



# Inspiring women contributing to our industry



**WORDS BY MERYN MORRISON, WIRT CHAIRPERSON**

I was delighted to read a couple of news articles recently about women who, through perseverance and a supportive company, found their niche as professional drivers in our industry. It's not often that road transport receives such positive news coverage and it's even rarer for that to include women drivers, so I thought it is worth repeating.

The first story was about Rose (Bishnu) Pradhan, a Bhutanese refugee and mother of two, who spent 20 years in Nepalese refugee camps and who now drives for TNL out of Nelson.

Rose and her family have had it tough but through determination and hard work not only did she see herself and her family through the difficult refugee resettlement process but also followed her dream of becoming a professional truck driver.

Having gained her Class 2 licence, Rose's story came to the attention of TNL driver trainer Derek Nees, who recommended her for an interview. What followed was a six-month contract to do metro deliveries.

Rose obviously excelled at the job, as she is now on a full-time contract, has gained her dangerous goods and forklift licences, her full Class four licence, and most recently was awarded employee of the month at TNL.

During the lockdown, Rose decided she wanted to work to give something back to the country and company that she felt had given her so many opportunities, so she was out there on the road delivering goods to other

essential services. Despite the challenges of working during lockdown with public facilities such as toilets closed and enforced social distancing rules, Rose was pleased to be part of the team that helped New Zealand get through Level 4.

She's also proud of her family and how settled they have become in New Zealand. "I really want to show people that if you work hard, you can achieve your goals," she told the New Zealand Red Cross.

The other story that got my attention was of Kerry Crosby, who, at 54, left her career as a hairdresser to follow her daughter in becoming a truck driver.

Despite the inevitable nerves in starting a new career and being so inexperienced, support from many trucking operators and from her network of friends gave Kerry the confidence to follow her dream and take a chance.

Kerry now drives shipping containers to and from the Port of Napier for Woodmass Transport in what has become a real family affair. Her daughter Elizabeth, Elizabeth's husband, and his father are all truck drivers and according to the story, it's not uncommon for them to all be working at the port together.

What I find inspiring about each of these women's stories is the determination they had to upskill and find a job in a male-dominated industry such as road transport, and in Rose's case, in a new country with unfamiliar cultural norms. Such stories are encouraging and show that trucking is

still very much on the radar for those who are after career opportunities and want to feel proud of what they do.

I also want to acknowledge companies such as TNL and Woodmass for taking a punt on people like Rose and Kerry. It's operators like these that help move our industry forward and give me a lot of hope for the future.

## Scholarships for female leaders

Women & Leadership New Zealand has approached the Road Transport Forum to advise us of a suite of \$1000 to \$5000 scholarships they have available to help increase the representation of female leadership within the transport and logistics sector.

The scholarships are available to women working in the sector in order to help support their participation in a range of online career building leadership development programmes.

The initiative is providing junior through to executive women managers with scholarships to support their growth and development via participation in one of three flagship courses. Participants will benefit from course content such as Emotional Intelligence and Conflict, Career and Professional Growth, Team Dynamics, Leading Innovation and Change, and Empowering Teams.

## Expressions of Interest

Find out more and register your interest by completing the Expression of Interest form prior to Friday, 11 September: [womenandleadership.co.nz/scholarships](http://womenandleadership.co.nz/scholarships). ■