

# *Ministry for the Environment*

## *Tomorrow's Workforce*

The Ministry for the Environment is working to get secondary school students interested in environmental challenges and engaged in working towards solutions.

The Youth Enviroleaders' Forum (YELF) is an initiative which offers an annual leadership development adventure for 55 secondary school students. It's supported by The Ministry for the Environment in partnership with the Sir Peter Blake Trust. It gives the students the opportunity to address topical environmental issues facing New Zealand and develop strategies to address them.



This year's YELF was held in Taranaki and focused on different environmental issues related to climate change. Students participated in outdoor activities, engaged with speakers including the Hon Nanaia Mahuta, the Minister for Maori Development and Local Government, all alongside peers also passionate about the environment.

Following the forum, the Ministry then offers six "YELFies" internships at the Ministry. These internships present participants with insights into the opportunities to pursue careers in areas that they are passionate about.

They also give the Ministry a chance to understand a youth perspective. The 2018 YELF interns were invited to make a video expressing their values and ambitions for the environment, and the Ministry's Chief Executive makes this video a cornerstone of her speeches.

The partnership with the Sir Peter Blake Trust is considered one of the Ministry's most significant partnerships, and current and former Ministry Chief Executives are members of the Trust's board. Ministry senior managers participate in the annual forum, and Government ministers often attend.

The Ministry views the YELF programme as a tangible way to help young people to understand the challenges facing our environment and empower them to become leaders for their generation in advocating for environmental values, says Justin Strang, a Principal in the Office of the Chief Executive.

It also brings an important youth perspective into the work of the Ministry.

"The YELF programme brings people who do not typically involve themselves in Government into the fold at the Ministry, which is a significant benefit to the organisation's understanding of New Zealanders, and improves our advice to Ministers," he says.

Staff members at the Ministry give positive feedback about YELF:

- Jolyon Swinburn, Policy Analyst: "We were supposed to go to Taranaki to teach and inspire these YELFies...but in hindsight I think this massively backfired as we were taught many lessons and came back inspired by them!"

- Anni Brumby, Ministry chaperone at YELF: "I was so inspired to spend time with these future leaders and to learn how committed they are in making a change within their communities. It was slightly embarrassing to admit our Ministry is not zero waste...let's fix that!"
- Luke Baker, Ministry chaperone at YELF: "Their familiarity with technology, things like digital content creation or social media management, offers an opportunity for us. Not only could they help us reach new and wider audiences, but we could also do it stylishly and with ease."

The YELF programme has provided benefits to all involved. The students go home with new experiences and insights, and are prepared to be future leaders, and the Ministry gets the benefit of having their input and being challenged by a different perspective.

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