



The changing face of boardrooms

Boards no longer look like they used to. The cultural makeup of boards is changing to reflect the societal shift that is happening around us. But what does that look like for people of colour who are suddenly given the role to speak on behalf of all ethnic communities? Where do those who identify as disabled or gender fluid fit on boards, and what does it mean to have a voice and push for change in the face of adversity? You'll hear all this and more.

Presenters: Kirsten Patterson and Sonia Yee

People: Tina Jenen, Paul Dykzeul, Kevin Kenrick, Taimi Allen, Dr Emily Beausoleil, Ross Townshend.

Sound engineer (mix): Marc Chesterman

Sonia Yee:

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Speaker 1:

They're there to make sure that all the legal requirements are met.

Speaker 2:

They just make the highest level decisions for the company.

Speaker 3:

I think a lot of companies are now very careful in choosing their board members to make sure they represent diverse perspectives.

Speaker 4:

They are trying to get more women into higher paying roles, but there is still a definite gap specifically with obviously males hired over women. Some of my female colleagues are definitely underpaid compared to their male colleagues.

Kirsten Patterson:

Kia ora I'm **Kirsten Patterson**, otherwise known as KP.

Sonia Yee:

And I'm **Sonia Yee**, the producer of this series Across the board, a podcast made by the Institute of Directors in association with the New Zealand Herald.

Kirsten Patterson:

In the series we look at why good governance matters and how it shapes our everyday lives.

Sonia Yee:

In this second episode, we take a look at board dynamics, diversity and inclusion, and whether or not getting a seat at the table is an even playing field. And you'll also hear a story from KP.

Kirsten Patterson:

That's coming up in just a bit. But first we head to Dr. Jim McAloon from Victoria University. In the first episode, he talked about New Zealand boards being largely made up of [inaudible 00:01:21] who are tightly networked. So, how does that track after the second World War and what's in store for women getting a look in.

Dr Jim McAloon:

That long post-war boom really for 30 years from the second World War. There's a general theme both in private business and in government of continuing to develop the resources in the economy of the country,

Kirsten Patterson:

Which sounds promising and may be a time for change.

Dr Jim McAloon:

There's a feeling that New Zealand is modernizing that there's huge opportunities, there's growth, there's extension, and that means greater prosperity for many.

Kirsten Patterson:

So what does that look like in the big picture?

Dr Jim McAloon:

On one level, there's a somewhat closer relationship between government and private business simply because of the scale of development, particularly in public works. The Ministry of Works did a huge amount, but it also contracted off with private construction firms and private engineering firms. There's close government involvement in the development of some industries like pulp and paper, like aluminum, like metals. And in terms of private business, I think the directors are still very much male, but they are now mostly New Zealand born. Although that's said, they're still pretty much characterized by very close networks. I can't think of too many women, if any.

Kirsten Patterson:

Which is still a little disappointing considering women had been holding the fort during the war and finding their foothold in the workplace. But that's not to say they were completely invisible.

Dr Jim McAloon:

Well, most female business owners ran much smaller businesses than some of the men did. There are lots of small male businessmen too, but women were pretty well concentrated in that self-employed, employing a few assistants. So, women weren't really enjoying much access to the commanding heights of the economy. You start to see women being appointed in the 1980s.

Kirsten Patterson:

And that was a decade that brought with it a huge amount of socioeconomic change. It was also a time when women were reclaiming

something back for themselves and breaking away from the confines of domestic life.

Dr Jim McAloon:

And remember too that there were very few women in parliament until very late seventies as well. So, it's really reflecting that shift in the wider society. Sometimes the case, I guess, that a woman will hold a very prominent and significant position, but then she moves on and as often it's back to normal with the replacement.

Kirsten Patterson:

Women had to give their roles back to the men who held them beforehand, a cycle of impermanence, leaving women in the wings, waiting again for change. And closer to home. By the end of the eighties, there was also a drop in immigration from the British Isles and Kiwis, including a younger generation of Māori, were heading overseas for warmer waters and opportunities in Australia.

