



# Popularity of Aussie boot camps encouraging



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If we consider the truck driving profession in New Zealand to be heavily male-dominated, then spare a thought for our Australian sisters. Figures I have seen recently suggest that up to 99% of the Australian truck driving workforce is male.

However, there is an organisation in Western Australia that is aiming to change that, and I consider them an inspiration to women across the industry. The Pilbara Heavy Haulage Girls (PHHG) is most commonly recognised by their bright pink trucks but it's what they are doing behind the scenes and in the cab that is to be most admired.

Incorporated in 2014, PHHG is a not-for-profit organisation providing professional development opportunities and career pathways. It's based in Karratha, in the Pilbara region of Western Australia, over 1500 kilometres from Perth.

PHHG's mission is to avert the projected Australian heavy vehicle driver shortage through the provision of professional development opportunities to newly licensed drivers from across Australia and encourage women to consider long-haul truck driving as a legitimate career option.

One of PHHG's most successful programmes is their boot camps for

new drivers. The camps, run by Jones and her two daughters, have gained such a good reputation that there are currently around 500 people on the waiting list.

The programme's description is that driving a truck is the "easy" bit. Loading, assessing, and securing freight in accordance with prevailing chain of responsibility legislation, conducting daily pre-starts, ensuring safe work practices while carrying oversize loads, interpreting local, intra, and interstate permits and complying with fatigue legislation are some of the skills and experience professional drivers must have before being considered for work in the Australian road transport sector. Apart from these, other skills required include ensuring a safe work environment, identifying and reporting mechanical problems, hooking up and securing trailers, building road trains, fuelling up, safe on-road driving, truck radio etiquette, sharing the road responsibly, changing tyres, maintaining logbooks, and working with different trailer types.

Almost all of those skills are applicable to the industry here in New Zealand as well, and I am informed that the programme is also open to New Zealand drivers.

I have been privileged to get to know Heather over the last few years,

and it's absolutely fantastic to hear of the popularity for what PHHG is doing. It's encouraging that a women's road transport organisation is able to have such an impact across the industry and in not only encouraging more women into the industry but also helping to improve professional standards, regardless of gender.

In my role with the Women in Road Transport network, I am currently working on developing an exchange programme with PHHG where one of our women can go over the ditch to learn how they do things and swap with one of their people who can come here and see how things are done on our twisty narrow little roads.

If you are interested in a unique professional development experience at a PHHG boot camp, contact Pilbara Heavy Haulage Girls via their e-mail at [admin@phhg.com.au](mailto:admin@phhg.com.au). You never know, one day soon, you may be piloting a three-trailer road train around the desert of Western Australia.

Finally, if you are interested in sharing your professional experiences, thoughts, and ideas with other women in the industry, you can contact Women in Road Transport through our Facebook page or our dedicated page on the RTF website: [rtfnz.co.nz/women-in-road-transport/](http://rtfnz.co.nz/women-in-road-transport/). A membership form is also available for those keen to join us. ■