

THE WIT REPORT

A NATIONAL WORKFORCE
INTERVENTION STRATEGY
2026-2027



Prepared by
Lyndal Denny

WOMEN IN TRUCKING AUSTRALIA

Navigating the Road Less Travelled



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Methodology

Research draws on a review of academic literature, government reports, industry data and interviews with female heavy vehicle drivers and sector stakeholders.

This mixed methods approach, integrating industry and academic research with direct stakeholder engagement provides a comprehensive basis for evaluating the training, recruitment and retention of female heavy vehicle drivers.

Enquiries

Enquiries and feedback on the findings and recommendations contained in this report should be emailed to ceo@wita.com.au. General and media enquiries should be directed to Lyndal Denny on 0429 333 082.

Drawing from a robust foundation of Qualitative and quantitative research that includes the lived experiences of female drivers nationwide, the WiT Report not only offers a thorough and objective analysis of the sector's current landscape, it also examines the specific challenges and barriers encountered by female drivers and women attempting to enter the industry, highlighting the persistent obstacles that have traditionally limited gender diversity.

Central to the Report is WiTA's Commonwealth funded NHVR administered "Foot in the Door" (FitD) female heavy vehicle driver training and recruitment program.

This 36-month pilot sheds light on the systemic barriers, entrenched cultural dynamics and recruitment practices that continue to influence female driver participation.

By spotlighting these critical issues, the WiT Report provides a vital platform for industry reform, paving the way toward a more inclusive and equitable future for Australia's heavy vehicle driver workforce

About the Author

WiTA founder Lyndal Denny (DipBus) was appointed CEO in 2019. Across a thirteen-year career, SA based, MC licensed Denny has driven much of the country delivering everything from oversized mining equipment to paperclips. Transitioning from corporate life to trucking at fifty-four, Denny continues to drive full-time - volunteering her off-road time to WiTA.



Front Cover

QLD based regional livestock driver Gab Ayre as a newly licenced MC driver transporting her first load of cattle from a farm near Westmar, QLD to another cattle property between Goondiwindi and Moonie for Hewitt Ag. [Copyright© Women in Trucking Australia 2026.](#)

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The Women in Trucking (WiT) Report is dedicated to the Nation's female heavy vehicle drivers - women who drive some of the longest on-road vehicles in the world across vast distances through some of the harshest conditions Australia has to offer.

From remote outback routes - to urban freight corridors, their work is essential to the nation's supply chain and economy.

Their contributions are not defined by strength but by impact. These women are leaders, mentors and professionals whose presence continues to shape the future of road transport in Australia.

The WiT Report is also dedicated to the countless thousands of heavy-vehicle-licensed women who - due to pervasive gender bias, have thus far been unable to smash "the glass bull bar" and secure driving work on the nation's roads.

The 36-month **Foot in the Door** (FitD) female heavy vehicle driver training and recruitment program is the driving force that underpins the groundbreaking WiT Report and represents a pivotal turning point for the Australian Trucking Industry.

Spearheaded by WiTA, this initiative has enabled a sweeping and deeply personal examination of the challenges Australian women face in their attempts to forge heavy vehicle driving careers.

Rather than rely on second-hand academic interpretations, the Report's insights are grounded in the direct, unfiltered experiences of female drivers themselves. This approach ensures the findings are both relevant and reflective of the realities faced nationwide.

The long-overdue WiT Report is a critical piece of literature that promises to reshape how the industry engages with female drivers. From recruitment practices to workplace culture, insights uncovered will serve as a blueprint for inclusive reform.

We sincerely thank the thousands of female drivers who have shared their stories with WiTA – providing valuable insights into Both the victories and the hurdles faced out on the road.

The WiT Report is so much more than just a report – it is a rally cry for equity, opportunity and respect in one of Australia's most traditionally male-dominated sectors.

Acknowledgements

The **FitD** pilot program and WiT Report are funded by the Federal Government and administered by the NHVR under its HSVI, a scheme supporting industry-led safety projects.

In presenting the WiT Report, WiTA extend sincere gratitude to the NHVR and the Hon. Catherine King MP - Minister for Transport for their commitment to advancing heavy vehicle safety by supporting increased gender diversity in the heavy vehicle driver space.

Grant funding has been instrumental in launching the FitD program, an initiative that has transformed the lives of many women and reshaped perceptions around female heavy vehicle driver workforce participation.

The ripple effect of the FitD program is evident in the growing momentum and visibility of female drivers nationally - as news of the pilot program spread - igniting nationwide interest and enthusiasm.

WiTA's 93,000 strong Facebook community, many of whom are aspiring female heavy vehicle drivers also responded with overwhelming positivity to every FitD post.

The significance of the pilot is immense - not only in opening up real pathways for women aspiring to establish trucking careers, but also in sparking a wider cultural transformation that has encouraged women to pursue a vocation previously seen as out of reach.

WiTA also extend sincere gratitude to stakeholders including employers, RTO's, driver trainers and mentors whose efforts and commitment were instrumental in delivering program objectives.

Special appreciation is reserved for our FitD graduates - women who generously shared their experiences throughout the program. Their openness and willingness to contribute invaluable insights has been central to capturing the realities faced by female heavy vehicle drivers nationally.

WiTA also acknowledges all employers who continue to champion DEI across the sector in addition to the nation's male heavy vehicle drivers who so generously support and share their knowledge with their female colleagues.

Their support remains crucial to fostering a more equitable and welcoming environment for women across all ages and stages of their trucking careers.

Sincere gratitude is also extended to Board Chair Natalie Kascak and Directors whose selfless collective commitment has been the driving force behind WiTA's ongoing success and sector-wide impact.

While most Boards focus on governance and strategic planning, WiTA Board Directors (all heavy vehicle drivers) stand apart through their hands-on approach.

The Board's leadership, unwavering support and vision has enabled WiTA to grow and deliver meaningful change - empowering women, championing opportunities and ensuring our female driver community is heard, inclusive and resilient.

We extend our heartfelt recognition to the many women who applied to participate in the FitD pilot who were unable to secure placements due to budgetary constraints.

Your interest and determination to pursue careers as heavy vehicle drivers has not gone unnoticed. We are deeply aware of your presence and the challenges you face. Your voices continue to resonate strongly with us.

As we move forward, our commitment to advocating for increased representation of female drivers remains unwavering.

We will continue to focus our efforts on employer education and actively seeking greater industry collaboration and support in an effort to create more accessible pathways for women seeking to establish trucking careers.

Finally, we extend our deepest gratitude to our generous partners and sponsors for their support over the years.

One in particular - Tilley's Transport Murray Bridge and owner Julie Tilley stand out for their unwavering belief in our mission during our earliest and most challenging days. As our very first Corporate Member, Tilley's stood beside us when our voices were still struggling to be heard.

Julie, your generosity and belief in our vision of a gender diverse heavy vehicle driver base has paved the way for countless women to

find their place behind the wheel across the nation and we are proud to count Tilley's Transport as a cornerstone of our journey and a true champion of change.

Circling back to our Corporate and Individual Members and Partners - your generosity and commitment empowers and funds our mission to champion diversity and inclusion in the heavy vehicle driver space.

Together we are driving meaningful change, opening doors and paving the way for a more equitable future for all.



Tilley's Transport	Insurelinx	Micfil Australia
Athelle Outback Hideaway	BJLF Freighters	OH Marketing
Paws and Relax Dog Grooming	Warwick Embroidery and Screen Printing	Hanson Heidelberg Cement Group
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Blenners Transport	Recharge Petroleum	Riordan's Grains
Livestock and Rural Transporters Assoc Vic	South Australia Heavy Vehicle Training	Transport Industry Training Solutions
TOLL Energy	TOLL Mining	Allora Gardens Nursery
Becks Transport Training	Cleanaway	Citywide
Brema Haulage	Bulkline	Startrack
CHL	Eather Group	Fennell Forestry
Fork n Trucks Training	GH Driving Schools	GTNT
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Wollongong Crane Trucks	Truck License SA	Turbo Tyres Humpty Doo
	Valkyrie Freight Solutions	

Foreword

In 21st century Australia, there remains a critical gap in rigorous, sector-wide research dedicated to understanding and addressing the challenges faced by female heavy vehicle driver veterans and rookies in a manner that foregrounds their lived experience.

