

# EMERGING TALENT MEMBERS IN FOCUS



*The Emerging Talent Network has been established by Infrastructure New Zealand to develop the next generation of infrastructure leaders. In this changing COVID-19 landscape we will be profiling a different ET member working in a different part of the industry each week. 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 Ngahuia Leighton from Crown Infrastructure Partners as this week's Emerging Talent Member in Focus. In addition to her role at Crown Infrastructure Partners, Ngahuia also sits on the ET Auckland Committee.**



**NGAHUIA LEIGHTON**  
COMMERCIAL ADVISOR



### **1. What organisation are you with, and what do you do day-to-day (normally)?**

I am part of the Bulk Housing Infrastructure team at Crown Infrastructure Partners (CIP). CIP is a Crown owned company that delivers on Government infrastructure policy objectives. My days are quite varied, which suits me. Up until recently, my focus was on testing aspects of the new Infrastructure Funding and Financing (IFF) legislation and progressing transactional work with local councils and developers on housing development projects which might benefit from alternative CIP financing and IFF. I am also the team's millennial mentor.

### **2. How has your work changed since going into lockdown?**

In response to COVID-19, Ministers and the Infrastructure Reference Group have requested CIP's support to prepare a list of shovel ready projects. I think we would consider the task a challenge under the best of circumstances. The idea of delivering a project like this working under Alert Level 4 lockdown, with a team spread across the country (some with children at home) seemed like a daunting task. Not to mention this is the first project I have worked on that has been totally paperless! But surprisingly, from my perspective, the project has run smoothly and I think this is partly due to the new working environment which has been forced upon us.

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

Working as part of a large newly formed project team has been streamlined thanks to video calling. I thought building rapport with new team members would be difficult to do virtually, but the team jokes can apparently still be formed over late-night zoom meetings.

Meetings to me have become much more efficient - we can be face to face within seconds with anyone in a more focused way and without the carbon footprint, small talk and germey elevators. It feels just as personal, particularly as I have now met many colleagues' children and have seen the insides of their kitchens. You can bring up documents easily while you are discussing them to make changes while sharing screens, and can invite

someone to join within minutes when you realise you need their input. The collaborative nature of working remotely has been surprising. Our team spends a lot of time away from our desks meeting with other organisations, so I think this has been really helpful for us.

The biggest challenge I have is separating work from home. It was hard enough pre-COVID not to check your phone during the evening. Now that my desk (the kitchen table) is always there, I find I am constantly 'in the office'. I also still have a terrible habit of leaving my coffee cups on my 'desk' which is frowned upon by my bubble partner.

#### **4. How is your sector of the infrastructure industry going and what are your sector's biggest needs right now?**

CIP sits within the broader public sector which means our work is largely driven by Government priorities which is influenced by the needs of other sectors and the general public. From my perspective, current policy seems to be in reactive mode trying to understand and keep up with the needs of the public and industries such as infrastructure, and to soften the blow of COVID-19. Down the track when there is some room to breathe I think there will be a great opportunity for policy makers to consider how the needs of the communities they serve have changed and how policy initiatives can be designed to better serve future requirements, rather than just doing what we have always done.

#### **5. What changes to your work or sector will endure after the lockdown is lifted?**

I would like to see Zoom meetings become a regular thing. New Zealand is small enough without limiting ourselves to working with people who are within meeting distance. I would also love to see working from home become a regular occurrence. The time saved from commuting is pretty hard to argue with.

#### **6. What are your top tips and tricks for surviving and thriving in the COVID-lockdown landscape?**

I escaped the city and came to stay in Gisborne with my partner for lockdown. I am lucky enough to be within walking distance to the beach which makes for a lovely start/end to the day. Going for a walk every day definitely keeps me sane – I try not to take my phone whenever possible. Also, teaching the non-millennial members of my team to use GIFs and Bitmojis has brought a lot of laughs to the group chats.

To learn more about opportunities for a career with Crown Infrastructure Partners click [here](#) or you can connect with Ngahaia on [LinkedIn](#).

---

## **LEARNING IN LOCKDOWN**

In this period of change and uncertainty, we have an opportunity to invest in ourselves, learn, and prepare for the new normal. Each week we will round up the webinars and resources we've come across that will be of interest to our members. If you would like to recommend a webinar to be included in next week's profile, please contact [Tara](#).

**Wednesday 22 April 2020 | [Infometrics - Building Focus](#) (Recording Only)**

**Thursday 7 May 2020, 5:00PM | [Engineering NZ - Tech Group Lightning Talks](#)**

**Friday 8 May 2020, 12:00PM | [FLINT CxObytes with Lillian Grace, Founder & CEO of Figure Group](#)**

**Tuesday 19 May 2020, 11:00AM | [Project Connect- Leadership in a Virtual Landscape](#)**

