an early talent ecosystem.

In this practical session, Seren, Aron and Harshi will challenge traditional thinking about graduate programmes and explore how leading organisations are connecting workforce needs with internships, scholarships, cadetships and graduate programmes to create successful future talent pipelines.

A strong early talent strategy starts well before recruitment begins. It starts with understanding the future capability your organisation needs, establishing a clear purpose the whole business understands and is invested in, and creating connected pathways across every entry point. The result is an early talent ecosystem where attraction, selection and development work together to contribute to the organisation's wider people strategy.

Drawing on real examples from Talent Solutions' work with New Zealand employers, we'll explore how to lay the right foundations, create effective early talent pathways, define the capabilities that matter, equip managers to support successful outcomes, and continuously improve against clear measures of success.

You'll leave with practical examples you can use to stress-test your own approach and identify where your early talent ecosystem can be strengthened.

Seren Wilson, Aron Chantelau and Harsheeta Nandani
Talent Solutions

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Your early talent programme experts

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Awards Evening Agenda | 6:00pm - 10:00pm
Thursday 29 October

6:00pm	***Awards Evening Commences	Registration***
6:45pm	**NZAGE Board Welcome**	Naomi Houston & Samantha McDiarmid
6:50pm	**Awards Evening Partner Address**	Jum Lamont, Amberjack Global
7:00pm	**NZAGE Awards Winners 2026 Announced** *(throughout the evening)*
10:00pm	***Awards Evening Concludes***



Awards Evening Partner

amberjack

nzage

NZAGE Awards Finalists 2026



Deloitte
EY
Fulton Hogan



Contact Energy
EY
NTT DATA
WSP



Downer
Mainfreight
NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi
WSP



2degrees
Suncorp
Watercare
Westland Milk Products/Yili Oceania



EY
Fonterra
Watercare

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NZAGE Awards Finalists 2026



Atlassian
EY
Fonterra
WSP



Contact Energy & Talent Solutions
EY & University of Auckland
Ministry of Social Development & Talent Solutions
NTT DATA & Amberjack Global



CDES at University of Auckland
University of Canterbury Centre for Employability & Career Development
University of Waikato Careers & Employability



Lizzie Duncan, BDO
Maggie Makrogianni, Transpower
Matt Kendall, Russell McVeagh
Naomi Houston, Watercare
Shawn Cornet, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi



Kate Coley, University of Auckland
Kylie Chye, University of Auckland
Melanie Barr, AUT

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HI-SO Rooftop Bar

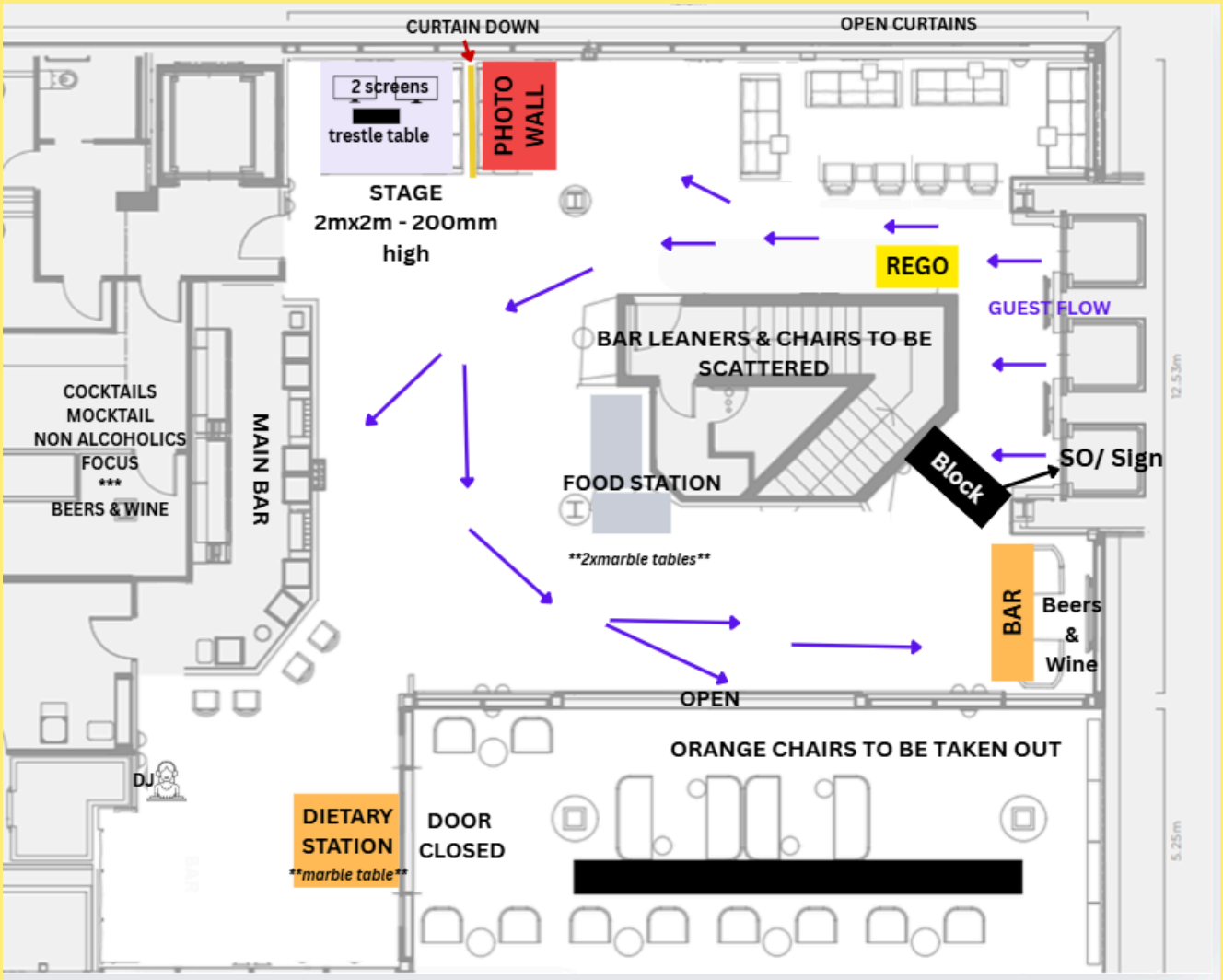
Getting there: Head to Level 16 via the SO/ Auckland hotel lobby at 67 Customs Street East.

