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**Beyond**



On the ball: Bianca Mueller loved her basketball, but she also had a penchant for the law which she has turned into a business in New Zealand.

Photos: JOHN NICHOLSON/FAIRFAX NZ

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**Key Appointments**

**Why work anywhere else?**

**HAWKE'S BAY DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD**  
Whakawatea

Finding the right balance between work opportunities and lifestyle is not difficult in Hawke's Bay. Hawke's Bay District Health Board provides both! We are large enough to provide variety, depth of experience, good support and supervision, yet small enough to offer a friendly team with good social interaction. And all in an enviable lifestyle location.

**Kaiwhakahaere, Service Manager Māori Health**

Whuia te toa ki te rangi. Ka haere ē whai mātou i ngā tapuwae ō Uenuku kia ora ai tō tatau iwi. Mēna he tangata pūkenga, mātau i nga mahi rangatōpu hauora rānei. Tēna tukuna mai, hikoihia tō mātou huarahi hei Kaiwhakahaere.

If you're looking for a brilliant opportunity in Māori Health join our high performing team as Māori Health Service Manager. This is a varied role working at both strategic and operational levels. You will be part of the Māori Leadership Team leading an operational team delivering a range of services to Māori consumers and whānau, develop strategy, implement new initiatives and provide advice to accelerate Māori health gains.

Your contribution will assist us to accelerate Māori health gains across the region by building a responsive health sector for Māori through building a capable health workforce.

**Senior Health and Social Policy Advisor, Māori Health**

Kia hiwa rā, kia hiwa rā, e te Iwi. Kei te watea tetahi tunga ki roto i te Wahanga Hauora Māori, mena tenei to hiahia, tukuna mai!

Hawke's Bay District Health Board oversees and delivers services to improve the health and social needs of Māori. We are looking for an experienced Senior Health and Social Policy Advisor who is highly motivated and passionate for making a difference in the health of Māori in Hawke's Bay and the Chatham Islands. You will be key in assisting the Māori Health Leadership Team with strategic advice, evaluation, research and analysis.

For more detailed information about these positions and to apply please visit our website. Alternatively contact Tracee Te Huia, Tumuaki General Manager Māori Health on 027 449 7306 to discuss.

If you think you are the right person for either of these jobs, and you're passionate about making a difference in Māori health please apply today!

**Applications close Monday 16 June 2014.**

For more information and to apply, please visit our website

[www.hawkesbay.health.nz](http://www.hawkesbay.health.nz)

## A German legal eagle with an eye for a good market niche

This new citizen likes to express the ideas of the law in plain language.

**I**T WAS big call for Bianca Mueller – play basketball or practise law.

She says she loved nothing more than playing basketball in Germany's top women's basketball league.

Sport, and basketball in particular, had always been Bianca's "thing" and during her school and university days it was all she could think about.

"Basketball was my biggest passion. I made it to the Bundesliga, and played semi-professionally. We didn't get paid but our expenses were paid for."

But when came crunch time – a time along university exams loomed and Mueller realised something had to give.

"Until then I had studied law and played basketball, but law was really only a sideshow," she laughs.

"I knew I had come to a point where I needed to make a decision. Based on rationale, law in the end had the better long-term prospects.

"I could play professional, or semi-professional basketball only for so long and it would never have paid the bills.

"Giving up basketball was a tough decision. I was in mourning. It was a huge part of my life. But the more I started really immersing myself in law the more I noticed that I actually enjoyed it and I was good at it."

It's a decision she has never regretted, and now 12 years on Bianca is a qualified judge in

Germany and fully-fledged lawyer in Germany and New Zealand, running her own firm called Law Down Under, specialising in technology, intellectual property law and international law.

And recently she celebrated her New Zealand citizenship at a ceremony in Lower Hutt after a seven-year-long immigration process.

"Getting citizenship was very exciting – I arrived here seven years ago with a typical stream of German lawyers with a view to do their masters.

"I was meant to leave after the completion of my masters, specialising in international trade law, at Vic Uni but halfway through the year-long programme I found a job, an interesting job, and I thought I'd be crazy to go back to Europe and not take the opportunity.

"Now I'm a New Zealand citizen!"

