

Women can help solve our workforce shortage



WORDS BY MERYN MORRISON, WIRT CHAIRPERSON

In the continuation of our series on WIRT Governance Group members, Sharon Scott tells us how she got involved in the road transport industry and why she is passionate about Women in Road Transport.

I've always had an affinity with trucks and grew up around them as my Dad worked in a trucking company. As a child, I spent many early mornings up and about on the road with Dad. I loved it. I loved sitting high in the cab watching the world go by. I also realised early on that road transport was a people-orientated industry. Most people don't see it as such; they assume it's a lonely sort of lifestyle because drivers spend so much time behind the wheel. However, the reality is that drivers are the interface with clients and are the actual face of any transport business.

Trucking is such a pivotal link in the supply chain for most New Zealand businesses, and in terms of getting products and services to New Zealanders, this is done so seamlessly that most people have no appreciation at all for how difficult it is and the effort that goes into it.

Currently, I am the national corporate services and human resources manager at Waste Management. As a member of the company's senior management team, I'm responsible for contributing to the company's people and culture strategy through the formation and implementation

of human resource initiatives, practices, systems, and technology that improves organisational effectiveness.

I've previously undertaken senior HR roles at Goodman Fielder and Fonterra so would like to think I have a few ideas on what good HR practices are and how to help people be their best in the job they are doing. I'm a big supporter of making sure that staff have access to professional development opportunities and are able to contribute their skills across the business.

I got involved in the Women in Road Transport network because I think it's important to help women understand that trucking and road freight is not just an industry for guys. A career in road freight transport and logistics can also be a great option for women and I'd encourage young women out of school



Sharon Scott

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or those looking for a change in their lives to consider it.

One of the biggest issues facing the industry outside of the downturn created, in part, by the coronavirus, is the shortage of truck drivers. Women make up roughly 50% of the workforce, yet the proportion of women in the transport industry would, at a guess, be less than five percent. This is a massive untapped workforce with huge potential.

Research tells us that when it comes to drivers, women are easier on the gear and take better care of their trucks. What this tells us is that if we can become an industry that attracts women, then as well as helping to address our workforce shortage, there can be other benefits to

our businesses as well. From a societal point of view, we will also be creating more career pathways for women.

I want to help encourage transport operators to make sure they provide the right incentives and environment for women to succeed. This doesn't have to be scary; often it's the small things that matter: providing clean and tidy bathroom facilities, making new women employees welcome by making sure they are considered a part of the team, and making sure that professional development opportunities exist across your business.

I strongly believe that WIRT is the vehicle that can help make these positive changes in our industry, and I'm excited to be involved in it.

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. ■