When you arrive, please register before heading in to enjoy an Amberjack cocktail or a beverage of your choice.

You'll see the stage as you enter, where we'll hold the formalities and Awards announcements. The photo wall is right beside it, so make sure you grab some photos throughout the evening!

We'll have a main bar serving all drinks, as well as a smaller bar dedicated to beer and wine to help reduce queues.

There'll also be a main food station, with a separate dietary station near the Terrace for guests with specific dietary requirements.



Summit Day 2 Agenda | 9:00am - 11:20am
Friday 30 October

9:00am	***Morning Tea + Exhibitor Area Open***		
9:45am	**Day 2 Welcome** | Samantha McDiarmid, NZAGE		
9:50am	**The Human Advantage: Rethinking Potential, Performance and Graduate Success in an AI-Enabled World** | Jum Lamont & Ally Snodgrass, Amberjack Global		
10:30am	***Session Transition***		
10:35am	**Concurrent Workshop Sessions**		
	Attraction - Beyond the Applicant Count: Building Attraction That Converts | Facilitated by Clancy Meaney and Brigitte Kolver, Prosple & Rebecca Swanson, NZAGE **Room: Millennium Ballroom**	**Selection - Too Early, Too Late, or Just in Time? Rethinking When and How You Assess Early Career Talent** | Facilitated by Leah Coulon, SHL & Chelsea Thomson, NZAGE **Room: Aucklander**	**Development - Developing the Graduate of 2027, 2028 and Beyond: From Student to Professional** | Facilitated by Eva Thompson-Smith and Eamon Lesperance, Student Job Search & Trish Mouton, NZAGE **Room: Coromandel**
11:15am	***Session Transition***		

Summit Day 2 Agenda | 11:20am - 1:50pm
Friday 30 October

11:20am	**Concurrent Sessions 1**		
	From Classroom to Career: Rethinking Early Talent Strategy | Alexcia Dellabarca, Fonterra **Room: Millennium Ballroom**	**From Viable to Optimal: Unlocking Potential with the Early Careers Maturity Model** | Kelly Pfeffer, Suncorp **Room: Aucklander**	**External secondments for development** | Naomi Houston, Watercare **Room: Coromandel**
12:00pm	***Lunch + Exhibitor Area Open***		
12:50pm	**Energiser** | Team Up		
1:05pm	***Session Transition***		
1:10pm	**Concurrent Sessions 2**		
	What makes a graduate accept an offer and what role does salary play in keeping your best talent? | Seren Wilson, Talent Solutions and Samara Fischer, Strategic Pay **Room: Millennium Ballroom**	**What Actually Makes an Early Talent Program Work? A boardroom simulation on investment, trade-offs and impact** | Jum Lamont, Amberjack Global **Room: Aucklander**	**Beyond Onboarding: Designing Graduate Cohorts That Connect Faster** | Tracey Rowe and Sam Clapham, Team Up **Room: Coromandel**

