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### **ALL ABOARD FOR NEW STEAM SCHOOL**

They might be something most of us associate with days gone by, but steam-powered transport is alive and well in New Zealand, says Warren Smith, Tai Poutini's Head of Department – Automotive Engineering.

The Polytechnic has been working with Shantytown to develop a Certificate in Steam-Powered Vehicles and Smith says demand has been "huge".

"I've just spent the last three days on the phone answering queries and have sent out over 30 enrolment packs already. It has been really surprising. I think we'll be looking at two or three courses per year for the first few years to cover the initial high levels of interest."

The part time, hands-on programme has been designed to prepare students with the skills to participate fully in heritage rail and steam activities. Graduates also have the potential to move into rail transport, steam plant or engineering, working as boiler operators in steam powered vehicles, driving a steam-driven rail vehicle or driving a steam-driven road vehicle.

"Students will graduate knowing how to operate and maintain steam locomotives or traction engines," says Ian Tibbles, Tutor and Shantytown's Engineering Manager, who has been driving and working with steam-powered vehicles for 47 years.

The programme initially targeted members of steam preservation and heritage groups, but has surprised organisers with its broad appeal. "It's been picked up by a lot of people outside the heritage area who just think it would be cool to get a steam ticket," says Tibbles.

The Certificate has also had broad appeal, age-wise. "The youngest applicant we've had is 17 – he's desperate to work with steam-powered engines, he just loves them. Our oldest female applicant is over 60 and we've had a couple of older guys asking 'is there an age limit?'" says Smith.

Smith says the programme, which has been three years in the planning, will be a mixture of distance learning, and five week-long on-site training blocks at Shantytown. "Anything that happened on a real

railway in the olden days happens here,” says Tibbles. “So it’s a great place for students to learn hands-on, practical skills.”

Topics include introduction to steam driven vehicle boilers; rail safety & inspections; preparing for operation; maintenance, repair and operation of steam-driven vehicles; water, corrosion and washouts; lubrication; records and documentation; and braking.

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**About Tai Poutini Polytechnic:**

Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) offers a range of exciting programmes including outdoor education, ski patrol, ecotourism, jade and hard stone carving, professional chef and civil construction. Tai Poutini Polytechnic has campuses in Auckland, Cambridge, Christchurch, Wanaka, Invercargill, Westport, Greymouth, Reefton and Hokitika. In 2009 TPP offers programmes at Greymouth, Reefton, Westport and Hokitika Campuses with no tuition fees\* (\* conditions apply).