Dr Jim McAloon:

But very slowly, some Māori began to appear in the worlds of directorship. Few examples are easy to note, but still when you look at the numbers as a whole, they're not that great.

Kirsten Patterson:

But while diversity was still lacking on boards, there were fresh new faces entering the scene.

Dr Jim McAloon:

What you had with the 1980s was a younger generation of directors, of entrepreneurs. Sometimes they were the children of established families, sometimes not. Brierleys, Doug Myers, folk like that. They perceived their elders as being somewhat stuck in the mud. Hugh Fletcher at Fletcher Challenge was the beneficiary of a Stanford Business School education. So, you always get that generational thing. And now of course, that generation aging and perhaps a new generation will be asking different questions and the context of some of the challenges that face the wider society now.

Kirsten Patterson

So, was it a question of out with the old and with the new? Well, not without some pushback, but that doesn't mean change shouldn't happen.

Dr Jim McAloon:

As far as moving people on when they've been there too long. I guess I would say that generational change is always difficult.

Sonia Yee:

An indicator of that lack of willingness to change with those in positions of power. Making the rules was also reflected in how women in corporate professions to address and as you're about to find out, that also held true for women on boards. Well, when they finally got a chance. And our very own KP, who's also IoD CEO, has a story to tell. She started her career as an employment lawyer.

Kirsten Patterson:

And back in those days we weren't even allowed to wear trousers to court. And many of the more senior women would tell me the stories if they'd turn up to court in trousers and the judge would say, I can't hear you, because they weren't wearing a skirt. So, very clearly ingrained into me that we never saw a client without a jacket and we never saw a client without lipstick and we didn't wear trousers to court. So, I've adapted to the trouser thing now, but so definitely in the boardroom, I'm still very much a blazer or a jacket person because that has been ingrained into me and is I think part of the corporate uniform.

Sonia Yee:

KP ended up making a shift into governance and management. She's spent 10 years working with New Zealand Rugby and that came with its own set of standards.

Kirsten Patterson:

Because I was one of the only woman at rugby. We used to get outfitting every year. So, all the leadership management team on the board would get suits provided, but they had no idea how to outfit us.

Sonia Yee:

Which is problematic when you consider everyone else looks identical.

Kirsten Patterson:

They had a male suit sponsor. We managed to negotiate to get the male suit sponsor to give us some runs of the fabric so that we could get custom made and get a tailor in to make outfits for us so that we didn't look different to the rest of the board because we were different enough. So, the act of fitting in or wearing the same or having the same look definitely helped from a confidence perspective. And it was my first ever time I worked there. I was in my late twenties when I started there. It was the first time I'd also had something custom made, corporate uniform for board meetings with a silver fern on the pocket. So, fashion is really important in terms of how you fit in.

Sonia Yee:

Except, I don't think KP anticipated this.

Kirsten Patterson:

Whenever I would go to events, people would mistake me for being a waitress because they're like, well, you can't be with the rugby team. I took to wearing broaches and these flower type things. And Steve choose said to me, not another bloody flower. And I said, but that flower is the thing that stops me from people asking me to get them drinks and to clean up after them because they could see that I was different.

Sonia Yee:

Well, things have definitely changed since then. But how big a deal is diversity for boards today and is it an even playing field for women and those from diverse backgrounds and identity?

Kirsten Patterson:

Let's go back to basics because under the company's act 1993, a company must have at least one director. And the NZX rules require a minimum of three directors. Best practice governance, on the other hand, recommend six to eight directors for boards or committees for a medium sized company. And the same applies to incorporated societies too. But there are no hard and fast rules. Smaller businesses can also have fewer directors.

Sonia Yee:

And in the case of equity for women in the workplace and on board, it's still an issue today. So, what are some of the obstacles for women getting ahead, whether that be on boards or management roles and are women being recognized as much as they should? And if not, what's being done about it, especially at a board level?

Jo Cribb:

So, I chose my boards basically thinking about how I could make the most difference.

