

INFRASTRUCTURE WOMEN IN FOCUS



WIN NZ has been established to increase the visibility of women in the infrastructure sector. Every month we profile a different woman 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'd like to introduce Carla Bates from KiwiRail as our next Woman of Focus. Carla is a member of the Wellington WIN Network.



CARLA BATES
TEAM LEADER, ENVIRONMENTAL



1. What company or organisation do you work for and what is your role there?

I am the Environmental Team Leader at KiwiRail, based in Wellington. KiwiRail is a State Owned Enterprise (SOE) and is New Zealand's national rail network provider. We also operate 3 vessels under the Interislander brand. My role involves leading a team of 2 environmental advisors, to support the organisation in actively achieving sustainable business operations. We support all parts of the organisation in environmental risk, competency, best practice, performance measurement, regulatory engagement and inputs to our SHE Management System. We sit within the wider Zero Harm or H&S Team.

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

I have around 12 years of overall environmental role experience but it's in a mixture of areas. I studied Environmental Science in the UK and started my career in the contaminated land sector as an environmental scientist both in the UK and NZ. I then moved into a role as an Environmental Advisor for a NZ construction/civils contractor and then onto KiwiRail as an Environmental Advisor and now Team Leader. I also did some retail and administration roles in between which I think people often erase all trace of in these reviews. However, these roles taught me a customer service, people centric focus which should not be ignored and has helped my professional success, especially in my consultancy roles. I saw my current position advertised and I was hugely excited about the national coverage of the role and the potential for environmental opportunity, but I also knew that with the breadth of experience I had behind me I would be well suited. I think the key element of my success in getting my current role was my passion for improving environmental outcomes, which the interviewer knew would help me to persevere in challenging thought processes but is also a potent element in making a mark.

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

My role involves a range of high level work streams rather than projects, but if I think about those streams the one that most excites me is helping to facilitate and create an environmental competency plan for KiwiRail. The goal is to ensure that our people have the knowledge they need to craft great environmental outcomes in the work they do. It also ties in to a cultural shift that we want for the business where staff who already want to do the best thing for the environment understand what that looks like and not only how to do it, but that in tandem they will get endorsement to do it. I get a kick out of upskilling and educating people in environmental management practices, I think because like a lot of people identify with, it's something that's bigger than me. It's also a rapidly more relevant and required skill set. I also came to work in my current role because I could see the potential for great environmental outcomes within the business to have far wider reaching ramifications for New Zealand's environment and communities.

4. What's the hardest job you've ever done and why?

Without a doubt it was a role as an Environmental Advisor during construction of a road of national significance. I had never worked in such a fast paced, practical and all-encompassing environmental role, or on a project of that scale, but it turned out to be a career epiphany for me. It made me realise that an environmental advisor role meant I could work in a range of environmental areas and I love variety in a role. I felt like I had real opportunity to make a difference to on the ground environmental outcomes. Why was it hard? I hadn't practically applied my environmental qualification in most of the areas I had to advise on and certainly not to a level where direction and advice was required on the spot in a fast-paced dynamic environment. I had to work with a lot of different staff with differing levels of environmental compliance knowledge, our consents were extremely hard to comply with, and I was working in an industry I had little experience in. I was privileged to work with an extremely talented team not only in the environmental space but also engineering. We each had our own specialisms and shared as we learnt together. This role was the realisation for me of the reward in taking on roles out of my comfort zone, and for that I will always feel a sense of gratitude for the experience.

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

I can think of a lot of examples of both, and when I say that I'm thinking about diversity in my experiences in different industries, countries, working with a range of differing expertise, when I was starting out and having worked in male dominated industries. I think as you grow in experience you reflect on events with fresh eyes. I have especially found that moving into a leadership role and having a graduate in my team. I think we all need to constantly evaluate our approach to different voices and ideas and check ourselves. I think my current role is a good example of a positive diversity outcome, because my leadership roles (with diversity themselves) have always been clear to feedback that they value my background and approach because it provides diversity to the business and by doing so it strengthens the business. When you come to work being your authentic self, that is extremely powerful feedback to receive and an example of how leadership valuing diversity can ripple through an organisation and essentially influence a wider network.

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