The **WiT Report** stands as the defining and single most comprehensive study ever undertaken examining the training and recruitment of Australian women as heavy vehicle drivers.

A turning point for the sector - it delivers a detailed analysis of current practices, challenges and outcomes specific to women at all ages and stages of their careers.

For the first time, the industry has an evidence driven, comprehensive analysis of the structural barriers preventing women from entering and remaining in driving roles - at the exact moment it faces the most severe driver shortages in its history.

The insights captured in The WiT Report have direct implications for national freight capacity, road safety, training standards and long-term workforce sustainability.

Its release will influence policy, reshape recruitment strategies and support safer, more stable female driver recruitment pathways across the sector.

The **WiT Report** is anchored by the 36-month **Foot in the Door** (FiTD) female heavy vehicle driver training and recruitment pilot project - a landmark initiative funded by the Commonwealth and administered by the NHVR under its HVS1.

Launched in 2023 and concluding in 2025, the pilot was designed to begin the task of examining and addressing the nation's acute female driver shortage through the provision of targeted pathways into trucking careers across all licence categories.

The program was implemented nationally, with a focus on regional centres where workforce shortages and recruitment barriers are most acute.

Through structured mentorship, practical training, advocacy and industry engagement, the pilot sought to not only recruit - but also retain female drivers - thereby challenging and transforming entrenched industry practices.

A defining feature of the WiT Report and a notable departure from traditional academic and stakeholder led investigations - is that the Report has been researched and authored by Australian female heavy vehicle drivers.

These women are professional drivers who also serve as advocates for and mentors to FiTD students and graduates. Their direct, ongoing engagement with the realities of the profession ensure the research is deeply informed by firsthand knowledge, practical insight and an unwavering commitment to advancing gender equity within the sector.

This approach ensures the authenticity and relevance of the findings and provides a unique, ground-level perspective that is often absent in the limited literature available.

The methodology underpinning this report is both robust and inclusive. Data was collected and analysed by female drivers who worked directly with veteran drivers, trainees and graduates throughout the pilot, ensuring the voices and experiences of women at all stages of their driving careers are central to findings and recommendations.

This hands-on engagement stands in marked contrast to conventional studies, which are frequently led by external researchers who have limited direct access to the world of the Australian female heavy vehicle driver.

The structure of the WiT Report guides the reader through a comprehensive overview of the FiTD program, followed by detailed findings from the pilot, an in-depth analysis of barriers faced by women and finally actionable stakeholder recommendations.

Throughout - all claims are substantiated with rigorous referencing, ensuring the report meets the highest standards of academic and professional integrity.

In doing so, the WiT Report aims to serve as an authoritative resource for industry professionals, policymakers and researchers committed to fostering a more inclusive and sustainable Australian road transport sector.

Natalie Kaszak
CHAIR
WOMEN IN TRUCKING
AUSTRALIA

Executive Summary

The WiT Report examines the multifaceted challenges faced by Australian women pursuing heavy vehicle driving careers. Despite incremental progress, female drivers remain significantly underrepresented.

In addition, the WiT Report also identifies key barriers to entry such as access to training, societal perceptions, entrenched workplace cultural issues, gender bias and shortfalls in recruitment and regulatory frameworks.

Drawing on empirical evidence and current practices, the report provides actionable recommendations for industry, governments and stakeholders - with a view to creating more inclusive, supportive recruitment and workplace environments for female drivers.

Although previous research has addressed gender disparity in the road transport sector, there has been a distinct lack of focus on the experiences of female drivers themselves.

Until now, no study has undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the barriers, challenges and issues from the unique perspective of women behind the wheel.

This report fills that gap by capturing firsthand accounts and delivering rare, invaluable insights into the current realities faced by the nation's female drivers.

The WiT Report also seeks to reenergise discussion around the lack of female driver professional development and career pathways.

Further compounding the multiplicity of barriers hampering female driver recruitment, the industry mantra "come back when you have three years' experience continues to sabotage women in an industry struggling under critical driver shortages and estimated to grow by 77% between 2020 and 2050.

With the mean age of Australian truck drivers approaching fifty, the industry can no longer afford to simply keep taking from the pool and not giving back. Collectively, we must find a way to replenish driver stocks.

Underpinned by research and data gathered over a six-year period, WiTA has developed a comprehensive blueprint that focuses on addressing and reducing current heavy vehicle driver gender disparity as the organisation continues to work with key stakeholders to generate meaningful change in recruitment and retention opportunities for women.

The WiT Report's central recommendation, therefore, centres on building a "grow-our-own-driver" culture and the development of a consistent and sustainable pipeline of professionally trained female drivers.

Through targeted training programs and stakeholder support, WiTA will ensure newly licensed female drivers are equipped with the skills and qualifications necessary to succeed, ultimately strengthening the workforce and enhancing long-term industry resilience.

Their stories will continue to enhance our understanding of the issues faced - providing greater clarity around the status quo and considerably expanding Australian female heavy vehicle driver literature.

It is hoped findings will help inform future policy and open up new conversations on how the sector can implement critical WiT Report recommendations it's believed will tackle the persistent under-representation of women in the heavy vehicle driver space.

We encourage you to take the time to read the WiT Report - to study its comprehensive and unique insights - all of which chart a clear pathway toward a more inclusive, productive and resilient industry.


CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
WOMEN IN TRUCKING
AUSTRALIA

Introduction

Australia consistently ranks among the top 15 of the world's most advanced and prosperous economies, yet despite this strong economic performance, the road transport sector continues to grapple with an ageing driver workforce, increasing freight demands and significant driver shortages.

In 2026, female heavy vehicle driver workforce participation continues to hover around *2% - leaving women behind as the industry's most underutilized resource.

Disappointingly, WiTA regularly fields calls from frustrated self-funded, heavy vehicle licensed women earning a living in other sectors, unable to get a start. The business case for increasing female driver participation is clear - as both an economic necessity and safety imperative.

The FitD program stands as Australia's first initiative purpose-built to recruit, train, and place women into heavy vehicle driving roles within their own communities. This pioneering effort successfully trained and placed 49 women nationwide across various licence categories, while also assisting three experienced female MC drivers to attain heavy vehicle driver trainer qualifications.

The program created genuine cultural shifts within participating organisations, fostering greater awareness and inclusion. That said, persistent challenges continued to be reported - including outdated perceptions and systemic unconscious bias.

Addressing these issues requires ongoing commitment to organisational change and

the active dismantling of entrenched stereotypes to create a more welcoming and equitable environment for female drivers.

Quantitative analysis consistently shows that women outperform in safety and reliability metrics and demonstrate strong abilities in customer service and communication. Boosting the number of female drivers will not only foster safer roads and workplaces but also help address ongoing driver shortages - ultimately enhancing profitability and productivity throughout the sector.

In response, the WiT Report's principal recommendation is to formally establish WiTA as Australia's inaugural recruitment agency dedicated to female heavy vehicle drivers. Utilising a user-pays model, this agency will connect qualified female drivers with employers, whilst leveraging strategic partnerships with stakeholders to broaden its influence and maximise positive outcomes across the sector.

The WiT Report delivers invaluable insights through detailed case studies, robust domestic and international benchmarking, and targeted recommendations for sector leaders and policymakers with findings reinforcing the urgent need for continued action, collaboration and investment to ensure a truly inclusive, safe and prosperous transport sector for all.

By embracing these recommendations, industry and governments alike can drive real, lasting change - securing a brighter future for women in trucking and the broader road transport community.



Let our industry look into its heart of hearts. Have we opened the doors to women as drivers?

No – of course we haven't.

Well trained, capable drivers into the 21st century are what the industry needs and little girls need to be told they can be what they want to be from a young age.

If that little girl's desire is to drive a truck, we will all be the better for it.



Bruce Honeywill – Editor – Truckin Life Magazine – September 2015

*Reference. Industry Skills Australia (2024), Transport & Logistics Workforce Data Summary; cited by NHVR (2024).



ABOUT WOMEN IN TRUCKING *Australia*

WiTA is a non-profit organisation founded by female heavy vehicle drivers FOR female heavy vehicle drivers.

Established in 2020, WiTA has evolved from a grassroots advocacy movement – focussed on supporting women into trucking careers into a nationally recognised and highly respected entity.

