

TAURA



**DIVERSITY
WORKS^{NZ}**

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Editor's letter

Kia ora

It's been a delight to edit this edition of Taura and showcase the voices of so many different contributors.

Pete Mercer, previously Head of Research and Development at Diversity Works New Zealand, has returned to Aotearoa for a short time and we were able to persuade him to look at two issues that are very pertinent to the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) community. On page 22 he explores why it's essential that workplaces facing tough decisions about what their business structure needs to look like in the current economic climate keep DEI at the forefront of their thinking. Pete also examines the evolution of mentoring and how adapting the conventional mentor-mentee configuration can lead to better outcomes from a DEI perspective – you can see that story on page 4.

Auckland University of Technology's Savita Bhaskaran shares key points from her thesis research on how women from the Indian migrant community experience barriers to career progress and how workplaces can help break down those blockades on page 18.

Most workplaces could learn something from Hind Management's Chief People Officer Phillipa Gimmillaro's thoughtful column on what she has discovered about creating a workplace environment where migrants can thrive. New Zealand has one of the largest migrant populations in the OECD and, as Phillipa says, migrants offer a vital link that connects us with the latest skills, knowledge, and innovations from around the globe, and enrich our cultural footprint. But including new arrivals in our workplaces and being mindful of their cultural needs is not without challenges.

Diversity Works New Zealand Board Chair Susan Doughty attended the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the UN's largest annual gathering on gender equality and women's empowerment, earlier this year. With the world at a crucial crossroads for gender equality, she looks at some of the surprising issues that workplaces need to consider.

If you have a DEI topic you would like to see covered in the next edition of Taura or would like to contribute to the magazine, please contact me on sblythen@diversityworks.nz

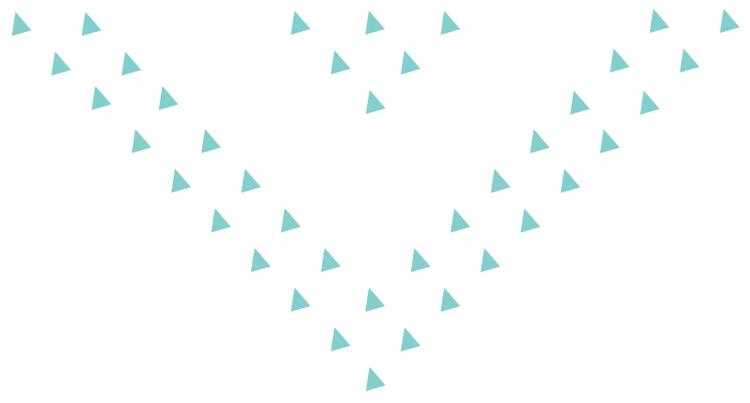
Ngā mihi



Sheryl Blythen
Head of Marketing and Communications



How to champion - not change - diverse talent



Pete Mercer examines the evolution of mentoring programmes and how adapting the conventional mentor-mentee configuration can lead to better outcomes from a diversity, equity, and inclusion perspective.

When it comes to realising the full potential of their people, employers have many tools in their kete. From leadership development programmes to recognition schemes and network groups to internal mobility and rotation opportunities, the options are plentiful.

Yet beneath the promise of each initiative lies a hidden common challenge: the risk of perpetuating, rather than tackling, inequities and power imbalances by failing to identify and address them in the accessibility, design and delivery of the initiatives themselves.

One prominent initiative used to support people's careers is mentoring - or *āwhinatanga* (interpersonal care) - a thoroughly tried and tested model for relationship-based growth and development.

The potential benefits of professional mentoring programmes can be extensive, including enhanced career development outcomes, increased staff retention, commitment and satisfaction, and improved organisational climate.

But how effectively do mentoring programmes achieve these goals from a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) perspective? →



“Formal mentoring programmes within organisations boosted minority and female representation in management on average by nine to 24 per cent.”

→ Research has indicated that they can support positive outcomes in terms of addressing under-representation, inequities and marginalisation, among other potential benefits (such as building empathy and intercultural capability). For example, a US study from the [Harvard Business Review](#) found that “formal mentoring programmes within organisations boosted minority and female representation in management on average by nine to 24 per cent.”

Is this necessarily the case, though? Are there any limitations of mentoring initiatives? And do they always have such impact for all diverse groups?

One potential pitfall of traditional mentoring lies in the tacit implication that mentees merely need to adopt the wisdom and guidance of mentors to navigate their development path. Such a dynamic can lead to pressure to assimilate and the feeling that they should just “be a bit more like the mentor” to succeed, suggesting the barriers to progression lie within the mentee themselves, rather than in their environment. This demonstrates little regard for differences in background, identity and lived experiences.

Organisations striving to overcome this tendency have responded by conceptually reshaping established development initiatives through a DEI lens - including making adaptations to the conventional mentor-mentee configuration.

Such an evolution can be found in the emergence of diversity mentoring schemes, which aim to address specific talent pipeline inequities. Take the TechWomen’s [Mentoring Circles](#) initiative, for example, which focuses on supporting women working in technology, highlighting the approximate 30 per cent female representation within the sector and the need for addressing evident gender inequity.

Other variants we have seen include reverse mentoring, where employees from non-dominant or under-represented groups offer their perspectives to colleagues in positions of power or influence, and mutual or reciprocal

mentoring, a collaborative and two-way exchange of knowledge and support.

While the concept of reverse mentoring has been around for a long time, some argue that the rapidly changing face of work (the jobs that exist and the working practices that support them) and the ever-expanding age range of our workforces mean that the perks of reverse mentoring are increasingly salient.

A blog written for HR software company [Employment Hero](#) suggests the fact that reverse mentors are often younger than their senior mentees offers inherent age inclusion and social cohesion benefits. It notes that reverse mentoring can help bring a multigenerational workforce together and achieve intergenerational awareness, which is especially important as we now have five generations of employees across nearly 70 years of experience in the workplace

Just one of a suite of initiatives designed to address underemployment of disabled people, New Zealand Disability Employment Network’s [Rise to Success](#) mentoring programme aims to be mutually beneficial. Mentees gain access to invaluable guidance, support and mentorship from experienced professionals, who in turn gain a deeper understanding of disability and inclusivity in the workplace.

Meanwhile, some organisations have discovered inclusion gains when mentoring is integrated with other learning mechanisms. In partnership with the Ministry for Pacific Peoples in 2022-23, the Leadership Development Centre of Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission ran the [Public Service Pacific Mentoring Programme](#). The nine-month programme, matching senior Pacific leaders with aspiring Pacific public servants, aimed to empower and maximise their skills and potential. The blended programme included five facilitated virtual workshops with mentees and mentors and reflective journaling for mentees alongside one-on-one mentoring sessions. →

Case study

KPMG

Having focussed on Inclusion and Diversity for a number of years, KPMG recognised that there was still work to do for the senior leadership to better reflect the diversity of Aotearoa, so introduced an initiative that uses sponsorship, rather than mentorship, to enable change.

