

HOLIDAYS ARE A HARD ACT TO FOLLOW

An Australian/New Zealand bus technology team has developed payroll software that helps bus operators manage one of New Zealand's biggest compliance minefields.

While most bus operator employees in New Zealand look forward to taking a well-earned break with a relaxing holiday, payroll staff dread working out their teams' leave payments – thanks to the complexities the Holidays Act 2003 bring.

But technology has helped solve those problems, making the lives of payroll staff a lot easier. Kelly Crookes from Trapeze Group is an accountant by trade, but her career has always involved the integration of payroll, business processes, and technology to increase efficiencies.

"I work with 'Bussies' on Bussie problems and help develop technology solutions to solve them. I'm interested in finding any way to make public transport, and specifically, bus operations, more efficient and sustainable."

Kelly has spent the last 12 years working on Trapeze's Enterprise Resource Planning solution called TIMS, which is used by some of New Zealand's largest bus operators. Since Kelly joined Trapeze, she has focused on designing and implementing payroll and finance solutions for the bus industry.

"I am passionate about improving business processes and providing solutions to problems. When I saw an advertisement from Trapeze Group for a Payroll and Finance Implementation Consultant, I jumped at the opportunity. I love how technology can make things easier for bus operators and employees so they can focus on what they need to do, instead of being bogged down in paperwork.

"I have seen first-hand how technology helps bus operators to understand and control costs better. When integration happens between departments, especially between workshops, operations, and payroll, this provides visibility and the capability to monitor and improve business-wide processes.

I've seen technology dramatically reduce the time spent on cumbersome and time-consuming procedures from days into minutes – freeing up staff to focus on other things that have the most impact."

Her bus industry career eventually led her to look at the challenges bus operators face in New Zealand, namely, the difficulties in complying with the notoriously complicated Holidays Act.

"When we first looked into the Holidays Act, we saw how complex it was to interpret and apply in real-world scenarios for bus operators, so we wanted to develop a bus-specific payroll solution that simplified leave payment calculations. The calculations and processes required are often not understood by many employers, resulting in payment errors and unintentional non-compliance. Leave payment issues can happen when dealing with shift work and variable hours – the normal employment arrangement for people in the bus industry. We noticed there was a large gap for bus industry software and as we pride ourselves on our payroll technology, we knew we could provide an effective solution for the New Zealand bus market."

Providing correct leave payments can be especially challenging for bus operators as payroll systems need to be integrated across multiple depots. Employee and roster data needs to be up to date to accurately undertake complex leave calculations – that is, pay the highest of three amounts.

There have been instances in New Zealand where bus operators have incorrectly paid some of their current and former employees involving different pay types – including annual leave, alternate workdays, and public holidays. These companies have had to recalculate these leave payments to account for under- and overpayments.



KELLY CROOKES from Trapeze Group.

"The Trapeze team worked closely with Price Waterhouse Coopers and the New Zealand Payroll Practitioners Association to ensure our payroll solution provided suitable support for the Holidays Act requirements. It was challenging as this had to be done remotely due to COVID, but we were very fortunate that we had forged strong relationships to make it happen."

Trapeze has been in the Australia/New Zealand market since 1995 and provides transport authorities and bus operators with integrated tools to maximise productivity across all elements of their businesses. Many of Trapeze's staff have direct experience working in the bus industry, including as drivers, operations, workshops, and planning departments.

Like to know more about Trapeze's New Zealand-specific payroll solution for bus operators? Join us on 24 November for a short webinar detailing the technology.

Visit www.trapezegrp.com.au/events to register now.