



# GWN Rising Stars

*Mānawatia a Matariki! Matariki is the start of the Māori New Year. It's a time to reflect on the previous year and to set the goals for the year ahead.*

During this time, GWN is pleased to shine a light on nine women who are rising stars in public sector for their career progress and their achievements in the past year. Join us in celebrating these women role models as we look ahead and set our goals for the coming year.



Ginette Spence  
*Project Manager,  
PHARMAC*

*"Kua tawhiti kē tō haerenga mai, kia kore e haere tonu. He nui rawa ō mahi, kia kore e mahi tonu."*

*(You have come too far not to go further, you have done too much not to do more.) — Tā Himi Henare*

Ginette started her current role at PHARMAC in June of this year after 16 years at ACC. In her previous role, she started a Women's Network in 2018 – the first of its kind at ACC. That network helped pave the way for the launch of other employee-led networks in the agency.

Currently studying for a Master's degree, Ginette is also a practising marriage celebrant, has been a keynote speaker and panel member at health conferences and a guest lecturer at AUT and Victoria University of Wellington.

Making lives better and helping remove barriers for people is at the heart of Ginette's passion for her work and the projects she contributes to. One of her proudest accomplishments to date has been the creation of a parents' room in the Justice Centre at ACC, providing parents with a safe and relaxing place at work.



**Kilisitina (Chrissy) Fifita**  
*Intelligence and Insight Specialist,  
Inland Revenue (IR)*

*"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." — Eleanor Roosevelt*

Kilisitina has been with Inland Revenue for nearly 25 years, spending most of that time working directly with customers. She is an active member of the IR's Women's Network and is a site Co-Chair and a National Executive member for the IR Tagata Pasifika Network. She also helped lead the work to hold the very first Tagata Pasifika Fono at IR in May of this year.

Chrissy is passionate about motivating other Pasifika women to bring their whole selves to work and achieve their goals and aspirations in the public sector – for themselves and their families. Most recently, Chrissy had the opportunity to share her story as a Pacific woman at Inland Revenue's first Tūhono Wāhine session on supporting authenticity where she spoke about the Tongan golden pillars/values that have shaped her: love (ofa), respect (faka'apa'apa), humility (lototo), maintaining good relationships (tauhi va) and loyalty (mamahi me'a).

Chrissy feels her success comes from the values and beliefs that her parents have instilled in her as a Tongan woman living in Aotearoa and would not be where she is had it not been for the love and support of her family.



**Tanya Carter**  
*Acting Stakeholder Engagement Manager,  
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment  
(MBIE)*

*"Ehara tāku toa, he takitahi, he toa takitini." (My success should not be bestowed onto me alone, as it was not individual success but success of a collective.)*

Tanya is Stakeholder Engagement Manager for the Intellectual Property Office of New Zealand (IPONZ) at MBIE and the Chair of MBIE's Women's Network. She also joined the Women in Leadership (WiL) Committee in early 2015. She has a keen interest in developing as a leader and sharing that leadership development potential with others.

Tanya believes that the power of women to lift up their families, communities and the vulnerable has the potential for far-reaching impact – including within and across government.



In her work with the Women in Leadership Committee, she helps deliver seminars and events to raise awareness of some of the challenges facing women and encourages women in all positions to take opportunities to lead, influence and achieve career goals. Tanya has also completed the Outward Bound Women in Leadership course which inspired her to “show the world the boldest of my ideas and myself, and to lead with courage, passion and vulnerability.”

Tanya is proud of the newly renamed Arahanga Wāhine-Women’s Network and its purpose: creating a community and a safe environment to influence change; and supporting and inspiring all women at MBIE to grow.



## Jess Middlemiss

*District Manager – Canterbury,  
Ara Poutama Aotearoa, Department of  
Corrections*

*“The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.” — Chinese proverb*

When Jess started as a Probation Officer with Ara Poutama Aotearoa Department of Corrections in 2012, it sparked a career-long passion for working with people, whānau and agencies to support positive change. After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts in Criminology at Auckland University of Technology, she has spent her career in Community Corrections roles, and her latest role is Acting District Manager at Canterbury Community Corrections.

Working to support people to be the best they can is what drives Jess. She strives for an environment where she can try new ideas, be creative and always learn. She believes that we have the potential to achieve amazing outcomes for people and communities by working together.

Jess says, “To grow and develop we must be life-long learners, seeking information, new knowledge and always learning from our experiences.



## Amy Wikaira

*Assistant Advisor, Māori Capability,  
Te Kawa Mataaho Public Service Commission*

*“Me ārahi, me whai, me whakawātea rānei.” (Lead, follow or get out of the way.) — Eva Rickard*

Amy is a descendant of Ngāti Maniapoto, Ngāti Pukenga and Ngāpuhi.



