



MAKING WAVES

Women's stories from the
seafood sector in Aotearoa,
New Zealand

Dr Angela Russell



**TE ŌHU
KAIMĀMANA**
Te Puea Dempsey



SEAFOOD
NEW ZEALAND

Karen Olver, Jen Vallance & Sarah Wright



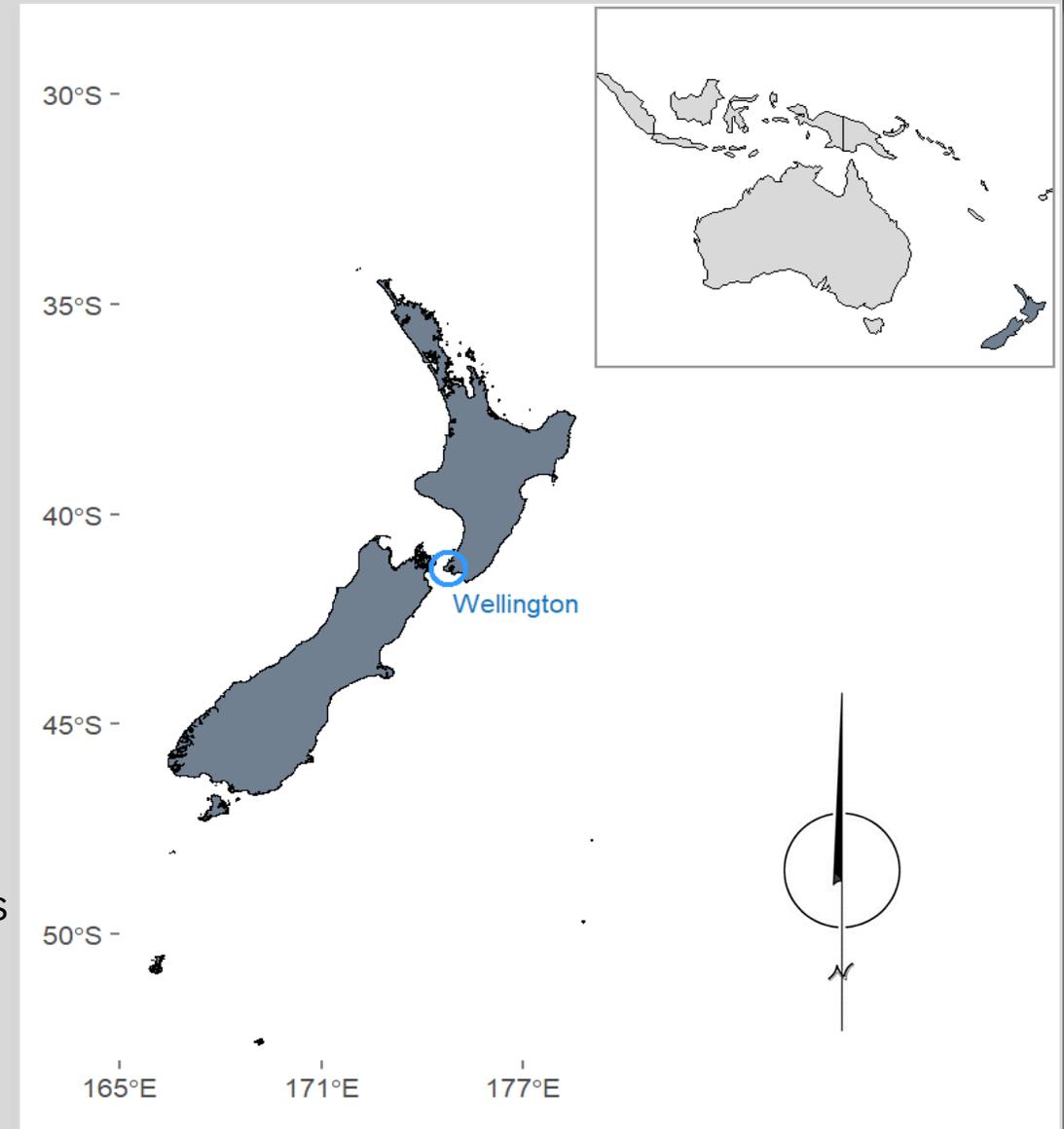
Earth Sciences
New Zealand
Di Tracey

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Context

- 5.2 million people
- Vast Exclusive Economic Zone (> 4.1 million Km²)
- Central to identity, economy and food security
- Seafood generates ~\$2.2 billion in exports
- 13-14 thousand jobs
- Bi-cultural nation (Te Tiriti o Waitangi - 1840)
- 1992 Māori Fisheries Settlement
- Stakeholders in fisheries governance & marine resources

Women under-represented in certain roles



SPECIAL ISSUE



Working in Fisheries - Fish and Aquaculture: a celebration of women's contribution and experience

Edited by Beatriz Morales-Nin (Spain), Di Tracey (NZ), Audrey Geffen (US), Cynthia Jones (UK)

