



## Shane Morgan, Watercare Service Ltd

### WALK THE TALK FINALIST



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Breaking down barriers through education, and embracing a wide variety of skills and lived experience has encouraged stronger relationships with the communities Watercare Services Ltd works with, and promoted the benefits of a diverse workplace within the organisation.

Chief Operating Officer Shane Morgan has overall responsibility for more than 360 of Watercare's 970 staff who work for New Zealand's largest company in the water and wastewater industry.

Shane's belief that utilising the skills and capabilities of a diverse workplace would lead to greater innovation, the development of more ideas, and an improved ability to work across the diverse sectors of the community Watercare interacts with, led to a series of initiatives to promote diversity.

Chief People Officer Jason Glennon says Shane's leadership style has led to significant and positive progress within the company.

"Watercare has seen greater collaboration and interaction across our teams and with the community as a result of the work that Shane has done," he says.

“We see his encouragement of diversity in the way that Shane leads and communicates with his people, providing them with opportunities to learn, and role-modelling behaviour that is inclusive and drives excellence to promote a positive brand for Watercare in both the global water industry and in terms of the employment brand.”

Shane was the executive sponsor of the Learning and Living Tikanga Māori programme to enable Watercare to more effectively build relationships with the communities and Iwi with shared interests in the land and assets the company uses.

Staff have appreciated the interactive nature of the programme that aimed to increase understanding of Māori culture and promote effective communication. Positive feedback included the following comments: “We had our first noho (stay) at Te Wananga o Aotearoa marae in Mangere on the weekend. It felt like a family coming together – we gave presentations and learnt waiata (songs) and had our meals together. It was a great environment to learn”; “I improved my pronunciation of the Māori words and it was great to see everyone in the group helping each other out and making friends – we were living the Māori principle of whanaungatanga;” “I was proud to see the interest and passion shown by others in learning about my culture and language.”

Along with another executive officer, Shane attended the course to build on his own knowledge of Māori culture and encourage his staff.

Shane has been a champion of flexible working arrangements in what has been traditionally a very structured part of the business. The Watercare operations environment now has a number of staff working four-day working weeks, flexing hours of working better suited to managing school children and day care, or in job share arrangements. Through these changes Watercare have not only been able to hold on to staff for longer but they have also been able to encourage workers back to the company after periods of work overseas or parental leave. Shane’s influence is also seen in developments within the company’s recruitment policies.

Jason says as one of a small number of students from a Decile 1 school who went on graduate with a degree in Engineering Science, Shane understands the barriers to education that many are faced with.

“He has been instrumental in getting a roadblock removed that now allows the business to take on board staff based on their experience and capabilities rather than just their qualifications,” says Jason.

“By removing the requirements for qualifications as a barrier, the business has been able to recruit across a wider breadth of candidates, from a range of cultural backgrounds, again bringing a rich and diverse skill set into the business.”

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He has been equally focussed on working with new graduates and promoting gender equality within Watercare. In what is very much a male-dominated industry, five of Shane's production managers are women, leading teams of between 10 and 30 staff. He is committed to securing new talent in the field and encouraging women into engineering and sciences.

Says Jason, "The initiatives that Shane championed in relation to recruitment have enabled the business to secure staff from a broader range of people, bringing depth and expertise that might not otherwise have been tapped into. He has been instrumental in shaping the diversity of the organisation to support our longer terms goals of having an agile, innovative and customer-focused team, while also providing an environment to work that is inclusive, embraces all cultures and develops technical and people skills to achieve excellence."

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