KPMG NZ is part of the KPMG global network of professional firms providing audit, tax, and advisory services. Its Diversity Sponsorship Programme, launched in 2022, aims to support the development of minority groups that were underrepresented in KPMG leadership levels.

The bespoke programme paired 11 senior Partners with 11 diverse emerging leaders at KPMG for four workshops, with pairs catching up in between and a finale event where learnings from the programme were celebrated and recognised. Topics covered included effective sponsorship, building self-awareness, understanding the employee experience is not equal and committing to individual micro-actions to support change.

Research shows that minority groups face barriers to advancing, including a lack of sponsorship, networking opportunities, and biases in the promotion process, says KPMG Inclusion, Diversity and Equity Lead Sophie Hart.

“Because our background and experiences shape our views, biases exist in our organisation. We are far more likely to advocate for someone in the workplace because of an affinity or stereotyping bias. These biases can explain why the pace of change in creating diverse workplaces has been so slow – those currently in senior leadership roles may unconsciously informally sponsor those who are ‘like them’”

KPMG committed to taking affirmative action to level the playing field to reduce the effects of diversity blockers (such as affinity and stereotyping bias) and support the development of diverse leaders.

“The Diversity Sponsorship Programme is unique in that it shifts away from improving personal leadership skills to advocating for others and affecting collective change. We were deliberate about the purpose of sponsorship rather than mentorship,” says Sophie.

One of the keys to the success of the programme was the careful selection of participants.

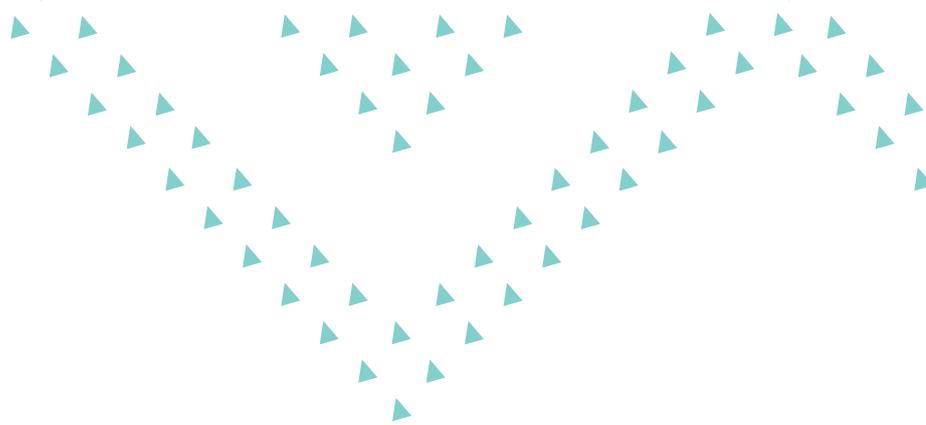
“We recognised that the people we wanted wouldn’t necessarily be people that would put themselves forward. Therefore, we created a bespoke process to remove barriers and get the representation we needed, using a combined approach of nominations and applications,” Sophie says.

KPMG has been able to take several elements that worked well in the Diversity Sponsorship Programme and integrate them into its learning and development process and continues to provide opportunities for the group to get together as a cohort and reflect on their experiences. The common reflections were increased confidence and sense of belonging.

“While we can’t see the long-term benefits of this programme yet, we can already see a direct impact on the progression of the individuals.”

KPMG was a finalist in the 2023 Diversity Awards NZ™. Read the [full case study](#)





“Reverse mentoring can help to bring a multigenerational workforce together and achieve intergenerational awareness, which is especially important as we now have four generations of employees across nearly 70 years of experience in the workplace.”

→ The ministry’s programme was based on four culturally aligned principles: reciprocity, service, collectivism and family. This highlights a more fundamental consideration for employers, which is the kaupapa that drives a programme: its founding values and principles, and the cultural lens used when establishing them.

In a business world often gripped by corporate models imported from overseas, it might be easy for organisations to default to programme design through a mono-cultural (Western dominant) worldview. But to do so is to disregard rich cultural perspectives and frameworks that are inherently adept for inclusive and equitable mentoring, and to potentially disenfranchise many of those they are seeking to empower in the process.

By contrast, Tātai Aho Rau Core Education offers a coaching and mentoring service - [He Waka Unua](#) - as part of its education and workplace development services. Each of their kaiārahi (coaches and mentors) are committed to realising a person’s potential by following a set of te ao Māori principles, such as kaitiakitanga - nurturing and protecting growth guided by a code of ethics.

Exploring mentoring programmes through an intercultural lens reveals another aspect that can present limitations: the sometimes individualistic and linear nature of a relationship from which only the mentee (and possibly the mentor) benefits.

Again, there are examples that demonstrate organisations transcending this concern. The mentoring programme developed by [the Ministry for Social Development \(MSD\) Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora](#) was defined as “growth through partnership”, focusing on employee-led network groups for collective participation. The groups take the core programme, overlay their cultural and other considerations, and drive the programme to meet their diverse needs.

When a workplace’s mentoring programme prioritises the needs of individuals over those of a wider community, it risks overlooking the broader systemic changes required to enable not just that individual’s success but also that of anyone who is obstructed by the same environmental barriers. MSD found that their approach enabled bottom-up change within the organisation and that solutions that came from the community were stronger and more sustainable.

Whether organised through employee network groups, action learning sets or otherwise, those coming together to affect real change in workplaces can really benefit from mentoring programmes. That said, even collective advocacy can be frustrated by the power imbalance inherent in employment hierarchies. For this reason, some organisations have consciously pivoted their focus towards the concept of sponsorship.

A sponsor is someone (usually with seniority) who can use their power, position and influence to deconstruct barriers and advocate for someone from an underrepresented group, by celebrating their skills and achievements, enabling access to development opportunities, and holding themselves and others accountable for broader DEI commitment.

Joanne Lu, who participated in [Deloitte’s Women in Leadership sponsorship programme](#), reflected: “I am both a reserved person, who doesn’t like to promote myself, as well as working in an industry that is highly male-dominated. It was great to have sponsors that gave me the opportunities to raise my profile, stretch out of my comfort zone, and advocate for the work that I deliver.”

Of course, sponsorship programmes can be vulnerable to some of the same limitations as mentoring programmes. For instance, sponsorship can be individualistic by design too; but it needn’t be. Senior sponsorship is increasingly being applied to support entire employee-led network



groups, as reflected in many of the network group structures of Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission, ANZ and Fletcher Building, to name just a few.

