

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 Kristy Verster as our next Woman of Focus. Kristy is a member of WIN Auckland.



KRISTY VERSTER
SENIOR MANAGER - PEOPLE ADVISORY
SERVICES, GLOBAL IMMIGRATION



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

I work for Ernst & Young (EY). I am a licensed New Zealand immigration adviser and lead EY's New Zealand immigration practice. My team and I navigate immigration law and practice to support our clients to get the right people with the right skills on-board in the right place and at the right time to meet business needs, create competitive advantage and help individuals take up new opportunities outside of their home country and even take their family along for the journey.

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

My career began with a graduate role in Mainfreight International in Auckland. Mainfreight had a great graduate programme where you were seconded to each part of the business to learn and understand all facets of the operation. During my time there, I became keenly aware that exceptional people are key to any businesses success, regardless of the part they play in the overall business or in what industry you operate and sourcing the right talent can make or break a business or project. So began my passion for people and driving business performance through accessing and retaining the right talent. As a migrant myself, I have always been interested in immigration. When the opportunity arose to work for EY, a market leader in immigration services, I jumped at the chance. For over 9 years, I have partnered with companies ranging from boutique local New Zealand companies to global multi-nationals, including some of New Zealand's largest infrastructure companies to support their people agenda. My objective is to demystify immigration rules and processes, and provide practical advice to companies and their employees to realise workforce plans and enable delivery on key projects and

deadlines. I absolutely love it! Being able to learn and contribute within the EY environment has also been a fantastic way to build my career and become a trusted advisor to my clients.

The construction industry in particular poses unique challenges in relation to immigration largely due to the volume, breadth and depth of the talent shortage in New Zealand. The Christchurch rebuild, the significant scale up of infrastructure projects, particularly in our main centres such as Auckland, and restrictions on access to migrant talent as a result of closed borders in response to Covid-19 have all contributed to the increasingly difficult labour market and urgent need for skilled workers. Being able to articulate the nature of construction skills required and the criticality of those skills to Immigration New Zealand in support of our client's work programmes, while also supporting their engagement with training providers and other key stakeholders, is a key part of my day to day role.

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

My team and I have worked closely with Haines Attract in their LookSee Build campaigns over the last few years, which have been focused on attracting world-class talent to New Zealand to support the urgent need for construction and engineering professionals. Most recently, we have been able to support Haines Attract with their Build New Zealand Now initiative. Build New Zealand Now aims to underpin New Zealand's infrastructure sector by creating an industry-led resource that recruits and grows the key talent required, as the government focuses significant investment in the sector and shovel-ready projects. As the immigration partner to the programme, we are able to work to support migrant employees in New Zealand that may have been displaced as a result of Covid-19 in retaining their ability to remain in New Zealand while also being involved in a project that focuses on growing the skills of local New Zealanders to strengthen the local labour market and support New Zealand's infrastructure objectives. New Zealand's closed borders have had far reaching impacts on a number of industries including the infrastructure sector. Over the last 8 months I have worked closely with a number of clients to support the entry of critical talent into New Zealand, despite the border closure, to ensure key infrastructure projects have been able to progress, meet critical milestones and deadlines and support the rebuild of New Zealand's economy by enabling the delivery of the government's funding and investment into the sector.

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

Selling clothes at a men's clothing store during my time at University. My passion is in people and partnering with others to support growth and development. Spending more time with clothes than people just didn't quite cut it for me, but it did teach me the importance of engaging with your passion and persevering to reach your goals.

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?

At EY I manage a team of people from all parts of New Zealand and the world, with diversity in ages and gender. It can be challenging at times to accept my opinion may not be the best one but this experience has given me a greater appreciation for other perspectives and more than once, has materially impacted my decision making in a positive way. It has also enabled me to work more effectively with diverse clients to understand their needs better.

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



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