



# Bi-Annual Report 2023-2024

*“Empowering Women in Public Service”*



*Te Aka Wahine O Aotearoa*

The vine that connects women in Aotearoa



Celebrating the Launch of the GWN Annual Report 2023







# Contents

Contents.....	2
A Word from our Co-Sponsors.....	4
A Word from our Co-Chairs .....	6
Kia ora and welcome .....	6
Steering Committee.....	7
Our Strategy.....	7
Driving System-Level Change Across the Public Sector .....	7
Our Strategic Priorities – What we achieve .....	7
Our Work Plan – What we will do.....	8
Equity Guide to Support Senior Leaders.....	8
Our Network Representatives .....	9
Regional Government Women’s Network.....	9
Highlights in 2024 .....	9
Looking ahead .....	9
Auckland Government Women’s Network.....	11
Te Aka Wāhine o Tāmaki.....	11
Events in 2023 .....	11
Highlights in 2024 .....	13
Online events.....	14
Committee update and looking ahead to 2025 .....	16
Southern Government Women’s Network.....	19
Te Aka Wāhine o Te Waipounamu .....	19
Highlights in 2023 .....	19
Achievements in 2023 .....	19
Events in 2023 .....	19
Highlights in 2024 .....	21
Women in Public Sector Summit 2023.....	22
Women in Public Sector Summit 2024.....	24
SGWN Committee update and looking ahead to 2025 .....	29
Women’s Networks Continue to Thrive .....	31
Te Taunaki Public Service Census.....	31
GWN LinkedIn .....	31



Cross Agency Employee-Led Networks .....	31
Diversity Awards 2024 .....	31
Tui Raumata were winners of the ‘Respectful Culture’ award .....	31
Results and Benefits .....	32
Women of Colour Public Sector Network (WOCPSN) .....	33
Including Neurodiversity in Government Organisations (INDIGO) .....	33
Looking Forward .....	34
Key Focus Areas.....	34
Look out for.....	34





## A Word from our Co-Sponsors

As champions of women's leadership in the public service, our commitment to empowering women continues to be a central focus of our work. The initiatives and collective efforts spearheaded by the Government Women's Network (GWN) have brought about meaningful change, and we are excited to see continued progress in the coming years.

In particular, we acknowledge the Network has responded to the challenges set by the incoming Government, providing valuable guidance on how to consider the impact of organisational changes impact different groups.

The success of the Southern Women in Public Service summit 2024 is to be commended and the on-going commitment and energy of the Committee who are always looking for ways to support members of the Network, recognising how challenging the public service environment has been.

Finally, we want to acknowledge Renee's contributions as Co-Sponsor and extend a warm welcome to Megan Main, who joins me as the new Co-Sponsor.



***Co-sponsor: Peter Mersi***

Commissioner and Chief Executive  
Inland Revenue/ Te Tari Taake



***Co-sponsor: Megan Main***

Chief Executive  
Accident Compensation/  
Te Kaporeihan Āwhina Hunga Whara



**Megan Main** - "It's not necessarily about grand gestures but advocacy in everyday support". It's about "designing out the lower paid roles and upskilling people to get them into other roles"





## Honouring Pacific Women's Contribution in the Public Sector







## A Word from our Co-Chairs

### Kia ora and welcome

On behalf of the Government Women's Network (GWN) we are delighted to publish the GWN Bi-annual report for the 2023 and 2024 calendar years. Over the past two years GWN has continued to grow from strength to strength, as women across the public sector work together to uplift and empower women to thrive. GWN's membership base continues to grow, as does its reach across Aotearoa with thriving regional committees, and passionate and committed members and allies across all agencies.

The past two years have seen many challenges for women. But with challenge comes opportunity, and the network has responded and adapted to the environment to ensure the network provides tangible and meaningful support to women. Numerous events have been hosted around the country, with workshops, webinars, speaker series, guidance and much more, all focused on supporting and enabling women to achieve their full potential.

This report is particularly exciting as it brings to a close a decade of advancement, reaching 10-years of the Government Women's Network. We hope you enjoy taking the time to look through the following pages and the vast amount of work that has been achieved by women across the public sector. It is a reminder of what we can achieve as a collective, and it continues to inspire hope for the future.



Ngā mihi

#### ***GWN Co-Chair: Nina Russell***

Director of Diversity and Inclusion  
Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa New Zealand  
Defence Force

#### ***GWN Chair: Nicola Johns***

Chief Advisor  
Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Police





## Steering Committee

**Nicola Johns**, Chair, Ngā Pirihimana o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Police

**Nina Russell**, Co-Chair, Te Ope Kātua o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Defence Force

**Jessie Johnson-Smith**, Secretariat, Taumata  
Arowai

**Karyn Thompson**, Te Papa Atawhai Department  
of Conservation

**Briar Wyatt**, Manatū mō te Taiao Ministry for  
the Environment

**Sio Kihe La'a Talakai-Alatini**, Te Manatū mō iwi  
ō te Moana-nui-ā-Kiwa Ministry of Pacific  
Peoples

**Heather Guthrie**, Manatū Ahu Matua Ministry  
of Primary Industries.

**Dr Anna Milne-Tavendale**, Te Tūāpapa Kura  
Kāinga Ministry of Housing and Urban  
Development

**Coyla Cameron**, Te Tāhū o te Ture Ministry of  
Justice

**Lyn Meredith**, Te Tari Taake Inland Revenue

**Zoe Ogilvie Burns**, Taumata Arowai

**Isabella Sanchez-Bolivar**, Manatū Wāhine  
Ministry for Women

**Rachael Bayliss**, Te Whatu Ora Health New  
Zealand

**Emma Saunders**, Ministry of Health Manatū  
Hauora

**Della Averina**, Te Tai Ōhanga The Treasury

The GWN Steering Committee also includes the  
Chairs of the regional networks, **Joanna Maskell**,  
Te Aka Wāhine o Tāmaki Auckland GWN and  
**Kirsty Paterson**, Te Aka Wāhine o Te  
Waipounamu Southern GWN.

