

Karin Schofield, Ministry of Justice

Walk the Talk

In the same way she was inspired by Sheryl Sandberg's book encouraging women to "lean in" at work, Karin Schofield has inspired her colleagues to better understand the barriers that stand between women and success in the workforce.

Karin works for the Ministry of Justice as Director, Strategic Performance, responsible for the Ministry's long-term planning, and supporting it to meet its public accountability requirements.

In 2015 Karin saw a need to help women working for the Ministry to achieve their personal and professional goals and break through the existing barriers, so she established the Ministry of Justice's Women's Network.



In the three years since it was founded, the network has grown into a powerful advocate for women, with more than 730 members in diverse roles based from Kaikohe to Invercargill.

The network is open to both women and men and offers monthly events with speakers sharing their career journeys, or speaking on specific topics such as financial wellbeing, gender and Māori tikanga, and pay equity. Use of remote participation technology means staff in courts and regional offices around the country can take part.

Karin communicates with network members each month in a newsletter encouraging women to pursue their personal and professional goals, and men to support the women in their lives. Chief Information Officer and Deputy Secretary, Information and Communication Technology Tina Wakefield is the Executive sponsor of the network. She says it has encouraged demonstrable shifts in attitudes and behaviours towards gender issues across the Ministry and the public service.

"Karin is the driving force behind the success of our Women's Network. She runs the network on top of her demanding role, and her strategic leadership of the network has extended its reach and created a substantive impact over the last three years."

The impact of the network is recognised by other government agencies and is highly regarded by Programme Director of the Government Women's Network Liz Chin.

"The Ministry of Justice Women's Network is one of the best I have seen across the public sector. The passionate, creative, and inspiring leadership provided by Karin Schofield, has given the network a solid brand and presence in the Ministry, and it delivers a well-organised programme of regular activities. Karin generously shares her knowledge and experiences with other women across the public sector, especially with those forming new networks or refreshing existing networks, and is an expert that I can call upon to assist me when needed."

In partnership with other initiatives undertaken by the Ministry to support its people, the network has contributed to positive results in the workplace.

Engagement results lifted from 47.4 per cent in 2015 to 59 per cent in 2018. Women in senior management (Tiers 1-3) have increased from 42.6 per cent to 54.4 per cent, a rate well above the public sector average. The gender pay gap has also decreased from 18.3 per cent in 2015 to 15 per cent in 2017.

Suzanne Stew, Deputy Secretary, Corporate says, "In leading the Women's Network, Karin has shown foresight and strong leadership skills as she has grown the network from a small local network to one that reaches across the organisation and country. Karin has fostered a strong and supportive environment that has solidified our Women's Network as a key part of our organisational culture."

In addition to leading the Women's Network, Karin supports the personal development of the people in her team and mentors colleagues from other business groups. Team members have a mix of working arrangements to allow for their diverse family circumstances, and team practices and ways of working are adjusted to ensure everyone is included in key meetings, events and discussions. She is renowned for her support to parents of young children as they navigate work and family life. Karin is open about her own personal challenges juggling career and family life, and supports flexible working arrangements, and encourages men to take equal share of childcare responsibilities.

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