Kirsten Patterson:

Joe Cribb is a consultant in the diversity and inclusion space. The former CEO for the Ministry for Women. She's a passionate director who sits on a number of boards, including the New Zealand Media Council, an independent director on the board for the Royal New Zealand Navy.

Jo Cribb:

So, all of those have a lens of complexity, mixture of commercial, and I guess a social purpose. I'm the chair of the Wellington Homeless Woman's Trust. It's one of my most, I guess, complex and consuming roles. Often our not-for-profits are, we have a transitional housing service for women in Wellington.

Kirsten Patterson:

Issues for women play a big role in Jo's portfolio, including addressing the gender pay gap.

Jo Cribb:

The research still shows we're doing more housework too, aren't we? So, add it all up.

Kirsten Patterson:

And in terms of board roles, women are often clustered on low and paying or nonprofit boards. So, in terms of equity, what should boards be thinking about?

Jo Cribb:

We can still see from all the research across all sectors, there is a gender pay gap in what directors are paid, which just seems madness. So, I think there's a recruiting lens we as directors need to think about. Many of us are involved in appointments and we need to bring that lens, I guess, to who we are appointing to our board teams. But as directors, we have, I guess, an obligation to ensure that we are good employers. And I would argue that one of the marks of being a good employer is that we don't discriminate against groups of workers. All the research is showing us at the moment that the gender pay gap isn't based on individual characteristics.

It's not based on the educational qualifications of women or the occupations or how long we've been working. About 80% of the gap is based on the behavior of that happens in firms. So, it's our hiring policies, it's our recruitment, our recruitment policies, it's our promotion policies, it's our pay policies. Directors absolutely have the mandate and the accountability for making sure all those settings don't discriminate against groups of workers. So, I think the gender pay gap is right smack as a boardroom issue. And I would hope all directors are asking for that data.

Kirsten Patterson:

And that transparency is a must for boards today to know what's going on in an organization or companies they serve.

Sonia Yee:

On the topic of discrimination, diversity, and inclusion, these are all big issues that need to be addressed in the boardroom. They also inform workplace culture, but who determines what that diversity or experience should look like beyond face value and how can diverse thinking add to the richness of that conversation?

Dr Michael Fraser:

If you have you times 10, you are just replicating yourself.

Sonia Yee:

Dr. Michael Fraser from the Institute of Directors.

Dr Michael Fraser:

It comes down to the point that actually one person can't do it all. And therefore you want complimentary views and complimentary skillset, so therefore you have more than you. It's important to have different ways of

thinking and different voices around that board table. That's a healthy dynamic for governance. Governance is not about a paper going forward and everyone says, "Great work. Can we re-look at the numbers?" It's broader than that, but diversity's hard diversity and more recently inclusion. Because inclusion I think is a broader subset. You can be part of a board but not necessarily central and included in it.

Sonia Yee:

We'll get more into that side of things in the next episode. Being a director requires attention across a broad landscape, and that includes socioeconomic and geopolitical issues. But in an environment of so much rapid change, it's not always easy to keep abreast of everything going on. And for those reasons, that's exactly why we need not just diverse thinking, but diverse experiences at the table.

Dr Michael Fraser:

So, do you need to have an understanding of how to uphold your obligations? Yes. Do you need to understand what your legal obligations are, how to read the financial statements? So, I think there's a basic level of needing to know. So, once you cover off the basic minimum, then actually what you're talking about is different types of experience. So if you are looking in a specialist healthcare setting, yes the surgeon will bring experience, but equally, somebody who's received medical treatment may also have an equally rich experience. So, a hospital's not just about operations, it's about the long-term wellbeing of that community. So, it depends on what councils experience and how wide that viewpoint is.

Sonia Yee:

And what about when it comes to age? How does that factor into whether or not someone is equipped or knowledgeable enough to sit on a board? Because if we rule out younger voices for instance, then there are people being excluded from the conversation.