There is no “one size fits all” here: the initiatives that employers implement and how they are configured must serve their own needs, priorities and organisational climate. But being mindful of equity and power dynamics is particularly important during such times of precarious employment, wherein those from marginalised groups may feel increased pressure to demonstrate their “worth” in ways that aren’t their authentic own. ■

Case study

3 Kapu Kawhe™

3 Kapu Kawhe™ is a short-term, cross-cultural mentoring programme that pairs ethnically diverse young leaders in the formative years of their careers (mentees) with experienced New Zealand executives and directors (mentors) for three transformative conversations.

The initiative is developed and run by Multiethnic Young Leaders NZ (MYLN), a network of ethnically diverse young leaders between the ages of 18 and 35 who are committed to strengthening social cohesion, championing ethnic and intersectional diversity in leadership, and empowering diverse young New Zealanders.

Drawing on te ao Māori concepts of whakawhanaungatanga (building connections) and ako (two-way learning), 3 Kapu Kawhe™ recognises that both mentors and mentees bring valuable knowledge, wisdom and insights to the relationship from which the other can learn and grow.

A fine example of mutual or reciprocal mentoring, selected mentors boast a proven track record of championing DEI issues and are therefore enthusiastic about further expanding their cultural knowledge and impact. Mentors and mentees are intentionally matched from different cultural backgrounds to bring together individuals who might not typically cross paths - aligning closely with MYLN's commitment to fostering social cohesion.

The programme's overarching purpose is fundamentally DEI-oriented, with objectives aimed at addressing equity gaps in leadership representation across business and government. Through this effort, the programme seeks to build Aotearoa New Zealand's pipeline of diverse, inclusive and purpose-driven future leaders.

Michelle Huang, Chair of MYLN, highlights the transformative potential of initiatives like 3 Kapu Kawhe™: "Through deliberate efforts to facilitate purposeful connections, there's a real opportunity to significantly increase social capital, connections and support for Māori, Asian, Pacific and other Minority Ethnicity (MAPME) aspiring leaders within record time - a single generation."

"Many MAPME professionals enter the workforce without established networks in their fields, often as first-generation professionals from historically underrepresented communities. Direct access to some of the country's top executives and directors across business and government can greatly expand one's sense of what's achievable and possible.



"By providing our leaders of tomorrow (ngā rangatira mo apōpō) with equitable access to mentorship and institutional support, 3 Kapu Kawhe™ is not just an investment in the future of diverse leadership, but also in the future of our communities, as we work towards a more equitable and inclusive Aotearoa."

Instead of focusing on scalability, the programme prioritises fostering quality relationships and ensuring the creation of safe, consistent development spaces for all participants.

The programme supports participants by providing handbooks that include content addressing power imbalances and their potential impact on mentor-mentee relationships.

Additionally, these handbooks offer tips on cross-cultural mentoring, techniques for recognising biases, as well as mentoring reflection prompts and a goal-setting matrix.

The programme also includes a 'pay it forward' component for mentees, which involves mentoring a student mentee, with a particular emphasis on first-generation students. This initiative not only enhances the mentees' leadership skills but also contributes to a chain of positive impact.

Now in its second year, the programme achieved a 100 per cent completion rate among its inaugural cohort. Looking ahead, efforts are being made to enhance impact through expanded monitoring and evaluation initiatives.

Find out more about the [3 Kapu Kawhe™ programme](#)



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The gender equity imperative



As part of her attendance at the United Nation's Commission on the Status of Women, Susan Doughty had firsthand access to expert discussions on the issues still impeding gender equality and women's empowerment. →

→ We have reached a critical juncture for worldwide gender equity. Globally, 10.3 per cent of women live in extreme poverty, and inequality and injustices against women and girls are among the biggest human rights issues we face today.

Solutions to end women's poverty are widely recognised: we need to invest in policies and programmes that address gender inequalities, including equal access to education and opportunities and boost women's agency and leadership.

Such investments yield enormous dividends: more than 100 million women and girls could be lifted out of poverty if governments prioritised education and family planning, fair and equal wages, and expanded social benefits.

Almost 300 million jobs could be created by 2035 through investments in care services. Closing gender gaps in employment could boost Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita by 20 per cent across all regions.

Earlier this year, I was fortunate to be one of 15,000 delegates to the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), the United Nation's largest annual gathering on gender equality and women's empowerment.

The key theme of this year's commission was accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective.

“Globally, 10.3 per cent of women live in extreme poverty, and inequality and injustices against women and girls are among the biggest human rights issues we face today.”

These are weighty goals, and it may feel hard to fathom how workplaces can play a role in their realisation.

Put simply, we cannot provide the same opportunities for people or access to the same opportunities without understanding and considering different lived experiences.

Organisations want to attract more women into leadership roles, however, if systemic barriers prevent women from taking up those opportunities, we will not see progress.

If someone's had limited access to education because they are female, it will affect their ability to find meaningful and well-paying jobs, progress in the workplace, and ultimately impact their economic empowerment.

If a woman has been subject to domestic violence, she may have had to take additional time off, an extended career break or even leave her chosen profession and therefore be at a disadvantage to someone who has not had that experience.





If women continue to take on a larger share of childcare and eldercare, we will not address their overrepresentation in lower paid roles. It also means that women in our workplaces, when given flexibility, are compelled to balance it with their job responsibilities.

If our organisations want to attract and retain great female talent, we need to address some of these issues and provide safe places for women to thrive.

We also need to understand that these issues are amplified for women of colour. Diversity Council Australia has done some fantastic work around [centring racially marginalised voices](#) and building unbiased frameworks to listen to and understand the perspectives of people who are different from the mainstream. Through doing that, and using co-design to address issues of inequity, we can make changes to our workplaces.

Part of those changes is acknowledging that choice is a loaded word. Many of the decisions women make or the actions they take are not

“We cannot provide the same opportunities for people or access to the same opportunities without understanding and considering different lived experiences.”

voluntary because they have not chosen the circumstances they are in. And access is not equal if you come from a different starting point.

CSW68 was held over two weeks in New York, with more than 800 meetings that brought together governments, civil society organisations, NGOs, experts and activists from across the world. It was difficult to choose which sessions to attend. I’ve highlighted five presentations I attended that offered learnings for workplace leaders in Aotearoa New Zealand. If you would like to find out about other sessions from CSW68, information is available on the [UN Women website](#). →



→ Centring Racially Marginalised Voices (CARM)

It was a privilege to co-present a session on Centring Racially Marginalised Voices (CARM) as part of the Global Inclusion and Diversity Alliance (GIDA).

Our session was based on the ground-breaking research undertaken by Diversity Council Australia¹ which provides a framework for listening to, and prioritising, what marginalised people are telling us about the systemic barriers they face – and, importantly, ensuring these perspectives are the foundation on which we build the diversity and equity initiatives focused on removing those barriers.