Summit Day 2 Agenda | 1:50pm - 3:45pm
Friday 30 October

1:50pm	***Session Transition***		
1:55pm	**Concurrent Sessions 3**		
	Thinking Beyond the Capability Gap | Ashley Jones, Beca **Room: Millennium Ballroom**	**Designing In, Not Bolting On** | Sarah Todd, Workbridge - Propel People **Room: Aucklander**	**Rethinking Early Talent: A Unified, AI-Enabled Approach to Recruiting and Developing Early Talent** | David Cvetkovski, Tectoniq **Room: Coromandel**
2:35pm	***Session Transition***		
2:40pm	**Day 2 Keynote: Between the Pages of My Book** | Sally Wenley, Freelance Journalist and Author		
3:30pm	**Closing Remarks, Prizes + Karakia** | Shailan Patel & Naomi Houston		
3:45pm	***Summit Concludes***		

Awards Evening Partner Session
9:50am - 10:30am

The Human Advantage: Rethinking Potential, Performance and Graduate Success in an AI-Enabled World

As AI becomes embedded in everyday work, organisations are being forced to rethink what really makes someone successful. Technical expertise still matters, but knowledge is now easier to access, some technical skills can be learned faster, and many role requirements are changing quicker than traditional recruitment and development models can keep up.

The real differentiator is increasingly human capability: critical thinking, judgement, adaptability, ethical decision-making, communication, relationship building, curiosity and the ability to keep learning.

Yet many graduate employers still recruit heavily for academic achievement, technical expertise, polished performance and past experience, then spend the next two years trying to develop the very human capabilities that have the greatest impact on long-term success.

This session challenges early careers leaders to ask whether they are identifying future potential early enough and developing it intentionally enough.

Drawing on market insight, Amberjack expertise and real case examples, we will explore how AI is changing both recruitment and development, how employers can better identify human advantage during selection, and how development experiences can intentionally build the capabilities that matter most once graduates join.

Delegates will leave with a practical lens for rethinking what they assess, what they develop, and how they define graduate success in an AI-enabled world.

Jum Lamont and Ally Snodgrass
Amberjack Global

amberjack

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Concurrent Workshop Sessions
10:35am - 11:15am

Stream 1 (Room: Millennium Ballroom): Attraction
Beyond the Applicant Count: Building Attraction That Converts

Maybe you're launching a brand-new graduate programme and no one on campus knows your name. Or maybe you've run one for years, but half of last year's offers were reneged. Where do you start, and where should the budget go?

Attraction is often treated as an afterthought, something that sits somewhere before assessment. But its job has changed. It's no longer just about filling the funnel. It's about educating candidates early, so the right people apply, accept and stay.

This interactive workshop is designed to help graduate recruiters take a step back and look at attraction with fresh eyes. Working alongside peers, you'll explore how different channels serve different goals, how to think about the return on each, and how to build a strategy that fits your organisation's specific challenges rather than simply repeating last year's plan.

You'll leave with a clearer framework for assessing your own attraction activity, new perspectives from across the sector, and practical ideas you can put to work in your next recruitment season. There's no single right answer, just better questions and smarter choices. Come ready to collaborate and debate.

Clancy Meaney and Brigitte Kolver, Prosple
Rebecca Swanson, NZAGE

Stream 2 (Room: Aucklander): Selection
Too Early, Too Late, or Just in Time? Rethinking When and How You Assess Early Career Talent

Early Career talent acquisition is shifting fast. Organisations are starting attraction and selection earlier, and for many larger employers, graduate recruitment is giving way to intern conversion as the primary pipeline. This raises two questions for TA and L&D leaders: when is it too early to assess and what should you be assessing for?

This session argues it's never too early to collect good, objective data, but doing so well requires a mindset shift in how organisations think about understanding "readiness". We'll explore how incorporating human skills like critical thinking, collaboration, adaptability alongside data like WAM (Weighted Average Mark) can provide better outcomes for your program and the business long term.

But identifying great talent is only half the challenge. The future of work is dynamic enough that by the time a graduate exits a program, the business they were selected for may have already changed. This session will also explore what graduate programs need to deliver at the point of exit, not just at the point of entry so organisations can build for talent mobility, not just initial role-fit. The session is structured for practical engagement with small table discussion throughout.

Leah Coulon, SHL
Chelsea Thomson, NZAGE

Stream 3 (Room: Coromandel): Development
Developing the Graduate of 2027, 2028 and Beyond: From Student to Professional

What will soon-to-be graduates need to succeed in the years ahead, and how can employers help them make the transition from student to professional?

At a time when AI and technical capability feature heavily in conversations about the future of work, this session will focus on the human side of development: the professional capabilities graduates believe they'll need, how prepared they feel to use them, and how confidently they can articulate what they bring.

Drawing on SJS research with students and recent graduates preparing to enter the workforce, we'll explore where they feel least prepared, how well they recognise the capabilities they are already developing, and what they believe they'll need from employers once they step into the role.

Through live polling and peer discussion, we'll compare perspectives, share what organisations are doing and seeing, and explore how employers can create experiences that help graduates grow into confident, capable professionals.