Dr Michael Fraser:

I don't think there's a specific age. I think it goes back to that earlier concept about experience and what good looks like, what's best for that organization. The younger you are at times than may have less relevant experience, but it depends what that experience is in. If you look at some of those tech startups, you do read of exceptional experience that would

serve on a board well. Equally, you may have older individuals that don't necessarily have that experience. So, I don't think it's just related to age. It's often correlated because the more time you've got, then chances are you've got more kind of relevant experience. I think there's a few fish hooks in there.

Sonia Yee:

You are listening to across the board, brought to you by the institute of directors made with the help of ASB bank.

Vanisa Dhiru:

Building diversity is around making sure you have different experiences around the table.

Kirsten Patterson:

Vanisa Dhiru grew up in Palmerston North. She's New Zealand born Indian and says helping her parents out in the family dairy and volunteering in the community taught her about the importance of the customer relationship. She started her governance career in her early twenties and today sits on seven boards and is also a diversity and inclusion consultant.

Vanisa Dhiru:

Your experience can come from being a woman, being someone of minority ethnicity, having an unusual accessibility problem or disability. It can come from being born and brought up in mana too, which are all things that can make you feel and think differently. But also it comes from having worked in different sectors or having exposure to different networks and people that make you think differently. They create and mold the way that you think immediately. So, it's built into your conscious and your unconscious thinking. And so, when you bring people that come from a variety of backgrounds in a variety of different sectors, just bring those different people together. You can get better thinking.

Kirsten Patterson:

So, what does her contribution to the governance space look like?

Vanisa Dhiru:

When I contribute to boards, I'm not thinking, I have to give the ethnic community's voice every time. Often I'm thinking about whatever it is the

issue might be. What I end up contributing is often a grassroots perspective and what it looks like when it lands on the ground with the client, the customer, the stakeholder. So, I'm used to thinking in that manner when you are serving on a committee or a board or advisory group and thinking that you are there to represent a certain type of person, you can do that. But then it's you are using your conscious thinking to be thinking in that manner and going, I've got to really think about this from this perspective. So, you're really thinking about the thoughts and I guess the content that you're contributing, both the conscious and the unconscious, which are really important when you're on a group of diverse people.

Kirsten Patterson:

On the downside, Vanisa often has to carry the weight of multiple ethnicities.

Vanisa Dhiru:

Firstly, it's unfair that that's what you are there to do in some instances. But it's also, I guess for how I have seen it, a way of being able to get a seat on the table. And we've seen those challenges around diversity of different groups over the numerous years evolve and evolve. And now we're seeing more representation style models and appointments. In order for someone like me that perhaps doesn't have as a commercial or professional background, I do need to pull on the other strings that will allow me to get my CV looked at with those opportunities and those appointments. It's like with anything, you've got to bring your whole self, and if your whole self comes with some different ethnicities or diversity markers, that's what you bring. But it shouldn't just rest with you. We need to be able to ensure that the rest of the board is also bringing some thinking and supporting that thinking, not just leaving it to one person.

Kirsten Patterson:

But what about when it comes to filling quotas? Do they add value towards diversity and are they necessary?

Vanisa Dhiru:

Look, I think quotas are actually very helpful. They're helpful in this time and age and this century. I guess my hope is that we will be in a space where we don't need those quotas going forward, but in order to break some of the unconscious bias that we are seeing across lots of boards and

lots of other hiring practices, quotas will help build some of that diversity upfront quickly because that's the challenge that I see is that we're not being able to do that fast. And with the changing nature of New Zealand's demographics with the changing challenges of everyday life, COVID-19 health technology, we need different and diverse opinions around board tables to make those really strong decisions. In order to get that, you have to be able to put in policies like quotas to make sure that you can get those different diverse views.

Kauri Tearaura:

Queer people still face issues of discrimination bias and queer phobia today.

Sonia Yee:

Kauri Tearaura lives in Hamilton. He's the youngest director in the series with a few board roles already under his belt.

