



CASE STUDY

Westpac

“Westpac Group recognises and values our people for their individual differences, qualities, ideas and insights. Workplace inclusion and diversity involve recognising the value that each and every one of us brings to the workplace.”

Sila Iona, Westpac Bank Manager, Mangere

A leading bank leads the way!

Westpac, New Zealand, is one of Aotearoa’s major banks. They are undeniably committed to improving their services for all Deaf and hard of hearing customers and employees, whether they communicate through spoken language or NZSL. The processes they’ve developed on their journey to becoming HAWP accredited in July 2023 are a testament to this.

A commitment strengthened through learning

As a business, Westpac is the passionate guardian of its Inclusion and Diversity policy. It does everything to ensure this is a policy in action, not just words on a page.

“Westpac Group recognises and values our people for their individual differences, qualities, ideas and insights. Workplace inclusion and diversity involve recognising the value that each and every one of us brings to the workplace”

“So proud and happy to be able to learn Sign Language, to help communicate better with our Deaf and hard of hearing community, definitely a game changer for my team.”



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WHILE WE RAN THE WORKSHOP AND ONLINE HEARING TESTING, PEOPLE UNDERSTOOD MY NEEDS MORE. I WAS ACCOMMODATED MORE APPROPRIATELY BY MY IMMEDIATE TEAM. SHOWING LEARNING CREATES EMPATHY!

EMPLOYEE WITH HEARING LOSS.

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“Inclusion means supporting people from all backgrounds and perspectives across the course of their career so that they feel supported, valued and comfortable at work. Embracing workplace inclusion and diversity involves developing people management strategies that accommodate and recognise diversity.”

Examples of this commitment include their customer advocacy policy, which ensures the accommodation of all customer access needs, and their recruitment statement. Westpac encourages anyone to apply for advertised positions, including those who are neurodiverse, are Deaf or hard of hearing, or anyone with health conditions or disabilities.

Turning learning into action

Throughout the HAWP accreditation process, the Westpac team learned many practical steps they can implement to accommodate their Deaf and hard of hearing employees and customers.

Live captioning is a simple and effective way to ensure all meeting attendees can access all spoken content in real time. Westpac has done a lot of work to ensure all teams incorporate live captioning in all meetings as a standard practice.

Additionally, their evacuation and emergency procedures now include best practices for alerting Deaf and hard of hearing employees and staff to ensure all warning systems prioritise their safety.

Another excellent accommodation for Deaf and hard of hearing employees is creating acoustically secure spaces; this is a fantastic way to ensure a hearing-aware work environment. These rooms, or pods, can serve as time-out zones where external noise is blocked out, and an employee can take time out, seek a quiet space to focus or hold a meeting or conversation where their hearing will not be compromised. Westpac has created one-person phone booths and slightly bigger pods that allow for meetings between 2 or 4 people.

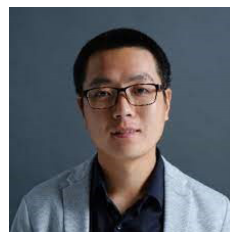
Awareness paves the way for inclusion

Westpac employees participated in a Hearing Awareness workshop and a Deaf Awareness: An Introduction to New Zealand Sign Language workshop over the course of their accreditation journey. These courses shed light on the impacts of hearing loss and the associated environmental risks and empower teams to prioritise hearing health in the workplace. They also address common misconceptions and show people how they can accommodate Deaf and hard of hearing employees and customers, including learning some essential signs in New Zealand Sign Language. The Westpac team has gone from strength to strength since becoming HAWP accredited and is proud to have set this standard among their peers.

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OBTAINING THE HEARING ACCREDITATION IS A SIGNIFICANT STEP FORWARD FOR WESTPAC SO THAT OUR SERVICE AND PRODUCT WILL BE MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR OUR CUSTOMERS, AND WORKPLACE FOR INCLUSIVE AND DIVERSE FOR OUR PEOPLE.

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Kelvin Xu

Co-chair of Westpac Accessibility Network.