Eva Thompson-Smith and Eamon Lesperance, Student Job Search
Trish Mouton, NZAGE

nzage

Concurrent Sessions 1 | 11:20am - 12:00pm

Stream 1 (Room: Millennium Ballroom): From Classroom to Career: Rethinking Early Talent Strategy

We recognise that building a future-ready talent pipeline starts well before graduate recruitment. Fonterra's Careers in Dairy strategy takes a long-term, ecosystem-based approach connecting rangatahi with meaningful STEM (Science Technology, Engineering and Math) and career pathways across our Co-operative and the wider industry.

Our workshop will explore how we have shifted from traditional early careers attraction to a multi-layered, partnership model. Working alongside organisations such as Pūhoro, The Wonder Project, Growing Future Farmers, Agribusiness in Schools etc we are increasing awareness, accessibility, and aspiration in schools and communities across Aotearoa. Additionally, our School Ambassador Programme helps bring this to life by showcasing the breadth of careers within dairy - helping students see themselves in roles spanning science, engineering, business, sustainability, and digital.

Participants will gain insight into how we are strengthening the education-to-employment pathway, including the development of a Digital Hub to support students, educators, and whanau in career decision-making.

There will be an interactive element where attendees are encouraged to go away and map their future talent ecosystem, identify gaps in their pipeline, and explore practical ways to build influence earlier - through schools, communities, and partnerships. We'll also bring to life our Digital Hub and careers resources used in schools to spark creativity, helping members reimagine how similar approaches could support their own teams and future talent pipelines

Ultimately, this workshop is about shifting mindset - from short-term hiring to long-term impact - helping organisations not only secure future talent but actively shape the workforce of tomorrow.

Alexcia Dellabarca, Fonterra

Stream 2 (Room: Aucklander): From Viable to Optimal: Unlocking Potential with the Early Careers Maturity Model

Early careers programmes play a critical role in building future capability, yet many organisations struggle to understand where their programme sits today and where to focus their efforts for maximum impact. This interactive workshop introduces the Early Career Maturity Model, a practical diagnostic framework designed to help organisations assess the maturity of their early career's strategy, programmes, and practices.

Participants will work through the model in real time, using a guided self-assessment to evaluate their organisation across key dimensions of early careers attraction, recruitment, development, and programme delivery. Through facilitated discussion and peer learning, attendees will identify strengths, uncover gaps, and explore opportunities to move their programmes from viable to optimal.

Whether you are building a new programme, refining an established approach, or looking for ways to demonstrate greater strategic value, the workshop will provide a structured framework for assessing current practices and prioritising future improvements. Suitable for early careers programme practitioners, attendees will leave with a completed assessment and a prioritised set of opportunities to take back to their organisation.

Kelly Pfeffer, Suncorp

Stream 3 (Room: Coromandel): External secondments for development

External secondments are a valuable development tool for graduates and early-career professionals, providing experience across organisations while strengthening collaboration across a sector. By placing participants in another organisation for a defined period, secondments broaden skills, build professional networks, and develop a deeper understanding of how organisations work together to achieve shared outcomes.

Drawing on Watercare's experience, this workshop will explore how external secondments are designed and delivered. It will cover the role of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), secondment agreements, liability and privacy considerations, and approaches to performance management. Participants will gain practical guidance on the governance, planning, and communication required to establish and support successful secondment programs.

The session will also explore the key benefits and common pitfalls of external secondments. While they require strong communication, aligned organisational cultures, and a willingness to invest in broader sector capability rather than focusing solely on individual organisational benefit, they can deliver significant value through improved safety in design, better operability and documentation, stronger cross-sector relationships, the development of well-rounded professionals, and improved talent retention. Participants will leave with a clear understanding of what makes external secondments successful and how to maximise outcomes for both individuals and participating organisations.

This session will also include a table discussion with other organisations interested in setting up some kind of external secondment programme.

Naomi Houston, Watercare

Concurrent Sessions 2 | 1:10pm - 1:50pm

Stream 1 (Room: Millennium Ballroom): What makes a graduate accept an offer and what role does salary play in keeping your best talent?

In this practical, insight-led session, Seren and Samara will combine New Zealand's largest early talent research dataset with the country's most comprehensive remuneration database to explore what motivates candidates to accept an offer and stay with your organisation. The contract might come at the end of your recruitment process, but a candidate's understanding of what's on offer starts forming much earlier. We'll explore how to build a compelling offer from the first point of contact, because losing a great candidate to a more compelling opportunity isn't simply a remuneration issue. It's an attraction, engagement and candidate experience challenge. Once graduates join, the salary conversation keeps evolving. AI and greater salary transparency are putting more information in graduates' hands, while employers are navigating pay progression, expectations and internal equity. We'll also tackle one of the trickiest points in the journey: transitioning graduates off programme and into permanent roles while maintaining pay momentum and fairness across the organisation.

