CLIFTONS CASE STUDY

Women of Pōneke

Celebrating the Women Behind Wellington's Hospitality Community



Overview

Through the Cliftons ESG Support Grant Program, Cliftons partnered with Women of Pōneke, a Wellington-based charitable organisation dedicated to celebrating, connecting, uplifting and supporting women of Wellington. The event was called 'Soulful Stories' and was dedicated to celebrating women working across the food and hospitality sector in Pōneke. The partnership enabled the delivery of a networking and storytelling event held at Cliftons Wellington.

Bringing together 120 attendees in a completely sold-out event despite wet and challenging weather conditions in Wellington, the event created a platform for women across their community to connect, share experiences and learn from a diverse group of inspiring leaders in hospitality, while supporting the work of food rescue social enterprise Everybody Eats.

The Challenge

Wellington's food and hospitality industry is internationally recognised, yet many of the women driving its success often remain behind the scenes.

Women of Pōneke wanted to create an event that would celebrate their stories, foster meaningful connections and provide visibility for women shaping the region's vibrant hospitality community. Importantly, Women of Pōneke care deeply about the experience of their attendees; they wanted to hold their event in a stunning location while providing quality food and beverage. At the same time, the organisation was committed to ensuring the event delivered tangible social and environmental outcomes rather than simply functioning as a networking opportunity.

As a charitable organisation, maintaining accessibility for the Women of Pōneke was also critical. The event needed to remain affordable while providing a professional experience that reflected the calibre of the attendees and speakers involved.



The Solution

Through the Cliftons ESG Support Grant Program, Cliftons provided support to help bring the event to life at its Wellington venue.

Designed as an evening of community, conversation and celebration, the event featured a panel of hospitality leaders sharing stories of creativity, resilience and joy. Speakers included the Head Chef at Everybody Eats, Harri Fletcher, the 'Gin Doctors' of Lippy Gin, Jo Davy and Helen Gower and Kate Hutchison, of Capitol Restaurant.

The event combined:

- Networking opportunities for women
- A curated speaker panel focused on professional and personal journeys
- Food-rescue catering delivered by Everybody Eats
- Wine pairings generously supported by Luna Estate
- Accessible ticketing options to encourage broad participation and remove barriers to attendance

The central Wellington location, flexible event space and integrated event support provided an environment where attendees could connect, learn and celebrate together.

Client Perspective

"The Cliftons team were an absolute dream to work with and played an important role in bringing Soulful Stories to life. Their support helped us create an exceptional experience for our attendees while maximising the positive impact we could deliver for our community partners." – ***Kate Lee, Co-Founder, Women of Pōneke***

Driving ESG Impact Through Partnership

A defining feature of the event was its commitment to creating measurable environmental and social outcomes.

By partnering with Everybody Eats, most of the catering was prepared using rescued surplus food that would otherwise have gone to waste. This helped demonstrate practical approaches to reducing food waste while showcasing how events can support a more circular economy.

The event also generated awareness and support for Everybody Eats' mission to reduce food insecurity and social isolation across New Zealand. Through the partnership, the event delivered measurable impact, serving 706 three-course meals to people in need, rescuing an estimated 400kg of food from landfill and generating an additional $150 in donations to support Everybody Eats' ongoing work. These outcomes demonstrated how purpose-led events can create tangible environmental and social benefits for local communities.



Supporting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

The event strongly aligned with Cliftons' ESG priorities by creating opportunities for women to build connections, increase their professional visibility and share experiences within an inclusive environment.

Women of Pōneke's charitable mission focuses on improving access and inclusiveness through discounted and complimentary ticket options, ensuring financial barriers do not prevent participation.

By creating a platform for women in their community to learn from one another and expand their networks, the event helped foster a more connected and supportive industry community.

ESG Impact

The partnership delivered meaningful outcomes across several key Cliftons ESG priorities:

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Providing a platform to celebrate and elevate women working throughout Wellington's food and hospitality sector.

Community & Social Impact
Supporting community connection, professional development and fundraising awareness for Everybody Eats and its mission to address food insecurity and social isolation.

Environmental Sustainability
Showcasing food rescue and waste minimisation through catering prepared using rescued surplus food that would otherwise have been discarded.





Results

The Women of Pōneke event successfully brought together community members with hospitality professionals for an evening focused on connection, storytelling and positive social impact.

The event delivered meaningful outcomes for attendees, the wider community and the environment, including:

- 120 attendees participating in the event
- 706 three-course meals served to people in need through Everybody Eats
- An estimated 400kg of food rescued from landfill
- $150 in additional donations raised to support Everybody Eats
- Increased visibility and recognition for women across Wellington's hospitality sector
- Stronger networks and community connections
- Greater awareness of food rescue, sustainability and social impact initiatives

The event demonstrated how collaboration between community organisations, purpose-led partners and industry supporters can create lasting impact well beyond the event itself.

Looking Forward

Cliftons is proud to support organisations that bring people together to create positive change.

Through partnerships such as Women of Pōneke, the Cliftons ESG Support Grant Program helps community organisations access professional event spaces and support, enabling important conversations, stronger community connections and measurable ESG outcomes.

Together, Cliftons and Women of Pōneke demonstrated how events can celebrate leadership, strengthen communities and contribute to a more sustainable future.

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