## Our Strategy

### Driving System-Level Change Across the Public Sector

The Government Women's Network (GWN) is focused on driving system-level change across the public sector to achieve broad, impactful, and sustainable shifts towards greater inclusivity and representation. Over the years, our strategy has evolved to emphasise collaboration and solution-sharing, recognising that change requires partnerships and collective action.

By working together across government agencies and sharing best practices, we are working to embed this change within the public sector, ensuring it is both far-reaching and lasting.

### Our Strategic Priorities – What we achieve

In 2023, GWN identified six strategic priorities aimed at supporting women's networks and fostering positive outcomes across the public sector.

These priorities supported enhancing connections between networks, aligning with sector-wide gender equity goals, recognising the achievements of wahine Māori and other women, expanding development opportunities, ensuring GWN's sustainability, and collaborating with additional networks.

In 2024, GWN's efforts focused on amplifying regional voices, developing practical gender equity tools, and increasing GWN's visibility. These actions collectively support an inclusive and cohesive





environment, advancing the position of women within the public sector.

## Our Work Plan – What we will do

To deliver on our six priorities our network has been focusing on a number of key activities through 2023-2024. These include:

- Supporting Regional Networks
- Network Representatives Group
- Contribute to the ELN Newsletter
- Events
- GWN Steering Committee recruitment
- Women of Colour Network
- Connecting into Tui Raumata

**The GWN Annual Report is a reflection and celebration of these activities.**

## Equity Guide to Support Senior Leaders

GWN developed the equity guide to address the disproportionate impact of cost-saving measures on women in the public sector. The guide emphasises the importance of applying an equity lens to decision-making processes to achieve gender-equitable outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of women, particularly Māori, Pacific, and ethnic minority women, who were disproportionately affected by job losses. In 2020, women accounted for 90% of pandemic-related redundancies, and by 2021, many found themselves in precarious employment.

This trend persists, with women continuing to be overrepresented in lower-paid and back-office roles within the public service. As a result, proposed job cuts are likely to affect women more severely, jeopardising the progress made in closing gender and ethnic pay gaps.

The guide also highlights that women who lose their jobs in the public sector may be forced to move to the private sector, where gender pay gaps are larger, and women hold fewer leadership positions. This shift could exacerbate the national gender pay gap and lead to a significant loss of skills and experience within the public sector.

Additionally, women face longer job search periods than men and have lower KiwiSaver balances, putting greater economic strain on them and their families.

To mitigate these impacts, the guide recommends that public service leaders utilise the Manatū Wāhine / Ministry for Women's "Bringing Gender In" tool to assess the gendered impact of workforce changes.

Leaders should engage with women's networks and union delegates during decision-making and apply a Te Tiriti o Waitangi lens to ensure equitable outcomes for Māori public servants.

After decisions are made, it is essential for leaders to measure and monitor their impact using the "Bringing Gender In" tool to ensure the decisions support a gender-equitable and inclusive future.

This guide received positive feedback from Papa Pounamu and People Lead Networks across Aotearoa in 2024.



## Our Network Representatives

### Regional Government Women's Network

GWN has continued to foster the connections it builds, sharing resources and supporting women's networks across agencies. 2024 saw a refresh of the Network Representatives meetings led by GWN Steering committee member Zoe Ogilvie Burns, where members supported the continuation of a Regional GWN online.

The purpose of the group is to provide the chairs and members from each respective agency networks a safe space to come together to build connections, support and celebrate successes.

A pulse check on issues faced by members and areas for support highlighted some key areas:

- sharing of ideas and resources
- sharing what is working - what are you getting traction on in your organisation
- system-level voice for issues that impact women
- connection across departments / ministries
- central advocacy (period products)

### Highlights in 2024

- Various agencies have implemented successful mentoring initiatives, enhancing career development and support, and introducing reverse mentoring where junior kaimahi

support senior kaimahi, which has been well received.

- New networks established at Tasman District Council and other agencies.
- Increased engagement and support from senior leaders in various departments.
- Women of Colour Network Campaign aims to pave the way for young girls, promote allyship, and break through the 'concrete ceiling'.

### Looking ahead

- **Sustainable workloads:** Addressing workload management to ensure sustainable practices for network committees.
- **Mentoring programs:** Emphasis on reverse mentoring and various mentoring projects.
- **Career development:** Continued focus on career growth opportunities and support for women in the public sector.
- **Funding and support:** Seeking funding opportunities to support network activities and initiatives.

GWN remains committed to supporting women's networks across government agencies, building connections, and promoting career development. The network's efforts in mentoring, event organisation, and campaign initiatives have significantly contributed to its mission.