What will you take away?

- How to build and communicate a compelling offer throughout the candidate journey
- What graduates value when deciding whether to accept an offer
- How AI and salary transparency are influencing graduate expectations and changing the salary conversation
- Practical insights for managing graduate pay, progression and the transition off programme

This isn't just a session about pay. It gives you the knowledge you need to create and communicate an early talent value proposition that gets a candidate to accept and a graduate to stay.

Seren Wilson, Talent Solutions and Samara Fischer, Strategic Pay

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Stream 2 (Room: Aucklander): What Actually Makes an Early Talent Program Work? A boardroom simulation on investment, trade-offs and impact

Early talent teams are under more pressure than ever. You're expected to attract great talent, improve diversity, build capability, support managers, retain graduates and prove impact - often all at the same time. But if you couldn't invest equally in everything, what would you prioritise?In this interactive workshop, you'll step into the role of an executive leadership team responsible for a national early talent program. Working through a boardroom-style simulation, you'll make investment decisions, navigate real-world challenges and defend the choices you make under pressure. Along the way, we'll explore what we're seeing across the market, where organisations are commonly over-investing and under-investing, and what the strongest programs tend to have in common. This isn't about finding the perfect model or the "right" answer. It's about challenging assumptions, exploring trade-offs and thinking differently about what actually drives impact.

Key takeaways you'll leave with:

- A fresh perspective on what drives successful early talent programs.
- Practical ideas you can apply to your own program.
- Insight into common investment blind spots and trade-offs.
- A simple framework for evaluating program decisions.
- Greater confidence connecting investment decisions to outcomes.
- New perspectives from peers facing similar challenges.

Most importantly, you'll leave with a clearer view of what actually makes an early talent program work.

Jum Lamont, Amberjack Global

Stream 3 (Room: Coromandel): Beyond Onboarding: Designing Graduate Cohorts That Connect Faster

Graduate programs are often measured by what people learn during induction, but their long-term success is determined by the relationships graduates build afterwards. Information helps graduates understand an organisation; connection helps them become part of it. Beyond Onboarding: Designing Graduate Cohorts That Connect Faster explores why connection - not just content - is the missing driver of graduate success, and how organisations can intentionally design for it rather than leaving it to chance.

Delegates will be introduced to five practical principles for accelerating graduate integration: shared challenge, psychological safety, informal interaction, reflection and purpose. Rather than simply hearing about these principles, participants will experience them directly through a live, facilitated shared-challenge activity that mirrors exactly what a new graduate feels on day one - uncertainty, unclear roles, and the gradual formation of trust and communication as the exercise progresses. Following the activity, a facilitated debrief will draw out the parallels between what delegates just experienced and what happens (or fails to happen) in real graduate cohorts.

The session closes with a live conversation with graduate employer Sarah Williams from KPMG, who has applied these principles in practice, sharing what challenge they were solving, what surprised them, and what they'd tell someone designing a graduate program today. Delegates will leave with practical, evidence-informed ideas for intentionally building connection, trust and collaboration within their own graduate cohorts. Grounded in a real experience, not just a framework.

Tracey Rowe and Sam Clapham, Team Up

Concurrent Sessions 3 | 1:55pm - 2:35pm

Stream 1 (Room: Millennium Ballroom): Thinking Beyond the Capability Gap

Over the past year, we undertook an in-depth review of our Graduate Development Programme (GDP), informed by extensive discussions with leaders and teams across the business. A consistent theme emerged: some core competencies, particularly in areas such as teamwork, communication, and workplace effectiveness, were not as strong as those seen in previous cohorts.
To better understand this shift, we explored global research on early career development trends. This confirmed that these patterns are not unique to our organisation and are being observed internationally across graduate populations. Importantly, these gaps are not reflective of individual shortcomings. They are a natural consequence of graduates spending formative learning years during the COVID pandemic, when opportunities to build key interpersonal and professional skills were significantly constrained.

However, our insights went further. We recognised that redesigning our programme requires more than understanding which capabilities are lacking. It requires a deeper understanding of how graduates have been learning and the environments they have been learning in. The pandemic did not simply disrupt education temporarily. It fundamentally reshaped how students engage with learning, collaborate, and build knowledge. Hybrid environments, increased digital reliance, and reduced in person interaction have created a learning experience that continues to influence today's cohorts.

This raises an important question for organisations. Are we truly confident that we understand how graduates are learning now, and therefore where the real capability gaps sit? Without this insight, there is a risk that we continue to design programmes for a learning context that no longer exists.

