



## New Zealand Steel INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE

**MEDIUM-LARGE ORGANISATION HIGHLY COMMENDED**

A concerted effort to create a more diverse labour pool has seen New Zealand Steel adopt a broad range of initiatives to create a welcoming and inclusive workplace for its people.

New Zealand Steel is the country's only steel-making company, operating at various sites including Glenbrook Steel Mill, Waikato North Head Mine site and Pacific Steel.

Diversity and Inclusion Committee Chair Mikaela Keir says leaders are committed to leading by example and creating a culture where diversity is encouraged and celebrated, and employees feel free to share their own ideas and perspectives without fear of harassment.

“New Zealand Steel has worked hard to make our organisation an attractive career option for more diverse candidate pools – we have been able to attract graduates and immigrants to the industry from diverse backgrounds. The labour pool has diversified, and the need to make the workplace inclusive and diversity has increased,” she says.

A diversity committee known as Identity was formed as a “voice of the people” group for planning, promoting and implementing initiatives, and to act as ambassadors for diversity and inclusion within the workplace.

The committee is made up of employees from different backgrounds, ranging from new graduates to members of the Senior Leadership Team. Initiatives have included: celebrating Māori Language Week and encouraging employees to participate in a course giving insight into a Māori world view; encouraging the LGBTQI+ community by adopting the colourful symbols of allyship in the workplace; inter-departmental cultural shared lunches; and setting up a prayer and reflection space.



**WATCH  
VIDEO**

Committee members visit teams within the business to raise awareness of diversity and inclusion and get feedback on how employees would further like to see it put into action.

A commitment to equal employment opportunities has seen a significant increase in the number of women employed by New Zealand Steel. As at April 2021, 20.2 per cent of employees were female, the highest level ever. That growth has impacted several areas within the organisation.

“More females working in operational areas has benefited the engagement and morale in some teams resulting in increased productivity and performance. Plant managers have reported a change in dynamics of teams as a result of female influence,” says Mikaela.



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A collaborative approach to problem-solving is encouraged across the organisation and anti-bullying and anti-harassment policies are in place to ensure everyone feels comfortable to be themselves at work.

“These policies are embedded and reinforced in our organisation through our Workplace Behaviours Training initiative – training provided to all employees covering the topics of bullying, harassment and discrimination,” says Mikaela. “So far, over 800 employees have attended these sessions and we have already seen the positive impact this is having on inclusion and our speak-up culture. Through our Speak Up policy, all employees are encouraged to ‘speak up’, especially if they think an action or discussion is not right.”

Anyone who doesn’t feel able to speak directly with their manager is able to report behaviour or incidents via an anonymous and confidential line.

Each year an awards night is held to recognise teams and individuals making an impact within the organisation and includes a Diversity and Inclusion award. This year’s winner was celebrated for encouraging work experience opportunities for young women interested in mechanic apprenticeships.

## THE AIM

Through conscious efforts New Zealand Steel has succeeded in attracting a diversified workforce and recognised that the critical next step towards retention and achievement of business outcomes was to make the workplace inclusive, welcoming and safe for all their people.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- Inclusive leadership training provided to all leaders.
- Leaders work alongside the People Team to ensure recruitment reflects diversity, with a mixed-gender interview panel used where possible.
- Training provided to all employees covering bullying, harassment and discrimination and a speak-up culture encouraged.
- An Identity committee introduces key initiatives and plans annual celebrations.
- Site-wide communication channels, including newsletters, Facebook page, and a revamped Intranet, make it easier to communicate new initiatives to staff.
- Wellness initiatives extended to local high schools, recognising families are part of the organisation's wider community.

## INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL BENEFITS

- Women employees increased from 7.5 per cent in 2010 to 20.2 per cent in 2021. Improved engagement and morale attributed to the increased female participation in the workplace.
- In the 2021 workplace survey, 81 per cent of employees reported that the organisation provides a working environment that is accepting of differences in personal identity and 79 per cent reported that they can be themselves at this organisation without worrying about how they will be accepted.
- Diverse backgrounds and perspectives acknowledged as a valuable tool for approaching business challenges.
- The adoption of a speak-up policy has had a positive impact on the organisation's culture.

## KEY LEARNING

A commitment to diversity and inclusion has allowed New Zealand Steel to tackle business challenges in a magnitude of different ways with everyone in the organisation free to offer their own background and perspectives.

**DO WORKPLACE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WELL  
AND DO WELL BECAUSE OF IT.**

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