**Women**  
**ACHIEVING**  
*their* **POTENTIAL**

Top: Melanie Smith, GWN Steering Committee Member 2021-2023

Launch of the GWN Annual Report 2023





# Auckland Government Women's Network

## Te Aka Wāhine o Tāmaki

The last two years have been busy and challenging for Tāmaki Makaurau, testing many public servants personally and professionally. This inspired our whakataūki for the 2023 Women in Public Sector Summit: “Mā te kotahitanga e whai kaha ai tātau” (In unity we have strength).

We began 2023 feeling the effects of climate change in our region, with two extreme weather events causing fatalities, flooding, and displacing of many whānau.

Public servants in our region and beyond rose to the challenge, supporting whānau with temporary accommodation, financial support, and navigating through the emotional and financial toll of property loss and damage.

In 2024, Auckland Government Women's Network (AGWN) faced further challenges with widespread restructures in the public sector, impacting our members and committee. Despite these challenges, AGWN membership continued to grow. We launched our LinkedIn page in 2023, which now has over 840 followers.

In 2023, we had 610 women attend our four events and capped off the year with a magnificent Women in Public Service summit. In 2024, 820 women attended six events both in person and online.

## Events in 2023

### International Women's Day

AGWN partnered with Auckland Council's Women's Network, Te Rōpū Wāhine. The event featured keynote speaker Rebecca Rolls (Ngāti Porou), Integrity Transition Director at Sport New Zealand (Sport NZ), who shared her inspiring career journey spanning roles in the New Zealand Police, the Serious Fraud Office, and the establishment of the Integrity Unit for Sport NZ, all while pursuing an international sporting career in cricket and football.

The keynote address was followed by a panel discussion with diverse women on how the public service can better support women in their career development.

### Gender Deep Dive: Strategic insights on Gender and Intersectionality in the Public Service

AGWN contributed feedback and participated in the inaugural Gender Deep Dive of the public service. This initiative, led by Ruth Shinoda (past GWN Chair) and Joanne Hacking (AGWN committee member and past chair) in collaboration with Stats NZ, used data from Te Taunaki - the Public Service Census.



The research explores the experiences of disabled public servants, public servants who identify as transgender, intersex, or of multiple/ other genders, those with diverse sexual identities, and women in the public service.

### **Supporting the International Women in Policing Conference**

The International Women in Policing Conference was held in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland in September 2023, marking the first time this event took place in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Senior Sergeant Mary Jane (MJ) Riddle, an active member of AGWN's Auckland representative group, played a key role in organising the conference. AGWN chair Sarah Leo and Deputy Chair Jo Maskell attended the Parade of Nations, which marked the opening of the event, to show their support for MJ and the conference.

The parade featured police officers from around the world in a vibrant display of unity and representation.



### **Online Event with Serena Curtis**

Serena Curtis, General Manager Pacific and Community Capability at the Ministry of Social Development, spoke at an online lunchtime hui attended by nearly 100 participants.

Serena shared insights into her leadership journey, her purpose-driven approach, and her dedication to serving others. One attendee described her as, “An amazing people leader who knows her why and serves well. She is an inspiration and a true role model”.

For further insights into Serena's journey, you can read her research conducted as part of her fellowship with the Public Service Leadership Development Centre: [LDC :: 2020 Fellow Serena Curtis](#)



## Highlights in 2024

In 2024 we partnered again with Te Rōpū wāhine Auckland Council's Women's Network as well as Auckland Transport Women's Network and PSA Women's Network to celebrate International Women's Day.

Dame Valerie Adams was our inspirational keynote speaker. We laughed, we cried and were so inspired by her kōrero. Dame Valerie invited us to consider that we are the drivers of our own bus, and to think about whether the people on our bus are making it go faster or slowing us down.



The panel discussed the theme of International Women's Day [#InvestInWomen](#) and how it applies to women's public sector careers. Over 200 people attended this event in person with another 150 online.

The continued collaboration with other women's networks in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, partnering with Auckland Transport Women's Network, Public Service Association (PSA) Women's Network and Te Rōpū Wāhine Auckland Council's women's network to celebrate International Women's Day at Auckland Transport's offices in the viaduct.

### Members survey

We surveyed our members about the impact of public sector restructures via email and LinkedIn. We received 102 responses from wāhine in 15 public sector organisations. Committee member Saana Judd themed the responses and noted, "feedback from members recognised disruptions at work about job and financial security, uncertainty, and stress, and that generally it had been a challenging time for many".

When asked how AGWN could support members, the survey highlighted that woman wanted tools and guidance, online seminars and opportunities to meet face-to-face. The feedback has been incorporated into future planning.





## Online events

### Seminar series

AGWN continued with our successful online seminar series organised by AGWN committee Jo Hacking and Victoria Mataitonga.

Our first session in May featured a diverse panel of women from public service Employee Led Networks discussing insights from the Women in Public Sector deep dive including Dr Hend Zaki from the Women of Colour Public Sector Network, Claudia Faletou and Karli Te Aotonga from the Tūhono Māori Network, Helen Karati from the Pacific Public Servants Network and Mridula Duffadar from the Pan Asian Public Service Network.



A second well received session was facilitated by Victoria Mataitonga took place in October called Mana Wāhine and Mentoring – believing in yourself and others, featuring Janine Parsons, National Manager Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, Rema Erueti, Head of Operations Manukau, Immigration NZ and La’a Tamarau, Head of Operations Christchurch, Immigrations NZ, describing their career progression and how mentoring and their support of each other has enabled this.

