

## Countdown

### *Emerging Diversity and Inclusion*

Countdown can now confidently say it has successfully integrated violence prevention into its day-to-day business and that a significant number of employees have benefited as a result.

Countdown is a leading supermarket brand with 184 stores across New Zealand employing 18,500 people, 56 per cent female and 44 per cent male.

The supermarket chain developed its violence prevention policy in 2016, and was awarded White Ribbon Accreditation in March 2018.

The accreditation is administered by the White Ribbon Organisation to give public recognition that an organisation has integrated violence prevention into its business practice.

The process has involved training more than 400 team members to recognise family violence.

The delivery of the training programmes began with Countdown's executive team. Starting at the top created an effective pathway for delivering the knowledge throughout the business, because after hearing the statistics and the potential number of team members that could be affected it encouraged leaders to show support and release teams for training.

A two-and-a-half-hour training programme was further rolled out to all line managers across the business and reached more than 400 senior managers.

The training created awareness around the signs of family violence, how to have a conversation with a team member and then to provide support to team members that may be experiencing family violence.

Countdown also recruited 35 store managers to be family violence trainers to deliver awareness sessions to all stores across New Zealand. Posters of available support and resources were posted on the back of every toilet door and copies of the policy and resource information sheets were placed in every lunchroom.

As part of the policy, 10 days paid leave is offered to a team member impacted by family violence. These days can be used to attend court hearings, meet with Women's Refuge, or relocate if required. The policy also provides unpaid leave for team members who are supporting family violence victims. Team members can access family violence support in a confidential way, either via Countdown's 24-hour 0800 number or email.

More than \$80,000 has been invested in the implementation of the policy so far, absorbed by each store. This covers paid and unpaid leave, support avenues, information and awareness sessions, cost of trainers to deliver these sessions, and resources.



Countdown has made a commitment to keep confidential details of any team members who have sought help in the past 18 months, but can say it has assisted 21 employees who have been impacted by family violence, providing a total of 55 days off work without any deduction from their pay, enabling them to get help to lead a life free of violence. The 21 team members are a mix of males and females.

“Without this initiative we have to wonder whether many of them would’ve sought help,” says Countdown Culture and People Manager Supermarkets and Logistics Michelle Dormer. “Our initial conversations were around the hope that if we could help just one person live a life free of violence, then that’s one less story gone untold. The fact they we are supporting 21 is heartbreaking but also a relief because we know that they are gaining help.”



Key to identifying people who need help has been an increased confidence in recognising signs. “People who have taken part in training and awareness sessions have said they are now more confident in asking their coworkers, ‘Are you OK and do you know that there is support available?’ Simple messages can have the biggest impact,” Michelle says.

Countdown celebrates the anniversary of the introduction of its violence prevention policy each year on White Ribbon Day by distributing white ribbons to all 18,500 team members. On White Ribbon Day in 2017, thousands took selfies of themselves with a message #standup and posted their support on an internal social media page .

Countdown has also extended support to its customers. Countdown is New Zealand’s largest online retailer and has one of the country’s most visited websites. In August 2017 it introduced a ‘shielded site’. This allows anyone visiting the website to access help related to family violence in a confidential way and it does not show in the browser history.

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YOUR WORKPLACE MORE INCLUSIVE

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