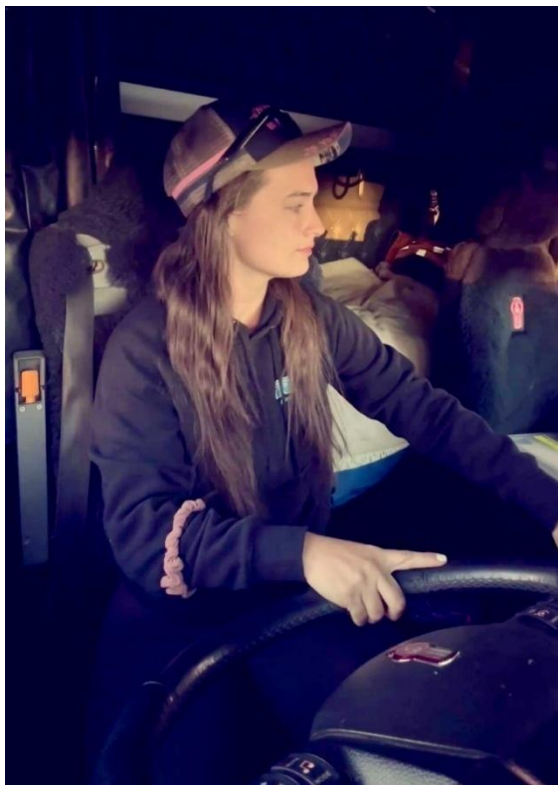
Through sustained research, pilot initiatives and partnerships, WiTA continues to drive progress in female heavy vehicle driver training, workforce participation and stakeholder education.

Now moving into its 7th operational year, the WiTA team of volunteers continue their vital work establishing an organization now recognized by female drivers as their peak advocacy body.

The Business Case for Gender Diversity

Road Safety and Workplace Incident Trends

Despite the Australian road transport sector undergoing extensive transformation - driven by technological advances, evolving safety standards and a growing recognition of diversity's role in workplace performance, Australian female heavy vehicle driver workforce participation remains low.



QLD Based MC Driver Chloe Anderson

Australian road crash and workplace safety statistics - combined with behavioural and organisational research, demonstrate women can make safer, more effective drivers with attention to detail, risk aversion and strong communication and organisational skills contributing to reduced incidents, road crashes, higher compliance and smoother operations.

BITRE behavioural studies of truck drivers also reveal that female drivers are significantly less likely to engage in aggressive manoeuvres or take shortcuts that compromise safety.



WA based MC Driver Bev Tate

BITRE data also reveals important trends in road safety and workplace incidents with national crash statistics consistently showing female drivers less likely to be involved in fatal and serious injury road crashes compared to their male counterparts.

This risk-averse approach extends to workplace conduct, with female drivers demonstrating greater adherence to company policies, safe loading compliance practices and use of PPE.

Combined - these behaviours reduce the likelihood of accidents, injuries and insurance claims - contributing to safer, more sustainable operating environments.

A 2024 Safe Work Australia Report further supports these findings, demonstrating women experience lower rates of workplace injuries - particularly those related to manual handling and vehicle operations.

In 2024, workplace incident rates for female heavy vehicle drivers were 30% lower than for males - particularly involving injuries linked to inattentiveness and non-compliance.

Table 1: Comparative Road Safety Data by Gender

Metric	Female Drivers	Male Drivers
Crash Rate (per 1,000 drivers)	2.1	3.7
Speeding Offences (per 1,000 drivers)	5	15
Drink/Drug Driving Incidents (per 1,000 drivers)	0.3	1.2
Seatbelt Offences (per 1,000 drivers)	0.8	2.6

Factors underpinning enhanced female driver safety records are their natural attentiveness to detail - coupled with the fact that early detection, identification and timely reporting of issues prevents breakdowns and reduces the risk of catastrophic on-road failures.

Employers also consistently report that female drivers submit more comprehensive mechanical and maintenance reports and are more proactive communicating minor concerns before they escalate. Whilst this culture of vigilance not only improves vehicle reliability, minimising costly downtime and enhancing overall fleet safety, studies also demonstrate increased gender diversity drives productivity and profitability.

Women also demonstrate superior communication skills by seeking clarification, confirming instructions and maintaining detailed records. They tend to be more organised, requiring all documentation including complete load manifests prior to departure.

This attention to process ensures compliance, reduces errors and facilitates efficient coordination with allocators and customers, resulting in smoother trip planning and fewer delays and incidents.

Diverse teams also bring fresh perspectives to problem-solving, enhance creativity and foster a more inclusive culture. Studies by the Diversity Council of Australia show companies embracing gender diversity report higher employee engagement, lower turnover and improved financial performance.



(L to R) MC Drivers Jess, Candice and Steph

Governments, the mining sector and major contractors already recognize the safety advantages inherent in a gender diverse workforce. As a result, they are drawn to tender submissions that also demonstrate a strong commitment to gender diversity and safety.

Evidence clearly supports a call to action for transport industry leaders to actively recruit, train and retain greater numbers of female heavy vehicle drivers - unlocking substantial benefits and advantages for their businesses and the broader community.

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“The trick is ...

... to believe in yourself ALL of the time”

Rachael .. Australian Female Heavy Vehicle Driver





Kattie Risk – Remote Area
Livestock MC Driver

About the “Foot in the Door” Program

WITA’s NHVR administered **Foot in the Door** pilot program represents a major shift in the training and recruitment of Australian female heavy vehicle drivers.

Funded by the Commonwealth, the program bridges the license to employment gap by engaging with industry stakeholders nationally to drive improved outcomes with this fit-for-purpose initiative that links inexperienced female HR/HC/MC drivers unable to get that critical foot in the door.

This unique initiative recognises the role many women play as primary carers and provides tailored support to those seeking to establish trucking careers without having to leave their communities. This ensures participant’s professional and personal commitments are fully supported - thereby overcoming many of the traditional barriers women face establishing trucking careers.

Rigorous tracking and evaluation of FiTD participants provided critical insights into the persistent challenges faced by entry level female drivers - highlighting issues such as limited access to employment opportunities, balancing

professional and caring responsibilities and overcoming outdated perceptions about female driver capabilities. This intel enabled the development of targeted, evidence-based strategies to address these concerns.

These strategies include tailored support frameworks, industry engagement to challenge stereotypes and the implementation of mentorship and advocacy programs.

By fostering inclusive recruitment and training practices and promoting supportive workplace cultures, FiTD set the foundation for greater gender diversity and long-term participation of women in trucking Australia wide.

Successful applicants accessed funding on completion of a rigorous pre-assessment process. A condition of participation was that participants complete the “legwork” by researching potential local employers, PPE requirements and training costs.

During the 36-month pilot, FiTD significantly increased employer awareness by proactively addressing entrenched stereotypes around female heavy vehicle driver capabilities. Trainers resoundingly noted the female propensity to ask questions.

Participant surveys revealed measurable improvements in self-confidence, financial autonomy and professional growth, underscoring the program’s positive impact on both participants and the broader industry.


Program Objectives

- ≈ To collaborate with employers nationally to establish seamless transition-to-work opportunities for entry-level female heavy vehicle drivers.
- ≈ To identify and analyse barriers women face securing and remaining in heavy vehicle driving roles.
- ≈ To build critical female heavy vehicle driver networks such as National Female Truckie’s Day and WITA’s annual TOOTS Awards.
- ≈ To deliver competent female heavy vehicle drivers through training, mentoring and advocacy.
- ≈ To evaluate contemporary female driver training, recruitment and policy practices.
- ≈ To present lived experience case studies and recommend strategies for improvement.
- ≈ To establish an educational platform that guide employers as they create and sustain gender-diverse workplaces.

Program Framework

Table 2: Ten-Step Training and Recruitment Pathway

STEP	PROCESS	DETAILS
1	Program Promotion	FitD advertised using industry, mainstream and social media networks - inviting women to submit an EOI to www.wita.com.au
2	EOI Submission	Applicants completed on-line EOI providing the following: 1. Licence type required 2. Additional training needs 3. Truck driving experience 4. Local employer contacts 5. Shift/freight preferences 6. Govt Wage subsidy availability 7. Character/Professional references 8. Ten-year employment history 8. Ten-year DoT driving history
3	EOI Assessment	Comprehensive EOI assessment conducted to determine applicant suitability and individual needs i.e. License type, Dangerous Goods, Forklift, Load Restraint Training etc. Phone interview conducted.
4	Program Acceptance	Applicant notified of program placement
5	Quotes	Trainees provided WiTA with two quotes from local RTO's and driver trainers.
6	Training	FitD funding allocated in line with participant requirements up to \$5,000. Training coordinated as three-way process between WiTA/Trainee/RTO
7	Supplementary Training	Additional training/tickets identified.
8	Resume Preparation	Trainee's resume updated/created by WiTA
9	Employer Engagement	WiTA liaise with potential employers providing Graduate resume, Project Brief and wage subsidy
10	Recruitment and Mentoring	Graduate commences employment. WiTA provides mentoring and advocacy as required.