### Collaboration with the Women of Colour Public Sector Network

AGWN was pleased to have two online seminar sessions in collaboration with the newly launched Women of Colour Public Sector Network (WOCPSN).

The first, facilitated by Natasha Lewis, AGWN Deputy Chair, featured a discussion by Samira Ghoresi, Senior Advisor – Ethnic Communities Violence Prevention, Flight Lieutenant Icy Guo and Fezeela Raza, Director Organisational Capability Reserve Bank of New Zealand, about how to invest in women of colour to support their public sector careers.

This insightful kōrero touched on the “concrete ceiling” for women of colour.

This topic inspired a second session in November with three academics, Savita Bhaskaran and, Dr Fatima Junaid from Massey University and Maulupeivao Dr Betty Ofe-Grant of AUT,





discussing their research on the impact of the “concrete ceiling” on the careers of women of colour. Natasha Lewis and Shahd El-Matary of the WOCPSN co-facilitated this session. We look forward to further collaboration with the WOCPSN in 2025.

### **Career Kōrero – Episode one with Parul Sood**

AGWN pioneered a half-hour podcast-style online chat to feature diverse wāhine leaders from across the public sector, sharing their inspirational career journeys and wisdom about how to progress our public sector careers in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Episode 1 featured Parul Sood, Deputy Director Infrastructure and Resilience at Auckland Council.

Parul shared her journey as a migrant woman, becoming the first Indian woman at executive leadership level at Auckland Council. This was a hugely popular session and format which we aim to continue in 2025.

### **Celebration of Pacific women’s contribution to the public sector in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland**



Keynote Address: Gerardine Clifford-Lidstone, Secretary for Pacific Peoples

We concluded 2024 with a memorable event at the Te Puke ō Tara Community Centre in Ōtara, celebrating the contributions of Pacific women in the public sector in Tāmaki Mākaaurau Auckland. This event was held in partnership with the Ministry for Pacific Peoples.

We were honoured to have Gerardine Clifford-Lidstone, Secretary for Pacific Peoples as our keynote speaker. The event was hosted by Sio Kihe La'a, GWN Steering Committee member, whose vivacious and humorous approach as mater of ceremony set a lively tone for the day.

A lively panel discussion was facilitated by Liline Hewett, AGWN komiti (committee) member, featuring panellists: Aiolupotea Sina Aiono, Regional Commissioner, Northwest and Central, Oranga Tamariki, Ana Cullen, Pacific Lead, National Cultural Capability, Ara Poutama and Iris Feilo-Naepi, Clinical Director, Allied Health,

Mental Health & Addiction Services, South

A highlight of the event was awarding the first-ever AGWN Life Membership to Anita Edwards, former AGWN and GWN Chair, in recognition of her outstanding contributions.



It was a truly uplifting and inspiring event, bringing together Pacific women across the public sector to connect, share, and celebrate as we closed out 2024 on a high note.

## Committee update and looking ahead to 2025

We had a change in leadership as Sarah Leo, our Chair for 2021-2023 finished her term at the end of 2023. Thank you, Sarah, for your energy, enthusiasm, and commitment to the AGWN kaupapa. We are so pleased you have remained on the committee. Our thanks also to long-standing members of the AGWN committee who stepped down in 2024: Cheryle Mikaere, Kim Egerton and Jo Hacking, for all their amazing mahi supporting women in the public sector over the years.

Joanna Maskell, from Auckland Council, stepped into the role of AGWN Chair and Natasha Lewis from the Office of the Health and Disability Commissioner became Deputy Chair at the beginning of 2024. We are also fortunate to have four new committee members who joined us in 2024, Tai Leofo, Director Pacific, Public Service Commission, Commander Lynette Marchant, Gender Participation Director Royal New Zealand Navy, Liline Hewitt, Senior Project Manager, Commerce Commission and Cupy Dee, International Liaison, New Zealand Customs.

Our annual planning meeting in January 2025 will explore how we can continue to progress Te Hā o Hineahuone, our Māori and Pacific strategies, collaborate with other employee-led networks (ELN's) in our region, and grow our reach by attracting new members.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa to all our members, and to all the incredible speakers who have contributed at events to uplift and inspire us over the last two years.











Top - AGWN farewells Cheryle Mikarere as she reflects on her 34-year career at Ara Poutama Corrections and her time with Te Aka Wāhine o Tāmaki Auckland GWN



Bottom Left: Natasha Lewis, Joanna Maskell, Cheryle Mikarere, Lynette Marchant, Kim Egerton



# Southern Government Women's Network

## Te Aka Wāhine o Te Waipounamu

### Highlights in 2023

#### **Southern Committee Grows: Welcoming 4 new volunteers and our new coordinator**

- **Virginia Fordham** – Coordinator, Regional Employee Led Networks
- **Kathy Connolly** – Tataurangi Aotearoa, Stats NZ (Christchurch)
- **Alexandra Neems** – Waka Kotahi, NZ Transport Agency (Dunedin)
- **Fiona Barker** – Toka Tū Ake Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tu Ake (Christchurch)
- **Trinity McMahon** – Te Manatū Whakahiato Ora – Ministry of Social Development (Invercargill)

### Achievements in 2023

- Catherine Pearson updated the Southern Government Women's Network (SGWN) section of the GWN website.
- Kathy Connolly provided a venue at Stats NZ for our hybrid events.
- Jennifer Leahy used her GWN Steering Committee connections to link us with local Employee-led Network (ELN) women.
- Jennifer Belworthy coordinated SGWN's content for the ELN Newsletter.
- Kirsty Paterson received a Covid-19 recognition award for her work at the border.