Special Issue Aims:

- To amplify women's voices in the global 'blue foods' sector
- Celebrate women's successes in research, policy and industry
- Understand barriers and hear recommendations
- Research topic aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals
- Support gender inclusivity in fisheries

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Three Opinion Articles from New Zealand:

- My life-time love affair with the sea (Mary Livingston, 2025)
- Paddling the waka: exploring the generational experiences of wāhine (women) in fisheries science, in Aotearoa New Zealand (Tessa Thomson et. al. 2025)
- **Making Waves: Women's Stories from the Seafood Sector, in Aotearoa New Zealand (Angela Russell, 2025)**

GAF Opinion Article:

- Women work in fisheries too: the Gender in Aquaculture and Fisheries Section story (Meryl Williams et.al. 2025) - authors from *Australia, India, Thailand and Malaysia*

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Making Waves: Women's Stories from the Seafood Sector in Aotearoa, New Zealand

Study Method

- Survey method
- 36 questions (supplementary material)
- Broadly ~ 2,700 industry members (male and female) – SNZ & NZ RLIC

Participation

- 37 respondents (many anonymously)
- 57% were 41 - 55 years old, and 24% were 55 years old or older.
- Entry to the seafood industry diverse
 - Many intergenerational transfer
 - Transitioned from other industries (e.g., conservation/business)



Scan me!

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Making Waves: Women's Stories from the Seafood Sector in Aotearoa, New Zealand



Article: Survey Outcomes



*Resilient, highly skilled, experienced
and **absolutely kicking goals!***

CEO of Seafood NZ: Lisa Futschek

CEO of Aquaculture: Teena Hale-Pennington

*While respondents observed
progress toward greater
inclusivity, **gender-based
barriers remain**, particularly
in **leadership** and **decision-
making**.*

***Mentorship, visibility, and inclusive
support structures** were identified as
key to advancing equity and
transforming the industry.*

‘Paddling the Waka’

Experiences from Fisheries Researchers

- **Surveyed 18 participants**
 - current, retired and ex-scientist/managers
- **Key outcomes**
 - existing gender barriers
 - unconscious bias
- **Key recommendations**
 - ✓ address gender pay gaps in policy and the “leaky pipeline” impact on women reaching senior leadership roles
 - ✓ inclusive, flexible and supportive work cultures as the norm
 - ✓ incorporate mātauranga Māori, community, and kaitiakitanga into fisheries science



Image: Brit Finucci

‘While there were a lot of positives working in research only 4 survey participants felt there had been no gender barriers’



Earth Sciences
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Key Leverages to Gender Equity and Equality

Mentorship and Recognition

- Formalised
- Build on WISA
- Industry Awards
- Industry Publication/media

Tailored Support

- Flexible caregiving support
- Ongoing training
- International conferences
- Young women to STEM

Communication and Connection

- Safe platforms for dialogue
- Networking opportunities
- Understand and value diverse communication styles/preferences
- Accessible industry forums

Wahine Māori (Māori Women)

Wahine Māori play significant roles managing, gathering and preserving Kai moana (seafood) within their communities

Wahine Māori fish for whitebait (īnanga) and snapper (tāmure)

By 1929, the catch provided a cash income as well as a food source.

Wahine Māori remain central in sustainable fisheries management, leadership & the continuation of traditional knowledge within iwi (tribes)



Image: Royal & Kaka-Scott, 2012



Image: Te Papa Museum, Wellington. NZ

A portrait of Dame Mira Szászy, an elderly woman with long, flowing white hair. She is wearing a traditional Māori feathered cloak (haka) with a white collar. The background is dark and out of focus.

The late Dame Mira Szászy

Ngāti Kuri, Te Aupōuri, Te Rarawa,
DBE, CB, QSMJP, BA, DipSocSci, LLD (Vic)

- Māori wahine leader of the 20th century
- First Māori woman university graduate - NZ
- President Māori Women's Welfare League
- Māori Fisheries Commissioner (1992)

*Mira's legacy ensures
Māori are influential partners in fisheries
governance and key stakeholders
in marine resources*

Gender inequality is a humanitarian issue

Mā te kotahitanga e whai kaha ai tatou

- through unity we find strength



"Tēnā tātou katoa"

Let's keep the conversation alive

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Image: ESNZ

Image: ESNZ

Questions?

References

Heberley, H. (2005). Ordinary Women, Extraordinary Lives in the Fishing Industry. Cape Catley.

Houkamau, C. A., & Pouwhare, R. (2025). Mana Moana: Ngā Urungi O Te Ohu Kaimoana Toitū Mō Anamata / Navigators of Sustainable Fisheries For The Future. Auckland University Press.

Royal, C., & Kaka-Scott, J. (2012). Māori foods - kai Māori - Modern cuisine. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand.



Hinaki
(Māori eel/fish trap)