

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 Katie Cappel as our next Woman of Focus. In addition to her role at WSP, Katie is also a member of the WIN Canterbury network.



KATIE CAPPEL
ENGINEER



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

I am a Civil Engineering Technologist at WSP (formerly Opus and Ministry of Works) and I work in the Christchurch office. I have a passion for the design of sustainable infrastructure including three waters and pavements. I have worked on large multi-disciplinary projects and have experienced working closely with contractors and local authorities. I have worked on commercial, industrial, educational and correctional projects, undertaking civil lead design of the site infrastructure and implementing software such as AutoCAD, Civil3D and Infracore. In addition, I am a Health and Safety Representative for my colleagues, and I am also involved in the Leadership Group for Engineers with up to 10 years' experience. I have a passion for supporting and coaching other professionals to see them grow and develop their career.

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

I studied Civil Engineering and Project Management in Germany. As part of my studies, I had the opportunity to work with Fulton Hogan in New Zealand. I came to New Zealand in 2013 and worked with SCIRT as I wanted to make a difference to the people living in Christchurch and learn about engineering at the same time. After I finished my studies in Germany in 2015, I came back to New Zealand to start my career at WSP. Since then, I have received great opportunities and support to work on a range of projects. I have a true passion for learning and upskilling in regard to technical design, therefore I am working on my Engineering NZ Knowledge Assessment which allows me to apply for the CPEng in future. I have to complete the Engineering NZ Knowledge Assessment as my German Bachelor of Engineering is not on par with the Washington Accord recognised here in NZ. I can truly say that I got to this position due to people supporting my efforts and believing in me when I struggled to believe in myself. I tried to grab every opportunity although it was daunting at the time as I knew that I would grow and come out stronger at the other end. Now, after overcoming tough times at the start of my career, I feel more confident. Therefore, I would like to encourage young women and men to never give up and stay open minded. Challenging conversations or tasks will make you grow stronger!

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

I am currently working on a design of a proposed hospital in the South Island. This project will be a major improvement to the available healthcare in Dunedin and surrounding area. This is long overdue as the population around this area is growing and requires adequate healthcare. It is fantastic to be part of a project that really makes a difference to people in need. The technical aspect of this project is mind blowing as there are so many designs that are specific to hospitals. As a Civil Engineer, I have to interface with a lot of other disciplines such as planners, architects, structural engineers and mechanical & electrical engineers. Therefore, precise and professional communication is key to find the best solution. In addition, I find team dynamics and seeing how people's personalities come into play interesting because at the end of the day we are all human and trying our hardest to make this project worthwhile.

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

I find it difficult to pinpoint the hardest job. For me personally as a young Civil Engineer, I find it hardest to identify the most fit-for-purpose engineering solution for our clients as well as doing a perfect job within the budget and time frame. It seems that there is almost never enough time or money to do the perfect job. Therefore, navigating between doing the best job I can do within the time frame and budget is difficult to accept because sometimes I feel I could do even more or even better. The thing that has helped me to accept it is to put in my best effort, be proactive and not put all the pressure on myself. We have a team to share the load and support each other.

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 feel lucky to say that I have not felt that being a female engineer has affected a work situation or project positively or negatively, or I have never perceived it that way at least. I think that my personality and my efforts have made the difference, and this is due to the acceptance from the people around me. However, I did struggle at the beginning of my career with a fear of being a female engineer in a male dominated industry and having to earn acceptance. Accepting myself and reminding myself that I am worthy of being here has made all the difference.

To learn more about careers with WSP click [here](#), or you can connect with Katie on [LinkedIn](#).

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