

Road Transport Forum

COMMENT

New chair for WiRT



WORDS BY KEN SHIRLEY,
CEO ROAD TRANSPORT

I am very pleased to confirm that Meryn Morrison has recently taken up the position as chairperson of Women in Road Transport (WiRT). Meryn replaces Jackie Carroll, who has stepped down after three years in the role.

The Road Transport Forum is extremely grateful to Jackie for the effort she has put in and the success she has had in raising the profile of the industry and supporting women in road transport.

WiRT is about promoting a positive image of the industry and positioning the road transport sector as a professional career choice for women, making it an even more interesting industry to work in. It is also set up as a network to support women already in the industry.

Without Jackie's enthusiasm and dedication to the status of women in our industry, I do not believe the WiRT initiative would be where it is today. She has been extremely passionate about promoting the value of women within our industry and encouraging those who may be considering it as a career.

It's not easy to start something like this from scratch and, in a few short years, turn it into an effective and relevant organisation. Jackie and her team deserve a huge amount of credit for that.

It also must be acknowledged that Jackie carried out her duties as chairperson on top



Meryn Morrison

of an already hectic schedule as co-owner of Tranzliquids Logistics.

Meryn's career began when she was 13 working during the holidays at her grandfather's company, Inglewood Motors, a diverse business including general rural freight, heavy haulage, transformers and oil industry work. Despite training as a school teacher, from 1991 Meryn ran health and safety for the business and in 2000 she became the general manager.

In 2004 the business was sold and Meryn moved on to work in driver training and the trailer building industry. Currently she is the

health and safety compliance manager for Regal Haulage NZ.

Meryn's focus will be on getting the industry to better recognise the contribution of women. As she says, "Women don't typically seek the limelight but just get the job done in the background. They juggle careers, home life, children's sports, school and activities, which makes for perfect logistical organisers."

It is indicative that Meryn identifies impediments to diversity in our industry as a few out-dated attitudes and a myth that women can't drive trucks or work with heavy machinery.

Slowly those attitudes are changing, so it is encouraging that Meryn is keen to drive it along as part of the industry's broader initiative to attract young people towards road transport careers.

According to the 2013 census, only 3.31 percent of heavy truck drivers in New Zealand are women. While road transport may always be a more male-oriented industry, this gender disparity is not ideal.

It goes without saying that cutting ourselves off from 50 percent of the workforce is not a sustainable long-term recruitment strategy. It is critical that we start appealing to young women and I welcome Meryn's commitment to helping us achieve that. ■

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