A photograph of four people, three women and one man, posing on the back of a yellow and white MMT truck. The man on the left is wearing a brown hat, sunglasses, a black polo shirt with a logo, and blue jeans. The woman next to him has long blonde hair and is wearing a black polo shirt. The woman in the foreground is wearing a blue shirt and a black vest, sitting on the truck's edge. The woman on the right is wearing a light blue button-down shirt and black pants, also sitting on the truck. The truck has the MMT logo in red on its side. The background shows a grey brick building and trees under a clear blue sky.

SA MC drivers (TL to BR) Trinity, Blayze, Stephanie and Lyndal

MMT

**A Gender diverse workforce
is an investment not a cost**

FitD Program Outcomes

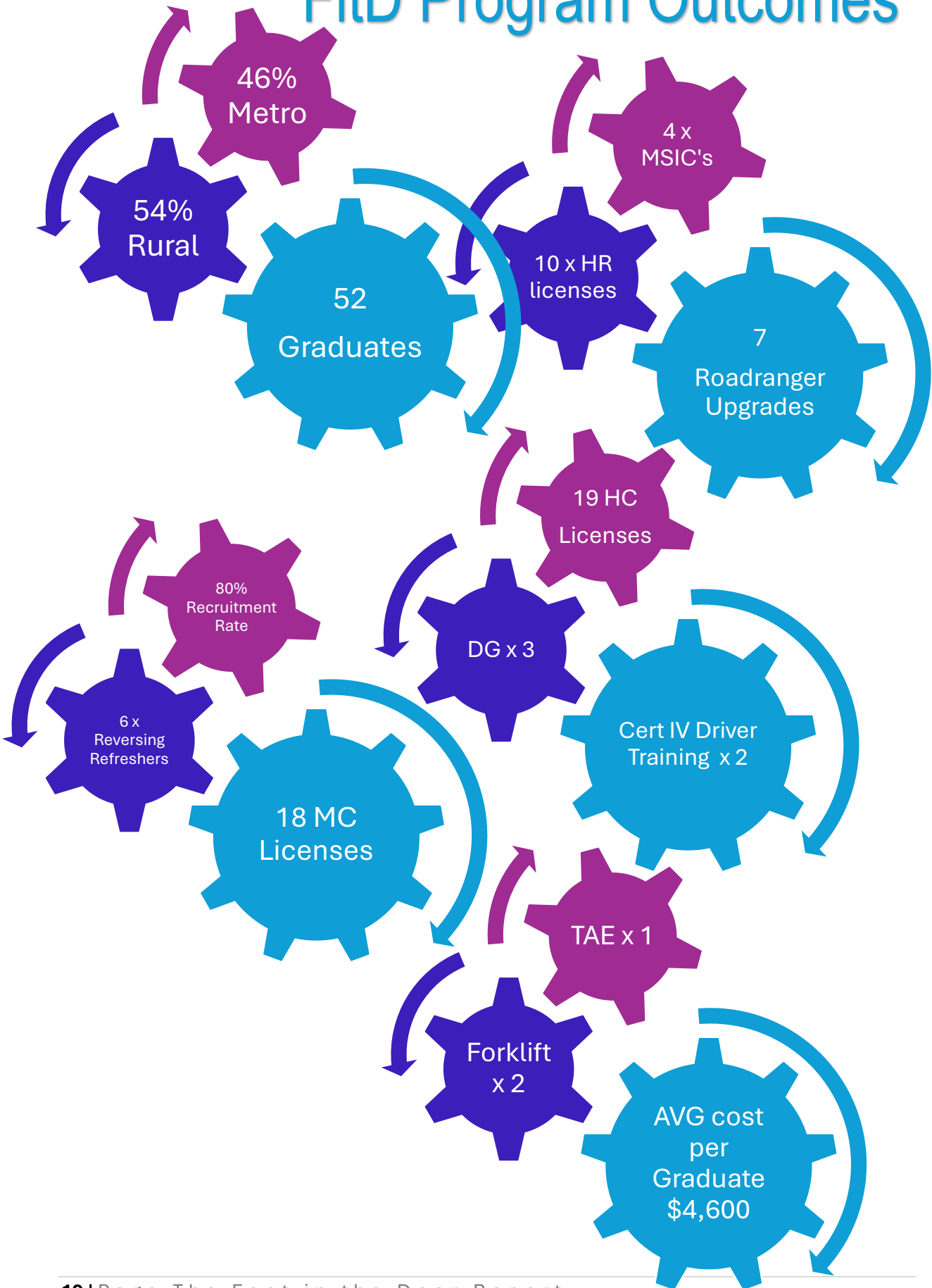


Table 3 Age Demographics of Foot in the Door Graduates

State Territory	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	AVG Age
QLD	-	1	2	3	7	52
NSW	1	1	1	4	2	47
ACT	-	-	-	-	-	-
VIC	-	1	1	3	1	45
TAS	-	-	-	-	-	-
NT	1	1	-	2	-	36
SA	-	3	6	5	2	43
WA	-	-	1	1	2	53
TOTALS	2	7	11	18	14	46

At a Glance

The average age of the Australian truck driver is about 47 - with more than half over 45 and close to half 55 or older. This ageing profile is one of the biggest structural threats to the sector. With a retirement cliff approaching and too few young people entering the industry, Australia faces a severe and worsening driver shortage.

Recent female graduates entering the heavy vehicle driving workforce across Australia have an average age of 46, which is slightly younger than the national average. This suggests female entrants are joining the industry at a pace that is helping to offset the sector's ageing workforce, even though the

difference is modest. Compared to national averages, female graduates represent a younger cohort, offering a promising avenue for renewal and future workforce sustainability.

South Australia led the way with 16 graduates, while Queensland followed with 13, indicating particularly strong participation in both states.

Graduates were fairly evenly split between metropolitan (46%) and rural (54%) areas, underscoring both the reach of the program and the potential to further strengthen engagement across regions in future cycles.

The Good News

Industry stakeholders including government bodies, major logistics companies and peak bodies continue to launch and/or support female driver initiatives with a view to raising awareness and encouraging women to consider heavy vehicle driving careers.

Companies including Toll, Volvo Australia, Ranstad's Women in Transport Program, Cleanaway, Riordan's Grain, Holcim's Women on Wheels and QUBE have established targeted, highly successful female driver recruitment initiatives – many of which are contributing to a measurable shift in perceptions - whilst providing results-driven outcomes.

Increasing Female Driver Participation Through Targeted Partnerships

With a view to shifting FitD modelling from theory into practice, WiTA joined with QUBE Logistics Adelaide in a collaboration that allowed WiTA CEO Lyndal Denny to observe the program in action in her own workplace.

Over the course of the pilot, QUBE State Transport Manager Matt Newman placed a number of FitD Graduates into full-time HC employment - providing them with the opportunity to apply their newly acquired skills in a supportive work environment.

This strategic partnership was not just about recruitment - it also involved comprehensive training, mentorship and workplace integration support.

QUBE's willingness to actively recruit from WiTA's pool of newly licensed SA drivers clearly demonstrated to other employers that female heavy vehicle driver recruitment is not a complex exercise, but rather an option well within reach of all.

The outstanding results achieved backed up theoretical FitD modelling and demonstrated the value of theory-informed action and practical application in real-world settings.

In May 2026 - female drivers represent 50% of the QUBE Logistics Outer Harbour afternoon shift team.



Qube Ahead of the Curve With 40% Female Drivers

[Kayla Walsh](#) September 3, 2024, 7:49 am



Matt Newman and his team of female drivers at Qube's Adelaide depot.

Qube's Outer Harbour Transport Manager Matt Newman has a crew of 17 drivers on the afternoon shift in Adelaide moving containers.

