

Friday 8 March 2024 – International Women’s Day

BUILDhers the home built by women – #InspiresInclusion across the industry

Women are hugely under-represented in the building and construction sector. In New Zealand less than 16% of tradespeople are women, with only 3.8% on the tools¹.

Given that, Fletcher Living’s innovative BUILDhers project had a dual purpose. They wanted to achieve a New Zealand first by building a home with an entirely female crew, and in doing so, spark a frank conversation about the lack of female representation in the building and construction industry and why that needs to change.

Aurelie Le Gall, Fletcher Living Branch Manager Auckland North, and the woman behind making BUILDhers a reality, says,

“Fletcher Living, with the backing of Fletcher Building, is ideally placed to challenge the way people think about the industry and normalise the presence of women on-site.

“In an industry with an extreme skills shortage, the lack of female participation is unfathomable. By failing to engage women effectively, the industry is essentially ruling out over half of the workforce and limiting its talent pool.”

With that motivation came the foundations of BUILDhers - a project challenging stereotypes by providing female tradespeople with a platform to show what is possible and encourage women interested in a career in building and construction to give it a go.

In Auckland’s Whenuapai, the first BUILDhers project has been completed. A four-bedroom, two and a half-bathroom home, planned, designed, engineered, and built by a team of more than 40 women.

“It’s been incredibly rewarding seeing the women showcase their skills and grow in confidence as they worked alongside each other. Female apprentices who have been mentored by more experienced builders on the site, have also been given a boost with the opportunity to take on more responsibility than they would usually get,” says Aurelie.

BUILDhers aimed to be a 100% female build, but the point they set out to highlight – a severe lack of female inclusion in the industry – was the hurdle they couldn't overcome. Finding women with the right level of experience in key trades such as scaffolding, meant the project finished up being an approximately 75% female build.

“We could have pushed out delivery of the build to keep it all female – every nail driven in by a woman, but the point of the project was to be a real build, with real timelines and budgets – otherwise what point would we actually be making.

“As I reflect on what we have achieved, yes we built a house, but what we have really built is the foundations of a community of capable, experienced women who will inspire the next generation of females to consider a career in trades. This will also see many find a pathway to financial independence,” says Aurelie.

The BUILDhers crew were honoured to have the Rt Hon Christopher Luxon, Prime Minister join them on International Women's Day, to see what they have achieved and hear first-hand why they believe other women should be inspired to pursue a career in trades.

"Marking International Women's Day with BUILDhers really highlighted this year's theme #InspireInclusion to me. They should be enormously proud of what they achieved. I have no doubt it will help encourage women to pursue and establish successful careers in the construction industry," says the Prime Minister.

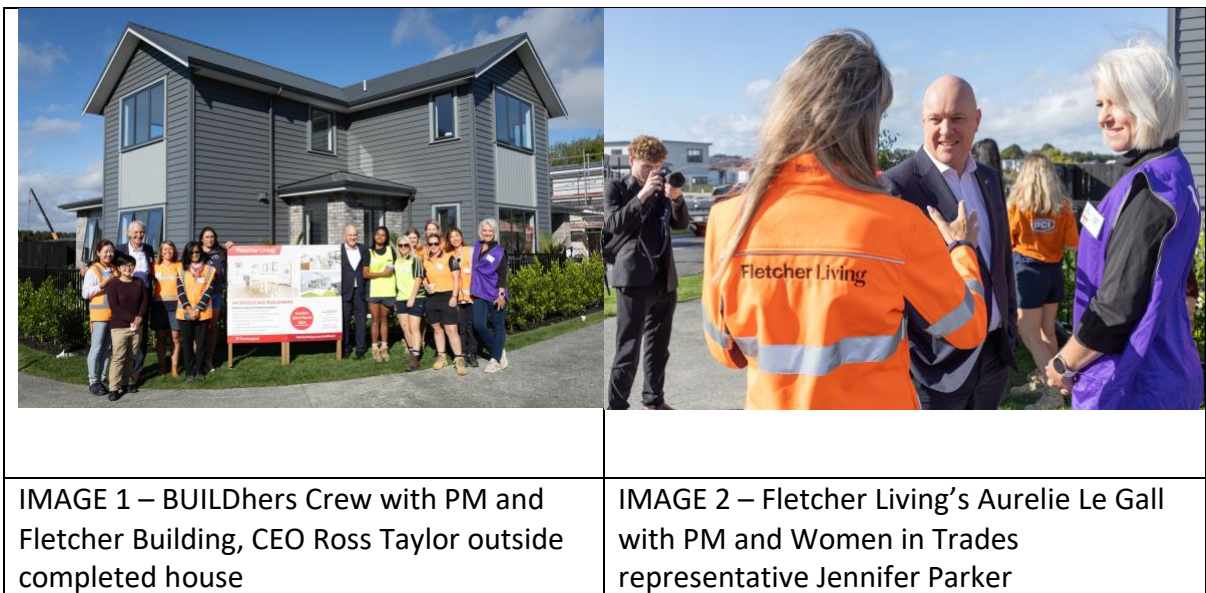




IMAGE 3 – Prime Minister with Fletcher Living, BUILDhers, Site Manager, Samantha Gerretzen



IMAGE 4 – Fletcher Living's Aurelie Le Gall with PM

“BUILDhers has successfully captured the imagination of the industry – the conversation can only grow from here,” says Aurelie.

The first BUILDhers home will be sold at auction, by a female auctioneer on site, 56 Samuel Marsden Place, Whenuapai on Saturday 23 March 2024.

#Ends

Note to editors

- ¹ Source - *Persons Employed by Sex in the Construction, August 2023*, Statistics New Zealand
- Championing women and working towards greater gender balance is a particular focus for Fletcher Building, with a set target to reach 30% women in leadership by FY27. Fletcher Residential and Development, of which Fletcher Living is part of, is currently at 29.2%
- Images from the event. [2024 FBU - Google Drive](#). Please credit: Photographer Greg Bowker, Fletcher Building Supplied
- Link to video footage of the BUILDhers project.
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/bd0470zlddht10ov6316v/h?rlkey=1tq4uw1nus1joo146wlw04rkl&dl=0>

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