Kauri Tearaura:

Kauri's mihi. So, executive board member for Rainbow Youth, a trustee at Seed Waikato and a board member at the Young Workers Resource Center.

Sonia Yee:

Kauri's interest in governance and leadership began at school where he also had the opportunity to work with UN Youth. And he says it was important in framing his place in the world.

Kauri Tearaura:

Definitely it has helped in the sense of thinking more globally and thinking greater than myself, my immediate surroundings, my community. But also in a way that showcases what is special about myself, my community, my people who I work with and sharing that with the world. So, it's a dual process and I think that's probably the biggest thing that I've learned from my experience working with UN Youth is definitely that reciprocal process of globalization, bringing in outside perspectives and sharing what we've got with others.

Sonia Yee:

But it's his personal experience with discrimination and feeling othered that drives Kauri's mission towards change. While he was at high school along with a couple of friends, he started a support group for other rainbow kids.

Kauri Tearaura:

The way that I felt about myself and the way that I presented myself didn't belong, especially in context of being around other young people. I felt different. As I said, othered around 14, 15 years old, year 10 in high school at the time. We'd all had experiences at school where we had felt excluded or even plainly discriminated. And so, that was our vision behind the raupu was to ensure that that wouldn't happen to other rainbow young people at our school.

Sonia Yee:

But it's ultimately his experience. It informs where he chooses to sit and Kauri's still passionate about the issues that are closest to his heart.

Kauri Tearaura:

Today, I have definitely more of an open and fluid concept of my own identity. I tend not to label myself or put myself in boxes. Where my voice is heard is around the cope up and how it speaks to my values. Being on the Rainbow Youth Board, I'm passionate about using my experience as a queer person to provide better outcomes for other people. And similar to my experiences on the seed and the Young Workers Resource Center boards because Seed works in the space of young people and supporting young people to thrive and to find their passions and to assist in their mental wellbeing because I myself am a young person. So, that definitely has impacted my choice of where I sit, particularly with the queer community, it is, or it can be an invisible identity. An identity that you can either choose to show or not and choose to share or not.

Sonia Yee:

And sharing that identity comes down to feeling safe because discrimination for those within the rainbow community can affect individuals on a number of levels.

Kauri Tearaura:

There are specific challenges that queer young people face that perhaps non-queer young people don't face. A lot of queer young people are

adversely affected by negative experiences that they've had growing up, whether it be a lack of supports from whanau or experiences in school where then they've not felt supported there. So, their mental wellbeing is adversely affected and the outcomes that can come from experiences where they have a lack of support from whanau, they can also end up homeless. Our response at Rainbow Youth has been based on a lot of those issues that queer young people face in Aotearoa particularly issues with mental wellbeing and homelessness.

Sonia Yee:

Being on a board like Rainbow Youth isn't a walk in the park and sometimes means standing up time and time again for the one thing you're there for in the first place, the right to exist, the right to be exactly who you are.

Kauri Tearaura:

We even as a board have faced a lot of backlash and a lot of resistance from certain other groups in the work that we've tried to do. It is sad that that is something that we have to do, that we have to develop that thick skin on our own.

Sonia Yee:

But what would change look like and can surveys in collecting data help to solve issues around discrimination in the school or the workplace.

Kauri Tearaura:

Whilst I do want that data, I do recognize that that is a huge limitation on the findings because you could not be sure that you had captured the full voice of queer people in [inaudible 00:25:59]. In that process, we would never want that person to feel exposed or to exploit their vulnerability.

Sonia Yee:

And after this recording, we heard that Kauri was appointed co-chair of Rainbow Youth. Back to Dr. Michael Fraser, who says governance requires an interest and continued learning and growth.

Dr Michael Fraser:

You can learn by going to a course, you can learn it in a book, but it's just a different aspect of learning.

Sonia Yee:

There's also mentorship. It's a good way to build foundational knowledge and tackle those sometimes difficult scenarios and issues in the boardroom.

