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STORIES

**Fiona Blair**

**CEO Brimbank**  
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**Nick:** Fiona is a great example of a climate creating leader. I have had the opportunity to coach many of Fiona's colleagues so I asked the question "What does it feel like to work with Fiona?" This is the type of feedback I received. "I feel supported." "No matter what happens I know Fiona has my back." "I am very clear of what is expected of me." "Fiona, encourages me to grow and develop. She is also focused on my wellbeing."

For two years at the DoT, I focused on leadership and culture in my team. When you pick up the phone and call someone to see how they are doing - you never know what impact you are having on people - that one simple call I was told made a difference.

**What leadership shadow will you**



I started my career as a Physical Education + Science teacher. How did I end up a CEO at Brimbank? My mentors and the network of other female leaders supported me. Tracey Slater (MD of Baron Water) framed the 'What If' question - what if you can do this? She has always encouraged and supported me to take on new challenges. Surrounding myself with really good people and other female leaders has been important to me. I have an obligation to other female leaders to lift them up.

**FIONA'S TOP CEO TIPS**

**Nick asked Fiona:** "How do you get your head around the challenge of being a new CEO? How do you plan for that change - what are the first things you put into place?"

**Fiona:** I came in with a structured approach for my first 90 days, thinking about what impact I wanted to have and what did I want to achieve, how did I want people to experience me and feel. I spoke to other CEO's for their top tips - what did they do as a new CEO and what did they wish they had done as a new CEO. Here's are some my top leadership tips:

- Whatever hand you have been dealt - you have to deal with it.
- Surround yourself with good people, but not people like you. Values and behaviours are just as important as capability.
- Always being authentic. How you connect with people must be genuine, caring and personal.
- Be aware of your spark - know what gives you energy and build that into your every day.
- What's the impact your making? Check in with yourself - question what do I need to do differently?
- Self care is fundamental - you need to look after yourself.
- What is your purpose, your vision and what do you need from people to get you there.



**What did you take out of the state government experience and how the relationship between the two levels of government work?**

**Fiona:** Understanding how the connections in State Govt. work, gave me insights into budget process, the machinations of state government, how minister offices work, networks and policy. Knowing this has been helpful returning to local government and seeing opportunities to partner and connect better with state government.



**Andrew:** "How do you see yourself as a social change maker impacting with the community - in terms of your role as CEO and the bigger picture?"



**How do you measure your impact, especially at a CEO level and in a new organisation to find how people are feeling, etc.?**

**Fiona:** A staff engagement survey was carried out within 6 months of my role as CEO, with results reflecting very high engagement. Over 500 comments were captured and one of the strong themes was about me - what people noticed and appreciated - the evidence of impact.

**Fiona:** I have always believed in investing in people to develop their leadership capability - by making better leaders, staff have a better experience and that means better outcomes for the community. My original training as a teacher has influenced me and I believe that as a leader I must not only learn myself but create a learning environment for others to learn .