

## Cameron (Cam) Lee, Fletcher Building *Walk the Talk*

Standing on Great South Road in Auckland with a well-known drag queen, a rainbow-decorated concrete truck, and pride flags flying high, Cam Lee made a strong statement – the world is changing and we are changing with it.

Following his appointment as general manager of Firth in 2017, one of the Fletcher Building group's businesses, Cam's first decision was to publicly support staff involvement in the Auckland Pride Parade.

This was an early indication of Cam's leadership values and the reversal of a decision made the previous year.

In 2016, FB Pride (Fletcher Building's Rainbow community employee action group) asked Firth to contribute to its entry in the parade. The construction industry has a reputation for fostering a 'blokey' culture and the decision was made not to publicly support the group. There were concerns around the potential negative perceptions from customers if Firth was involved in the event.

That changed with Cam's commitment to supporting the group. "I couldn't imagine what it would be like to feel you had to hide who you are every day, you didn't fit in, or the amount of fear and anxiety it would cause," he said at the time. "I just knew it had to be a 'no debate' decision that needed to come from the top. The world has changed and we need to change with it."

Cam joined Firth at 22, after a stint in the Navy. Working from Kaitia to Bluff gave him a strong understanding of the true diversity of New Zealand's workforce. His commitment to creating a culture of respect, and a leadership style that ensured admiration from his team, meant he was quickly noticed by those above him. His people-centric approach continued in his GM role.

His decision to sponsor the FB Pride campaign sent a signal to his workforce that Firth embraced diversity and encouraged an inclusive culture. The support was practical and tangible, and Cam released two Firth concrete truck mixers to the group. One truck had a rainbow decal on the bowl and was in operation for the duration of the Auckland Pride Festival, the other was used in the February parade as a giant disco ball. The FB Pride campaign was launched at a special event at the Fletcher Building Penrose Campus with special guest drag queen Buckwheat.

The support of FB Pride has had a hugely positive impact on Firth's culture. Its engagement scores are one of the highest in Fletcher Building (out of 35 business units) and current Inclusive Leadership Index score is 70. While customer reaction has been overwhelmingly supportive, the biggest impact is seen in feedback from individuals who identify with the Rainbow community.

"Growing up in a small conservative farming community, where being heterosexual was the only option, I hid my sexuality from most people," says Allan Lennie, Certified Cadet (Firth).



“Through the support of individuals in the Fletcher Building Pride Group and Fletcher Building itself, I can truly say I am very proud to be part of such a diverse, inclusive, forward-thinking organisation. I am now a much more confident, happier employee who looks forward to coming to work every day and I can be myself. Fundamentally for me, it’s not about whether I’m gay or not; if you have the right attitude and work ethic, your sexuality, gender, race, ethnic origin or religious beliefs should never get in the way. The rainbow truck doesn’t only show support towards the LGBTQI community, but also symbolises diversity for all, something we all should be proud of.”



Jenna Walsh, Finance Manager (Firth), says Cam’s decision quickly won over its detractors.

“There were some people within the business who were not supportive of the idea, thinking we would upset and lose customers, however Cam’s support was unwavering and we ended up with customers sharing pictures on social media of the rainbow truck turning up at their site, feeling proud to have Firth as their supplier. Cam’s boldness has not only instilled commitment to diversity within Firth’s culture, but his influence has extended out to the general public and those who interact with Firth. Being a member of FB Pride and a Firth employee, this is something I’m really proud of,” she says.

Employees report that Cam’s leadership initiatives have made work a better place to be.

Cam is a strong advocate for diversity and inclusion and made a huge impact by making Firth a major sponsor of FB Pride for the Auckland Pride Parade. As a result, he has set the trend across other Fletcher Building businesses who now would like to do the same. As a member of FB Pride and the Rainbow Community, I feel that it’s becoming a lot easier and safe for me to bring myself to work, based on Firth and Fletcher Building’s inclusion and diversity commitment,” says Rajiv Rathod, Business Improvement Manager (GBCWinstone).

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