Dr Michael Fraser:

Almost some kind of shepherding and shadowing that actually being in the boardroom when some of those really difficult conversations take place, you can feel it. These conversations matter and it's different from reading about it or different from necessarily doing it in a classroom setting. So, it's a learning that actually is there to equip good governance. It's a real skill. It's top of your game. It is demanding. That's the other myth. This is not you finish your CEO role, you're in for a soft retirement and you can lean back and assume a few board roles in between your golf games.

Kirsten Patterson:

There are so many different types of skills that need to be factored into a boardroom dynamic. And yes, it's difficult to get a seat at the table, but if you have the desire to serve on a board where you know you can add value, there's every reason you should give it a go.

Paula Browning:

Copyright Licensing New Zealand brought on a board intern last year, a young man who works in the tech space and is under 30. And his experiences youth, different way of looking at the world and the knowledge that he's brought have added nothing but value to the board's considerations.

Kirsten Patterson:

Paula Browning is chief executive of Copyright Licensing New Zealand and Chair of Arts Foundation, We create.

Paula Browning:

He's obviously learning from being involved in a fairly well organized governance structure, but we're also learning an awful lot from him. And if

we hadn't made that space, neither of us would be having that experience. The more diverse a board is, the different perspectives that are brought to the board table, the better off the organization is. Particularly in a country like New Zealand where we are all really very diverse, but we also have obviously responsibilities to our indigenous culture through the treaty and obligations with Māori. And we can't lose sight of that either and I certainly wouldn't say arts creativity sector has nailed it at all.

It's something that you constantly have to challenge yourself on and be engaging with. Also think that we don't necessarily, and again, back to our point about what gets reported in the media and what New Zealanders are aware of, while that content and those people might exist, they're not necessarily being given the platforms for what they're doing to reach a wide audience. And there's probably more work that can be done there. I think some of this comes back to that whole how we value arts, culture and creativity and we value the diversity of what's created here. There's a lot of work to be done and it's constant. I don't think that you'd ever say, right, we've sorted that. Now what's next?

Kirsten Patterson:

Paula also believes that boards, whether those representing the arts or otherwise, should consider those from the creative sector who bring an ability to think outside the box.

Paula Browning:

There are other opportunities as well as through governance to influence the organization and be involved. But most arts organizations I know are open to those conversations and really interested in talking to new people and new communities about what they can do together and how they can be more broadly inclusive. And whether that's at a governance level or in other ways through what the organization does. One of the things that's inherent in creativity is the problem-solving. I've got this in my house with the youngest child who is the one who's quite chronically dyslexic.

My background's in accounting, so I tend to be the spreadsheet nut where she comes to problems from a very different perspective. And more often than not, her solutions are better mine. I think that the value of differences in thinking styles, learning styles, ways of seeing problems can benefit boards in ways that a lot of boards wouldn't understand until you've tried it. Experimenting with board structures to make space for people who do think differently, I think is really useful for boards.

Sonia Yee:

Included in the diversity discussion is access, or what most people think of as disability. And having access to opportunities as we know is not created equally.

Minnie Baragwanath:

25% of the population, over 1 million New Zealanders, by the time we're 65, 50% of people over the age of 65 have at least one impairment. And if we live long enough through aging, all of us will experience age-related disability and impairment.

Sonia Yee:

Minnie Baragwanath knows a lot about the challenges around disability and access needs. As a CE for the Global Center for Possibility at the Auckland University of Technology or AUT she's been advocating for change and discourse in the access space for the better part of two decades.

Minnie Baragwanath:

Having an access need or an impairment or disability is actually part of being human. It's not just some small group who use a wheelchair over there to the side. Secondly, the concept of impairment or disability. It encompasses people with any kind of mental health learning impairment, physical, sensory. It's a huge number of people who are impacted.

Sonia Yee:

And this is a space that Minnie knows all too well in terms of her own disability. Some might say it's invisible.

Minnie Baragwanath:

I was diagnosed at 14, nearly 15 with a congenital site condition called Stargardt. And so, I don't have vision in the center of my eyes, but I have peripheral vision, but it means I have difficulty seeing people's faces, reading text, whether that's in a book, on a phone, on a computer, any written word, actually printed word.

