

**Empowerment Award Winner:  
Supreme Award Winner:  
New Zealand Police**



Video Link <https://vimeo.com/178545435/0986902383>

Initiatives that have helped recruit, retain and promote female officers are bettering the New Zealand Police and the community they serve.

The New Zealand Police face unique challenges in being an appealing career option for women, and, once in the workforce, women face further challenges around promotion and progression, says Strategic Advisor: Women's Development Anne-Marie Fitchett.

Independent reviews have outlined a lack of progress around gender diversity measures, with the 2007 Commission of Inquiry into Police Conduct highlighting a need to better recruit, develop and support women (and ethnic minority staff).

The New Zealand Police has more than 11,900 staff, including more than 8000 constabulary staff, operating in a complex 24/7 environment. Staff work from land, sea and air, managing nearly 800,000 emergency calls a year.

Recognising the significant challenge the police faced in transforming its gender diversity, Police Commissioner Mike Bush and the Executive Leadership Team have made it a top

priority, introducing two major initiatives in 2014 and 2015. The first was setting up a Women's Advisory Network and the second was recruiting targeting women.

The Women's Advisory Network (WAN), designed to support women's development, was mooted at the inaugural Women's Commissioned Officer two-day forum held in December 2013. With strong support from the Commissioner, a governance group was set up to co-ordinate WAN activities at a national level and oversaw the creation of WANs in each district and in three service centres (Royal NZ Police College, Police National Headquarters and Police Communications).

All were required to submit action plans outlining how they were going to address the objectives of the network. The Strategic Advisor: Women's Development position was established to coordinate and enable the implementation of initiatives identified by the WAN Governance Group. The role also serves as the conduit between the group and district networks.

The establishment of the network was announced on the New Zealand police website with Commissioner Bush describing it as 'a major milestone in the development of women leaders across the NZ Police'. He also announced the new targeted recruitment drive aimed at women, including the high-impact 'Do you care enough to be a cop?' marketing campaign which specifically addresses the drivers that encourage women to join up, and the 'Women In Blue' reality TV show.

First screened in April 2014, the show ran in prime time and attracted significant viewer following (more than half a million viewers each week). A specific web page was designed to profile the women on the show and the police held a competition to win one of five ride-alongs with those officers.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of women in police, and a range of activities are planned to showcase the contribution they make and promote the police force as a great career opportunity for women.

These initiatives to improve the appeal of the police as a career option and a positive work environment for women are beginning to pay dividends, says Anne-Marie.

The past year has seen record growth in recruitment of women - last year females made up 35.9 per cent of graduates from the Royal NZ Police College. This figure has been steadily increasing since 2012, when female graduates numbered 24.2 per cent.

The recruitment website revamp in 2015 has also hit the mark with women, with a 10 per cent increase in website traffic from women as a result of the revamp and the specific marketing campaigns aimed at women.

The 'Women in Blue' reality television programme provided unparalleled exposure of what it's like for women in police and 14,860 people visited the show's specially created website.

The WAN networks have run dozens of initiatives such as mentoring and buddying programmes, leadership forums and women's development days.

Headway is also being made towards the networks' goal of increasing the percentage of women applying for promotion and being promoted. There was a 41 per cent increase in women promoted to the rank of Senior Sergeant between 2014 and April 2016, a 36 per cent increase in those promoted to Inspector, and the number of female Superintendents rose from two to seven (a 250 per cent increase).

The benefit for employees has been the culture change in respect to supporting the development and progression of women in the police, Anne-Marie says.

"The more geographically spread the WANs are and the more active they are, the more normal they become and the more comfortable people are with their purpose and activity. We believe this is driving acceptance of women's issues as business as usual and a better understanding of the business case for diversity."

Research conducted by IBM for the police in 2014 identified networking as critical for women in terms of achieving actual promotion. Yet there are fewer opportunities for women to network with each other due to males far outnumbering females, especially in the frontline setting. The WANs are focused on creating opportunities for women to connect with other women.

Last year, the WAN Governance Group organised a three-day Women's Leadership Conference for 100 female police staff. This included ranks from Constable through to Superintendent and both constabulary and non-constabulary.

Feedback from one participants reads; "I thought it was great how the conference seemed to be 'rank-less' - everyone went by first names, and it felt like there was a lot of mutual trust and support there, which made participation and interaction so much easier."