The session examined the experiences of intersectionality of racially marginalised women through the Australian, Canadian, New Zealand and Hong Kong lenses using the Collaborative Framework of co-diagnose, co-design, co-deliver and co-evaluate. Using the New Zealand lens, we discussed the importance of reciprocity, “centring voice” as a foundational principle of engagement, the principles of self-determination and having

meaningful control over one’s own life and cultural wellbeing as embedded in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

You can find a synopsis of the report here: [Culturally and Racially Marginalised Women in Leadership: Synopsis](#)

Unquiet Voices

This was possibly the most impactful session I attended on gender-based violence. Hosted by the Romanian Association Anais, it featured the campaign Unquiet Voices.

It is estimated that every 30 seconds, a Romanian woman becomes a victim of domestic abuse. This incredibly sobering campaign uses 1920s silent movies as the backdrop for women to tell their own stories of domestic violence. The toxic nature of silent movies gave voice to the victims’ own stories to un-silence every violent scene. This gender-based issue directly impacts a woman’s education, ability to work and to control their own finances and destiny. You can [view it here](#).

Think we are different? New Zealand has the highest rate

of intimate partner violence against women in the OECD. One in three women here has experienced physical, sexual or coercive violence from an intimate partner in her lifetime; the rates are higher for Māori women, New Zealand born non-white women and migrant women.²

Women Walk Out – Iceland Strike

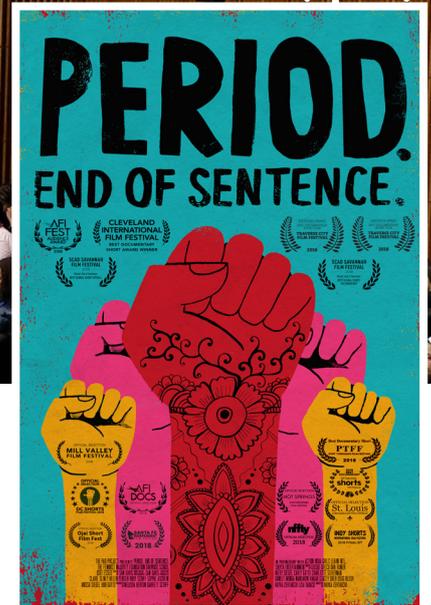
“Holding women’s wages down is a form of violence”.

This was an extraordinary story on the 2023 women’s strike in Iceland. Iceland has long been considered the world’s leader on equal rights for women ranking number one in the World Economic Forum’s gender gap index for the past 14 years.

Still, when it comes to the pay gap, there’s a long way to go. In 2021, the pay gap was 10.2 per cent, according to Statistics Iceland and up to 21 per cent in some industries. Violence against women is still glaringly high, too, with 40 per cent of women saying they’ve experienced sexual or gender-based violence.

1. Reference: Diversity Council Australia (V. Mapedzahama, F. Laffernis, A. Barhoum, and J. O’Leary). Culturally and racially marginalised women in leadership: A framework for (intersectional) organisational action, Diversity Council Australia, 2023.

2. University of Auckland - The hierarchies in NZ’s domestic violence problem



So in 2023, they said enough is enough and a strike was organised by the Icelandic Federation for Public Workers (BSRB), along with 40 other organisations. The strike was called to protest gaps in pay compared to men and gender-based violence, as well as to highlight unpaid work such as childcare that often falls on women.

Upwards of 100,000 (out of a population of 377,000) turned out to strike, shutting down Iceland for the day. Even the Prime Minister closed their office and went on strike, emphasising the importance of achieving full gender equity.

Interestingly, the presenters commented that they are looking to other countries for best practice and named New Zealand's efforts on equal pay as the best example. It just shows that even those countries that are held up as the best in world, are looking for answers and have work to do.

The Pad Project

This was a terrific session from the Pad Project on the impact of menstruation and

the ability for girls and women to attend school and work. The Pad Project partners with local organisations and grassroots NGOs to implement pad machine or washable pad programmes, run menstrual hygiene management (MHM) workshops, and distribute menstrual products in communities around the world.

Did you know that 26 per cent of the population are women of a reproductive age, 16.9 million people who menstruate are living in poverty and one in five can't afford menstrual products. This leads to significant impact on their ability to fully participate in education and work.

Globally, girls miss up to 20 per cent of school days per year due to period poverty. New Zealand isn't immune from this, with almost a quarter of New Zealand women missing school or work because they have been unable to afford sanitary items.³

This is a gender equity issue that has a disproportionate impact on women in the workplace.

This NGO created this award-winning Netflix documentary *Period. End of Sentence.*, which can be [viewed here](#).

YWCA Pay Equity

Another great session was delivered by our very own YWCA Auckland. A group of young women delivered a very lively and engaging session on the issues of pay equity and the drive for change within Aotearoa, New Zealand. It was great to see our young women on the world stage and taking up the fight for future generations to come. ■



Susan Doughty is the Board Chair of Diversity Works New Zealand and across her career has been an advocate for helping women and under-represented groups achieve their potential and growing diverse talent pipelines within organisations.

3. YWCA: Period Poverty in Aotearoa NZ





Indian migrant women managers and the glass ceiling

New research reveals how women from the Indian migrant community experience barriers to career progress and how workplaces can help break down the blockades. →



→ We've all heard of the "glass ceiling" – the term coined in the 1980s to describe the unseen blockades that impede women's career advancement in middle management.

Now, thanks to research from Auckland University of Technology (AUT), we have new insight into how Indian migrant women (IMW) managers in New Zealand experience the glass ceiling. Perhaps most importantly, we can also understand the steps they have taken to break through these invisible yet indisputable barriers.

Savita Bhaskaran has just completed her Master of Business at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). An IMW who came to New Zealand 20 years ago, Bhaskaran currently works full-time as a professional staff member at AUT.

She says she undertook the thesis to "address a gap in knowledge about the experiences of a growing cohort of employees who contribute to the country's economy". Bhaskaran interviewed a dozen IMW with at least two years' managerial experience in New Zealand organisations. Two-thirds reported frequently experiencing recruitment bias, racism, and bullying in the workplace.

For example, one participant said she "found it very challenging that the recruiters have horse blinkers on, and they don't see anything else apart from what they want to see." Another voiced her frustration over her concerted efforts to progress in the workplace.

"I applied for two places, very senior roles, [that] I didn't get; I applied for junior roles which I didn't get because they said 'You'd be very demotivated. We don't want to give it to you because if we give you a junior role you are not going to be more motivated.' So, it's catch-22."

Another described the bullying and harassment she experienced as "merely an extension of ethnic discrimination". Feeling unsupported by the HR department, her only recourse was to deal with these incidents on her own, deeply impacting her mental and physical wellbeing. She reluctantly had to take a break from employment, which further degraded her professional and financial status.

"I am a 50-year-old Indian migrant woman, so the pecking order is so low for me today in my job and career. I have had to accept that [I must] 'just run with what you get' and continue one's life; how long can one complain and sound like a victim?"

