

Women's achievements in sector celebrated

Felicity Wolfe - Mon, 13 Mar 2023

Almost 90 women and men from across New Zealand's mining and quarrying sector gathered in Christchurch on Friday to celebrate diversity and inclusion in the extractives sector.

Straterra chief executive Josie Vidal says the first Women in Extractives lunch and awards highlighted the many roles women play in the industry while celebrating their achievements.

"There was a real depth of talent in the nominations for these awards which was great to see – the extractives industry is certainly in good hands."

While there is still work to do to encourage a more diverse workforce across the industry, she was delighted with the number of men who attended in support of their female colleagues.

"We don't want it to be an exclusive club. Whilst it's called Women in Extractives, it's that whole journey to find how we can make everybody feel welcome."

She says the event proved a great success, with support from across the industry.

"From the feedback, there was a really good energy here," Vidal says. "It was low-key, but powerful."

A total of 88 people from across the country and sectors attended the event, which was hosted by Straterra, the Aggregate and Quarry Association and MinEx. It was sponsored by Komatsu New Zealand.

Inclusion champion

The event featured the launch of the Kristy Christensen Memorial Award celebrating the life and work of the late geologist and inclusion champion.

AQA and MinEx chief executive Wayne Scott says the inaugural award, sponsored by MinEx, was posthumously awarded to Christensen for her tireless campaigning for better and more inclusive working conditions for women in traditionally male-dominated industries.

Christensen, who lost her battle to breast cancer last year, had returned to New Zealand after more than a decade working in underground mines in Australia. She set up [Shesfreetobe](#) in 2019 to provide female inclusion advice and training for companies in heavy industries. Christensen also developed toolkits for women working in areas where there is limited access to toilet facilities – a difficult barrier she had faced working long shifts underground.

Scott, who worked alongside Christensen during her time as a MinEx Board member, said it was an honour to present the Memorial Award, accepted on her behalf by her sister Skye Knox.

"Kristy's enthusiasm, work ethic and big smile were contagious and she never left you in any doubt about what she thought, leading to some interesting MinEx Board meetings," Scott says.

Knox says her family will continue She's Free To Be, with Christensen leaving detailed plans for how she wanted the company to progress.

She says her sister wanted to ensure women could be comfortable as they carried out their day-to-day tasks.

"Kristy's life's passion was diversity and inclusion for women in any industry that is male-dominated," Knox says. "There are practices and processes that need to be refined across the board. Because of those things, she wanted to offer a product to companies seeking to better themselves long term and to invite women into spaces they haven't been invited to before."

Award winners

OceanaGold senior environmental advisor Stephanie Hayton was presented with the MITO – Te Pūkenga Emerging Star Award.

Having researched a now world-recognised passive water treatment system as part of a mine, Hayton's current work on the protection of the endangered Archey's frog and the biodiversity of the Waihi North Project, is potentially a "game changer", Scott says.

Hayton is pictured above right with Alison Paul, Straterra chair and OceanaGold's general manager for corporate and legal affairs.

Winstone Aggregates Roy's Hill Quarry supervisor Allanah Toko-Mikahere received the Hanga-Aro-Rau Workforce Development Council Leader of the Year award. In presenting the award, Scott noted her exceptional skill, leadership, and adaptability as well as her ability to "roll up the sleeves and do any job".

"Allanah is the supervisor of a mainly male crew at Roys Hill Quarry. With the attitude that you can't tell someone to do something unless you have done it yourself, she has become proficient at all tasks in the quarry and is responsible for mentoring and employment of local young people and whānau at the quarry."

She is pictured below with Samantha McNaughton, deputy chief executive Hanga-Aro-Rau, the workforce development council for the manufacturing, engineering and logistics sectors.



Find out more...

Factfile information

Organisation	OceanaGold
	Winstone Aggregates
	Road Metals
	J Swap Contractors



Strong field

Scott says seeing the number of excellent nominations for the awards is “a positive moment in our industry”.

Vidal and Scott acknowledged the award finalists – Luana Misa from Winstone Aggregates and Molly Davidson from Road Metals for the Emerging Star award, and Samantha Muir from OceanaGold and Karyn Payne from J Swap Contractors for the Leader of the Year award.

Vidal says they were high quality finalists who are doing great things in their sectors.

“There was tough competition – they were not easy choices.”