It's not a long run – only about 200 metres but it's not easy work either, with 16 or 17 trips per driver and about 100 containers in total being moved in eight hours.

Still, it's nothing too out of the ordinary – apart from the fact that 40% of Matt's team are women, quite a bit higher than the national average of 2%.

To recruit these drivers, Matt has teamed up with Women in Trucking Australia's CEO and Qube driver Lyndal Denny who stepped up to help supply suitable candidates.

"I think engaging with WiTA to recruit drivers has been the best thing I ever did," he told Big Rigs. "It's a hard industry, and kids aren't coming out of school wanting to enter it."



**QUBE Transport Manager Matt Newman
with FitD MC driver Gail Ritchie**

"Drivers aren't exactly a dime a dozen, so working with WiTA has turned out really well"

Lyndal runs the Foot in the Door program, a collaboration between WiTA and the NHVR which helps women get a start in the transport industry or advance their careers with further training and support.

"Lyndal brings the candidates to me, we interview them, and we go from there," said Matt. "Lyndal's the one who sits with the driver for nearly two weeks, training them up, so she deserves a lot of credit."

Matt is very happy with the standard of drivers Lyndal has supplied to Qube. "The PM shift have got a pretty big job," he said.

"We're relying on them to move ninety percent of our exports to Flinders. "When they are moving 100 containers in eight hours I can't complain – they are a great team."

He shared an example of one driver in particular, [49-year-old Gail Ritchie](#), who has come a long way since she started with the company. "She came to us as a HC driver with no experience," he said. "Now she's pulling triples every night of the week."

Lyndal is vocal about her goal of achieving gender parity in the transport industry by 2050.

"Employers need to recognize that women don't need special favours, we just need a start, respect, appropriate training and a fair and equal workplace."

In recognition of his commitment to workplace diversity, Matt was awarded the first ever Diversity and Inclusion Award at WiTA's Toots Awards in July.

"I was quite happy and proud to get that award," he said. "And I never say I'm proud of myself!"

Company Case Study

Championing Respect, Equal Opportunity and Professional Growth

Qube SA Outer Harbour State Transport Manager Matt Newman has set a remarkable standard supporting the **Foot in the Door** program with a number of graduates transitioning into full-time employment with the Company.



QUBE/WITA Drivers (L-R) Lyndal, Gail and Casey

Matt's approach is anchored in respect, courtesy and an unwavering commitment to equal opportunity - his focus is squarely fixed on each individual's potential contribution to the business rather than their gender.

QUBE/WITA HC Driver Diana Ewing



This progressive attitude has resulted in a workplace free of bias and stereotyping – a workplace that allows the team to thrive based on merit and capability.



QUBE/WITA HC Driver Em

Participants unanimously report that - while stepping into their new roles presented a steep learning curve, at no stage did they feel pressured or rushed – with each given ample time to settle in, to adapt to their responsibilities and to develop their skills. All reported the workplace culture as one of support and encouragement.

This culture of inclusion and respect not only benefits staff but also enhances the overall performance and reputation of Qube Outer Harbour as a forward-thinking employer.

QUBE Outer Harbour depot recruitment practices demonstrate the considerable opportunities and benefits available both to women and transport companies when recruiters ignore tired generational assumptions and embrace respectful inclusion practices.

In recognition of his unwavering commitment to DEI Matt was awarded the prestigious 2024 National QUBE Thrive Inclusion Award.

“Working with Women in Trucking Australia, Matt has built a team that includes 40% female drivers. He is known for his care, for leading by example and for creating a supportive, fair and inclusive workplace.” QUBE Holdings

Understanding the Impact of Advocacy on Female Driver Recruitment

A key insight emerging from the FitD pilot project is that employers are significantly more willing to recruit and train newly licensed female drivers when the introduction is facilitated through WiTA, rather than via direct walk-in applications. This highlights the value of a trusted intermediary in overcoming entrenched biases and opening doors to genuine employment pathways.

This organisational endorsement alleviates employer concerns about the risks of hiring entry-level applicants – leaving them secure in the knowledge that FitD trainees have undergone rigorous screening, mentoring and preparation and have subsequently met the high standards of professionalism and readiness the program demands.

This is backed up by research highlighting referrals from respected third parties can significantly increase employer willingness to consider non-traditional candidates.

The Transport and Logistics Industry Reference Committee (2020) found that employers are more likely to hire candidates deemed “work-ready” and recommended by reputable industry bodies.

WiTA’s involvement ensures ongoing support, expert advice and advocacy - giving employers confidence throughout both the training and initial stages of employment.

Women are the only large, immediately available, safety focussed domestic workforce capable of reversing driver shortages

This support is especially valuable when integrating female drivers into traditionally male workplaces, helping address concerns about workplace culture, retention and diversity.

By presenting candidates as part of a structured, industry-backed initiative, WiTA challenges biases and encourages fairer recruitment practices.

Diversity Council Australia research supports the effectiveness of targeted diversity programs in reducing bias and promoting equitable hiring.

WiTA’s approach offers employers background information, context and assurances of candidate preparedness, enhancing confidence in recruitment decisions.

As a result, employers are more willing to hire entry-level female drivers through WiTA because of increased trust, perceived candidate quality, organisational backing and reduced bias.

The involvement of organisations like WiTA plays a vital role in advancing gender diversity and facilitating successful integration of women into non-traditional roles within the sector.

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Long-Term Impact of the Foot in the Door Program

Pioneering a Decade-Long Longitudinal Study on Female Heavy Vehicle Driver Recruitment



QLD based MC driver and FitD Graduate Jacqui Larkin

WiTA's **"Foot in the Door"** pilot has already made significant strides in terms of female heavy vehicle driver recruitment.

In an unprecedented move, the initiative is set to deliver further value to the sector as WiTA establishes a comprehensive longitudinal study with the program transitioning into an ongoing research project, tracking Graduates and analysing recruitment trends across the next decade.

The first of its kind, this longitudinal study will mark a pivotal step in understanding the long-term challenges faced by women entering and remaining in heavy vehicle driving roles.

The aim of the study will be to provide the industry with robust, evidence-based insights into the recruitment, retention and career progression of female heavy vehicle drivers.

By following Graduates over an extended period, the study will:

- ✓ Identify key factors influencing women's decisions to join the sector and remain engaged
- ✓ Track changes in recruitment practices and their effectiveness
- ✓ Highlight ongoing barriers and challenges
- ✓ Showcase success stories and best practice for supporting gender diversity

Why This Matters

This longitudinal research will become a vital resource for fleet operators, recruiters, policy makers and industry associations - informing strategies to attract and retain greater numbers of female drivers.

It will help address skills shortages and foster a more inclusive and productive workforce. The findings will also assist in shaping future training programs and workplace policies to better support female drivers.

By committing to this decade-long study, WiTA reinforces its role as a leader in driving positive, evidence-based change. The initiative ensures the benefits of the FitD program will extend well beyond its foundation Graduates - contributing to the growth of the Australian road transport industry for years to come.

This pioneering research represents a major investment in the future of Australia's transport sector. Industry stakeholders are encouraged to engage with WiTA and support the ongoing study, as its outcomes will undoubtedly shape a more diverse and resilient workforce moving forward.



Women in Trucking Australia
Driving Equality

she
WEAR



FOOT IN THE DOOR

PROGRAM



www.wita.com.au

Ally Hunt – QUBE/WiTA FitD HC Driver

21st Century Challenges

Female heavy vehicle drivers face unique barriers in their efforts to establish trucking careers. These can include recruitment bias, bullying, sexism, gender bias and sexual

harassment – all of which contribute to stressful work environments for those fortunate enough to have smashed the “glass bullbar.”

Table 4 Entrenched Barriers

Barrier	Manifestation
Gender Bias	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gendered wording in job advertisements • Gender bias: in the application of selection criteria in interview invitations in evaluation of credentials in promotion
Stereotyping	<p>Gendered Role Assumptions and beliefs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women don’t have the strength to "handle the job" • Women are “bad drivers” • Women “don’t know anything about fixing trucks" • Women won’t work unless they have clean amenities • Women prefer shopping, socialising and having babies
Sexism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismissive attitudes • Assumptions about competence • Unequal opportunities • Sexual harassment • Exclusion from informal networks • Customer bias • Rigid gender roles:
Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unequal Pay and Promotion Opportunities • Exclusion from Informal Networks • Sexual Harassment and Hostile Work Environments • Lack of Mentorship and Sponsorship • Resistance to Flexible Work Arrangements • Tokenism

There is a persistent misconception among employers and recruiters that employing female drivers necessitates a complex suite of workplace initiatives.

male colleagues - with much of the misinformation and myths spread by individuals who lack direct experience in the role.