"The necessity for more inclusive workplaces for Indian migrant women, and other minority employees, is becoming clearer as the country's ethnic diversity grows."

Far from being victims, however, the women developed a range of strategies to overcome these barriers. Their strategies include taking proactive steps to understand and adapt to the local work culture and to the multicultural workplaces common in Aotearoa; building robust professional networks, being vocal about their career ambitions, actively seeking new opportunities for professional development and progression, and understanding the value of family support.

"It was a privilege to hear from these women, who have made huge changes in their lives as migrants. Most of them had to put in a tenfold effort, including requalifying to prove their credibility to their employer and to gain equal status and acknowledgement as New Zealand Pākehā women. Now they are forging ahead in local organisations and ensuring their unique expertise and potential is realised," Bhaskaran says.

The necessity for more inclusive workplaces for IMW, and other minority employees, is becoming clearer as the country's ethnic diversity grows. By 2043, the Asian population in Aotearoa is projected to comprise 24 per cent of the population and become the second largest ethnic group.

"As Indian women, our culture, academic learning and experiences are of significant benefit to New Zealand organisations, and I hope this research will help raise awareness of the specific issues that can arise in the workplace and ways they can be addressed." ■



Savita Bhaskaran works full-time as a professional staff member at AUT. Her thesis, Indian Migrant Women Managers' Experiences of the Glass Ceiling in New Zealand, can be [downloaded here](#)

A photograph of two women, one with long brown hair and one with short dark hair and glasses, looking down at a document on a table. The woman with glasses is pointing at the document with a blue pen. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a laptop and other papers on the table.

How can New Zealand organisations dismantle the glass ceiling?

Recommendations from Savita's thesis include:

- **Fostering welcoming and inclusive workplaces** – the women interviewed reported making deliberate efforts to 'fit in', sometimes at the expense of their own identity. "I can change everything, but I cannot change my colour," said a participant.
- **Organisations can improve cultural competence and understanding that differences are beneficial.** This could include a focus on receiving feedback from minority and marginalised groups. A participant who is a senior manager in public service said, "The time to adapt may vary as everyone is different. It also depends on how supportive the organisation and senior leadership teams are, and the exposure given to employees."
- **Effective monitoring of reports by minority group women of bullying and harassment,** as well as microaggressions, is crucial for organisations' human resources departments. A participant who had been a victim of the severe repercussions of workplace bullying said nervously, "I am not the bee's knees; I am not a pretty, white woman; you know what I mean? I am not blonde, I am not blue-eyed, so who is supposed to care for me?"
- **Increased representation of IMW on senior leadership teams** and ensuring the provision of appropriate training and career opportunities to facilitate engagement at this level. A participant stated, "I can't remember in my current organisation if there is any head who is an Indian woman. I am definitely a loner in that sense. In fact, in my last organisation, I was the only diverse person of colour in my team. They were all uniformly European Kiwi."



Resizing through an **equity lens**



Diversity, equity and inclusion practitioner Pete Mercer explores the responsibilities of employers during hiring, downsizing and restructuring and why consideration for DEI in staffing decisions is even more important during times of flux. →

→ In the current employment climate, many organisations are facing tough decisions about what their business structure needs to look like now to safeguard a successful future.

But what is at stake for organisations that don't hold diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) at the heart of such decision-making? What are the potential implications for the wider social and economic landscape of Aotearoa New Zealand? And practically speaking, how do we get the right people in the right place without losing all the gains we have made in the DEI space?

Many organisations understandably focus on diversifying their talent pool when recruiting new people, seizing the opportunity to enrich their organisation, particularly in times of stability and growth - and rightly so. No employer should be complacent in this respect, ensuring they exercise a critical view of how inclusive and equitable their recruitment practice and processes are.

And, except for recruitment freeze periods, rarely do the employee profiles of organisations remain entirely static, so inclusive and equitable hiring is always relevant, even in times of economic downturn.

What is talked about much less often, however, is how the same organisational principles apply when restructuring and downsizing.

From a general people management perspective - and certainly from a DEI perspective - it is broadly accepted that involuntary redundancies should ideally be a last resort for organisations, on account of the potential harm such processes can inflict on employee engagement, wellbeing and trust.

As we all know, sometimes employers simply have no choice. Where organisations do usually have some degree of choice, though, is in precisely what decisions are made, how they are arrived at and executed, and how their consequences are managed. From an equity impact perspective, the approach an employer takes can reduce the potential havoc that can be caused.

Fundamentally, if people that belong to historically marginalised, under-represented or non-dominant groups are disproportionately being made redundant, compared with the wider workforce populations, then these are not equitable outcomes.

The consequences of these decisions extend well beyond the walls of your organisation. Gainful employment - that is, access to decent and fairly paid work - is one of the most significant socio-economic determinants. During a climate of recession, inequity in redundancies being made across organisations holds the potential to alter the national picture in terms of socio-economic outcomes. In essence, ubiquitous inequitable decision-making can (and will, if not avoided) result in a less equal Aotearoa New Zealand.

“Fundamentally, if people that belong to historically marginalised, under-represented or non-dominant groups are disproportionately being made redundant, compared with the wider workforce populations, then these are not equitable outcomes.”

So how can this be avoided?

In the planning and preparation phase, it's paramount that organisations' goals are clearly defined, so that key drivers and desired outcomes are ascertained - including the need for equitable outcomes. Only from this point can you develop objective criteria and establish metrics for impact analysis.

When establishing and applying criteria, it's important that the decision-making team that's assembled is in itself diverse, aware of equity issues and capable of challenging bias and group-think. Then in any scenario planning, the team should conduct reviews to assess any disproportionate impact - crucially before decisions are finalised.

Once a restructure has been completed, organisations must continue to monitor and review subsequent outcomes, tracking key metrics such as demographic representation, employee engagement and turnover rates among remaining employees.

Of course, there is much more to consider than the staffing decisions themselves. Times of change call for a holistic plan to ensure your organisation is heading in the right direction, adapting its strategic leadership course and dialling up transparency to 10 through open communication.

“Unfortunately, precarious economic climates sometimes result in DEI objectives being de-prioritised or abandoned by organisations, who mistakenly perceive them as surplus to core requirements, rather than mission critical.”

Most crucially, providing as much wellbeing support as is feasible and building a culture of empathetic inclusion is the key to ensure that people feel valued and respected - both during and long after any structural shifts.

Unfortunately, precarious economic climates sometimes result in DEI objectives (and the infrastructure that supports them) being de-prioritised or abandoned by organisations, who mistakenly perceive them as surplus to core requirements, rather than mission critical. This is a grave error.

Not only does continued commitment to DEI demonstrate unwavering adherence to your organisation’s values and long-term goals - in the bad times as well as the good - but it also reduces the risk of discrimination, helps keep staff wellbeing and morale afloat, and bolsters the cohesion of your teams.