This perspective reframed our approach. Rather than viewing these gaps as deficits, we see them as both an opportunity and a responsibility. Organisations now play a critical role in rebuilding and strengthening these capabilities, while aligning learning design to the realities of modern education and work. Our refreshed Graduate Development Programme responds to this by combining capability development with a more intentional, experience led approach that reflects how graduates learn today.
I am looking forward to sharing the journey of redesigning the programme, key insights from research and stakeholder engagement, and practical strategies for aligning early career development with evolving learning behaviours to future proof graduate programmes.

Ashley Jones, Beca

Stream 2 (Room: Aucklander): Designing In, Not Bolting On

There's a significant pool of great, diverse, dedicated talent that most graduate programmes are quietly missing - not because it isn't out there, but because the recruitment process itself is creating barriers without anyone meaning to. Disability disclosure at application stage is low, which usually means this talent is already in your pipeline more often than your data shows - you're just not seeing it.

This session is a practical, confidence-building walk through the graduate recruitment and onboarding journey - from job ad through assessment, interview, offer, and the first six months in role - showing exactly where great candidates most often hit friction, and the small, low-cost design changes that fix it.

You'll leave with a simple idea to guide it all: shift the effort of navigating the process from the candidate to the system around them. Do that well, and you're not just ticking a diversity box for your organisation, you're building a genuinely stronger, more capable graduate cohort, because you're reaching the talent your current process may be inadvertently filtering out. This session is practical and evidence-based, built for teams who've already made the commitment to inclusive hiring and want the tools to execute it with confidence

Sarah Todd, Workbridge - Propel People

Stream 3 (Room: Coromandel): Rethinking Early Talent: A Unified, AI-Enabled Approach to Recruiting and Developing Early Talent

Early Talent managers across New Zealand and Australia are under growing pressure to hire fairly and efficiently at scale, while candidates increasingly expect a modern, transparent and low-friction experience. At the same time, many organisations are still relying on disconnected point solutions, an ATS here, a spreadsheet there, a separate assessment vendor, that make it hard to see the whole candidate journey or to defend decisions with consistent, defensible evidence.

This session speaks directly to that gap: it shows how a unified platform and a multi-signal, AI-supported assessment approach can give talent teams both better decisions and a better candidate experience, without losing the human judgement that early talent programmes depend on.

David Cvetkovski, TectoniQ

NZAGE Summit
Day 2 Keynote
2:40pm - 3:30pm



Sally Wenley

Freelance Journalist
Author

Between the Pages of My Book

Between the Pages of My Book tells the remarkable story of Sally Wenley, whose life changed dramatically at age 16 after surviving a fatal school bus crash that claimed five lives and left her with a head and spinal cord injury. Once destined for a future in competitive sport, Sally instead spent six months in a rehabilitation unit before rebuilding her life and redefining her ambitions.

The keynote traces her journey through coming to terms with being a paraplegic, tertiary education and the discovery of a passion for journalism. After studying at Massey University and the New Zealand Broadcasting School, she launched a successful journalism career, earning a coveted TVNZ internship before working across television, print and radio where she has won four reporting awards. Along the way, she navigated workplace sexism, bullying and the demanding culture of newsrooms as well as fun. After becoming a parent Sally juggled home life and working as an independent contractor.

