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Media Release

Extractive sector mourns loss of boundary-breaking woman

The loss to cancer of Te Kuiti-based mining engineer Kristy Christensen is being felt across the extractive sector, says the CEO of its health and safety organisation, MinEx.

Wayne Scott says Kristy had blazed a trail for women in mines and quarries across New Zealand and Australia and her passing has robbed the sector of someone who still had much to contribute.

“Kristy joined our Board less than two years ago and very quickly made her mark as an advocate for the industry changing its approaches and attitudes to employing women. She did this as a mining engineer for an ironsands company and through her company, Shesfreetobe – the title said it all.”

In October 2020, Kristy was the only New Zealand woman chosen from a record 626 world-wide nominations in the fourth edition of the [100 Global Inspirational Women in Mining](#), run by the Women in Mining UK organisation.

Wayne Scott says this week’s MinEx Board meeting learned that one of Kristy’s last acts was to donate the base resources she’d developed for her Shesfreetobe business, so women could continue to be supported within the extractive sector.

“That’s just so typical of Kristy. She’d brought together resources some of which will still be freely available to employers so they can self-assess the challenges women face in their workplace.”

Wayne Scott runs an annual series of health and safety workshops for quarries and mines around New Zealand and Kristy was to be the keynote speaker this year.

“She will be greatly missed and our sector’s thoughts are with her family and friends.”

Kristy had qualified as a geologist at Auckland University and worked at Waihi’s Heritage Gold mine before moving to an underground coal mine in central Queensland. She recalled being the only woman in the 1,200 strong workforce and being banned on her first day from going underground for the first half hour because her co-workers didn’t believe a woman would work in a mine. She then faced issues including no female toilet on shifts lasting up to 12 hours and ill-fitting PPE designed for men.

Kristy later worked at a New South Wales mine before returning home with her husband Jamin Christensen to raise their two children.

Jamin says Kristy’s wider family is going to continue to run Shesfreetobe to provide its fuller range of services to women in employment.

Anyone who wishes to can mark her passing by making a contribution to Hospice Waikato.

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