Sonia Yee:

But with technology and a good education, she's been able to achieve a lot without her impairment limiting her.

Minnie Baragwanath:

As an access citizen. You learn to be incredibly adaptive, creative and resilient. And that's why I guess I get frustrated when people look at people's supposed limitations. If I was a board, I'd be thinking, shoot, what extraordinary ability. Who doesn't want someone who's creative problem-solving and resilient?

Sonia Yee:

Minnie says the idea of disability has a lot to do with ingrained stereotypes and the image of someone confined to a wheelchair. Something that often prompts discomfort and leads to discrimination. So, what can recruiters do to make jobs and opportunities accessible at every level? Is it as simple as a use of language and how a role is framed or something more?

Minnie Baragwanath:

It's not so much the wording because every ad should be open to every appropriately skilled candidate to apply for. People used to say, you must have a driver's license. And okay, look, if you're going to be a taxi driver or an Uber driver, well, okay, that makes sense. So, it's more about things like that. It's more about ensuring your recruitment agency and however you are promoting that ad are on websites. There are some ads and websites I simply can't access as a blind person who uses screen reading software. So, as the HR lead or whoever's posting the ad, ask your recruitment agency to guarantee that their recruitment process is accessible. How do they know when they go out and search? And how do they know that when they're interviewing people and getting CVs, have they checked with an appropriate agency that every touchpoint along the way has been designed in a way that every person can access.

Sonia Yee:

But in order to progress things in the space? Minnie says there's one important question that boards need to ask themselves first.

Minnie Baragwanath:

Why is accessibility important? And if a board in an organization can't articulate that, that's a problem. Accessibility needs to be approached strategically as a strategic thread through the organization. The board might need some support to understand and unpack, okay, why is access important to us? And to come up with a leadership and strategic statement

that makes sense to that organization and the sector. It also provides both a vision and a touchstone to keep that organization clear around the why of accessibility. So a bank, 25% of the population in New Zealand has an access need. That means, do we know if 25% of our customers have an access need? Chances are they do. How are we ensuring that we, as a banquet, that values customer service, which I'm hoping they do, how are we ensuring we're truly meeting the needs of our diverse customer base? What does that look like? How do we know? Who have we asked? What's the story we as X bank want to be able to tell about ourselves and our commitment in two years' time, in five years' time, in 10 years' time? Because it will take time.

Sonia Yee:

But Minnie's worry is that if no one makes a start, then nothing will change.

Minnie Baragwanath:

Access citizens have been around as long as we've had human beings, nothing about this is new. What does need to shift is our framing and our understanding of the massive contribution access citizens have always made to our society, but can and could continue to make if we made some effort to become more accessible across our boards in our organizations. Because we are missing out on incredible talent by not employing people, by not ensuring people are also being promoted and have professional pathways. And so much of this is because our thinking and our stereotypes, I think that lots of people have in their minds are so actually offensive. It's just time that boards and organization have invested in updating their understanding. There is some work to be done here.

Sonia Yee:

That was mini Minnie Baragwanath.

Kirsten Patterson:

You also heard Paula Browning, Dr. Michael Fraser, Vanisa Dhiru, Kauri Tearaura and Dr. Jim McAloon. And the sound engineer for the series is Mark Chesterman. I'm **Kirsten Patterson**.

Sonia Yee:

And I'm the **Sonia Yee**. If you'd like to listen to more from the series, you can download or subscribe on iHeartRadio, Spotify, Apple, or wherever you get your podcasts.

Kirsten Patterson:

And if you'd like to find out more about governance or what it means to sit on a board, head to iod.org.nz. Next time on across the board, we address what it means for CEOs to speak out, including the ramifications of saying too much.

Sonia Yee:

Or too little.

Kirsten Patterson:

And why social issues matter in a landscape that demands transparency from the top. Ka kite.

Sonia Yee:

Catch you next time.