### Events in 2023

#### **Life After 40: Insights from Viv Whelan, Director of Christchurch Women's Prison**

The Life After 40 event was one of the most highly attended of Southern Government Women's Network (SGWN). We were honoured to welcome Viv Whelan, Director of Christchurch Women's Prison who shared the pivotal moment in her life when, at 40, she made the decision to shift careers and join Ara Poutama - Department of Corrections, ultimately leading to her current role. She spoke candidly about the challenges of starting anew in her career, balancing family life, and her commitment to improving the system for both staff and prisoners. Viv highlighted the importance of her role as a female leader in creating a pathway for women who will follow in her footsteps.

#### **Suffrage Event: Celebrating Women's Progress with Anna Johnstone, Executive Coach and CEO of The Female Career – 14 September 2023**

To mark Suffrage Day 2023, we welcomed Anna Johnstone, Founder and CEO of "The Female Career," to share insights on career progression. This was organised by SGWN Co-Chair Kirsty Paterson, who connected with Anna through a coaching opportunity in 2022. The event attracted 191 online attendees and 27 people in person. Anna presented seven strategies to accelerate career growth, with participants noting key themes, including starting with small steps and embracing courage and visibility. The event received positive feedback.





### **End of Year Event: Key Insights from Alexandra Green, Manager of Psychological Services, and Megan Stenswick, Senior Psychologist – 23 November 2023**

The final event of the year was a wellbeing check-in, featuring Alex Green and Megan Stenswick, who together bring 40 years of psychological experience from their work at the Kia Marama Special Treatment Unit (STU) at Rolleston Prison. They presented "12 Self-Care Strategies for the Holiday Season," offering valuable insights. Key themes included knowing your limits and setting boundaries, taking time to pause and check in with yourself, and practising kindness towards oneself. As always, the feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees expressing gratitude for the timely reminders to prioritise their wellbeing.



### **Final SGWN Committee Meeting of 2023: Farewells and Handovers – 30 November 2023**

At the final committee meeting of the year over lunch at a local café. We took the opportunity to thank and farewell Jennifer Leahy, who has served as Chair for the past two years, following her role as Co-Chair. Her leadership has significantly advanced the position of women in public service across Te Waipounamu South Island, leaving a lasting impact on the Southern Government Women's Network. We are grateful for her years of service and pleased she will remain on the committee to provide valuable guidance as Kirsty Paterson takes over as Chair for 2024.



We also farewelled Jennifer Belworthy, who has moved on a new role outside the public service and thanked her for her contributions. We welcomed back Karen Mora as Co-Chair for 2024, along with new member Alica Barwell. Additionally, Eileen Yee returned to her substantive role after a secondment.



## Highlights in 2024

As 2024 draws to a close, the Southern Government Women's Network (SGWN) reflected on an important year filled with connection, learning and advocacy.

This year the Network hosted a variety of events aimed at fostering professional growth, sparking important conversations and raising awareness on pertinent issues for women in the workplace. Highlights included:

### **Celebration of Te Tiriti O Waitangi**

This event featured a panel of experts who shared their perspectives on Te Tiriti o Waitangi, providing valuable insights into its historical significance and its modern-day application within the public sector. The discussions encouraged participants to reflect on their roles in honouring Te Tiriti principles, making it a standout events in our calendar.

### **World Menopause Day speaker event**

In October, the Network observed World Menopause Day, which proved to be a powerful platform for raising awareness about menopause in the workplace. Participants discussed ways to normalise conversations about menopause and implement supportive practices for those navigating this life stage. The session was a testament to SGWNs commitment to addressing issues that directly impact women in their personal and professional lives.

### **Empowerment Through Self Discovery workshop with Amira Aman**

A virtual Empowerment Through Self-Discovery session offered a valuable opportunity to engage in personal growth. This online workshop focused on self-reflection and strategies for building confidence, giving participants tools to embrace their full potential.

In addition to our events, SGWN commemorated White Ribbon Day by our members. This communication emphasised the importance of standing united against violence and promoting safe, respectful environments for all. Throughout the year, SGWN has navigated the ongoing operational changes within the public sector. During these transitions we are grateful for the continued support and engagement from our members.





## Women in Public Sector Summit

The Women in Public Sector Summits brought together women from across the public sector to explore themes of leadership, collaboration and resilience. Attendees shared their journeys, challenges and triumphs, creating a sense of camaraderie and inspiration that resonated well beyond the summit.

### Women in Public Sector Summit 2023

#### Empowering Voices at Te Pae, Ōtautahi Christchurch – 14 March 2023



This year, we focussed our early efforts into planning and delivering the first in-person Southern Women in Public Service Summit, held at Ōtautahi Christchurch's new Te Pae Convention Centre. Centred on the theme "Behind the Mask: Vulnerability within Leadership," the summit reflected the whakataukī: Mā mua ka kite a muri, mā muri ka ora a mua – Those who lead give sight to those who follow; those who follow give life to those who lead.

The summit featured a lineup of 16 speakers, including four keynote presentations, a panel discussion, and eight breakout sessions.

