

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 [Natasha](#).

We'd like to introduce Susie as our next Woman of Focus. In addition to her role at EY, Susie also sits on the WIN Christchurch Chapter Committee as Chair.



SUSIE ROULSTON
SENIOR MANAGER



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

I'm a Senior Manager at EY in Christchurch. I work in our Infrastructure Advisory Services team, which sits within our broader Transaction Advisory Team.

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

I'm an EY "lifer". While completing my BCom(Hons), I started with the EY assurance team in 2005 as a fresh faced summer intern and took up a role as a graduate the following year. I came into the assurance team at a time where New Zealand reporting entities were adopting International Financial Reporting Standards. Interpretation of standards, policies and legislation was a significant area of interest for me and so I focussed on becoming a specialist in this area. Over the next three years I had some of the most memorable years of my working life – working, living and playing with colleagues who were to become friends for life, despite all going our separate ways professionally.

After three years in the assurance team I craved a new challenge and moved to our Transaction Advisory Team where I developed a generalist corporate finance skillset. Then along came the Canterbury earthquakes. While being an incredibly traumatic time for so many, the devastation caused by the earthquakes gave rise to opportunity, a new perspective and, in turn, the transformation of my career.

In the 12 months following the earthquakes I was given the opportunity to apply my business modelling skills and interest in policy interpretation to the preparation of some major business interruption and material damage insurance claims. This experience sparked something inside of me - where I felt I was working towards a greater

purpose, which was an incredibly motivating and rewarding feeling. Following this, with the establishment of the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) and release of the Christchurch Central Recovery Plan (CCRP), I made my biggest leap into the world of infrastructure. Over the subsequent five years, I was blessed to be involved in the majority of the Christchurch central city anchor projects. This propelled my passion for social investment and, leveraging the skills I gained through my work with CERA, I made my next leap into the health and social investment sector where I now focus my energy.

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

I recently supported the Canterbury District Health Board (CDHB) and Ministry of Health in the delivery of an indicative and detailed business case for the development of new facilities to accommodate Specialist Mental Health inpatient and outpatient services. My childhood was shaped by my mother's severe mental illness and how the adults around me chose to respond to it. Working with CDHB, I was immediately struck by these amazing individuals who were giving so much of themselves to help others – from the executive team right through to those at the front line. Passion and a higher purpose was the best way to describe what I observed. Almost immediately, I had skin in the game and was compelled to do everything I could to provide the best outcomes for our vulnerable populations, their families and the remarkable individuals tasked with helping them.

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

I can't say I would describe anything as "hard" – that word is not really in my vocabulary. There are always challenges – challenging technical aspects, challenging individuals, challenging timeframes and challenging politics – but it all translates to learning. That learning arms me for the next challenge and gives me the ability to teach others so they can avoid or be prepared for those same challenges.

However, in saying that...my biggest challenge has got to be balancing motherhood and work and trying to excel at both. Luckily, I have the most amazing husband and mentor (who I just recently married) who provides me with immense support along the way.

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?

For the first half of my career I naively thought that gender inequality was a simple generational issue that would resolve itself over time. I did not encounter any instances where I felt my gender had held me back or resulted in a negative situation – I was equally mindful that I did not want to give any fuel to that fire. However, the perspective I came from was that of an ambitious, confident woman whose career was her priority. However, after having children my perspective has changed considerably. I am still highly ambitious but that ambition is now spread across both my career and my role as mother and wife. I am now acutely aware of the challenges we face in achieving genuine diversity of gender, race, culture, religion, sexual orientation, values and backgrounds.

While gender balance is slowly improving, we are a long way off understanding let alone achieving genuine diversity in business. Similar to the viewership of sport, the expectations about how we do business and who is at the centre of our universe continue to be shaped by centuries of men in business. In turn, as we strive for gender balance we face the risk of assuming every woman is created equal and that simply being a woman provides diversity. This flawed view runs the risk of simply promoting women who demonstrate stereotypically male-like qualities and very little is gained in terms of genuine diversity for the organisation.

I do not have the answers to such complex issues but I choose to be a voice. I choose to be authentic. I choose to not compromise my values to be successful. And along the way, I hope to inspire other women, including my daughter, to have a voice and lead with authenticity, courage and compassion.



To learn more about opportunities for a career with EY [click here](#).

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

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