

EMERGING TALENT MEMBERS IN FOCUS



The Emerging Talent Network has been established by Infrastructure New Zealand to develop the next generation of infrastructure leaders. Each month we will be profiling an ET member working in a different part of the industry. If you would like to be profiled, or would like to nominate someone to be profiled, please answer the questions below and send your picture through to [Tara](#).

We would like to introduce Kate Slater from Russell McVeagh in Wellington as this month's Emerging Talent Member in Focus.



KATE SLATER
BANKING AND FINANCE
SOLICITOR



1. What organisation are you with, and what do you do day-to-day?

I work as a solicitor in the Banking and Finance team at Russell McVeagh. Our firm has a strong focus on the infrastructure space and my team specialises in project finance, helping to raise funds for major infrastructure developments. We work for both Government and private sector clients, including the major banks who lend to the companies building our new roads, bridges, etc. Day-to-day, my role involves drafting and reviewing loan agreements and security documents, preparing corporate authorisations and assisting with conditions precedent to completing transactions.

2. Tell us about your career background and how you got to this position/role?

I moved to Wellington from my hometown of Hamilton in 2015 to study a conjoint Bachelor of Laws and Arts (majoring in International Relations) at Victoria University. I completed a summer clerkship in the Banking and Finance team at Russell McVeagh in 2017/2018 and started as a graduate with the firm in April 2019. Between September 2019 and February 2020, I was fortunate to have spent time on secondment at ANZ, which was a great opportunity to experience the in-house side of law and learn about the business needs and processes of New Zealand's largest bank.

3. Tell us about a project you are currently working on and why it interests you?

We act for the lenders on several of New Zealand's major public private partnership (PPP) infrastructure projects. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected these projects in a number of ways, and it has been extremely interesting working through these impacts and advising the parties on how to address these. I'm really enjoying learning about the different parties involved in these projects and all the moving parts that come together to deliver new infrastructure.

4. What are the biggest successes/challenges with the new ways of working? (i.e., video conferencing, lack of events and in-person meetings, etc.)

The switch to online platforms for holding events has made it easier to find time to attend more webinars and other CPD events. This has been a great way to grow my knowledge in all sorts of areas and to access events that might not otherwise be available in Wellington, although I've missed meeting new people at industry events. As we have all been working

remotely, we have adapted to using Zoom more to keep in touch and collaborate, which makes it easy to work with colleagues in our Auckland office and across different teams. A big challenge with the new way of working for me has been the lack of in-person interaction. This is easier to manage for ongoing projects but much more difficult when starting new projects and welcoming new team members.

5. Can you think of one example where your age diversity has materially affected the outcome of a work situation or project, either positively or negatively?

I'm fortunate enough to be involved with a number of young professionals networks and offshoots of professional organisations such as the Emerging Talent Network and INFINZ Young Finance professionals. Being part of these networks has allowed me to build connections with young professionals in other industries and in law, which has been really helpful when it comes to working with these firms on transactions. Having strong working relationships with other people of a similar age makes it easy to pick up the phone to get something resolved on a deal.

6. What are your key learnings from lockdown?

The lockdown experience has highlighted the importance of the shared workspace for me individually and as a junior team member, to be surrounded by senior colleagues to learn from and direct questions to. I thrive on being in a high performing environment where I can bounce ideas off my colleagues.

7. Do you have any tips on how to thrive professionally in an ever changing COVID environment?

As busy professionals, it can be hard to find the time to reflect on your own career choices and progression. Lockdown provided a great chance to assess what work you enjoy doing (outside of the context of the office environment) and what challenges you. This is particularly helpful for young professionals trying to decide where we want to specialise or where we need to focus our development.

Working more flexibly, whether that is working from home or with different working hours, also frees up time that can be used to pursue personal interests and further learning. This, combined with the increased availability of remote learning through webinars or online courses, creates opportunities to start a new hobby or advance your professional skills. While stuck at home during level 4 lockdown I took Zoom French classes run out of Auckland – it was great to try something new even when I couldn't leave the house.

To learn more about opportunities for a career with Russell McVeagh click [here](#) or you can connect with Kate on [LinkedIn](#).

