

Training Place

Kiwi wool needs dyers wi

by **Angela McCarthy**

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New Zealand is famous for its woollen fibres, particularly woollen carpets. Yet the industry is struggling to attract new trainees in areas such as dyeing and finishing.

The Apparel and Textile Industry Training Organisation runs a number of qualifications, from a Level 2 certificate to the National Diploma in Textile Dyeing and Finishing.

Initial training covers operation and processing skills. By Level 4, trainees are sample dyeing in laboratories, colour matching to samples, doing colour measurement and shade prediction, and dye and chemical preparation. Graduates have advanced knowledge of textile dyestuff and chemistry, the theory of colour, and dyehouse operation. They also have first-line management and computing skills.

Practical training is on-the-job, with the eight to 10 theory modules usually done through distance learning. Block courses are being introduced as numbers grow.

The Graduate

Grant Townend, 29

Dyehouse supervisor

Norman Ellis Carpets

Finished diploma beginning this year

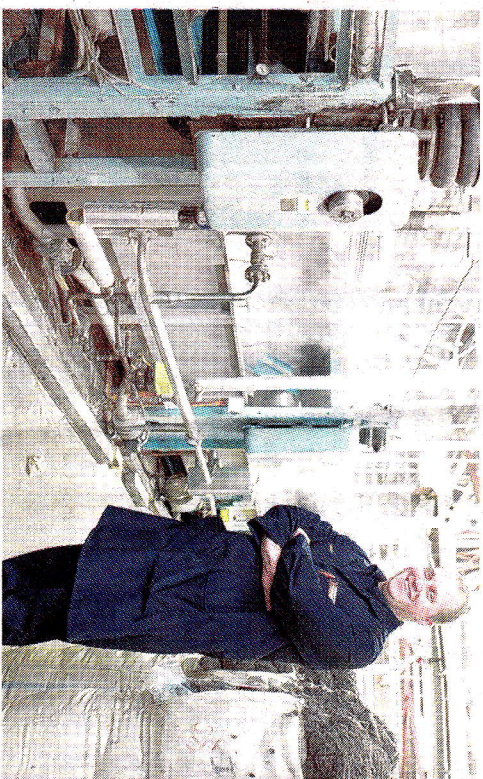
Pay rates: \$14-18 per hour Initially.

Once qualified \$25 per hour upward, depending on skills

I'm employed in the dyehouse of Norman Ellis Carpets, producers of New Zealand wool, wool-blend and synthetic carpet, including an anti-allergenic 100 per cent-wool range.

The dyehouse dyes wool for the yarn-manufacturing division. Everyday I deal with colours, dyes, chemicals, acids and bases. Most of my time is spent on the floor weighing dye, supervising production and staff and testing the yarn water and oil regains (quantity of oil and water moisture in the yarn). I also do titration testing, which is checking we have the correct level of set in our yarns.

Training starts with core operating processes, such as loading machines and weighing out dyes. Later on you learn skills such as



Grant Townend enjoys the challenge of matching new colours from scratch at his job in a carpet dyehouse. Picture/ Ted Baghurst

colour matching and predicting recipe changes. Understanding colour is really important.

The course was probably 50-50 theory and practice. You really need the theory for the practical in most cases, especially colour matching.

I did practical assessments at work, where I was assessed by Murray (boss). The chemistry unit took the longest to do; about three months. Other units usually took me three to four weeks. I did my theory by correspondence.

Flair for colour

Pathway to success

National Diploma in Textile Dyeing and Finishing (Advanced Dyeing Technology) Level 5 Apparel and Textile Industry Training Organisation (Atitio)

Ph (03) 377 8443

training@atitio.org.nz

www.atitio.org.nz

● **Entry Requirements:**

Determined by employer. Good eyesight is a job requirement.

● **Course costs:** About \$4000.

Atitio provides 50 per cent subsidy towards off-job training employer usually pays other half. Diploma also has first-line management qualification costing about \$2500. Again Atitio and employer usually go 50-50.

Although I only work with wool and wool blends here, during the diploma I also learned about dyeing other fabrics.

The course really increased my understanding of my job and rounded out my knowledge. It also

gave me a broader understanding of other aspects of the industry.

When I first left school I started a double degree in business and science but I didn't enjoy it and left.

My Dad had a wool mill where I'd worked in school holidays and he offered me a job. I've stayed in the industry ever since.

I moved to Norman Ellison Carpets more than three years ago.

I really like the job because it is practical, keeps me busy and pays reasonably well. I enjoy the challenge of trying to match new colours; something that can be frustrating. It can sometimes take a couple of days; one recently took two weeks.

The Employer

Murray Webb

**Norman Ellison Carpets Dyehouse
Manager**

We got to know Grant through his father's mill. We needed extra dyers on site – Grant was already committed to the industry so we convinced him to join us in Auckland. We're

now looking for a new apprentice to start the process again.

We need people with good English skills because a lot of explanation is required, especially at the start. You need a bit of flair with art. We use percentages, subtraction and division on a daily basis so a reasonable grasp of maths is important. Chemistry is helpful but it isn't absolutely necessary because we teach it.

We want someone practical who likes to get on with the job. You start on the shop floor and spend a lot of time there so you need to be happy to get your hands dirty.

We also look for people prepared to stick it out. Training someone to diploma level costs us about \$10,000 in fees and time.

It is financially worthwhile getting qualified. Grant was an operator on \$14-16 per hour and now earns over \$60,000 per year as a supervisor and second in charge.

There will always be a need for dyers. Yet there are only about 25 dyers left in the industry. The amount of work coming on means we need skilled people on site.