This belief often leads recruiters to view women as a problematic demographic to accommodate - deterring genuine efforts to diversify the workforce.

These speculative views tend to exaggerate the differences between male and female drivers, perpetuating the myth that women require costly and challenging workplace adjustments.

In reality, the needs and expectations of female drivers closely mirror those of their

Myth-busting Female Driver Recruitment

“The myth that women are difficult to recruit and retain due to supposed unique needs has tangible consequences. It discourages employers from pursuing female candidates, perpetuates gender imbalance and undermines efforts to build inclusive teams. Furthermore, it diverts attention from genuine workplace improvements, focusing instead on imagined issues. When organisations treat female drivers differently based on unfounded assumptions, it fosters division and erodes trust, making the industry less attractive to all prospective employees.” (Workplace Gender Equality Agency, 2024).

Despite positive – albeit slow-moving trends, a range of contemporary myths - many stemming from outdated generational beliefs continue to influence how female drivers are recruited, trained and integrated into the sector. These myths dovetail into unnecessary or misguided workplace practices that risk reinforcing gender stereotypes - rather than promoting true equality.

Myth

Women Require Workplace Considerations Not Required by Men

A persistent myth is that female drivers require fundamentally different workplace arrangements than their male colleagues. This includes assumptions about special amenities,



Tamara - WA MC Iron Ore Quad Driver

additional privacy and unique support systems. Such beliefs often lead to overcomplicated or patronising policies that can inadvertently make women feel singled out rather than welcomed.

Myth

Women Have Special Menstruation Needs

Another myth suggests female drivers be assigned long distance over local work or that they need extra time off during their menstrual cycles. This belief is outdated and fails to recognise women's autonomy and ability to manage their own health. Work allocations should be based on capability and preference - not gendered assumptions.

Myth

Women Require out of Truck Accommodation

The idea that women cannot or should not sleep in their trucks and instead be provided with hotel accommodation is another myth rooted in outdated notions of female vulnerability. While safety and comfort are critical for all drivers - policies should be applied equally - with sleeping away from truck options based on individual agreements between employers and employees.

Myth

Women Require Cleaner Amenities

The belief that women need cleaner or more hygienic amenities than men is both patronising and illogical. All workers deserve clean, well-maintained facilities as a basic standard of workplace health and safety, rather than a gender-specific privilege.

Paving the Road to Gender Diversity

Moving Beyond Myths. Best Practice for Inclusive Recruitment

Myths surrounding Australian female heavy vehicle driver recruitment are fed by readily accepted generational hand-me-down comments and incorrect assumptions.

The reality however - is straightforward. Women do not require special treatment. They require respect, equitable workplace opportunity and the same standards across the board as their male colleagues. Talent, attitude and capability are the only criteria that matter.

The essential foundations of a safe and supportive workplace environment for all drivers - irrespective of gender are as follows:

Clear Communication

Open channels for feedback, transparent job expectations and timely information about schedules or procedural changes.

Safety

Robust safety protocols, well-maintained vehicles and a commitment to risk reduction in daily operations.

Respect

Zero tolerance for harassment or discrimination and a culture that values every employee's contribution.

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Clean Amenities

Ensuring all drivers - regardless of gender, have access to clean amenities, comfortable rest areas, safe accommodation and gender tailored PPE

Equity

Assigning work and training based on individual capability rather than gender-based assumptions.

Dignity

Fostering an environment where all drivers are treated with dignity – an environment where diversity is celebrated as a strength.

By focusing on universal improvements rather than gendered conjecture, employers can dispel myths, attract diverse talent and foster a workplace culture built on equality and practical support.

WITA SA based HC FiTD Graduate
Lindsee Cameron (and bub)



Smashing the Glass Bullbar.

Tackling Gender Bias in Australia's Heavy Vehicle Driver Workforce

WOMEN

can't cope with the rough conditions

like to shop and have babies

won't cope with basic or no amenities

don't want to be away from their families

cost too much to employ

can't change truck tyres

distract "the boys"

Picture the average Australian truck driver. Chances are, you're imagining a bloke behind the wheel.

That's not just a stereotype - it's a reflection of a stubborn reality because in 2026, women comprise just 2% of Australia's heavy vehicle driver workforce.

Despite persistent driver skills shortages and widespread industry discussion around the critical importance of diversity, female driver numbers remain stubbornly low.

So, what keeps women off the nation's highways and out of the driver's seat?

Ask around and you'll hear a familiar set of "reasons" why so few women drive heavy vehicles. These unfounded myths continue unchecked, so have become part of industry folklore.

What we need to focus on - are the real barriers and how we can educate and steer the industry in a more inclusive direction.

In December 2013, the ATA lobbied the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency in a submission titled **Skilled Occupation List for 2014**

- a) pushing to have truck driving added to the Skills Occupation List and
- b) pursuing Labour Agreements with the Immigration Department because “current recruitment policies are not meeting the driver shortage.”

Key Quotes from the Submission regarding female driver recruitment perpetuate these myths

1. “The industry is male dominated and a perception of a ‘boys’ club’ culture may be off-putting to women.”
2. “The lifestyle that is inherent with heavy vehicle driving may be at odds with some women’s ambitions to socialise and have a family.”
3. “Until the lack of adequate female-friendly amenities, flexible work hours and personal safety issues involved with driving trucks are addressed, many women will not believe trucking is an attractive profession where they can achieve long-term aspirations.”
4. “Women should be encouraged to become truck drivers but creating and enforcing quotas would not result in the best outcome for industry. There should be equality of opportunity, not equality of outcome.”
5. “Women already play a role in policy direction in the ATA Council and its Committees. Each year, women of distinction are nominated and rewarded with the ‘National Trucking Industry Woman of the Year’ award at the ATA’s annual event.”
6. “Short shift driving would target over 35’s, those with families and women in the industry. While this is one of the clearest ways to attract and retain workers, operators are resistant to

an idea that will increase costs just to suit some of the workforce.”

7. In conclusion, the ATA stated it had provided “conclusive evidence” of the current barriers to attracting new drivers and that “the industry is working on improving this situation.”
8. And finally “having heavy vehicle drivers included on the SOL list will help supplement the national workforce temporarily and make sure industry can meet the growing freight task **at the lowest cost possible.**
9. **The ATA’s Recommendation** Heavy vehicle drivers (ANZSCO 733111) should be included on the skilled occupation list, in order for overseas drivers to apply for 457 visas and for the heavy vehicle industry to meet the growing freight task.

Today, myths around women preferring to have babies, socialising and requiring “female friendly” amenities are as outdated and as inaccurate as they were in 2013.

Whilst it is recognised there has been a changing of the guard at the ATA, these myths remain very much a part of industry culture and serve to deflect attention from the real, systemic issues at play. By focusing on supposed preferences or limitations, the industry avoids confronting its own biases and barriers.

Surveys repeatedly show female work interests are diverse - with many drawn to well-paying, independent, adventurous roles qualities truck driving offers in spades.

The low female driver heavy vehicle driver participation rate isn’t about lack of interest but rather the barriers women face getting a foot in the door.

These factors all combine to create an environment where women are under-represented - not because they aren’t interested or capable - but because the system is stacked against them.

Australian Truck Driver Gender Ratios

Table 5 Australian Heavy Vehicle Licence Types – HR to MC

HR - Heavy Rigid	Rigid vehicle with 3 or more axles and a GVM over 8,000kg
HC - Heavy Combination	Articulated vehicle with a prime mover and semi-trailer or a rigid vehicle towing a trailer over 9,000 kg GVM.
MC - Multi Combination	Road trains/B-doubles - the largest vehicles on Australian roads.

N.B. The figures presented below reflect the total number of heavy vehicle licence holders, rather than the actual count of individuals currently employed as truck drivers.