So in what ways can you leverage cornerstone DEI priorities to support your organisation and its people during these challenging times?

Consider the following core areas:

- **Leadership** - don’t shy away from the important but sometimes uncomfortable conversations about what equity looks like during structural change and how it can best be achieved. Lead from the top in terms of role modelling compassionate behaviour.
- **Data** - diversity data is essential for performing an accurate equity impact assessment. Use any diversity data you have in criteria setting, scenario planning and the staffing decisions themselves, and continue to build upon your data infrastructure for future workforce monitoring and planning. Diversity Works New Zealand’s [Diversity Data guides](#) can support you to do this work.

- **Recruitment** - where any hiring is taking place, seize these opportunities to diversify your talent pipeline. This means removing unnecessary barriers, being vigilant against bias (both inter-personal and systemic) and proactively widening your talent search through a diversity lens. Learn more from Diversity Works New Zealand’s series of guides on [Diverse Recruitment](#).
- **Career development** - broaden your career development offerings to give your people the best possible chance for adaptation and empower them to pivot to different opportunities, while identifying and mitigating the barriers to progression that those from diverse groups face.
- **Cultural change programme** - invest in the parts of your organisational culture you wish to retain and cultivate, dial up efforts to enhance inclusive collaboration and amplify the voices and contributions of those who are under-represented or marginalised.
- **Strategy** - such a significant structural shift will undoubtedly alter the fibre of your organisation, including from a DEI perspective, so take the opportunity to revisit your strategy to re-assess what your priorities should be.

Remember that who you have in your organisation is certainly not the only measure of success, because headcounts say little about how individuals are treated during such processes. True success hinges on our commitment to fairness across every facet of the employee experience, and upholding the mana and dignity of each and every individual, no matter the eventual outcome.

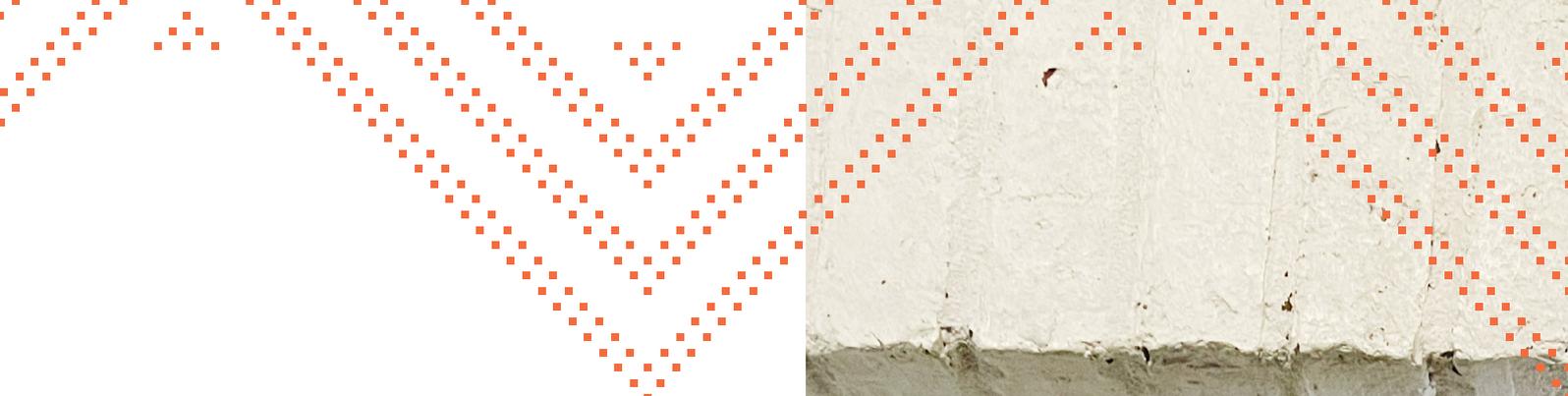
The principles of equity and inclusion are the compass that organisations should use to navigate today’s storms and to find a path towards resilience and sustainability. Making DEI a priority in challenging times is what fortifies our workplaces for the times that lay ahead. ■





Rolling out the welcome mat for a global workforce

Starting a new job in New Zealand can be an exciting yet challenging experience, especially for new migrants. Hind Management's Chief People Officer Phillipa Gimmillaro shares what she has learned about creating a workplace environment where migrants can thrive. →



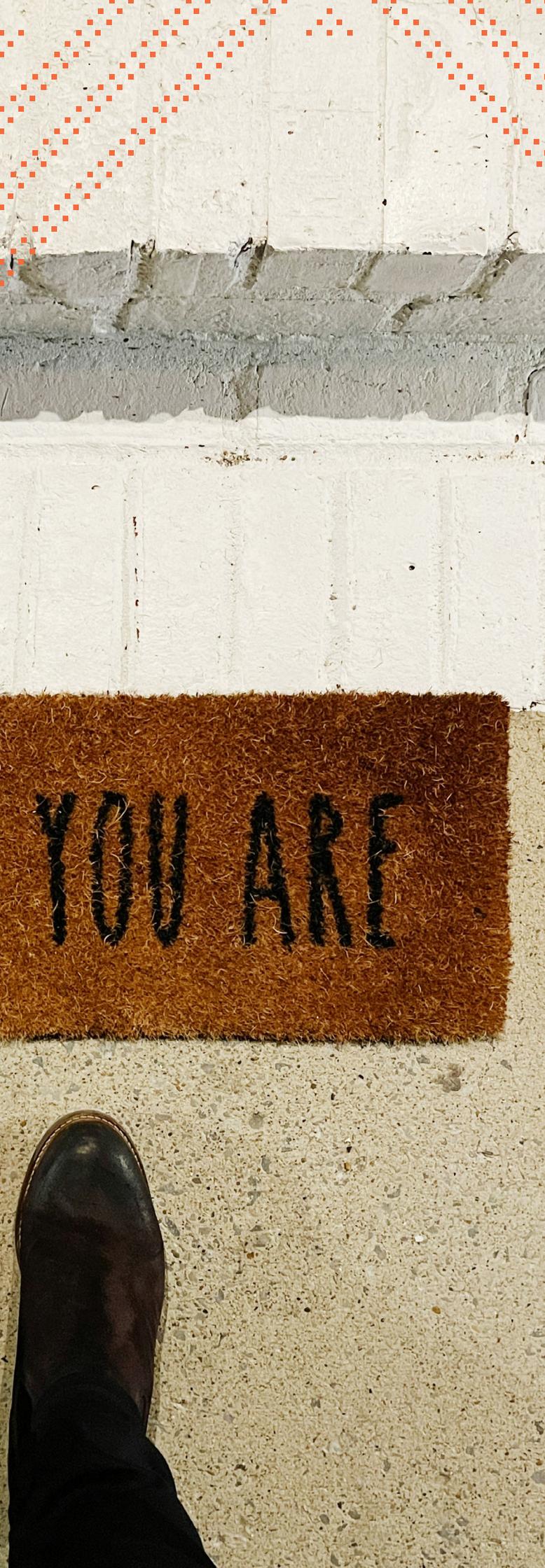
→ The role of migrants in our society is essential, and New Zealand has one of the largest migrant populations in the OECD. According to [Education Counts](#), more than one in three New Zealanders, or 35 per cent aged 25-64, were born overseas, more than twice the average in the OECD. This includes my family: my two children were born overseas in the UK, where I hold dual nationality with New Zealand. My mother became a migrant in New Zealand in the 1970s after meeting my New Zealand father on a working holiday in the UK. I followed a similar path, meeting my Italian partner while travelling. I returned to New Zealand in 2016 with my Italian-British New Zealand family, where we initiated the (long) process for my husband to gain citizenship in New Zealand.

