

INFRASTRUCTURE WOMEN IN FOCUS



WIN NZ has been established to grow the visibility of women in the infrastructure sector and is open to women of all levels. Every month we will be profiling a different woman working in a different part of the sector. If you would like to be profiled, please answer the questions below and send your picture through to [Natasha](#).

We'd like to introduce Anna as our next Woman of Focus.



ANNA BRIDGMAN

**GROUP MANAGER – LOWER
NORTH ISLAND NZ WATER**



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

I work for Stantec, an international engineering consultancy with over 22,000 employees worldwide. I am Group Manager of the Water Team for the Lower North Island which covers the Hastings, Palmerston North and Wellington offices.

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

I started as a graduate engineer in the Wellington City Council water department 14 years ago—a great place to begin a career. The next few years were a mix of design roles and environmental engineering before heading to the United Kingdom and working as a water engineer in Edinburgh.

I've been with Stantec for nearly 10 years (including two periods of maternity leave), starting as a water engineer following my return from Edinburgh, then picking up project management as well as investigation, design and construction management of water infrastructure projects, primarily for local councils.

Five years ago I was given the opportunity to take on a team lead role, and moved up to the Group Manager position at the beginning of 2017.

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

One project I'm currently working on is helping a client look for an alternative location for an emergency overflow from a wastewater treatment plant (WWTP).

WWTPs aren't sexy but they're absolutely necessary for community sanitation—wastewater is any water that has been affected by human use, so in urban areas it contains household and industrial waste prior to treatment.

With the WWTP I'm working on, when its outfall pipeline is full from large storm events, or out of action for repair work, the treated wastewater discharges into the local stream. However, this is not ideal because the local councils and the community have worked hard to improve the stream's water quality over a number of years through stream improvement works and network upgrades.

I'm dedicated to helping our client find an alternative location for the discharge to reduce the impact on the stream, so our team is looking at relocating the emergency overflow to a larger body of water nearby. I'm also proposing additional storage at the WWTP to further minimise the adverse effects of these discharges, and for the client to continue implementing preventative measures by improving the upstream network.

It's the first time I've been involved in a larger consenting project and multifaceted optioneering and assessment process. Ensuring that client needs are met or balanced with all aspects of the community—cultural, resilience, water quality, visual, social and financial—means this project is complex and dynamic, but makes me more determined to get it right.

The community was consulted on the project as part of the options assessment phase and it was fantastic to see how they engaged in the process and considered how all elements of the pipeline location would affect them.

We're currently seeking consent to construct the emergency overflow and I'm positive that the community and client will benefit through protection of a local resource that's precious to them, while understanding the infrastructure requirements.

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

Other than care for two small boys? Work is my relaxation time! While I will always remember my first construction management jobs, and the lessons they taught me around knowing my stuff and not being afraid to *not* know something (while brave on site I did spend a few days coming home in tears), I think my time as Water Team Lead in our Wellington office was one of my hardest roles.

It was the first time I had to deal with performance management; I couldn't just be everyone's friend while we worked through it. I was responsible for the team's workloads and delivery while still having a sizeable portfolio of technical work.

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?

As a woman in a 'male-dominated' industry, I feel like my interactions often end up being more formal and organised than many of my male counterparts'. Some of my male peers catch up with a client, contractor or other professional acquaintance over a beer, and these casual interactions lubricate relationships which can change or help projects.

I think there are still many in the industry that might not be as comfortable having a drink with a female colleague as a male colleague, or just might not consider asking.

I really like working at Stantec because of its proactive approach in supporting gender diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace. By bringing together diverse perspectives we're better at collaborating towards shared success. This cooperation and agility means I can work four days a week and have a day at home with my boys (though I will admit to answering calls and emails—habits hard to break).

My team has a good, flexible working environment and I do encourage others to look for opportunities to take time out for family, particularly the males in my team if it means their partners can return to a position that continues to develop their careers. This may have earned me the odd kick under the table during interviews, but I believe that having both parents engaged in domestic work enables gender equality in the workplace. Stantec's core values of community and collaboration create a safe environment where women like me feel empowered to recognise gender discrimination and find solutions to overcome it.

To learn more about opportunities for a career with Stantec please go to <https://www.stantec.com/en/careers>

Or, you can [connect with Anna on LinkedIn](#).

