



For more info on WEL Networks, check out [wel.co.nz](http://wel.co.nz)

**WEL Network's role is to design and maintain the safe, reliable, and efficient operation of electrical distribution assets and infrastructure throughout the Waikato region.**

At WEL Networks about 300 team members work to keep the power flowing between the power generators and your place. The crew works behind the scenes maintaining the network of power lines, poles, underground cables and technology – keeping the lights of the Waikato shining bright! The business has been serving Waikato for 100 years, distributing power from the national grid and connecting almost 100,000 residential properties, small businesses and commercial/ industrial sites to a power supply within the WEL network area.



**“You come into this industry thinking you can only be an electrician but really, the field is enormous! At WEL we have electricians but also: lines mechanics, jointers, inspection officers, cable testers, fault finders, equipment testers it's just massive. There's truly something here for everyone. Get your foot the door and then decide where you want to go!”**

To find out more about this sector, profiles of young people like you in the industry, and career tools and tips...

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**KATE WESTBROOK**  
SUBSTATION SUPERVISOR



The FutureForce® Crew sat down with Kate to chat about her role...

→ **WHAT DO YOU DO AND WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT IT?**

We do all of the substation maintenance and we do large substation projects as well. My job is to make sure that the team on the ground have everything that they need to carry on their work.

I really enjoy building a great team and great team culture. We have a big team so there's always a lot going on. We're all human and a lot of unexpected things can happen in a day, and it's my job to make sure the workers look after themselves so we can get as much work done as possible. It's definitely a logistical job organising all of the pieces to get the work done.

Every day is so different. It's full-on and keeps you really busy. I often find that the days just whizz past in this role. The first hour of my day is the busiest: people might call in sick, jobs might get cancelled due to weather, equipment, or unforeseen faults. That's when we get the work for our team's day organised – we try to plan it as best we can. A lot of shuffling is required!



**BE ENTHUSIASTIC, WILLING TO LEARN, ASK QUESTIONS AND LISTEN. REALLY JUST GIVE IT A GOOD GO.**

**WHAT WAS YOUR CAREER JOURNEY LIKE?**

I had a go at a few things to find and navigate what I really wanted to do. Following high school I took a year off which was a really good idea. You finish school at about 17 or 18 and think you know everything, but you don't. As time goes on you figure more out about yourself, and sometimes taking that time is needed. This time (if used well) can teach you about work – what you do and don't like, where you might like to go from there. I actually did one year of studying health science at UniTech in Auckland. I decided that this wasn't for me. It didn't really fit well with my personality and what I wanted for myself. I had a friend who was an electrician and thought that sounded like an interesting job. So I applied for an apprenticeship and here I am!

**KATE WESTBROOK**  
SUBSTATION SUPERVISOR



→ **WHAT SCHOOL SUBJECTS DO YOU FIND USEFUL?**

Maths, physics and any practical/hands-on type subjects like metalwork, woodwork, machinery etc. A lot of the jobs use tools, so it's helpful having an understanding of those tools prior to coming in.

→ **WHAT SORT OF PERSON DO YOU NEED TO BE FOR THIS TYPE OF ROLE?**

- A problem-solver
- Agile – you've got to solve problems quickly and then move to the next thing. You will have to go back and forth a few times, so you need to multi-task and be focused on what your priority is
- Decisive – you have to make a decision – you can't sit on the fence. It doesn't have to be a hasty decision but think about it, make the decision, and just run with it
- Impartial when making decisions
- Safety focused – safety is paramount in the industry we work in and safety takes priority over deadlines
- A team player – even though you're the one supervising, you have to work together as a team
- Open-minded
- Fair and equitable

→ **HAVE THERE BEEN ANY CHALLENGES IN THIS ROLE?**

I've been in this job almost a year now. I've been in the industry for about 12 years. I worked in the field at first where you sort of look after yourself and your work. Then I moved into this job where I no longer look after myself primarily, but I look after my team all the time. It's a lot more than one person and at first I found that quite difficult. Now I'm in my stride – I'm getting a hang of it and the team know what to expect from me, and I know what to expect from them. I had to get out of that tunnel vision of only looking out for myself in this role, and had to think big picture, supervising the team around me.

Earlier in my career, being female was definitely a bit of a challenge. People just didn't think you could do it. I felt like I had to be better just to be considered equal. But in saying that, that was a lot more prevalent earlier in my career. Things have improved within the industry in recent years. Times are changing and I feel there's a more equal footing being female – have the grit to put your heel down, keep going and know things will get better. Know that you're good at your job and prove that you're good at your job.

**WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ON THE JOB?**

Everything. I've definitely learnt to be more agile – I can move quickly from one thing to the next while still keeping track of all of those things. That was a big change from before where I'd be given one job, work on that one job, and only focus on that. Now I'm given a lot of things to juggle at once.

Other people's lives are a lot more complicated than you realise. When they're your co-workers they may not share or talk about personal things. But when you're a supervisor, people come to you with a lot of those things that are going on in their lives.

**WHAT'S THE BEST THING ABOUT WORKING AT WEL NETWORKS?**

WEL Networks talks the talk and truly values the wellbeing of workers. You've got to look after people. Personal wellbeing is the most important thing. Only good things come from this – it's a win-win for the company and most importantly, for our workers. "WEL"being (excuse the pun) is a high priority here.



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