Migrants bring rich cultural diversity, knowledge, perspectives, and essential skills to local communities and businesses, particularly our education sector, including world-class academics who are attracted to the lifestyle and opportunities that New Zealand offers. On average, 53 per cent of foreign-born citizens are tertiary educated, a higher percentage than New Zealand-born nationals, bringing vital expertise to New Zealand. Because New Zealand is geographically distant from the rest of the world, migrants offer a vital link that connects us with the latest skills, knowledge, and innovations from around the globe and enrich our cultural footprint.

Within the hospitality and tourism industry, migrants bring cultural diversity; many have foreign language skills imperative when welcoming thousands of international visitors – manuhiri – from around the world every day. The journey to New Zealand often means migrants have resilience and adaptability skills, which are great attributes for employers. However, adjusting to a new work environment, cultural norms, and potential language barriers can be daunting for our latest arrivals.

With 10 sites from Auckland to Queenstown, Hind Management employs more than 650 people across award-winning hotels, spas and restaurants. Around 26 per cent of our permanent workforce are migrants to Aotearoa, New Zealand, including many new and recent migrants. We also offer short-term international internships in partnership with leading hospitality schools. We





“Migrants bring rich cultural diversity, knowledge, perspectives, and essential skills to local communities and businesses, particularly our education sector, including world-class academics.”

all learn from the immersive cultural experience of hosting the students. The significance of these exchanges is not lost on me; being an international exchange student in high school, living abroad, learning the language and being hosted by a local family changed my outlook on life, and sparked an interest in people and cultures. I still maintain a close connection with the country and family today.

Hind Management’s commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is embodied in our company whakataukī - He kura te tangata: People are precious. We strive to empower our people and foster a strong sense of belonging through whanaungatanga. We build solid relationships based on shared experiences with our guests, people, community, and environment.

Maintaining a balance between attracting candidates who align with our values and ensuring an inclusive, highly skilled workforce is not always straightforward, but it brings many rewards. The hospitality industry has, at times, attracted a poor reputation from a handful of employers who seek to take advantage of migrant workers rather than seeing the value they offer communities and cherishing their unique skills.

There remains work to do to educate the wider industry on inclusion, respect, and belonging to ensure we leave a lasting positive impression on the global stage as a welcoming destination for migrants. Working with a diverse workforce in a fast-paced industry such as hospitality, where people have high levels of passion in their areas of expertise, is not without challenges. Newcomers have to learn the small things that we take for granted, such as the low power distance in New Zealand, where many of our hotel customers are happy to converse with our team and be addressed on a first name basis. →

“By fostering an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued, we can support their pathway to belonging in their new home.”

→Communication difficulties tend to be a regular challenge. Imagine a team where the number of languages spoken is 10-plus; in the middle of service, stress levels are high, and things can go sideways quickly with communication and team cohesion. Hence, it takes conscious inclusion and additional time for leaders to ensure they have an excellent onboarding, training and communication plan for new team members.

What I’ve learned during my time at Hind Management is that a focus on whanaungatanga, beginning with onboarding new team members and continuing throughout their employment journey, goes a long way to preventing these issues from arising.

As part of our commitment, during the company induction, we invite new team members to stay at the hotel where they will work, experiencing it firsthand as VIP guests. This immersive experience, complete with pampering and welcome amenities, helps new team members feel valued, boosting their knowledge and confidence in the products they will represent.

With these things in place, the result is a high-impact team that supports and cares for each other inside and outside the workplace. Understanding the unique challenges new migrants face, our team saw an opportunity to extend whanaungatanga beyond the induction experience to host new-migrant afternoon tea celebrations across our hotels, where employees and their families can socialise and form connections, share kai and, on occasion, sample a pavlova from one of our Hotel Managers. These events have evolved to include optional English and te reo Māori language classes, fostering deeper bonds and cultural exchange.

A recent migrant shared her experience with the People and Culture team: “The hotel celebrations helped me feel at home at my new workplace. Meeting others who share similar experiences and missed their traditional food and customs from home helped make my transition easier.”

Reflections and future opportunities

I recently had the opportunity to attend a citizenship ceremony in South Auckland, where my husband (finally) received his New Zealand citizenship after a long journey spanning more than 15 years. This significant milestone made me reflect on how we support our new migrants upon arrival and throughout their journey to becoming citizens and beyond.

Employers should consider marking this momentous occasion for our employees across New Zealand. Additionally, we could review our leave policies to allow extended or unpaid leave for employees to visit family overseas, ensuring they can maintain strong connections with their roots.

It’s also crucial to ensure a safe workplace for all. We must continue to review policies to effectively address racism, harassment, or bullying. Providing support and information to navigate health and wellbeing services, including mental and maternal health, is equally important. The experiences and heritage of our migrant whānau enrich our workplaces and communities. By fostering an inclusive environment where everyone feels valued, we can support their pathway to belonging in their new home. ■



Phillipa Gimmillaro is the Chief People Officer | Pou Here Tangata at Hind Management. She is a Workplace Inclusion Accredited Professional and was the HRD NZ HR Director of the Year 2023



Tips for DEI practitioners:

- Ask your migrant employees what they would like and how you can support them.
- Host regular social events to foster community among new employees; make them optional and consider opening them to partners and families.
- Offer language classes and opportunities to learn more about New Zealand culture to aid integration.
- Celebrate significant milestones, such as citizenship or family members/partners settling, to acknowledge and honour employees' journeys.
- Ensure robust support systems are in place for reporting and addressing workplace issues.
- Review leave policies to accommodate the unique needs of migrant employees.

FOCUS ON New Zealand Disability Employers' Network

Across Aotearoa, there are many advocacy groups and not-for-profit organisations that play an important role in advancing cultures of inclusion in our workplaces. We've asked Phil Turner from the **New Zealand Disability Employers' Network (NZDEN)** about the work it does to help organisations realise the true potential of disabled and neurodiverse people.

What is NZDEN's mission?