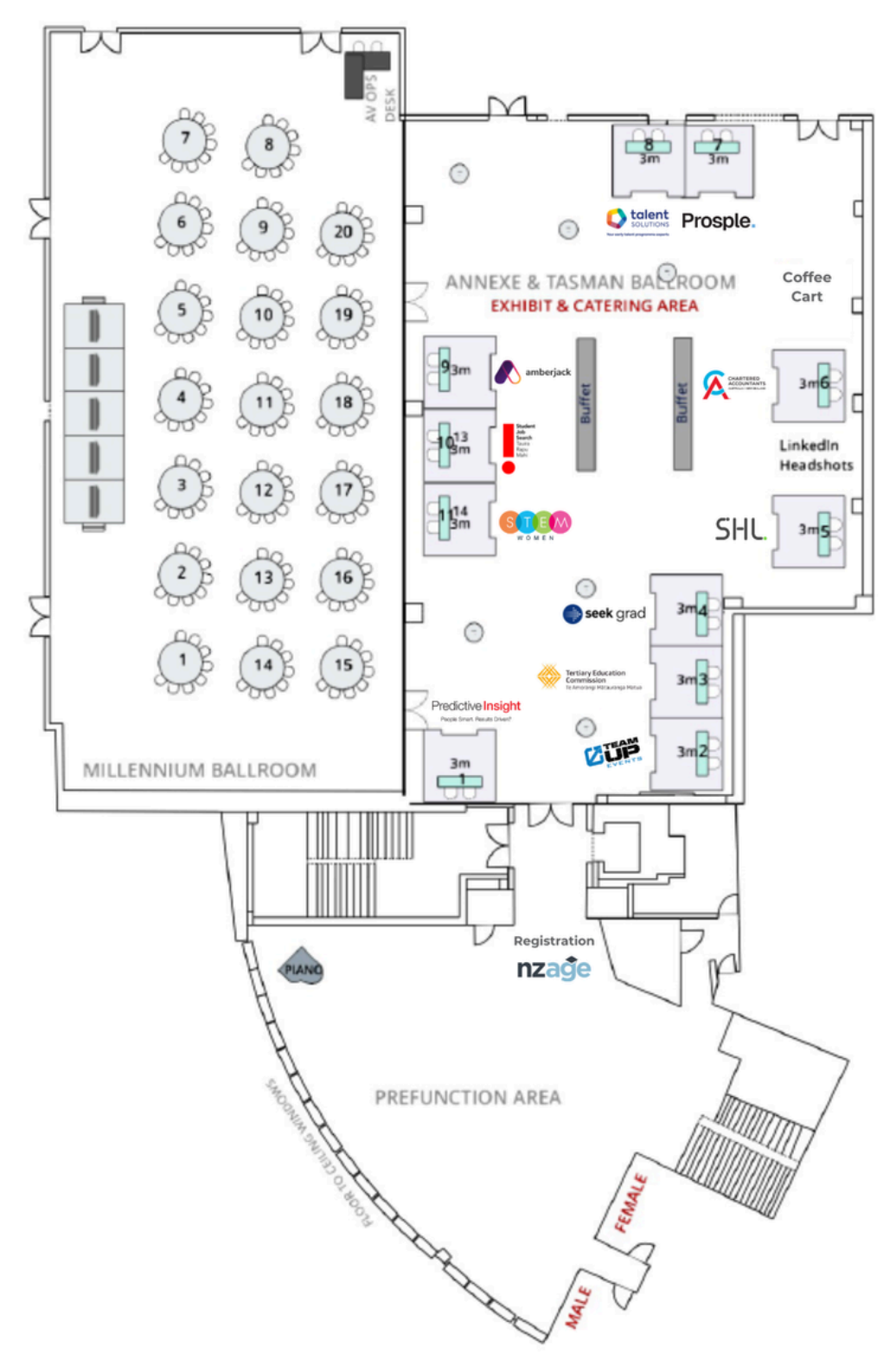
Sally speaks candidly about the often-hidden realities of living with a spinal cord injury, including chronic pain, hospitalisations and mental health challenges. Drawing on decades of personal and professional experience, Sally reflects on whether workplace support may have been beneficial during her career. She offers an insight into being a disabled employee – and the highs and lows of talented people who do not fit traditional expectations.

Purchase Sally's book, The Crash, at a special NZAGE rate here.

Grand Millennium Rooms

All sessions on Day 1 are in the Millennium Ballroom.

Upon entering the lobby area, please turn right and take the escalator to Level 1. From there, turn right again and use the escalator or stairs to reach our Ballrooms. The exhibition area is located within the Annexe and Tasman Ballroom. Alternatively, if you enter through the parking area, proceed to Level 8, which is our lobby. You can then take the lift (press B) directly to the Ballroom.



