



MEDIA RELEASE

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PowerNet appoints new Chief Operating Officer

Perth-based Rio Tinto executive Michelle Henderson has been named as PowerNet's new chief operating officer.

She has been with Rio Tinto for 24 years. Henderson, who is currently the general manager of engineering and asset management at Rio Tinto Iron Ore, started her career at the New Zealand Aluminium Smelters' Tiwai plant after graduating from Auckland University in the early 1990s.

After leaving NZAS in 2010, Henderson was transferred to Rio Tinto Aluminium's Gladstone operations in Queensland, and held various roles there before transferring to the firm's iron ore operations in Western Australia.

The roles she has held with the global miner means she will bring significant engineering, leadership, business improvement and workplace safety experience, PowerNet chief executive Jason Franklin says.

Henderson's proven ability to lead large teams and experience in lean manufacturing practices fits PowerNet's ambitions as a business, he says. And, having previously worked alongside Henderson at Rio Tinto, Franklin is "very comfortable" she is the right person for the job.

Henderson will join PowerNet's executive team at the start of October once she has relocated back to Southland with her family.

"She sees it as a return home for herself and her family."

Changes

PowerNet is owned by Electricity Invercargill Limited and The Power Company Limited, which owns the Southern networks. The firm manages those networks and also has a contract to manage the OtagoNet network, which is jointly owned by its shareholders.

Franklin announced in February that PowerNet was creating a chief operations executive role following the amalgamation of its Power Services and Otago Power Services teams into the core firm last year.

He says the newly created role is critically important for PowerNet and it undertook an extensive search through an external recruitment company to ensure the best person was selected.

The firm moved to a new executive structure to accommodate those changes in April.

The change consolidated PowerNet's network operations, disestablishing two roles; general manager of technical and network performance and general manager of customer, metering and distribution services.

Previously one general manager was broadly responsible for lines and poles and the other oversaw substations and system controls.

Streamlined system

The changes also included shifting oversight of the networks' Geographic Information System and operating systems to the business support team and customer and metering services responsibilities were transferred to PowerNet's finance and commercial team.

Franklin says the amalgamation is already proving beneficial in bringing together formerly disparate teams from PowerNet's different distribution regions.

A "small example" is the three teams of five staff sent to help rebuild the Fiji electricity network after cyclone Winston, which is "working together very well."

PowerNet is also seeing results from other initiatives including raising health and safety standards, implementing lean manufacturing practices and starting up an in-house leadership programme.

"All these are bringing the team together as one," Franklin says.

"It is a culmination of change over the past two to three years. I am very positive about the way the organisation is developing."

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For more information please contact:

Jason Franklin

027 214 5309