



Iconic Hastings hotel takes on a new offering

The Angus is ideal — providing a great place for people to enjoy their work/life balance.

Hastings' iconic Angus Inn, once the top business hotel in the city, is now part of a win-win solution to fixing Hawke's Bay's housing crisis and the seasonal labour shortage.

In its hey day, the Angus Inn was the place to stay — from hosting All Blacks players to politicians, as well as it being booked out on Saturday nights for weddings and 21st celebrations.

Today the Angus is playing a new role in growing Hastings' economy along with transitioning locals into full-time employment.

It's a great example of how Hawke's Bay's booming horticultural industry is dealing with the region's housing crisis, while accommodating the desperately needed seasonal RSE (recognised seasonal employment) labour to get the record crop picked.

Bibby brothers Drew and Nick, together with their father Richard, recently purchased the Angus Inn for \$4.8 million and have undertaken a \$600,000 refurbishment to provide 312 beds.

The development is part of the apple industry's \$30 million investment in building 1500 new beds to gain the Government's confidence that Hawke's Bay can accommodate the 1000 more RSE workers needed to get the crops harvested.

At the same time, these new beds are becoming part of the solution to the region's housing crisis, offering transitional accommodation to vulnerable people in desperate need while also freeing up rented houses.

Their positive working relationship with WINZ means every suitable New Zealander looking for employment is being offered the chance of full-time work through a range of seasonal jobs required during the year.

The Bibby's business, Thornhill Horticultural Contracting, provides a 450-strong permanent and seasonal workforce to a range of leading Hawke's Bay employers, including Brownrigg Agriculture, Rockit Apples and Delegates.

As part of Thornhill's pastoral care package, for \$130 a week, RSEs staying at the Angus get full lodgings, fresh linen, weekly laundry

and cleaning service, this is extra. They will also get three full meals a day for \$13.50, including a packed lunch.

Thornhill have started an initiative with the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) and Department of Corrections giving New Zealanders the same opportunities as RSE workers; that is, offering jobs, subsidised accommodation and meals to those in need. Named the Accommodate to Work Scheme, applicants are employed with Thornhill, or other employment if they already have full-time work.

The entire premises is now an alcohol-free zone, with full security, a 24-hour on-site manager, and a strong health and well-being focus.

Their focus is on developing a supportive and friendly culture for all different nationalities including people visiting from Samoa, Vanuatu, Tonga, Thailand and Fiji.

The Bibby family is making a positive difference.

"It's incredibly rewarding being able to help those who have no place to live," says Drew.

A fully separated area with its own secure access of 14 units is providing transitional housing in partnership with MSD.

Some of the transitional housing tenants are also becoming permanent Thornhill employees working within the Angus accommodation complex and elsewhere as part of the contracting team.

"This is how we can make a real difference towards helping people improve their lives."

Nick Bibby



Nick Bibby

"MSD clients are often homeless when referred so it's great to be able to accommodate them and help them into full employment.

Nick says "One of the greatest benefits is it's giving people the time and opportunity they need to find work and a place to settle, without the fear of where their next bed and meal will come from.

"This is how we can make a real difference towards helping people improve their lives."

The Angus offered everything the Bibby's needed: it had great bones, a full commercial kitchen and dining hall, and an open lounge and common area.

"The complex is ideal. Its large hotel rooms mean we can meet all the new size and building, bed and bathroom requirements set by the council for RSEs, as well as providing a great place for people to enjoy their work/life balance."

It now has an entertainment area with pool tables, 86-inch televisions, computers and free Wi-Fi throughout. Outside there's a range of different activities available including volleyball, pentaque and a swimming pool during summer.

The Bibby's are also developing 60+ more beds in the 'bird cage bar' area within the hotel site. As well as accommodating their own RSE and New Zealand staff, the Bibby's are now providing evening meals to other employee staff.



Fully refurbished — the Angus is providing over 300 beds.



Drew Bibby

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