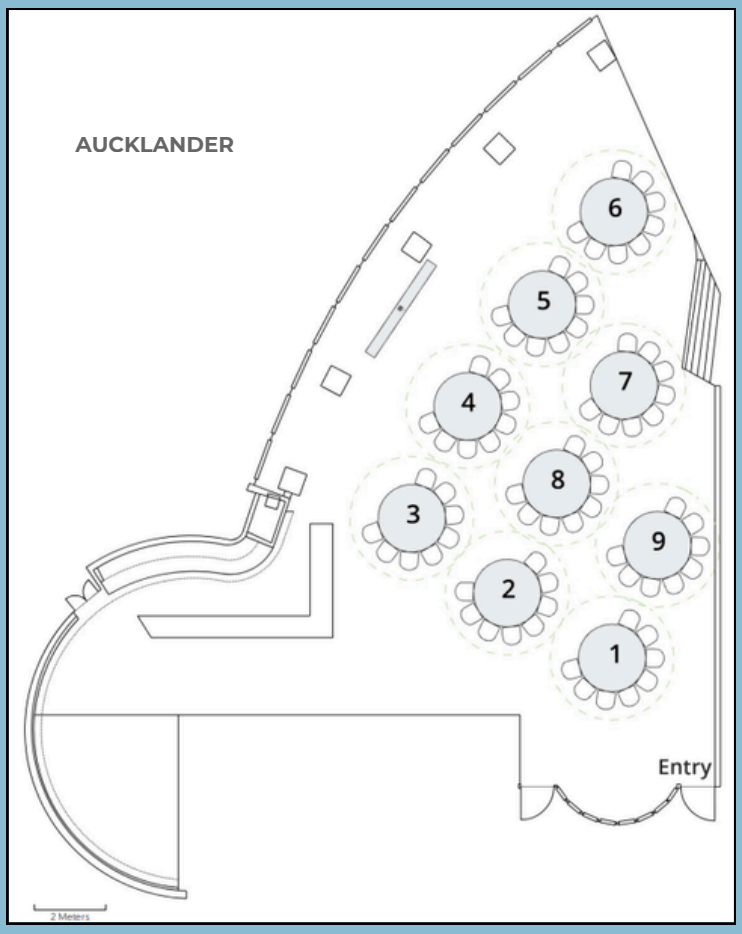
Grand Millennium Rooms

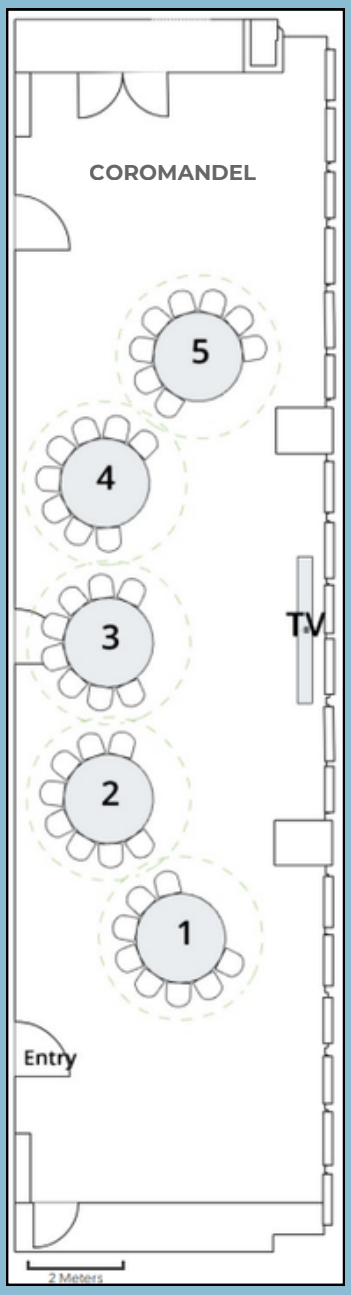
All main sessions on Day 2 are in the Millennium Ballroom.

Concurrent sessions will be in the Millennium Ballroom, Aucklander and Coromandel rooms.

Aucklander room: Located at Lobby level, next to the Concierge Desk. You can either take the lift directly down to the Lobby or use the stairs, which are accessible from Level 1.

Coromandel room: From the Ballroom, take the stairs down one level, which will lead you straight to the Coromandel. Alternatively, you may use the lift (press A) to reach the Atrium level, then walk straight to the end of the floor to find the Coromandel.





Thank you to our Partners

Principal Summit Partner

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Your early talent programme experts

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Welcome delegates

We're delighted to share that we have delegates registered to attend the Summit and Awards 2026 from the following organisations:

2degrees, ACCIONA, Amberjack Global, Arup, ASB, Atlassian, Auckland Council, Auckland University of Technology, Aurecon Group, Australian Association for Graduate Employers, Baker Tilly Staples Rodway, BDO, Beca, Chartered Accountants Australia & New Zealand, Contact Energy, CPA Australia, Deloitte, Dentons, Downer, Eagle Technology, EY, Fletcher Construction, Fonterra, Foodstuffs North Island, Fulton Hogan, Government Digital Delivery Agency, Grant Thornton, Growth Hungry, HEB Construction, Holmes Group, KiwiRail, KPMG, Mainfreight, Meridian Energy, Ministry for Regulation, Ministry of Social Development, MYOB, NTT DATA, NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, Powerco, Predictive Insight, Prosple, PwC, Reserve Bank of New Zealand, Russell McVeagh, SEEK Grad, SHL, Simpson Grierson, Stantec, STEM Women, Strategic Pay, Student Job Search, Summer of Tech, Suncorp, Talent Solutions, Team Up, TectoniQ, Tertiary Education Commission, Tonkin + Taylor, Tower Insurance, Transpower, University of Auckland, University of Canterbury, University of Waikato, Vector, Vulcan, Watercare, Westland Milk Products, Workbridge - Propel People, WSP, Z Energy

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NZAGE Board and Committee

Many of you we already know, but if we haven't had the pleasure of meeting yet, please do come and say hello at the Summit and Awards. The team look forward to meeting you.

NZAGE Board Co-Chairs



Siobhan Warren



Shailan Patel
MYOB

NZAGE Admin & Comms



Bronwyn Sweeney

NZAGE Board and Committee Members



Samantha McDiarmid
EY



Naomi Houston
Watercare



Chelsea Thomson
Fonterra



Rebecca Swanson
PwC



Andrena Corby
Fulton Hogan



Trish Mouton
Powerco

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We look forward to seeing you at

NZAGE Summit and Awards 2026

