

'Jobbortunities' knocking

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Centre of attention: Clutha mayor Bryan Cadogan outside Queenstown's 'jobbortunities' venue

By PHILIP CHANDLER

A near-neighbouring mayor's rolling up his sleeves to present 8000-plus job options to Covid-19-impacted Queenstowners.

In a unique Otago-wide initiative, Clutha District mayor Bryan Cadogan and his council are running a five-hour work fair, called 'Jobbortunities', at Queenstown Memorial Centre on October 10, with support from the Ministry of Social Development.

While his own South Otago area's been almost unaffected by job losses, thousands of Queenstown tourism workers have been laid off.

At the same time, other sectors, like horticulture, have been crying out for workers.

"We've squeezed every corner of the Otago job market that we can find," Cadogan says.

“To date, we’ve managed to amass over 8000 jobs, and the HR managers or the bosses for those jobs will be coming to the Memorial Centre for a speed-dating exercise.”

Those employers encompass sectors like farming, horticulture, viticulture, construction and forestry.

“We’ve got the big boys coming — the Fonterras, Danone, Silver Fern Farms, Calder Stewart, Alliance Group, viticulturists.

“We’re so excited with the response we’ve got.”

He’s promising jobseekers turning up will be treated with respect.

“It will be as low-key and as informal and as conducive an environment as possible.

“We’re talking 300 minutes, of the doors open, so it’s going to be pretty quick, but it’s that first contact.”

From his own experience of unemployment, he sees the value of giving someone just one contact or one chance — “the confidence builds and away you go”.

As well as employers, Cadogan is also inviting education providers like polytechs and Otago University.

“When you’re in a transition as so many people are in this town, going and doing tertiary studies is a positive outcome.”

In addition, Cadogan says he’s aware Queenstown has about 2500 foreign nationals “needing to have a pathway forward”.

So on Friday, October 9, there’ll also be a special immigration session at the Memorial Centre.

He’s been in contact with Immigration Minister Kris Faafoi and says Immigration New Zealand’s bringing a team, “so we can clarify whether [individual migrants] qualify to come to the Saturday [session]”.

In a message to Queenstown’s jobless, Cadogan says: “What we desperately ask Queenstown is, ‘wouldn’t it be an abomination if we put all those jobs and opportunities in the hall and Queenstown didn’t show up?’”

It's then up to individuals what they do next.

He adds, "if that happens to be that it's three years, and you become a teacher, or three days, and you become a fruit picker".

He says it's also possible many taking up work or training opportunities could commute from Queenstown.

Both the October 9 and October 10 sessions run from 10am till 3pm.

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Boult: 'Great initiative'

Queenstown mayor Jim Boult tips his hat to his Clutha counterpart, Bryan Cadogan, for "a great initiative".

"This is a wonderful case of cross-district cooperation.

"If we end up putting 500 people into jobs that they didn't have before, well, that's 500 pieces of good news."

Like Cadogan, he's hoping for a good turnout.

"Anyone who doesn't have a job or is worried about the longevity of their job, come along.

"There's no downside other than spending a little bit of your time."

— PHILIP CHANDLER

