

Walk the Talk Award Entrant:

Gina Mills – EY



Video Link <https://vimeo.com/178545421/00bd24c8e4>

Gina Mills' impact at accountancy firm EY is felt throughout New Zealand and Australia. As the person responsible for expanding a regionally-based diversity and inclusiveness programme, Gina has put enormous energy into development and rollout of a huge range of initiatives, Oceania-wide.

Gina is a senior manager at EY, having started with the firm in 2004.

She has been at the forefront of diversity and inclusiveness at her workplace from day one. Her example has raised awareness and inspired leaders and her peers to actively participate in promoting diversity and inclusiveness across the business

Management believes her commitment has had positive impact on who the firm is – as reflected in EY's preferred employer status in the market and high employee satisfaction.

One of Gina's biggest achievements and core to her work, was her establishment of the first Diversity and Inclusiveness Council in New Zealand in 2015. This ensured greater connectedness with regional initiatives – and a greater voice for New Zealand across Oceania and the wider Asia Pacific.

The Council has five key areas of focus:

- ethnicity (making people of all ethnicities feel welcome and included)

- gender (improving the gender balance and ensuring equal treatment for all)
- flexibility (allowing people to balance their home and work commitments, improving the ability of staff to continue in work whilst managing their families)
- disability (ensuring that we make allowance for people with disabilities and allow members with disabilities to feel valued and able to contribute to the success of the firm)
- LGBTI (ensuring that people of all orientations are respected and included all times).

As traction in these areas is achieved, there are plans to broaden the scope into other areas where there are current gaps.

Gina has put an extraordinary amount of effort in promoting diversity as a whole and LGBTI in particular. Gina has led the firm's LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex) council. She has encouraged everyone else to contribute by her personal example and her enthusiasm to embed diversity and inclusiveness in the culture of the firm. She has established a range of LGBTI focused initiatives and functions with an inclusiveness focus.

Gina has also been single minded in convincing the Firm's leadership to embrace the Rainbow Tick and EY has now achieved this status. All policies and principles align with these criteria. She attends Rainbow Tick networking events and seminars, leveraging from the experiences of other corporates to bring the initiatives back to EY.

And she arranged for EY to do pro bone accounting work for OUTLine NZ and fundraise for Rainbow Youth.

Gina has set up a share point site for the LGBTI diversity pillar and has gathered a range of resources for employees to access. She also represented NZ in the Australian Pride parade, joining colleagues from the Sydney Firm.

Gina has also had some innovative cultural input. She was instrumental in making Harmony Day (highlighting the varied ethnicities in EY) happen in NZ.

She worked with HR to establish a policy so that any staff member can substitute two standard public holidays with days that might be more meaningful for their culture.

Gina is also EY's representative for Global Women, ideas she once again implements back at EY.

Getting the top management's buy-in is one of the most important steps in ensuring that diversity in all its forms is celebrated and accepted within the firm. No problem there. Gina has a direct line of communication with the Managing Partner who has fully endorsed the firm's diversity principles and actions. The Managing Partner now puts out regular communications supporting and encouraging a range of Diversity initiatives.

Gina's contribution to EY's values was recognised in 2014 when she was a recipient of a Chairman's Values Award in Asia Pacific, after being nominated by her peers.

Gina summarises in her own words her approach to making a difference in her workforce.

"Senior management does not necessarily have the answers to every problem and we must all step up, harness our collective ideas and take responsibility for building a better

working world. In facilitating these discussions internally, I am amazed at the variety of ways that our people approach situations, the different things that resonate with each of them and the way that they can still work together to achieve a common goal," she says.

No doubt Gina will continue to be a powerhouse for diversity for some time to come.