

CASE STUDY

Kinetic

People's Choice Award Winner, Breaking
Barriers Award Medium-Large
Organisation Winner



Through a targeted approach to address gender inequity, Zealand's largest bus operator, Kinetic, recruited 172 female bus drivers across the country in the first 13 months of their Women Up Front – Trainee Bus Driver programme. That's an average of three a week.

Kinetic delivers transport services in New Zealand through brands such as Go Bus, SkyBus, and Johnston's Coachlines, partnering with the Ministry of Education and councils across New Zealand, employing more than 4,000 people nationwide.

Recruitment Manager Lewis Osborne, who has been at the helm of recruitment for the Women Up Front programme, says one of the organisation's ongoing challenges has been addressing gender equality within traditionally male-dominated roles, particularly in its driver and operational workforces.

"We also recognised the need to strengthen our internal talent pipelines, creating clearer pathways for women into supervisory and management roles."

Recognising that structural barriers such as licensing requirements, inflexible working hours, safety, and workplace facilities were limiting women's participation, Kinetic launched the Women Up Front – Trainee Bus Driver programme in New Zealand in October 2024.

The initiative expanded entry pathways by allowing women with a Class 1 licence to enter the programme, with full financial and practical support to obtain the required Class 2 licence and Passenger endorsement.

Traditionally, Kinetic hires drivers who already hold a Class 2 licence and Passenger endorsement in line with NZTA requirements.

Additional classroom support for theory exams and an extended six-week training programme, compared with the standard three weeks, ensure women are fully prepared for frontline roles.

The programme also includes mentoring, structured onboarding and flexible rostering to support work-life balance, while tailored recruitment campaigns showcase women in driving roles. Kinetic has also invested significantly in upgrading depot facilities to better accommodate a diverse workforce.

“Women Up Front has not only increased female representation across Kinetic's workforce but has also strengthened our culture by ensuring women are visible, supported, and empowered in every part of the business,” says Lewis.

Since the launch of the programme, Kinetic has now welcomed 276 female drivers into the business across New Zealand.

A workforce survey shows that engagement scores for female drivers have increased from 67 per cent to 73 per cent.

Importantly, the overall Diversity and Inclusion score across all employees, including male participants, has also increased by six per cent since the programme's launch.

Te Uru Tāngata Centre for Workplace Inclusion Chief Executive Maretha Smit says Kinetic has demonstrated how to systematically dismantle a deeply embedded workforce barrier at scale.

“Rather than focusing on awareness or aspiration, this initiative tackles the practical constraints that exclude women from participation in a way that is both measurable and replicable.

“The organisation has delivered significant workforce shifts within a short timeframe in a traditionally resistant industry. Combined with strong leadership commitment and capital investment, this positions Kinetic as a credible blueprint for industry-wide transformation.”

Kinetic's goal is to achieve a workforce that is 40 per cent women, 40 per cent men, and 20 per cent of any or no specific gender by 2030.

“By embedding gender equity into workforce planning, policy and leadership accountability, we're driving sustainable change that reflects the communities we serve.”



Lewis Osborne says the ambitious target demonstrates the company's commitment to creating a truly diverse and inclusive environment where all perspectives are valued and represented.

“By embedding gender equity into our workforce planning, policy development, and leadership accountability, we are driving sustainable change and ensuring that Kinetic reflects the diverse communities we serve.”

Strategies for success

- Launched Women Up Front to address structural barriers limiting women's participation in driving and operational roles.
- Expanded entry to women with a Class 1 licence, providing financial support, additional training and mentoring to achieve the required Class 2 licence and Passenger endorsement.
- Introduced flexible rostering to support work-life balance.
- Upgraded depot facilities and amenities to better accommodate women.
- Used tailored recruitment campaigns showcasing female role models, supported by structured onboarding and mentoring.



Results and benefits

- 172 female drivers recruited in the first 13 months – around three a week.
- Engagement scores for female drivers increased from 67 per cent to 73 per cent.
- Diversity and Inclusion score across all employees increased by six per cent.
- More than \$4 million invested since 2022 in upgrading amenities and breakout areas for women across the Kinetic network.