Our master of ceremonies, Petra Bagust, enriched the event by using te reo Māori, inspiring attendees throughout the day. Local iwi Ngāi Tūāhuriri, represented by Jennifer Leahy, were closely involved in the planning, and the event opened with a stirring kapa haka performance by Te Kāreti o Hato Makere, led by Tamehana Sonny Tehuia Wiparata and student leader Kylana Peauafi-Symonds.

Special thanks goes to the SGWN Summit Steering Committee Jennifer Leahy, Jenny Farrar De Wagt, Jacqui Francis, Paula Ratahi-O'Neill, Jennifer Belworthy, and Wendy Thompson, for their contributions to making the Summit's success.

The event drew over 445 attendees, with 267 in-person and 178 online participants from over 70 public sector organisations. Heather Milne, a previous SGWN coordinator, captured official photos of this memorable event.







## A Resounding Success

**“It was great to attend the event and network in person. It’s nice to put a name to a face, especially after having previous events online.”**

**“I ran into four senior colleagues who had been to the summit. This was their first and they absolutely loved the day. They thought it was awesome and made such amazing connections.”**

**“... a beautifully diverse range of speakers, all bringing their own incredible experiences and backgrounds to share with us. Nice to see te reo Māori was peppered throughout the proceedings.”**

### **In Unity, We Have Strength - 16 November 2023 Mā te kotahitanga e whai kaha ai tātau**

This summit took place at the Aotea Centre in central Auckland. Over 350 people attended in person which was a fabulous turnout given the event was so close to the general election and at a busy time of year. There was a mixture of inspiring speakers, panel discussions and workshops with practical tips about how to manage finances, tips for your CV and prioritising wellbeing.

**The keynote speakers including Hon Carmel Sepuloni, MP for Kelston (former Deputy Prime Minister); Jane Wrightson, Retirement Commissioner, Carolyn Coper Aged Care Commissioner; and Parekawhia McLean; Chief Executive of Te Kāhui Tātare Ture the Criminal Cases review Commission.**

**“It was the first summit I have attended, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. It gave me that boost that I needed, and it was really inspiring.” - participant**





## Women in Public Sector Summit 2024

### Influencing Leaders of the Future: ‘Kia mahi tahi ai mō ngā Uri e whai aka nei’ - Working Together for Future Generations - 14 August 2024

This summit was held in Ōtautahi Christchurch at the Town Hall. The day started with a mihi whakatau led by Ngāi Tūāhuriri kaumatua, which set, us up for a fantastic day of learning and sharing.

The master of ceremonies, Michele A’Court, brought energy and insight, using humour and personal reflections to seamlessly guide the programme. Her expert facilitation ensured a good flow between speakers, keeping attendees engaged, informed, and entertained throughout the event.

#### Publicity and Promotion

Recognising the financial constraints across government agencies, the committee undertook an extensive outreach campaign to drive ticket sales. Each member actively engaged their networks, reaching out to local councils, sister agencies, and partner organisations. Promotional efforts included distributing flyers to local offices, circulating email campaigns, and advocating within our own agencies for ticket funding. Through a coordinated and persistent approach, we maximised awareness and participation despite the challenging funding environment.

The day began with a mihi whakatau led by Ngāi Tūāhuriri Kaumātua, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere that set the tone for a day of learning and connection.



#### Setting the Scene

Kirsty Paterson Steering Committee Chair, opened the summit by introducing the theme and whakataukī, highlighting the connection between the Women in Public Sector (WiPS) Summit and the Southern Government Women’s Network (SGWN). She encouraged attendees to engage with SGWN committee members to learn more about getting involved.



Kirsty then welcomed Peter Mersi, Commissioner and Chief Executive of Inland Revenue, Co-Sponsor of GWN, and Co-Lead for Papa Pounamu. Peter led the intention-setting session, reaffirming his strong support for GWN and the WiPS Summits, reinforcing the importance of collective leadership and growth.

### **Keynote Address**

Master of ceremonies Michele A'Court then welcomed the Minister for Women, Hon. Nicola Grigg, who also serves as Minister of State for Trade and Associate Minister of Agriculture (Horticulture). As the MP for Selwyn since 2020, Nicola shared her journey into public life, reflecting on her rural background and the need for greater representation of rural women in politics.

Her message, women thrive when they are supported, resonated strongly with the audience. Speaking as a new mother, she acknowledged the challenges women face when re-entering the workforce and emphasised the importance of fostering future generations of female leaders. She highlighted that increasing women's representation in leadership reduces the gender pay gap and reinforced the idea that sunlight is the best disinfectant, and transparency is key to addressing inequality.

Nicola encouraged attendees to explore Mind the Gap, an initiative focused on pay equity for women, Māori, and Pacific peoples.

### **Audience Engagement and Keynote Address**

Michele A'Court facilitated an interactive Q&A session, fielding questions submitted by the audience through the Slido app. This platform allowed participants to engage with speakers in real time, contributing to a dynamic and inclusive discussion.

Following the morning tea break, Michele introduced Prudence Walker, Disability Rights Commissioner and former Chief Executive of the Disabled Persons Assembly New Zealand. Prudence shared compelling statistics on workplace bullying and harassment, highlighting the significant number of people affected and the reluctance many feel in reporting such behaviour.

