

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 [Paige](#).

We'd like to introduce Caroline Butterworth as our next Woman of Focus. Caroline is a member of WIN Auckland.



CAROLINE BUTTERWORTH
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE



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

I am the Deputy Chief Executive of Auckland and Northland at Kāinga Ora – Homes and Communities. Kāinga Ora moved to a place-based structure in December 2020 to build our capability and leadership in the regions. My role is designed to help our relatively new organisation work more closely with our customers, partners and communities in Auckland and Northland, very different regions that both experience high housing need.

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

I have been at Kāinga Ora, and formerly Housing New Zealand, for 13 years and was previously Acting Deputy Chief Executive Partnerships and Community Engagement at Kāinga Ora and the General Manager Communications and Stakeholders at Housing New Zealand – having worked across the policy, strategy and relationship management spheres.

I joined Housing New Zealand in 2008 on returning from Melbourne, where I had worked for the Victorian State Government's then Department of Human Services and also the City of Yarra Council. The City of Yarra is a highly diverse inner metropolitan municipality, which at the time had a large refugee and asylum seeker community. I worked with those groups as a community advisor, across issues including settlement, gambling, homelessness and drug and alcohol addiction.

The council of the day comprised Green, Communist, Liberal and Labour representatives, and was invested in working with asylum seekers from East Timor. I had the opportunity to travel to

East Timor soon after the Indonesian occupation ended. I was very involved in refugee issues working for the State Government to writing Victoria's first refugee health plan.

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

At Kāinga Ora, we have recently dissolved our executive team and established six leadership committees called Ngā Pae Tātaki. I chair the Public and Supported Housing Pae Tātaki. This new leadership structure allows for decision-making to be distributed across different groups throughout the organisation.

One of the early challenges is connecting with the decisions made by the other Pae and identifying areas of interdependency across the different leadership groups. There is a lot of goodwill as we set this new decision-making system up and define our collective rules of engagement.

One of our Auckland regional directors on the Pae that I chair recently recounted that the paepae is the place on the marae where people are encouraged to deliver speeches with humility, humour and a broad view. So we're incorporating those behaviours and, so far, it's working a treat.

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

Very early in my public sector career, I was involved in assessing applications from community groups for community grants. It was a highly politicised environment with much direct lobbying of local politicians for, often, very small amounts of money. My manager, at that time, offered little guidance or support and I was often left dangling in this complex, political environment. That early experience taught me the value of being bold in giving advice and being decisive. And also the kind of manager I did not want to be!

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?

Toward the end of my time at the City of Yarra, I was working alongside people in community organisations who were settling refugees and asylum seekers. I also had two small children; at that time, I never considered that motherhood would be relevant to my work. But having that profile of being female with small children really did act as a bridge to help in conversations with people from extremely different cultures and life experiences – perhaps someone from the Sudanese community who had lived rurally and had very different expectations about the role of women.

At that stage of my career, I had thought work and family life were separate and would never intersect. Instead, my status as a mother was a bridge between cultures and a common basis from which to build trust and understanding.

To learn more about opportunities for a career with Kainga Ora click [here](#) or, you can connect with Caroline on [LinkedIn](#).

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