

# Pushing ourselves to the front



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**R**edefining the road' is a phrase that's becoming popular overseas to describe the changing nature of the road transport workforce. So, what does it mean for operators in New Zealand?

Well, surely it all starts with the old saying 'if you can't beat 'em, join 'em!' Employing more frontline female drivers, managers, and appointing women into governance roles is a good place to start.

The fact is that there are not enough women in governance and leadership roles in our industry. We might be a minority of the road transport workforce but putting our views forward when we represent 50% of the population and as we strive to diversify our industry is important.

I take a different view on the issue than our new Minister for Women Julie Anne Genter, who earlier this year said that old, white men on boards need to move on. I don't think that attitude is helpful. It is merely divisive. I think a fair bit of onus must be on women putting their hands up when the time comes to fill governance and company leadership positions.

I was quite shocked when I recently read that the proportion of women in leadership positions in New Zealand companies has actually decreased in recent years, according to Grant Thornton International's Women in Business report. New Zealand companies

have slid backwards in the proportion of women in senior leadership teams from 31% in 2004 to 18% this year.

This is quite an extraordinary statistic and not one I was expecting to read in 2018, because we know that over the last couple of decades, women have, on average, a higher level of education than men. As well as the 'smarts', women bring a lot of balance to areas of a business through natural traits such as

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risk adversity, responsibility, and a greater duty of care. So, women in the road transport industry, let's not wait for these leadership positions to come to us; let's push ourselves to the front and by our actions demand that we are considered for those positions not

because we are women but because we are the best person for the job.

Moving onto another topic close to my heart as a health and safety manager, the job of driving for a living has changed and we now must accept that in many respects it is a pretty sedentary job. Mechanisation, better loading facilities, and better vehicles mean that the job is not that physical for many drivers out there. Of course, there are parts of the industry that are excluded from this generalisation, but for the sake of brevity, please permit me to be over-simplistic.

Unfortunately, truck rest areas and places to park while we are travelling are at a premium, and we are often competing with campervans and bigger personal vehicles for space. This means that when you do find a place, it is often in front of a 'pie palace' and perhaps not somewhere you can get a nutritious snack or get out and do some exercise. Stretching, which can be done in a pretty small space, is therefore important to keep yourself fit after bouncing around in the cab for a few hours.

ACC has developed an online resource called Work Smart Tips that has some basic stretches specifically for truck drivers. The stretches can be found at [worksmarttips.co.nz](http://worksmarttips.co.nz) along with instructions on how to properly do them. You can print the page out, keep it in your cab, and the next time you stop for a pie, instead have a sandwich and spend five minutes stretching. ■