Table 6 Heavy Vehicle Licence Numbers Nationally by Gender and Percentage

Licence Class	Total Licence Holders	Male (%)	Female (%)
HR - Heavy Rigid	350,000	96%	4%
HC - Heavy Combination	120,000	97%	3%
MC - Multi Combination	50,000	97%	3%

Table 7 Heavy Vehicle Licence Numbers by State/Territory, Gender and Percentage

State Territory	Female (HR/HC/MC)	Male (HR/HC/MC)	% Female
NSW	2,300	58,700	3.8%
VIC	1,800	46,200	3.7%
QLD	2,100	45,900	4.4%
WA	1,100	27,600	3.8%
SA	950	20,700	4.4%
TAS	400	7,900	4.8%
NT	180	4,200	4.1%
ACT	120	2,900	4.0%
TOTAL	8,950	214,100	4.1%

References

Data collected from official sources, including state and territory transport departments, the NHVR and recent government and industry reports. The figures represent the most recent available statistics as of 2024. Where direct gender splits by licence type were unavailable, the closest available data was used.

Australian Government – Heavy Vehicle Driver Licence Statistics

Australian Bureau of Statistics – Road Freight Movement

National Heavy Vehicle Regulator – Industry Statistics

Queensland Department of Transport and Main Roads – Open Data

VicRoads – Data, Statistics and Reports

Transport for NSW – Licence Statistics

women ...
the solution to critical driver shortages ...



A Sector at a Crossroads.

Foreign Driver vs Female Driver Recruitment

Australia's road transport sector is under increasing pressure to fill chronic driver shortages, with many companies turning to overseas recruitment to keep freight moving.

While this strategy helps maintain supply chains, it has also created a complex and sensitive issue on Australian roads as large numbers of recruits arrive from countries where road laws are loosely enforced, crash rates significantly higher and driving cultures significantly more aggressive than what is permitted under Australian law.

When these drivers are placed behind the wheel of heavy vehicles on Australian roads, many with limited command of English, limited knowledge of road law and minimal training – if any - the risk profile increases dramatically.

For those forced to share the road with these drivers, the reality ceases to be an abstract policy debate and becomes a lived safety concern.

Many Australian truck drivers report being accused of racism when they raise issues about close calls on the road, unsafe driving practices and language difficulties.

This effectively shuts down legitimate safety conversations – leaving many feeling ignored by corporate decision-makers who are not the ones navigating these risks on the road.

The core problem isn't the nationality of the drivers - it's the gap between the standards required to operate safely in Australia and the training, language proficiency and driving culture many bring with them.

A more honest industry conversation is needed - one that separates safety concerns from cultural judgement - one that acknowledges the realities of the job and ensures that every driver, regardless of origin

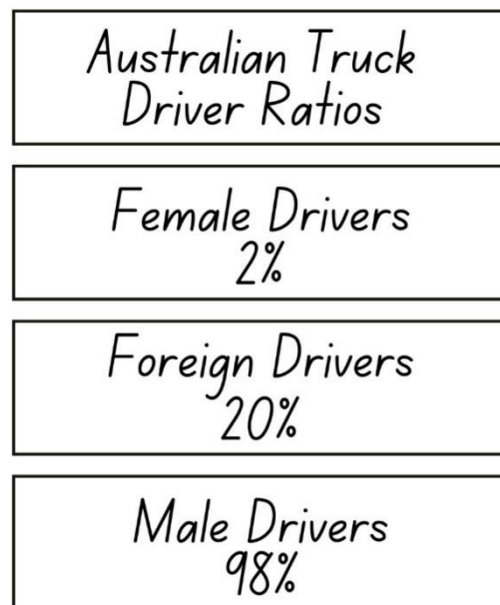
is professionally trained, accurately assessed and fully capable of meeting Australian road-safety expectations.

Without that, the tension between corporate priorities and on-road realities will only continue to grow.

The industry's ongoing reliance on recruiting foreign drivers to address shortages highlights a clear lack of genuine investment in gender diversity - specifically, in attracting, training and retaining Australian women as drivers.

Currently, just 2% of Australian truck drivers are women. In contrast, foreign-born drivers have secured a notable 20% of the heavy vehicle workforce - indicating more targeted, effective pathways exist for their employment.

Table 8 Truck Driver Ratios in Australia



Source: ABS

This stark contrast suggests that while international recruitment is actively pursued, efforts to engage women remain under-developed and underfunded - leaving the pace of change glacial.

Recruitment pipelines for foreign drivers on the other hand, are streamlined and well supported - highlighting a clear imbalance in strategic focus.

WiTA believes if the sector is serious about solving its workforce crisis, it must equally prioritise female driver inclusion alongside international recruitment.

Instead, too often we hear claims that mandatory gender targets risk “the best person for the job” missing out.

This argument sits uncomfortably beside a growing reality that sees skilled domestic drivers overlooked as employers prioritise cheaper overseas labour - drivers with limited English skills, minimal familiarity with Australian road law, minimal training, minimal on-road experience and inconsistent safety practices.

The contradiction is impossible to ignore. When it comes to gender equity, the industry insists on pure merit. But when it comes to labour shortages and cost-cutting, merit suddenly becomes negotiable.

It’s a double standard that exposes a deeper truth - the rhetoric about “the best person for the job” is applied selectively and often only when it protects the status quo.

The industry publicly champions safety as its highest priority. From fatigue-management campaigns to strict compliance regimes, the message is clear - safety is non-negotiable.

Yet alongside this rhetoric sits foreign driver recruitment – a practice that raises uncomfortable questions, given issues previously discussed – that see new arrivals placed behind the wheel of vehicles weighing upwards of 42 tonnes regardless.

This isn’t a criticism of those seeking to build a better life. The issue lies with an industry that insists on world-class safety while simultaneously relying on a pipeline of workers – many of whom have not been

given the tools, training or language support needed to meet those standards.

When profit pressures collide with safety ideals - the cracks show. If the sector truly values safety on its roads, then heavy vehicle driver recruitment must be matched with rigorous, consistent and culturally aware training - not shortcuts that shift risk onto truck drivers and other road users.

It is here the disconnect between corporate safety slogans and actual practice becomes apparent with much coming down to economics and power - not skill or safety.

Companies will publicly talk about safety, diversity, inclusion and “Australian jobs” but behind the scenes many prioritise lower labour costs, driver willingness to work longer hours for less money in sub-standard vehicles and reduced driver turnover because many visa conditions are tied to work status, creating significant power imbalances.

Incidents involving foreign drivers have contributed to measurable reputational harm within the sector - with an Austroads survey of more than 1,900 respondents finding that over 85% believed foreign truck drivers should not be permitted to operate in Australia on their overseas licence.

This reflects widespread industry concern about inconsistent training and safety standards.

Industry operators have publicly reported cases of foreign drivers taking unsafe detours, operating poorly maintained or uninsured vehicles and demonstrating limited knowledge of Australian road rules, further amplifying perceptions of declining professionalism.

These concerns sit against a backdrop of 157 fatalities in crashes involving heavy trucks in the 12 months to March 2025, intensifying scrutiny when incidents involve drivers recruited from overseas.

