

Her Stories ...

Megan McDonald

Megan McDonald was the 2016 recipient of the Sue McDonald Career Change Award while she was studying the New Zealand Diploma of Engineering (Civil) at Wellington Institute of Technology (WelTec). The Sue McDonald Career Change is available to help and assist women to change the focus of their career and employment by entering a non-traditional field of employment for women.

At 37 years old, Megan has found the diploma really interesting and a practical way to step into the engineering field. One of the reasons the course was so interesting was the wide variety of people of all ages in the course, right from school leavers to people from engineering trades and other industries who were coming back to get qualifications, which allowed for great class dynamics.

She found developing new skills and the steep learning curve of core mathematics and physics very rewarding. Megan is particularly interested in her structural and geotechnical papers at WelTec. In one of her current projects, she is assessing the soil at a site for slop stability and bearing capacity so she can design a retaining wall. This involves taking shear vane measurements, digging bore holes and doing Scala penetrometer tests of the site (see photo below).

The Award helped her in 2016 to put more energy into her studies without having to take on too many hours at work. The award also gave her encouragement that there were people genuinely interested in seeing mature woman change careers and succeed in the engineering industry. She believes people should follow their passion and take on new challenges, no matter what age in life.

Megan graduates in December 2017 and has accepted an internship with AECOM where she will get a chance to work in the Civil Infrastructure team and get an overview of the various civil areas of work, with a focus on geotechnical engineering.



Photo: Megan McDonald on her WelTec project site, taking shear vane measurements.