

# NZ mining engineer in top 100 Global Inspirational Women in Mining

Simon Hartley - Tue, 24 Nov 2020

New Zealand mining engineer and MinEx board member Kristy Christensen has been named among the top 100 Global Inspirational Women in Mining, run by Women in Mining UK and now in its fourth edition.

A record 626 nominations were received this year.

In the e-book detailing the women's stories, Christensen says she wears two hats – one as a senior mining engineer for an ironsands company, the other as an advocate for more female-friendly workplaces in the extractives sector.

“I know what it’s like to be excluded and I work hard to build a sense of inclusion for future generations,” she says.

## Geologist going underground

Now in her thirties, Christensen qualified as a geologist at Auckland University, had two years at Heritage Gold at Waihi, then moved to an underground coal mine in central Queensland – the only woman in the workforce of 1200.

She immediately hit stumbling blocks, being banned from going to her underground training for the first half hour as the trainer didn’t believe a woman would be working underground.

Next, she faced issues including no female toilet on shifts of up to 12 hours and PPE designed for men.

After a move to a Wollongong mine in New South Wales, Christensen fell pregnant.

“After two years of infertility, when the day came, I was terrified and nauseous at seven weeks and I had no idea what to say to my workplace and when.

“I was the first to be in this situation and it felt lonely.”

## Support for future ‘underground mothers’

However, Christensen says her boss provided incredible support and she then worked to ensure there were procedures and support for future ‘underground mothers.’

Returning to New Zealand and settling in Waikato, with husband Jamin and their two children, she established consultancy business Shesfreetobe.

The business aims to assist women working in the extractive sector, and also the wider business sectors who want to improve their approach to recruiting and retaining female staff.

“It can be hard as an employee to talk about these barriers so I’m the conduit to enable those conversations to take place,” Christensen says.

## Creating connection and united sense of purpose

“To create workplaces that reflect the communities that we operate in creates connection and a united sense of purpose, which is game-changing,” she says.

In congratulating Christensen, MinEx board chair Chris Baker says the award is a huge accolade to her on behalf of all women working in the extractive sector in New Zealand.

“She is ensuring those voices are being heard at board tables, in canteens and contractors’ facilities around the country,” he says.

“We think we have equal opportunity but we want more women to choose to work in our industry and Kristy’s work, and this recognition, will help achieve that.”

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