

Introducing Beth Sandle



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There are many great examples around the country of women achieving in our industry.

Every woman has an inspiring story to tell and I'd like to showcase some of them here in my monthly column, so please get in touch and send me your story (wirtnz@gmail.com). To kick things off, here, in her own words, is one lady, who has backed herself and risen through the ranks to become one of our top drivers.

My name is Beth Sandle, and currently, I am driving a milk tanker for Fonterra based out of the Te Rapa depot. I've always had a love for the road, fostered by family road trips as a child, and after a short stint driving delivery vans and then buses, I decided truck driving was for me. I completed the BOP Polytech Certificate in Road Transport in 2010 and through the contacts I made there, got a job driving a six-wheel tipper for a local earthworks company.

I worked my way up through the licence classes doing milk runs, metro freight, linehaul bread runs, and bulk tipping before, eventually, in 2013, I began carting bulk liquids for a company contracted to Fonterra. It was a shift work job, and initially, I didn't think I would be able to make it work with two small sons who at the time were aged one and six, but thanks to the generous help of good friends,



Beth Sandle

I was able to make it work. Since starting with Fonterra in 2014, I have learned to manage a good work-life balance. The roster pattern allows me to attend school events and enjoy activities with my family that I wouldn't have been able to do in a Monday to Friday job. Fonterra is hugely supportive when it comes to family. In my job, every day is different. We travel all over the Waikato, as far south as Taupo, coast-to-coast and sometimes as far north as Whangarei, on a wide variety of terrain and conditions.

It's a simple enough job once you're used to it, but initially, there is a lot to learn and every day presents its challenges. Driving on such a wide variety of roads and in a range of conditions both day and night has

massively improved my ability as a driver, and I encourage other women to give it a go.

I can't say for sure if being a female driver has helped or hindered me in the industry really. I've had the same challenges everybody faces but I've also been helped out at times with advice or assistance when perhaps if I were male, I wouldn't have been.

I definitely feel there's an element of truth in the suggestion that as a woman driver, you have to work twice as hard and be twice as good as a man to gain respect, but that may not be every woman's experience.

I've been blessed to have an amazing home-based caregiver to look after my oldest child and sharing custody of my youngest also helps make the shift work possible. It would, however, be fantastic to see childcare facilities offer more services outside of their regular hours to assist more trucking mothers and other shift workers, as not everyone has family or friends available to look after their children. In the future, I'm looking forward to seeing more and more women out there on the road and more support systems in place to allow that to happen.

See you out there ladies! ■
—Beth