

Empowerment Award Entrant: Bupa Care Services NZ Ltd.

Bupa women setting the standard for caring profession

Bupa Care Services New Zealand, part of the leading International Bupa Group, has three aged care businesses; rest homes and hospitals; retirement villages and personal medical alarms and a rehabilitation business, all operating on a 24/7 basis. Bupa New Zealand has around 4,000 employees looking after the healthcare needs of more than 16,000 New Zealanders. As such it is the largest national aged care provider in the country, offering specialist dementia care and brain rehabilitation.

Frontline jobs in the care industry have traditionally been perceived as low-skilled, low-paid and low-status jobs, presenting care organisations with challenges such as high turnover and absenteeism. These jobs have also been traditionally associated with women, as illustrated by the revolutionary Bartlett vs. Terranova case. However, the principles of women's empowerment visibly permeate all levels of Bupa Care Services New Zealand.

Female representation in the organisation currently sits at around 88 per cent with women represented at every tier of the organisation, from frontline employees to the Executive Leadership team. Unlike other organisations in which there may be a high female representation at lower levels of management but a greater ratio of men in senior management roles, Bupa has no glass ceiling with five out of seven of the Executive Leadership team positions held by females, including Managing Director, Gráinne Moss.

The organisational vision to ensure that all their employees are accepted, valued and empowered is embedded in one of Bupa's three key strategic goals for 2020, 'People Love Working Here'. To bring this vision to life, Bupa has implemented a wide range of training and development opportunities for people to grow their strengths, along with an employee health and wellbeing programme 'B-fit' to promote positive work-life balance. Together these initiatives engage the Bupa workforce, develop confidence and skills, recognise personal needs and subsequently empower Bupa's 3,500 female employees to take control of their career and their future, no matter where they are in the organisation.

New Zealand is an increasingly diverse country and alongside Bupa's growth ambition to double in size by 2020 compared to 2012, the culture of respect for the diverse contributions of women that are engendered at every level of the organisation will ensure that the strength of their large-scale, diverse workforce will become increasingly relevant.

Bupa's female leaders have been committed to fostering and helping other women progress in their careers through training and development, respect for the whole person's life balance, and through a culture of openness and support. At Bupa's helm, Gráinne Moss is passionate about creating opportunities for other women. Aside from forging career opportunities for women, she has also been a community advocate for women's social and economic development. In addition, she has been active in 'Caring Counts' (a coalition addressing pay parity in the private and public sector), and leads union negotiations to increase pay conditions for frontline employees at Bupa.

Furthermore, as a board member of Global Women, Gráinne represents Bupa in a panel of the most influential female leaders in New Zealand where she encourages and supports female leaders of the future to achieve top levels of government and business. Talking about Bupa's internship programme, Gráinne said "Bupa wants to continue to create opportunities and options for graduates, and also encourage by our action and commitment, other employers to create similar schemes".

Women are empowered at Bupa, not through one single initiative, but through a strong supportive culture. There is a recognition and respect for the valuable contribution that all women make to the organisation. Sandy Turnwald, Deputy Director of Nursing, Quality and Risk, says that it is the overall culture and employee experience that empowers women at all levels across the organisation. "I've grown from being a Clinical Manager, to Care Home Manager to a Deputy Director. I've been empowered to learn and develop both personally and professionally within an extremely supportive environment. Professional development is not always about accessing external courses and training, it's also about being given opportunities within the organisation to grow and learn - of which I've had plenty".

Committed to growing future female leaders, the Internship programme has made an enormous difference to young women, empowering them with much needed confidence and skills at the beginning of their career. The Bupa Scholarship programme has empowered many women by assisting them with tertiary education. Rochelle Hamilton, HR Advisor, and recent Bachelor of Management Studies Graduate from The University of Waikato, says of her experience "...with the support of my manager and team, I have been able to achieve my degree qualification. Bupa is a great place to work and I really feel that I am being encouraged to grow and develop myself in real and meaningful ways".

With such diverse initiatives, catering to a wide variety of needs within the workforce, there are numerous testimonials from women who have felt empowered by career development and training initiatives as well as wellbeing programmes run by Bupa. Across the business many women report that the organisational initiatives have made a real difference to their lives, enhancing their sense of identity, confidence levels and their ability to be engaged in, and empowered by, their jobs.