



WORDS BY MERYN MORRISON, WIRT CHAIRPERSON

A letter from a Me Too survivor

Sometimes I'm truly uplifted by the wonderful people in this industry and at other times, I shake my head in disbelief about the pathetic behaviour some of our women drivers experience in their workplaces and out on the road.

The Me Too movement has highlighted the issues of harassment and bullying across the globe and as you will read below, our industry is most definitely not immune from it. This letter was penned and sent to me by an experienced 'old school' woman driver.

"As a professional truck driver, you have sole charge of up to 50 tonnes of vehicle and freight that may be worth well over \$1 million. You can be prosecuted for incorrect operation of your unit, of your time management via a logbook, and breaches of health and safety. So, let's face it, you are highly skilled and have more responsibility in every minute on the road than many a pen-pushing-office worker will have in a week!

"Unfortunately, though, there are still some unprofessional elements in parts of our industry. You know the ones: blame the driver or the boss for everything, blame the traffic for being late, blame the truck and the gear for their lack of performance. These people are also usually the ones with the snide remarks, the teasing, and the bullying.

"Now everyone enjoys a good laugh, but when it is directed at a specific person, it can easily morph into bullying. The very worst side of this

bullying is harassment, be that continual ridicule or something of a sexual nature. Either way, it's just not ok.

"We know that there are not a lot of women in this industry, but for those who are, we know they can do the job and do the job well. They have proven this to the testing officers during the licencing process and to their employers to get the job in the first place. Why then do some male members of the profession still think it is ok to tease, pay overt attention, and harass female drivers?

"So, what can we as women in the industry do about it?

"First, be the professional that you are. If you have the temperament and skill to back a B-train down a narrow alley at night in the rain then I believe you have the credibility to call out that work colleague that is making a dick of themselves and your life uncomfortable. Make it known to them that it is not ok to be a bully; call the bully out to the boss and other colleagues.

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"If you see bullying and harassment happening to others, support the person that is being victimised and make sure they are ok. Do what you can to support them through making a complaint and help make the industry somewhere you would want your son or daughter to work.

"Finally, here are some personal tips that have helped me along the way:

- Hold onto and be proud of being a female in this industry. Embrace your own strengths, skills, and traits. Maintain your professional approach and be confident in your problem solving and technical abilities.
- Your skills and actions will always speak louder than words.
- Don't try and be 'one of the boys'; just be you!
- Ignore the taunts of bullies if you can. You can be pretty sure that if their mother was standing there, they would not be saying what they are saying (visualising this will make you smile).
- Don't necessarily try and do things the same way as the blokes do— work smarter not harder.
- Don't drop to the level of the bully. Take up your issue with your boss and the people you trust and do it professionally."

Writing that letter took courage and an attitude that enough is enough! It is concerning but at the same time thought-provoking. I hope it helps inspire further cultural change in our industry. ■

