

From cooking burgers to the boardroom



While we're all familiar with the *golden arches* and popular menu of McDonald's, what you may not know is how much the company values *career training* and *professional development*. WOMAN caught up with Kylie Freeland on her *remarkable 27-year* career that now sees her *lead the business* in Aotearoa.

SINCE OPENING ITS FIRST RESTAURANT in Porirua in 1976, McDonald's New Zealand has gone on to experience incredible success. Over 40 years later, the business has opened 170 restaurants nationwide, serving over one million people each week. At the head of it all is Managing Director of New Zealand and Pacific Islands, Kylie Freeland, whose incredible rise to senior management is a true success story for both herself and McDonald's.

Kylie's inspirational journey with McDonald's started while she was still in school, with her parents advocating it as a great place to get job experience. Kylie still remembers her first shift at the local Jindalee McDonald's in Brisbane, "I was horrified because they put me in the kitchen, and I was not expecting that at all." She persevered and within a couple of weeks her engaging personality had been noticed, leading her to land a role as a hostess for birthday parties as well.

Years later, while completing her university studies in radiation therapy, Kylie would be offered the amazing opportunity to become restaurant manager of a brand-new location in Calamvale. "So, I took that opportunity and stopped my studies thinking I would go back... but I think the rest is history." She surged upward through the operations pathways all the way to the top, eventually running all the company-owned restaurants in Queensland. Kylie continued to thrive in this new role and McDonald's in kind continued to offer her opportunities to further her career, this time inviting her to join the national business in Sydney.

Kylie, along with her wife and young family, bravely decided to take the plunge and move to Sydney. Here, she would experience a variety of roles including business development manager, and a challengingly timed position as head of the Australia and New Zealand supply chain network when the COVID-19 pandemic struck. Then, in 2022, Kylie was offered the opportunity to lead the McDonald's New Zealand business. After initially commuting from Australia, Kylie was then joined by her family. Kylie says the first year flew by and she is "loving the NZ business and settling into the country. In fact, we headed back to Australia for Christmas and we all said we were looking forward to coming back home to NZ."

Kylie's success story is a testament not only to her own hard work but also to the company's support for the growth of its team members. "McDonald's has always supported professional growth, encouraging promotion and support in the early days of my career to sponsoring my master's degree in business and providing countless opportunities to expand my knowledge and expertise", says Kylie. Since joining the senior leadership group, she has come to realise that the majority of its other members have also built their way up from a restaurant background. This is compelling evidence of the fact that McDonald's is committed to, as Kylie puts it, "developing people from where they are today to wherever they want to be in the future", going on to add "the sky really is the limit within McDonald's." **W**