It turns out the job too good to turn down was at the Ministry of Justice, where she started out as a research assistant and wound up as a report writer working with the Waitangi Tribunal on the controversial Wai 262 claim relating to intellectual property rights to indigenous flora and fauna.

"I had heard about the Wai 262 claim and since I had an intellectual property background I told my manager I was here if I could be of help and things evolved from that – I ended up writing two chapters of that 1000-page report issued by the Tribunal in 2011.

"It was just a privilege to work on that claim, though it was a massive transitioning process for me personally.

"Having come from a civil law country and now being in a common law country was quite a transition – it's a little bit like the metric system and the American system. You have to recalibrate

your thinking and your approach.

"To be honest, it's still a work in progress, but I now understand that New Zealand's legal system is influenced by its cultural and historical background."

Mueller's four-year stint at the Ministry of Justice not only gave her a greater understanding of the New Zealand legal system, it also gave her the chance to explore new legal areas too, such as international trade and environmental law.

This led her into a project management role for Victoria University that involved looking after a project on New Zealand's commercial regulations and how they can be made more efficient.

At the same time she studied and completed the papers needed to become a qualified New Zealand lawyer.

While preparing for her overseas practitioner's exam she and a lawyer friend began writing a criminal law textbook for students and young practitioners and it was published in November 2013.

"We felt the material we had to study was either too thin or too convoluted. I have a passion for writing and we thought there was a need for something that showed the material in a more structured way and in context, so we put complex ideas and issues into plain English.

"Lexis Nexis just loved the idea. They bought the entire manuscript off us."

These days Bianca continues to satisfy her passion for writing and translating complex legal issues into plain English that are published in various legal magazines and other publications.

Her mainstay, though, is her business, Law Down Under, which mainly concentrates on European transnational and commercial relationships with Australia and New Zealand.

"That was an obvious niche. It's

funny because I always thought I would start my own business; I just didn't think it would be a law firm, to be honest.

"Back home, when I was studying, I started an online shop selling cellphones – law for a long time was just a sideshow to that too, and just two years ago I thought about starting a legal publishing company but market research showed that's probably not a good idea in a small market like New Zealand."

Through Law Down Under Bianca spends much of her time working with German companies and investors branching into the New Zealand or Australian markets and vice versa.

While she's bound by confidentiality and can't discuss projects or dealings, she says much of her work focuses on technology, IP, commercial or enforcement of international judgments, and drafting of international agreements.

The fact that she can speak German, English and Spanish is handy too.

"Most German clients are just happy to be able to talk to a lawyer in German when it's about New Zealand or Australia. Nothing can get lost in translation; you can inform them clearly of what they are getting into if they buy a business here."

Mueller knows the German system well. Having graduated with a law degree from the universities of Freiburg and Potsdam, she was admitted to the bar which also qualifies her as a judge.

Rather than spend time in the courts, she landed a job at multinational media corporation Bertelsmann where she focused on IP and software licensing work.

A year later she not only moved jobs but also countries, taking on a junior clerkship role at a law firm in Malaga in southern Spain. While

in Spain, the "beautiful landscape and remoteness" of New Zealand beckoned – the ideal place, she thought, to spend a year completing her masters.

"I'm not sure what kind of expectation I had when I came here, but I have no intention of leaving now!" Being a sports nut in a sports-mad nation also helps her to feel right at home here.

Just last year Bianca finally returned to playing basketball, albeit socially.

She's also playing football for Petone's first women's team and dabbles in surfing.

"I'm an active person and law is quite a sedentary-type job. It's not something that comes easy to me so I need to be active outside of work."

**Q+A**

**QUICK QUESTIONS**

**NAME:** Bianca Mueller

**BORN:** 1978, in Freiburg, Germany.

**FIRST JOB:** Delivering circulars.

**FAVOURITE MOVIE:** *American Beauty*

**FAVOURITE ALBUM:** At the moment it's *Pure Heroine* by Lorde

**FAVOURITE FOOD:** ALL (except for fish and celery)

**FAVOURITE BOOK:** *Who am I? And if so, how many?* By Richard David Precht.

'Go for the moon. If you don't get it, you'll still be heading for a star'

WILLIS REED

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