



The difficult job of managing health and safety



WORDS BY MERYN MORRISON, WIRT CHAIRPERSON

As some readers already know, my day job away from the Women in Road Transport network is as health and safety compliance manager at Regal Group. I take my role seriously and enjoy the responsibility of making sure that the people who work for Regal are as safe as they can possibly be while at their place of work.

It is in this context that I followed with interest the recent public conversation about the impact that health and safety compliance is having on the recruitment of young people to the road transport industry.

The argument goes that the trucking sector is being 'strangled' by the new Health and Safety at Work Act due to the increased compliance involved with having passengers in trucks and non-essential people at depots and loading sites.

This is not a new phenomenon. Many operators and customers have had bans on visitors, especially children, from their depots and yards for a number of years.

The belief among many in our industry is that this situation is starting to become a major contributing factor to the heavy vehicle driver shortage. Without a doubt, these days it is far more difficult for young people to tag along with mum or

dad in the truck and be introduced to the various parts of the job.

My experience over the last year or so in dealing with the new Act is that compliance is definitely a lot tougher and businesses are taking health and safety far more seriously. It must be conceded that this was the government's intention. It is easy to be critical of policymakers in Wellington.

However, the other side of the coin is that New Zealand has had a poor record when it comes to workplace health and safety for a long time now and the tightening of the rules was a predictable response.

It also must be remembered that we are still in the early days of the new law, and as things settle down and businesses become more confident in their health and safety processes, they can hopefully find a workable middle ground that allows young people the opportunity to have a hands-on introduction to the industry while not jeopardising the health and safety standards of the worksite.

Perhaps operators could also look to schedule induction programmes for the children of staff to teach them the basics of health and safety around trucks. Of course, there would be a cost associated with this, but it may well pay off in the long-term when those

kids are banging down the door for an opportunity in the industry. Other than that, all I can suggest is talk to your customers and suppliers, explain the problem, and perhaps an arrangement can be negotiated that suits all parties.

Funding grants for women's leadership development

Finally, I'd like to alert readers to a new professional development opportunity being offered by Women & Leadership New Zealand (WLNZ).

WLNZ is administering a national initiative to support the development of female leaders across New Zealand's transport and logistics sector. The initiative is providing women with grants to enable participation in a range of leadership development programmes.

Scholarship funding is strictly limited and will be awarded based on a set of selection criteria being met. Find out more and register your interest by completing the Expression of Interest form at womenandleadership.co.nz/associations.

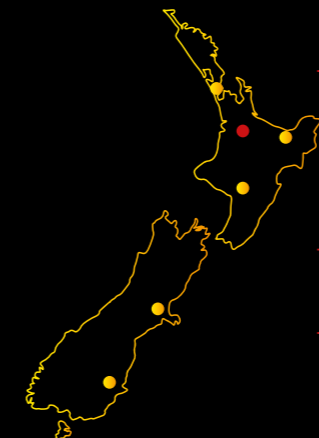
The application deadline is 7 June. Should you wish to discuss the initiative in more detail, please contact Alistair Young at the office of the National Industry Scholarship Program, WLNZ on +61 3 9270 9032 or drop an e-mail at ayoung@wla.edu.au. ■

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