

Shorts

Profile

Recipe for quality

The winner of a major industry award, *Kasey Ward* has been pinpointed as an emerging leader. A quality assurance officer at Invercargill City Council, she tells *Build* about her career path and what is behind her success.

Q. What is your education and work history?

I completed my Diploma in Architectural Draughting in Dunedin in 2006 and worked in that field before retraining to become a qualified chef. After relocating to Invercargill with my husband in 2011, a position for a building control officer became available at the local council. I wasn't sure my work experience matched what they were looking for, but there was a new focus on building control officers requiring an industry-relevant qualification that helped me get the job.

I worked in this role for approximately 4 years vetting and processing building consents and answering customer enquiries before changing my focus to quality assurance.

In my new role, I maintain our quality manual, audits, competency assessments and continuous improvement and conflict of interest registers.

Q. You won the Resene Construction Systems Emerging Leader Award in the BOINZ awards - what is behind your success?

My team leader nominated me because of my enthusiasm for improving our existing processes to make the job easier for my workmates. Having started at the council in an entry-level position, I have



an appreciation for each role involved in making a building consent authority (BCA) run smoothly. I try to involve these staff in any changes we are making so they are comfortable with them and are confident they are for the best.

Q. Tell *Build* about your work with quality assurance and how you are improving BCA processes.

My focus has always been from a customer service angle, and this includes our internal staff and the general public, designers, engineers and builders we deal with daily. Customers expect consistent results and not just locally but further afield.

The Southern Cluster group of councils has recently established a Quality Officer Support Group with regular meetings

so we can work on improving and streamlining our BCA quality assurance processes across a bigger area.

Q. What is your personal interest in quality assurance, an always topical issue in the building industry?

With my background in cooking, I always look at processes as if they were a recipe. Using a good recipe, you should get consistent results that will keep customers happy - but is there enough information in the recipe for this to happen? Is it worded clearly enough for staff to follow? Can it easily be used as a training tool? If changes need to be made, are these well communicated so everyone is aware of them?

Extracting information from the key people who know their jobs so well and documenting these processes is important and a part of my job I really enjoy.

Q. What are the quality issues in your region?

There are plans to revitalise Invercargill's city centre, which will have an impact on a number of the departments at the council so communication will be important to ensure we all work together on this. I think having all parties involved from the start of the building design process helps keep things on track and ensures there aren't hold-ups for amendments to plans further down the track.

Q. What excites you about your job and what career aspirations do you have?

There are always challenges with my job - it's a balance between legislative compliance, making processes easy for staff to implement and assisting customers to a satisfactory result. Things are always evolving, and I'm lucky to have some great contacts in the industry that provide really helpful feedback when we need to update things.

I'm a mum of one with another on the way, so work and life balance is important - my workplace has been really supportive with allowing me to adjust my working hours to suit.

I'm passionate about education and would like to look at enhancing our induction processes and growing the BCA's relationships with our external customers and local tertiary training facilities training the next generation of designers and builders.

Q. Anything else you would like to add?

With the accreditation checklists created by MBIE now part of the BCA accreditation assessments, quality assurance officers have more guidance on what is expected as part of the BCAs' quality assurance system. Hopefully this will further align BCAs so our external customers receive a consistent service across the country. ◀