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From: Cory Neale, Commanding Officer 2nd/1st Battalion, NZ Army

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To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to provide a professional reference for Dr Ellen Nelson. On 08 Mar 2022, I was fortunate to open a conference for International Women's Day at which Dr Nelson was the guest speaker. A respected and progressive academic, Dr Nelson as speaker was highly anticipated and motivated a wide cross-section of people to attend.

During the conference Dr Nelson talked to a number of topical issues in-line with her research field. An engaging speaker who prepared well, therefore, was highly relatable to the audience, Dr Nelson held the room completely and led the conference in her open and honest manner through numerous and related subjects. Of particular note, although the conference was for International Women's Day, Dr Nelson worked hard to expand her themes so that everyone could see the benefit of her assertions for all individuals. Specifically, that improving the environment for our women team members would correlate to improved productivity and satisfaction for the whole team.

As my own organisation continues on the journey to promote and harness the power of our teams, hence I was also at the conference in a speaking capacity, Dr Nelson discussed a number of topics, of which three resonated strongly with me. Dr Nelson went to lengths to explain that diversity by itself, as Dr Nelson put it; having one of each type, is not effective. To generate tangible effects from difference and differences, diversity must be paired with inclusivity and ensuring the social environment is fit for purpose; supportive and respectful. Dr Nelson, a former Army officer, also used her deep understanding of military structures to continue that it is also cognitive diversity – the power to build on ideas and solve complex problems in teams through bringing different perspectives together is critical to high performance and team success. This idea poses an interesting challenge for us all in the military as from day one of an individual's career they are taught to think and act within normalised, sometimes traditionally based conventions. Additionally, Dr Nelson introduced the subject of working school hours as a means of improving work-life balance for parents. Aside from making a strong case for improved productivity, Dr Nelson highlighted the truism that an organisation like the military can better sustain and retain a highly skilled and difficult to replace workforce through something as simple as applying the 'work school hours' concept. This last point really connected with the group as a sustainable way to manage team members who are also parents.

Dr Nelson is a passionate and knowledgeable presenter who has embraced the challenges facing the target audience, applied her professional experience and academic acumen to offer constructive solutions for leaders and team members alike. The insights she gave were meaningful and impactful and I know that within my sphere of influence, will generate tangible improvements for all personnel.

With people at the centre of most organisations, Dr Nelson has a powerful message to share. I would happily recommend Dr Nelson to any organisation seeking to grow and maximise talent. Any employer that cares about their staff and is brave enough to challenge the status quo should seek out the opportunity to work with Dr Nelson. It will enrich their perspective and embolden them to change.

Sincerely,

CORY NEALE
Lieutenant Colonel
Commanding Officer