

Looking back at the years gone by



WORDS BY MERYN MORRISON, WIRT CHAIRPERSON

Time flies when you're having fun, they say. Well, that's definitely the case for me with my time at the Women in Road Transport network.

I have recently ticked more than three-and-a-half years in the role as chair of WIRT and have been reflecting on all that has happened in that time—the fantastic people I have met and the progress we've made in advocating for women and young people in the industry.

It has truly been a whirlwind experience so far, punctuated with so many highlights: from the wonderful personal experiences of going to the US and Canada to engage with women trucking leaders such as Ellen Voie, to meeting some of the inspirational Pilbara Heavy Haulage Girls to watching young women such as Samantha Fraser compete with distinction in the NZ Truck Driving Championships, and being there to see Ayna Shamim become the first-ever winner of the Women in Road Transport Award (not to mention three of the five 2019 NZ Road Transport Industry Awards going to women).

So much has changed in such a short time. In the time I have been chair of WIRT, I've seen a major improvement in the attitude of many within the industry towards women. Yes, there's still a long way to go and some people still need to buck their ideas up but real progress is being made. Those who remain resistant to the skills of women drivers or the value of having women in

leadership or management positions belong to an ever-decreasing cohort.

I sincerely want to thank WIRT's fantastic corporate sponsors such as Volvo, Carter's Tyre Service, and NZI who provide me and the rest of the WIRT team with such fantastic support. Without you we could not do what we do.

To those that don't know me, I have been in the road transport industry since I was 13 years old and am currently health and safety compliance manager for Regal Haulage NZ Ltd.

WIRT is a passion for me because of the wide contribution of women, not only in our industry but also across our communities. Women juggle their careers, children's school, sports, and activities, as well as their home life which, let's be honest, makes them the perfect logistical organisers.

It's fair to say that I am also passionate about the industry. Transport is such an interesting and diverse area to work in. So many people don't realise how transport affects so much of their daily lives.

“ WIRT is a passion for me ”

A vibrant transport sector is a measure of a country's economic success and it's high time our sector was better recognised as the economic heartbeat of New Zealand. It must also be acknowledged that our drivers are wives, husbands, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, uncles, and aunts who ultimately deliver product to the supermarket shelves and export goods to the dock. Without them, the economy would grind to a halt.

Many women are already carving out good careers in trucking but we still make up only around 15% of the total industry workforce. All of us involved with road transport must present our industry as an exciting choice for young women looking for a career, whether it be as drivers, accountants, mechanics, engineers, or logistics personnel. We need to be encouraging young, new blood into our industry.

Women in Road Transport has a governance board of seven people from across New Zealand's road transport regions, all of whom are passionate about attracting more women and youth into our industry. Over the next few months, I hope to profile them in these pages so that you can get to know more about your local WIRT representative.

Please follow Women in Road Transport NZ on Facebook and if you wish to contact us directly, you can e-mail WIRTnz@gmail.co.nz. ■



Another 'media' engagement for WIRT chair



Meryn speaking at an RTF Conference



The fantastic WOMAN MAN Mainfreight truck displayed in support of WIRT at the 2018 TMC Trailers Truck Show



Meryn is in the driving seat of health and safety at Regal Group



Meryn and fellow WIRT member Fiona Pace