She started at Te Kawa Mataaho in 2019 as an Executive Coordinator in Corporate Services and progressed to her current role as Assistant Advisor, Māori Capability last year. Her work centres on incorporating Te Ao Māori perspectives into strategic frameworks. In this mahi, Amy helps to enable the building and lifting of organisational capability by working with and influencing senior leaders. She often represents the Commission on topics of capability building with external agencies.

Within the agency, Amy is well-known for her ability to galvanise, coordinate and engage her colleagues. In 2020, she led Te Kawa Mataaho's response to Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (Māori Language Commission) Te Wiki o Te Reo Māori which resulted in winning the inaugural Te Tiki mō Te Wiki award.

Amy says she is driven by a commitment to create better futures for her uri (descendants). She is a member of the Tūhono Pou Tangata rōpū, which is reimagining HR policy and practice to be more responsive to Te Ao Māori. Amy believes if we value and nourish employees in a meaningful way, staff of all diversities will be able to thrive.



## Leila Nicholson

*Principal Adviser to the Chief Science Adviser,  
Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI)*

*"Be curious, be brave and be open to the nudge – take opportunities that present themselves because they are well within your capability!"*

Leila has worked at MPI for almost four years, with roles in food safety and biosecurity. In her latest role as Principal Adviser to the Chief Science Adviser, she provides advice on science/technical issues that may affect our primary sector. She has been able to use her knowledge of virology and biosecurity to provide strategic and operational insights to senior decision makers in the All-of-Government Covid-19 response.

Leila is passionate about the application of science, research and using an evidence-based approach to better help people and industries. She holds a first-class honours degree in Microbiology and Immunology from the University of Otago and received her PhD with Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research where she studied rabbit control and caliciviruses in New Zealand.

Helping other women achieve their potential and goals is another passion for Leila. She recognises that the help she has received on her journey has been part of her success. This has motivated her to become a mentor with the MPI mentoring programme, a member of the MPI Women's Network Ngā Wāhine Toa, and a GWN Rep for her agency. She also enjoys being a mentor for young women who are interested in a career in STEM through GirlBoss and Innovative Young Minds.





## Wikitoria (Wiki) Pou

### *Emergency Dispatch, NZ Police*

*"If you're always trying to be normal, you will never know how amazing you can be." — Maya Angelou*

Wikitoria is proud of her whanau and legacy as a descendent of Ngāpuhi and Ngāti Hine.

She began working for New Zealand Police in 2006 and was recently promoted to Emergency Dispatcher, a role she 'absolutely loves.'

Wiki says her passion lies in creating more meaningful opportunities for her Mana Wāhine colleagues, making progress for women and ensuring there are safe places for women's voices to be heard. In her work, she brings this same passion to ensuring that her mahi contributes to her community and that Police tāne and wāhine mā are safe in their jobs and in returning home to their whānau.

Wiki is also the Co-Chair of the NZ Police Women's Advisory Network Committee at Piki Ki Te Ao – NZ Police. She is a member of GWN and is a mentee with the Tumanawanui Te Mangai Arahi 2021-2022 Women in Justice Sector mentoring programme.

Her whānau are what drives Wiki to strive for a better, more inclusive, accepting and compassionate Aotearoa. She says her three sons are her greatest achievement.



## Jude Patterson

### *Chief Fire Officer, Fire and Emergency New Zealand*

*"Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak – it's also what it takes to sit down and listen."*

Jude Patterson was appointed Chief Fire Officer in 2020 becoming the first female Fire Chief in the 128 year history of the Lawrence Volunteer Fire Brigade. She is one of seven female fire chiefs in New Zealand.

Prior to becoming Fire Chief, she was also Chair of the Regional Women's Advisory Network for Fire and Emergency and sat on the National Committee for Women in Fire and Emergency New Zealand. (WFENZ). In this work, she was able to engage with Ministers and senior leaders in her agency which inspired her to become a registered mediator to assist the many brigades in need of resolution and natural justice.



Jude has been a strong advocate for volunteering courses with FENZ for year 13, women leadership camps, and has participated in the volunteer leadership development programme with Fire and Emergency. She has a passion to support and mentor women, helping them to create a positive legacy and pursue their dreams.



## Avery Underwood

*Senior Communications Adviser, Inland Revenue (IR)*

*"When one of us shines, all of us shine."*

Avery (she/her) was appointed as Senior Communications Adviser at IR in May of this year. Avery has used her expertise and her passion for intersectionality in this role to lead the Māori and the Diversity & Inclusion portfolios.

In 2020, she was elected to be co-chair of the IR Rainbow Network and was recognised for her contribution to the launch of this network with an IR Commissioner's Award. In this role, she has also led the development of a mentoring programme for the network.

As a champion for Rainbow best practice, Avery has led the development of 'Transitioning at Work' guidelines for IR staff and the 'Rainbow Inclusive Language Guide.' She also delivers training on pronouns, inclusive language and allyship.

Avery also serves as the Resource Manager of the Cross-Agency Rainbow Network. In this capacity, she developed resources, strategies, and stakeholder initiatives to create better experiences and outcomes for Rainbow government staff and for Rainbow New Zealanders.

