

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 Michelle Qu as our next Woman of Focus. Michelle is a member of WIN Auckland.



MICHELLE QU
HEAD OF CPAD PROCUREMENT -
CAPITAL PROJECTS AND ASSET
DEVELOPMENT



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

I am the Head of Procurement in KiwiRail Capital Projects and Assets Development. My team tenders and procures all the rail infrastructure projects, related scope of work including design, engineering, construction work, equipment supply and project management services throughout both the North and South Island.

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

I grew up in Shanghai, China and migrated to NZ in 2000. After finishing my master's degree in translation and international communication at Auckland University, I started my career in international trade, in particular imports/exports between Asia and NZ. Kind of slipped into the construction industry when Hawkins Construction offered me an exciting role to procure building products from overseas in 2004, which entirely changed my career pathway and I just love this industry with non-stop new opportunities and challenges. Since then, I have worked at Hawkins Infrastructure, McConnell Group, Park Hyatt Project, Fletcher Infrastructure Puhoi to Warkworth PPP, and started the new rail experience a year ago within KiwiRail.

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

This is a tricky one, as being in procurement industry I actually cannot tell you any particular project I am working on, due to probity and confidentiality based on procurement code of conduct, and the Government Rule of Sourcing in particular. However, I can tell you there is never a same day, the complexity of procuring multiple hundred million dollar infrastructure projects requires an extremely wide range of knowledge and skill sets, from procurement

strategy, construction methodology, contract model, governance, logistics, finance, risk, planning to the understanding of different negotiation style, cultural diversity, global economic and political influence. It interests me extremely and I love what I do, as it is never repetitive work, but every single project procurement is entirely different, and every day I work with different project managers and engineers, different tenderers.

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

In my 20 years of procurement experience, I believe construction procurement is the hardest. Within construction procurement, rail project procurement is the hardest comparing to other infrastructure sectors such as roads and vertical buildings. The NZ rail industry has a small pool of skilled designers, contractors and suppliers, at the same time most of the system including equipment, building methodology, 2D/3D design, contract management are all out of date and way behind the global trend. While general public are not happy with the expensive commute cost, and unreliable service of public transportation, it is reality our rail infrastructure needs upgrading. Procuring the right service providers to deliver these rail capital projects is the starting point to make it happen, and I am determined to be part of it and go through this journey with my KiwiRail mates who are just passionate and love rail!

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?

Tell me that, if we think there is not enough female in construction, there is even fewer female in infrastructure, particularly in the rail industry. However, there are some really strong and outstanding women in rail who have not only survived but thrived within this heavily male dominated industry. Our "diversity" is affecting the outcome of work and projects on a daily basis, and talking about procurement, two very important skills: "planning" and "multi-tasking", which most of my male colleagues agree they are definitely not as good at as women. Most of the project managers want a contractor on site literally yesterday, and this is the time when we say, "maybe, a little bit early planning, will do, mate!"

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

FOLLOW US ON **LINKEDIN**

women's
infrastructure
network 