

# Coming out is a very personal decision

October 11 is International Coming Out Day. This year, Shell will be marking this important day for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) staff by flying, for the first time, the symbolic rainbow-coloured pride flag outside Headquarters and Shell's other offices across the Netherlands.

Between 20 and 30 per cent of Shell LGTB employees are not "out" in the workplace and hide the fact that they are LGBT. "Imagine what that must feel like, constantly having to be careful about what you say to colleagues so as not to disclose your sexual gender preference," says Mark Emdin, Organisation Effectiveness Consultant P&T and member of the LGTB network Pink Pearl. "This can be incredibly tiring, stressful and highly unproductive. If we are to be the world's most innovative energy company, we need to tap into the full potential of all employees, so we need people to be able to be themselves at work."

By flying the Pride flag, Shell is sending a strong signal to all LGTB staff – especially those who are not "out" – that this is a company where people are supported in coming out. Mark feels it is a bold move. "Just think of the impact if you see the Pride flag on entering a Shell building!" Pink Pearl member Jeanine van Barlingen, Country HR Manager P&T, stresses that they don't want to pressure anyone. "Coming out is a very personal decision: what is important is that anyone who takes that decision knows and feels that they are supported."

## Canal Parade

One of the aims of Pink Pearl is to raise awareness amongst non-gay staff of what it's like to be gay or lesbian, not just in the Netherlands but in all countries where Shell operates. "It is vital that gay employees feel accepted and supported by their co-workers. For example, when we participated in the Amsterdam Canal Parade last August, it meant a lot to us that straight colleagues were cheering us on from the canal side," says Mark. "On a more personal note: I was out when I was working in Shell Australia, but after arriving in the Netherlands I had to come

out all over again: something many LGBT staff experience every time they move country, join a new team or have a new manager. For me, this was a very positive experience and I was fully supported by my manager and co-workers."

Another aim for the LGBT network is to encourage Shell's senior leaders to have conversations about being gay or lesbian at Shell. Thanks to the network's efforts, awareness among senior leaders is growing (see text box). Mark and Jeanine are happy with the results. "We are making inroads, we're proud of our results and thankful for the support we have received so far," says Mark. **GK**

■ **Anyone wishing to join Pink Pearl or seeking support can contact the network at [Pink-Pearl-NL@shell.com](mailto:Pink-Pearl-NL@shell.com)**

## SENIOR LEADERS ON LGBT EMPLOYEES

**Peter Sharpe – EVP Wells, Projects & Technology:** "While many D&I issues are broadly understood, it became clear to me during a recent workshop that workplace challenges faced by our LGBT colleagues are both significant and poorly understood. This is something we need to rectify."

**Dick Benschop – Shell Nederland President:** "The yearly Shell People Survey contains the question 'Do you feel free to speak your mind?'. The answers to this question are one of the indicators of how our D&I practice is doing and an indicator of whether gay and lesbian colleagues feel free enough and comfortable for a coming out."

■ **Mark Emdin**



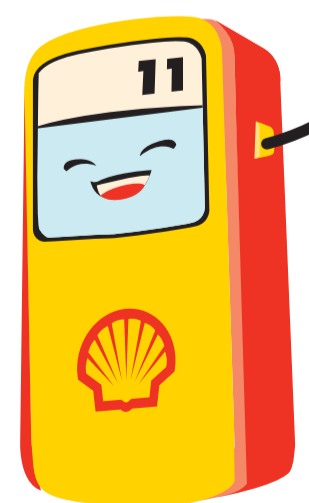
## BART VOET, NEW BOSS AT PERNIS

At the end of June, Lori Ryerkerk, VP Manufacturing Operations Europe & Africa, announced that Hans van Scherpenzeel would be succeeded as General Manager Pernis by Bart Voet. To ensure a good handover, Bart arrived at Pernis on September 1. One month later he officially replaced Hans van Scherpenzeel, who can now enjoy his retirement.

Aged 45, Bart Voet was previously Managing Director of South African Petroleum Refineries (Pty) Ltd (SAPREF). Before that time he gained experience in Manufacturing in positions including Plant Manager in Oman for the LNG plant, as Business Group Manager HSE Consultancy and as LNG Train Commissioning Superintendent. During his career so far, Bart has worked in Oman, the Netherlands, the USA, the UK, Nigeria, Australia and South Africa. **LA**

## LAST WORD

... FINALLY WANTS TO ADMIT HE'S GAY TOO



"But I'm otherwise engaged on October 11." **FB**