Drawing from her own lived experience of abuse, she spoke passionately about the need for strong advocacy and safe workplace cultures. She urged leaders to create environments where team members feel empowered to speak up and seek support.





## Keynote Speech

**Annabel Ahuriri-Driscoll**, PhD, MPH (Distinction) – Associate Professor, Māori Health and Wellbeing, University of Canterbury.



Annabel opened with the whakataukī *Hā mua ka kite a muri, mā muri ka ora a mua*— "Those who lead give sight to those who follow, those who follow give life to those who lead." She emphasised that true leadership is guided by the mandate and will of the people.

Sharing her deeply personal journey of choosing to wear moko kauae and embracing her

whakapapa, Annabel spoke of moving forward with strength. Her powerful address captivated the audience, weaving together personal insights on closed adoption, the impact of storytelling, and her advocacy for abuse in care and adoption law reform.

**Anne Jordan** – Menopause Practitioner and Coach

Following Annabel's emotional *kōrero*, Anne Jordan shifted the pace with an engaging and practical session on menopause. Dedicated to empowering women and organisations to navigate menopause, she highlighted a critical workplace issue—one in twelve women leave the workforce due to menopause-related challenges.

Anne outlined strategies for managing menopause in both work and life, introducing the six pillars of menopause: sleep, liver/gut health, diet, stress, exercise, and joy. She encouraged a balanced, evidence-based approach, cautioning against expensive supplements when good nutrition and an active lifestyle can be the best medicine.

## Afternoon Session

The afternoon started with a presentation by Professor Bronwyn Hayward, Professor of Political Science and International Relations, University of Canterbury, Te Whare Wānanga o Waitaha.

Bronwyn's presentation, *Supporting Children in Climate Chaos*, began with an acknowledgment of the critical role public servants play in shaping the future. She highlighted the urgency of climate action, referencing the IPCC statement signed by 197 countries: "Any further delay in concerted global action will miss the brief, rapidly closing window to secure a liveable future."



Emphasising that children will bear the greatest impact of climate change, she urged public servants to leverage their connections, values, and vision to drive meaningful change and uphold the social fabric needed to address these pressing global challenges.

### **Panel Discussion: Leading Across Levels**

The panel discussion was expertly facilitated by Steph Voight, Regional Public Service Commissioner and Regional Commissioner at the Ministry for Social Development. The panel featured:

Diane McDermott – Central South Commissioner, Ministry for Primary Industries, Jenna Guest – Team Manager, Intelligence & Targeting Team, Ministry for Primary Industries Manatū Ahu Matua, Saane Havea – Manager, Customer Information, Natural Hazards Commission Toka Tū Ake

Steph guided the discussion with thought-provoking questions, including: “How can women leaders effectively mentor and influence the next generation?” and “What techniques ensure all voices are heard and diverse perspectives are considered?”

Each panellist shared valuable insights from their leadership journeys, while Steph enriched the kōrero with her own experiences. The session was highly engaging, with the audience posing thoughtful follow-up questions.

Key takeaways included the importance of being mindful of how leaders present their ideas to teams and allowing space for all voices to be heard, ensuring inclusive and considered decision-making.





## Final Session: Confidence, Values, and Choosing Who to Get Influenced By

The final session featured Franzisca Doser, Emergency Management Lead (Waitaha District) for Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora. Her presentation was an inspiring and uplifting journey through her career, titled “Confidence, Values, and Choosing Who to Get Influenced By.”

Franzisca shared how confidence is built through challenging experiences, where dedication and hard work lead to personal growth and reflection on the impact made. She emphasised that these experiences shape who we become. Her key message was to surround yourself with people who can see your potential and help you reach places beyond your imagination.



## Closing Remarks

The final address was delivered by Carin Sundstedt, Programme Director for Employee-Led Networks at the Public Service Commission since 2020. As she prepared to leave her role, Carin expressed her gratitude to everyone for their contributions in building strong Government Women’s Networks across New Zealand.

Reflecting on the successes of the ELNs over the past four years, she emphasised the power of connections and the importance of paying it forward. Carin encouraged us to keep moving forward. Her leadership was instrumental in equipping the SGWN committee with the skills and knowledge to lead the steering committee in organising such a successful event. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Carin.



The event concluded with a special waiata, chosen by Carin— “I Am Woman, Hear Me Roar”.

Thank you to Avenues Event Management for their support throughout the planning and on the day, and to the Steering Committee for their dedication and hard work in creating an inspiring and uplifting event.





## SGWN Committee update and looking ahead to 2025

As we look ahead to 2025, we are excited to celebrate the Government Women's Network's tenth anniversary. This milestone will be an opportunity to reflect on the progress made over the past decade and set our sights on even greater achievements. Whether you attended, shared your thoughts, or stayed connected, your involvement is what makes this Network so special.



SGWN Current and Past Committee Members



Top left: Peter Mersi, Kirsty Paterson, Melanie Smith, Sarah Leo Anderson, Anita Edwards, Renee Graham.

