



# Roadside facilities important for women



WORDS BY MERYN MORRISON,  
WIRT CHAIRPERSON

**D**uring the time I have been involved in the road transport industry, one of the biggest complaints I hear from our women drivers is the lack of adequate roadside facilities while they are out on the road.

I'm sure most readers, male or female, would agree that the provision of pullover rest areas and motorway services in New Zealand leaves a lot to be desired. Apart from one or two exceptions, our motorway network is totally devoid of the kind of conveniences and service areas that are common in the UK, Europe, and the US.

The full motorway service centres that you see in Europe or the US with cafés, shops, and accommodation are unlikely ever to become common in New Zealand, given our small population and shorter driving distances. However, I firmly believe that there is more scope for clean and tidy rest areas with proper bathroom facilities.

It is not acceptable that truck drivers who are doing long hours in the cab are unable to access clean and tidy facilities to take a bathroom break and freshen up. Many of the existing rest areas have inadequate parking for trucks, are unlit, unsafe at night, and have no bathroom facilities.

Feedback from the Women in Road Transport network is that the lack of safe public rest areas with truck parking,

lighting, and adequate bathroom facilities is one of the biggest challenges for female drivers out on the road and an impediment for women to get into the industry.

Even in the UK, where motorway service centres are far more common, a Parliamentary inquiry into the UK's driver shortage highlighted the lack of appropriate motorway services as a

**“We aren't claiming that men don't care about germs, but we have found that women often have higher standards for defining what is meant by 'clean'”**

contributing issue in the lack of diversity in the industry and problems in recruiting young female drivers.

In the United States, truck stops are a veritable institution and are a critical part of the transport network. Ellen Voie, president and CEO of the Women in

Trucking Association (WIT) in the US, recently wrote that along with workplace safety, “cleanliness is another issue that has arisen more often for women. Truck stops are not as clean as many would like them to be, and some of the restroom facilities at the loading docks haven't been cleaned in ages. We aren't claiming that men don't care about germs, but we have found that women often have higher standards for defining what is meant by 'clean'.”

WIT goes so far as to actively assist female drivers in accessing clean and tidy truck stops through their Truck Stop Directory. This online facility allows anyone to search for a specific truck stop by city and state or specific route and check its rating as assigned by other users. Factors such as safety and lighting, variety and quality of food, provision of showers, and ease of parking are taken into account.

In New Zealand, for a long time, we have taken a pretty lackadaisical attitude to the provision of bathroom facilities and conveniences. Well, times have changed and as someone representing women in the industry, I'm determined to advocate for an improvement in this area.

Our drivers are skilled professionals doing an important job. It is critical they are provided with the proper tools to do that job and that includes regular, safe, and tidy roadside facilities. ■