The New Zealand Disability Employers' Network (NZDEN) is a collective of New Zealand employers committed to advancing disability inclusion and accessibility practices within their organisations and nationwide. It empowers its members with the tools, resources, and support to effectively include and engage disabled people in their workforce.

At the heart of our network is the vision: "New Zealand organisations recognise the true potential of disabled and neurodivergent people, to the benefit of everyone." We focus on what it takes to transform workplace cultures across the motu toward equitable outcomes for disabled and neurodivergent people, achieving better outcomes for all.

Individual organisations often lack the knowledge, skills, and connections for robust disability and neurodiversity inclusion. Through the network we pool resources to support a specialist team which, in-turn, supports each member's unique journey.

Founded in 2018, NZDEN emerged from a critical examination of the stubbornly low disability employment statistics, and their decline since the turn of the century. Meeting and having conversations with employers highlighted the lack of the right supports and representation to be successful in creating fully inclusive workplaces. This insight led to the creation of the Accessibility Tick initiative and the Accessibility Tick Employers' Network, which later became NZDEN.

We support our members to understand barriers faced by disabled people and their positive impacts and benefits in the workplace, share successful inclusive employment strategies, and provide practical resources, training, and guidance. We also collaborate with our community and other stakeholders to influence positive legislative changes and societal attitudes toward disability in workplaces.



Since our inception, our mission remains steadfast in continuing to build a network committed to fostering a disability-confident and inclusive Aotearoa.

What are the biggest workplace inclusion issues for disabled and neurodiverse people?

One of the foremost challenges facing disabled and neurodivergent people in the workplace is societal attitudes that perpetuate perceptions of them as lesser than their non-disabled counterparts. This stigma affects their self-esteem and influences hiring decisions and workplace interactions.

Additionally, many workplaces struggle with implementing accessibility or may be unwilling to provide reasonable accommodations. Biases in hiring exacerbate these challenges, often preventing disabled candidates from entering the workforce. Moreover, there is a pervasive lack of awareness and support for individuals with 'invisible' disabilities, leading to misunderstandings and inadequate accommodations. Lastly, many disabled people fear negative judgment or repercussions if they disclose their disability, hindering their professional growth, sense of belonging and mental health. Addressing these issues requires concerted efforts to foster inclusive practices and challenge discriminatory attitudes across business and society alike.

What are the main initiatives NZDEN has put in place to support employers?

As a network of employers, we look to establish and promote best practices in disability and neurodiversity inclusion through shared experiences and continuous learning.

“

We focus on what it takes to transform workplace cultures across the motu toward equitable outcomes for disabled and neurodivergent people, achieving better outcomes for all.

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Our flagship initiative, the Accessibility Tick, guides organisations through assessing current practices, exploring possibilities, and developing a continuous improvement action plan. Gaining the Accessibility Tick marks the commitment by an organisation to their journey toward advancing disability and neurodiversity inclusion.

NZDEN facilitates knowledge sharing through member gatherings, hosting guest speakers at our regular hui, the Disability Inclusive Pathways conference, and specialised Communities of Practice (CoP).

We currently have two successful CoP operating, with plans for expansion. The Accessible Recruitment CoP is pioneering innovative changes in recruitment practices which could profoundly change the landscape of recruitment in Aotearoa to the benefit of disabled and neurodivergent candidates and employers alike.

We offer training programmes and workshops on topics including Accessible Communications, Disability Confidence for Leaders, and Customer Service. This year, we have become a reseller of the Do-IT Neurodiversity Workplace Profiler, a powerful tool which helps shape conversations around individuals' neurodivergent traits.

Members may access our online resource library, with e-learning modules, downloadable resources, and event recordings, which continually grows to meet evolving needs.

Ultimately, we strive to be the trusted partner that members know will provide them with the right advice, at the right time, and practical tools to achieve their goals for disability and neurodiversity inclusion.



What shifts have you seen as a result of the mahi you have done?

The employers that we work with are all advancing their disability and neurodiversity inclusion strategies in a structured and intentional manner, while receiving the support to keep them on track.

The results of their cultural shift mean that they are seeing more people being open about their needs, which when met, lead to more productive and happier workplaces. As an organisation's disability confidence rises, so does their interest in welcoming more disabled and neurodivergent people to their whānau.

Find out more about what NZDEN does and how you can support the organisation's work at nzden.org.nz

In brief

A quick look at workplace inclusion news and updates making headlines here and around the world.

WHAT GENDER PAY GAP?

[The Diversity Agenda](#) reports that its members have closed the gender pay gap within their workplaces, shifting the dial from a six per cent pay equity gap in 2023 to just 0.4 per cent in 2024. The results were announced as part of The Diversity Agenda Accord Summit held in Wellington. The Diversity Agenda was set up to help engineering and architecture firms become more diverse and inclusive through awareness, empowerment and action. It's now challenging members to have their senior leadership reflect the diversity in their organisations and contribute to the goal of having 40 per cent women, 40 per cent men and 20 per cent any gender in senior leadership by 2030.

US EXECS INCREASING DEI COMMITMENT

Nearly three out of four C-suite and human resources leaders in the United States plan to increase their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), [HRD reports](#). The findings, from a Bridge Partners survey of 400 C-Suite and HR decision-makers, showed that 72 per cent of participants plan to increase their DEI programmes in the next two years. Tory Clarke, co-founder, and partner at Bridge Partners says it's encouraging to see that despite near-constant attacks on DEI programmes in the past year, business leaders understand that diverse teams, equitable hiring processes, and inclusive cultures are all valuable drivers of stronger organisations.

REMOTE WORKING KEY FOR KIWI PROFESSIONALS

Research shows that 90 per cent of professionals working in New Zealand would look for a new role if their employer increased their in-office days. The survey, conducted by recruitment agency Robert Walters, indicated that the main deterrents for professionals in increasing their office presence are long commutes (41%), disruptions to work-life balance (40%), workplace distractions (11%), and associated costs (9%). With Robert Walters noting a considerable number of employers are advocating for increased office attendance, hybrid work arrangements are set to be a critical factor in the war for talent.

LGBTQ+ DISCRIMINATION IN THE WORKPLACE

Almost half of LGBTQ+ employees have left a job due to lack of acceptance, according to a [global survey](#). EduBirdie surveyed 2000 people who identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community on their experiences of discrimination and whether there's true equality in the workplace today. The research also showed that 63 per cent of LGBTQ+ employees have faced discrimination in their career, and 45 reported being passed over for promotion. A third of all LGBTQ+ workers avoid coming out to their colleagues, fearing discrimination (30%), judgment (28%), and for their safety (23%).



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Time: Drinks from 6pm

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DIVERSITY WORKS NEW ZEALAND

Level 1, 90 Symonds Street, Auckland 1010

+64 9 525 3023 | 0800 DIVERSITY | 0800 348 377

info@diversityworks.co.nz | diversityworks.nz