



On the road during a pandemic



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Recently, I was reading a story in an American publication about Bunni Metanoia, a long-haul truck driving mum. It's an inspiring, and at the same time heartbreaking, story of just how difficult it is for our fellow truckies across parts of the world severely impacted by COVID-19.

Truck drivers delivering essential goods are in many places across the US subject to such strict social distancing measures that they are unable to access bathrooms at distribution facilities or rest areas. Bunni even has to carry her own portable urinals for emergencies.

There are contactless paperwork exchanges at pick-ups and drop-offs as drivers are not allowed in customers' buildings. There have been major issues sourcing PPE masks and cleaning supplies.

Finding food is also a problem out on the road. Many restaurants are closed to walk-in customers and even fast food is limited to drive-throughs, which don't fit trucks. Then there are the different rules in different states, quarantines, and shelter-in-place orders that add additional stress to the job.

As a single mum driving long-haul, Bunni typically only gets to see her daughter every other week during normal times. Now with COVID-19 rampant across the US and her daughter staying with grandparents, Bunni hasn't seen her for two months and has no idea when they will meet again. That must be incredibly tough and is a testament to the sacrifice truckies make to keep supply chains going.

Safety is an issue for female drivers in

the US and the article describes how Bunni carries pepper spray and a pocket-knife for protection. However, it's also pleasing to read that, like we saw here, there's a high degree of public gratitude for what truckies are doing.

The reality is that our sisters and brothers in parts of the world that are suffering from the virus have a long haul ahead. While we may celebrate our hard-won freedoms here, let's spare a thought for them.

You can read Bunni Metanoia's story at thelily.com.

As some of you will know, I've always been one to try a few things and test the waters. I've also never been known as a shrinking violet and some of my career decisions have been a leap of faith.

My career arc has so far taken me from dairy farming to computer sales, then transport, more transport, training in transport-related areas, trailer building, and back to transport. I've recently embarked on another career reincarnation as a health and safety consultant specialising in transport and stores quarantine work.

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It seems like a never-ending circle in some ways.

Traditionally, women aren't good at applying for jobs or selling themselves for a position. New Zealand women tend to think they have to be perfect and hold all the skills before they will land their dream job. Having been on the other side, I can tell you that in many cases, an employer puts together a wish-list for their prospective employee and often that person just does not exist.

So, the moral of the story is, go for it. It's about taking opportunities as they arise, knowing yourself, your drivers as a person, your capabilities, and the skills you want to develop. Be prepared to take a stepping-stone approach, develop your niche, and don't be afraid to let the boss know your career goals.

Employers are slowly getting savvy, especially the younger ones. They know you will reinvent yourself as your career progresses and may even offer company hopping or secondment opportunities to help you gain experience somewhere else.

The transport industry has traditionally gone after Class 5 drivers but operators are finally getting their heads around the opportunities associated with employing a forklift driver and upskilling them to drive heavy vehicles.

The modern generation has many skills in their toolbox, and I guess I see myself the same in some ways. Ha, maybe I'm just ahead of my time!

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