Bottom: Karyn Thompson and Laura Jolsen







## Women's Networks Continue to Thrive

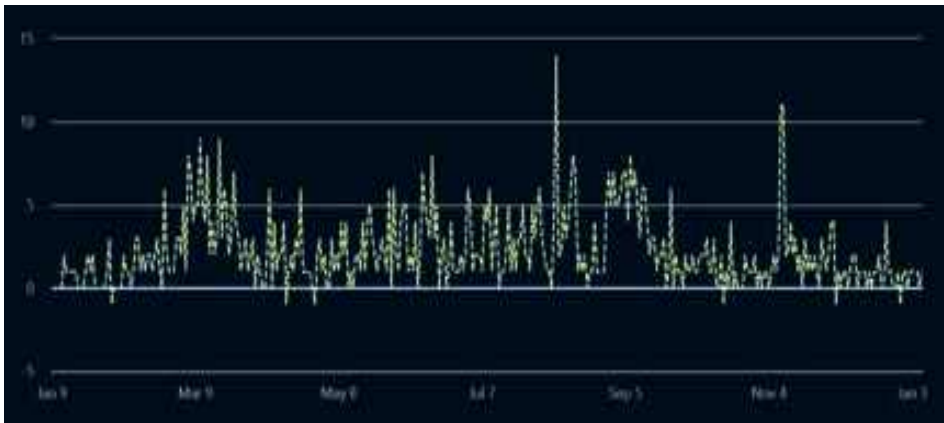
### Te Taunaki Public Service Census

Te Taunaki 2021 provided information about Public Service employee experiences, motivations, and demographic information.

The next survey will take place in March 2025, which will cover a broader range of topics reflecting the Public Service Commissioner's intent to drive performance through robust data collected across the Public Service.

### GWN LinkedIn

Our GWN [LinkedIn page](#) now has over 8,000 followers, with an increase of 800 followers in 2024.



## Cross Agency Employee-Led Networks

### Diversity Awards 2024

#### Tui Raumata were winners of the 'Respectful Culture' award

A big congratulations to Tui Raumata for winning the Respectful Culture Award at Diversity Works Award on Wednesday 28 August 2024. We are incredibly proud to see this ground-breaking work recognised in such a meaningful way.

The Deputy Public Service Commissioner, Heather Baggott, also extended her congratulations to the team, stating: "I know how hard you have all worked to collectively grow the impact of our employee-led networks, foster inclusive workplaces, and champion diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Public Service. Having a workforce that understands and values our diverse communities, and workplaces that create a sense of belonging for people from all backgrounds and perspectives, enables the Public Service to better serve and reflect our communities. Thank





you for doing this amazing collaborative work that is having an impact across the whole of government. This award is a testament to leadership and commitment.”

Additionally, a special shout-out to Alex Chadwick’s sponsorship, Tofilau Iris Webster, Carin Sundstedt, and the employee-led network team for their behind-the-scenes work, as well as the support of the Chief Executive for Tui Raumata. Thank you all for your dedication to this important mahi.



Many of these are supported by seven cross agency Employee-Led Networks (ELN);

- Tūhono, the Māori public sector network
- Pacific Public Servants’ Network (PPSN)
- Pan-Asia Public Sector Network (PAPSN)
- Government Women’s Network (GWN)
- We Enable Us (WEU)
- Cross-Agency Rainbow Network (CARN)
- Public Service Futures (PSF)

## Results and Benefits

- Through the 2021 Te Taunaki census, Tui Raumata supported the collection of data that provides an insight into the size of communities with the public sector represented by various ELN.



- Tui Raumata has created, contributed to and distributed a range of resources designed to create a more inclusive Public Service.
- Supported by Tui Raumata, ELN are growing in number and have all increased their membership.
- Tui Raumata has supported a number of events, conferences and wānanga that have created spaces for people to come together and diverse voices are heard.

## Women of Colour Public Sector Network (WOCPSN)

Women of Colour Public Sector Network (WOCPSN) is for public sector employees who identify as women of colour and allies of all genders, ethnicities, and backgrounds.

With its successful launch in 2024, it collaborated with AGWN and GWN by holding several online webinars.

## Including Neurodiversity in Government Organisations (INDIGO)



The Including Neurodiversity in Government Organisations (INDIGO) launched at the end of 2024. It welcomes all public sector staff, regardless of how they identify with neurodiversity.

They network promotes awareness and support, and influences change across the public service.



## Looking Forward

### Key Focus Areas

- Supporting the GWN network representatives' groups
- Building and strengthening our membership base
- Responding to the need and providing tangible support to Women across the Public Service
- Refresh of GWN Strategy
- Working collectively to tautoko and awhi other employee-led networks

### Look out for

- 10-year history of GWN book
- GWN 10th Birthday celebrations - 10 events for 10 years
- Women in Public Sector Summit
- Regional Events around Aotearoa
- Suffrage Day Celebration


### Current GWN Steering Committee

Current GWN Steering Committee, back row left to right: Coyla Rutherford, Nina Russell (GWN co-Chair), Peter Mersi (GWN Sponsor), Joanna Maskell, Nicola Johns (GWN Chair), Lyn Meredith, Emma Saunders

Front left to right: Isabella Sanchez-Bolivar, Zoe Ogilvie-Burns, Karyn Thompson, Jessie Johnson-Smith, Sio Kihe La'a Talakai-Alatini, Anna Milne-Tavendale





A woman with long brown hair and a traditional Māori moko on her chin is speaking at a podium. She is wearing a white floral patterned top. The background is a blue screen with a large, faint Māori haka logo. The text is overlaid on a dark blue semi-transparent box.

For more information on joining GWN Contact:

[enquiries@gwn.govt.nz](mailto:enquiries@gwn.govt.nz)

Top: Jacqueline Matthews GWN Steering Committee Member  
2022-2023