



# Truck Driver Appreciation Week



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**M**any people probably did not notice but a few weeks ago, the industry celebrated National Truck Driver Appreciation Week in New Zealand. This was the first year it was held here having been a regular and popular fixture in the US for some time.

For a start, it is pleasing that, as an industry, we have finally got around to recognising our fantastic men and women in this way. The unfortunate thing is that in many parts of the country, truck drivers are not given the credit for doing what is a challenging but critical job.

We seem to accept the media and public prejudice against truckies as a given these days, however, Truck Driver Appreciation Week showed that beneath the surface, there is a great deal of respect for what our people do out there on the road. I suppose it makes you think that we really should have done something before now.

Every day, New Zealand truck drivers haul tens of thousands of tonnes of freight all over the country; freight that is absolutely crucial to keep the economy ticking over, people employed, families fed, and supermarket shelves loaded with product.

Of course, those who are determined to focus on the negatives will say that trucks are bad, they are polluting the environment, destroying our roads, and scary to drive around. This ill-informed and purposely-narrow view of the world dismisses the fact that the people behind the wheel are highly-skilled professionals

doing a bloody good job. Our people often work in hard-to-reach locations all hours of the day and night to make sure that freight is delivered safely where and when New Zealanders demand it.



**National Truck Driver Appreciation Week was held for the first time in NZ**

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The tragedy is that most people, when they grab something from the supermarket don't even consider the skill and effort it took to get it there.

It is no secret that we, along with the rest of the developed world, are going through an acute driver shortage.

The fact of the matter is that we aren't very good at patting ourselves on the back, and that is something that we need to improve on if we want to attract new talent. Young people who consider our industry as a career want to know that they will be thanked for the work they do and will feel a valued member of the community. Those things, as much as we might roll our eyes at them, are important. I, therefore, applaud those behind Truck Driver Appreciation Week. It was a long time coming and now it is here, so let's make the most of it and make it bigger and better every year.

While I am on the business of 'appreciating', I'd like to give a massive shout out to the Women in Road Transport Network's family of sponsors.

As I am sure most readers know, WiRT is a not-for-profit volunteer-led organisation that runs on the smell of an oily rag. While we receive some support from the Road Transport Forum and its associations, we rely heavily on the generosity of a number of valuable sponsors from across the industry. Our diamond sponsor is Carter's Tyre Service, Opal sponsors are Volvo Trucks, Regal Group and Fuso, while UDC Finance, Southpac trucks, ERoad and BP are also valued supporters.

What these organisations do in terms of financial backing and the provision of goodies to help support our activities is really appreciated. The fact of the matter is we couldn't keep advocating for women in our industry without them. Cheers guys! ■