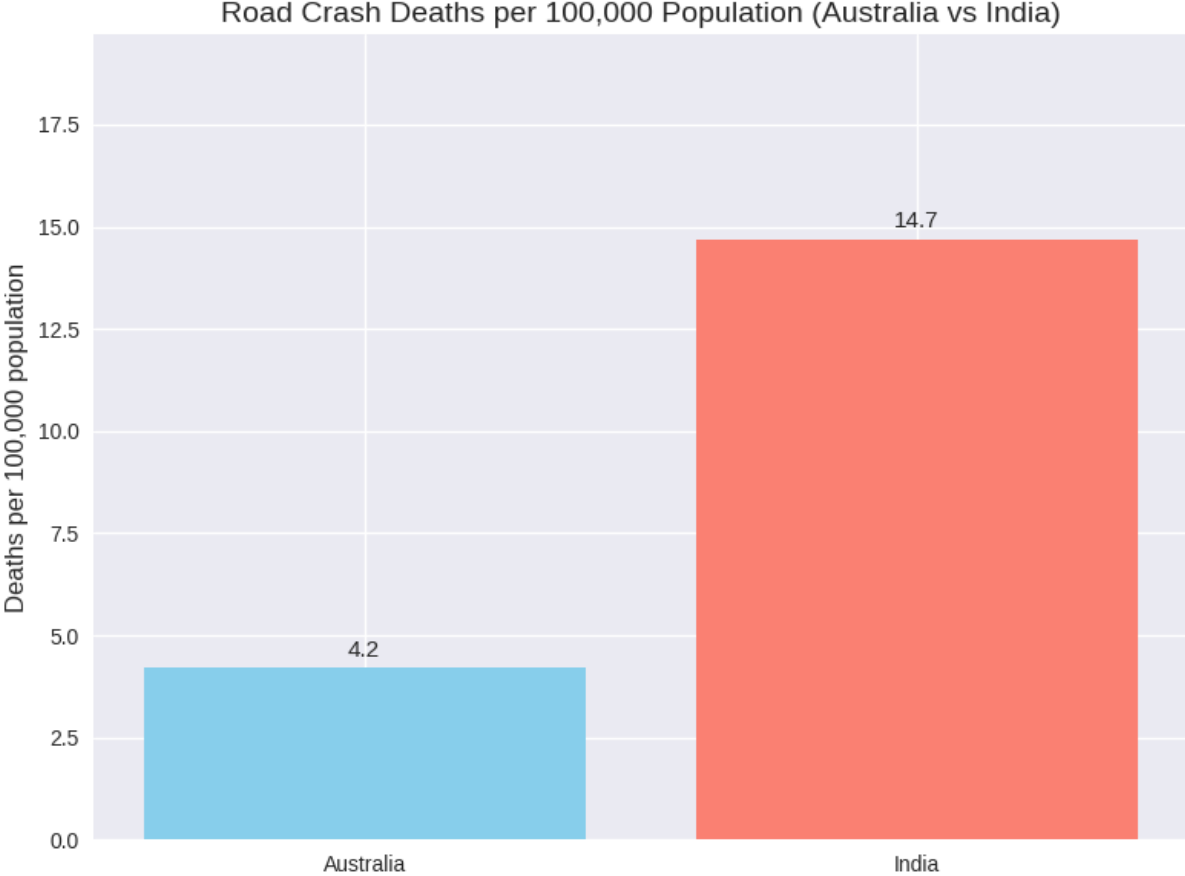
Together, these factors have reinforced a public narrative that labour-shortage solutions are being prioritised at the expense of safety, eroding trust in the sector’s recruitment and regulatory practices.

By way of example, India’s driving culture and resultant annual road toll is dramatically

higher than Australia’s - with a road crash death rate of 14.7 per 100,000 while Australia’s is far lower at 4.2 per 100,000.

In simple terms, India’s fatality rate is about 250% higher than Australia’s - highlighting a significant gap in road safety outcomes between the two countries.

Table 9 Comparison of Road Crash Deaths per 100,000 - Australia vs India



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Recruitment Pathways for Foreign Drivers

Many foreign drivers enter the sector via migration programs and international recruitment initiatives. These pathways are typically supported by government policies aimed at addressing skills shortages in the sector. Programs are formalised, well-funded and actively promoted.

Some employers actively recruit overseas workers, offering training and sponsorship opportunities that facilitate their seamless transition into the sector. International recruitment agencies also specialise in matching overseas candidates with Australian transport companies.

Recruitment Pathways for Australian Women

Unlike foreign driver programs, a lack of equivalent investment and focus on attracting and supporting women into the industry exists. Women also face barriers accessing training including lack of information, lack of support and lack of flexible options to accommodate family responsibilities.

Unfounded biases shrouding female driver recruitment, combined with the absence of policy incentives and industry support further limit employment pathways. Gender bias stands as the defining barrier to female driver employment.

Table 10 Ratios - Foreign v Female Truck Drivers in Australia by Licence Type

Licence Type	% Foreign Drivers	% Female Drivers	Ratio (Foreign : Female)
Heavy Rigid (HR)	12%	4%	3 : 1
Heavy Combination (HC)	16%	3%	5 : 1
Multi Combination (MC)	20%	2%	10 : 1

Notes: Table 10 provides a comparison of the ratios between foreign and female truck drivers in Australia, segmented by licence type. Figures are sourced from the most recent data available from the ABS and leading industry publications as of 2024. “Foreign drivers” refers to individuals born overseas who hold a valid Australian truck licence. “Female drivers” refers to individuals identifying as female and holding a valid licence in the specified category. Percentages are based on the total number of licensed drivers in each truck licence class. Ratios are calculated by dividing the percentage of foreign drivers by the percentage of female drivers for each licence type.

Table 10 figures reflect current trends where foreign-born driver numbers increase with licence complexity, while female participation remains low across all classes.

Whilst foreign driver recruitment may appear to be a cost-effective readily available option, without rigorous training, language support and staged exposure - the risk isn’t abstract, it’s measured in kinetic energy, lives lost and operating deficits due to lost productivity.

The answer to Australia’s heavy-vehicle driver shortage isn’t overseas. It lies domestically in our own backyard. Relying on overseas recruitment has brought its own set of consequences including communication barriers, compromised safety standards and domestic driver attrition – all pushing sections of the industry to the brink.

When profitability is prioritised over safety, everyone loses – companies, communities and the drivers themselves. The truth is both uncomfortable and unavoidable as the industry now wrestles with the consequences of its own short-term decision-making.

The good news is that it doesn’t have to stay this way because a stronger, safer, more sustainable future is within reach and women are central to the solution.

If the industry wants resilience, if it wants growth, if it wants a workforce built for the next decade rather than the last one, then it must invest in women - not as a slogan and not as a diversity checkbox - but as a strategic, long-term workforce solution.



The road ahead is clear. Listen to women. Train them. Support them. Hire them. Australia's next generation of professional drivers is ready. The only question is whether the industry is ready for them.

“Female heavy vehicle drivers do not require special treatment - but rather the removal of barriers (both practical and attitudinal) that have historically limited their participation. Fostering a culture of respect and safety is the cornerstone of successful female driver recruitment and retention.”

Lyndal Denny, WITA CEO

Recruiting Female Drivers Addressing an Underutilised Resource



Demystifying Female Driver Recruitment

With Australia's road freight task projected to grow by 77% between 2020 and 2050, the demand for skilled drivers is accelerating at a pace the current workforce pipeline cannot sustain.

Alarming, instead of expanding the talent pool, many employers remain locked in a cycle of poaching from an already limited supply - a short-sighted strategy that undermines long-term industry viability with a common refrain - "Why invest in training new drivers when they'll just leave for another company?"

While this sentiment is understandable in a competitive market, the logic is ultimately self-defeating. It perpetuates scarcity, inflates wages without improving productivity and leaves prime-movers idle due to a lack of qualified drivers.

What the industry needs is a cultural shift, from guarding talent to growing it.

If every trucking company committed to training just one new driver each year, the impact would be transformative.

With more than 60,000 registered road freight transport businesses operating nationally, even modest participation would generate thousands of new drivers annually, offsetting natural attrition and helping meet the expanding freight task.

Developing a sustainable driver pipeline requires investment, but the returns are substantial and include

A larger, more stable driver pool, reducing vulnerability to turnover and poaching.

Expanded employment opportunities in regional Australia, strengthening local economies.

Fewer delays, fewer idle trucks and smoother supply chains benefiting operators, clients and the broader economy.

WiTA's proposed Designated Female Driver Recruitment Agency Action Plan 2026–27 will serve as a foundational strategy, establishing the groundwork for a coordinated, sector-wide effort to address Australia's persistent driver shortages.

With active stakeholder engagement, this initiative will not only channel more women into the talent pipeline - it will also help build a more diverse, resilient and future ready workforce.

By supporting women at every stage of their driving careers, this initiative aims to deliver long-term benefits for the industry, ensuring a stronger and more sustainable pool of skilled drivers.

We must replace the old refrain—"I'm not training any more drivers because they go elsewhere" with a new ethos: "I'll contribute to the industry by training one new driver each year."

This simple shift transforms employers from competitors into collaborators. While some drivers will inevitably move on, many will stay and all will strengthen the industry.

WiTA's Female Driver Recruitment Agency proposal advocates for a collaborative stakeholder approach throughout the R&D phase and beyond.

The proposal is grounded in the belief that meaningful progress will occur only when companies shift from a narrow focus on recruitment to embracing their role as trainers and talent developers.

For many employers, training new drivers is perceived as a risk. Yet by growing our own, we build a future where freight keeps moving, the economy keeps growing and the industry thrives.

Currently, many businesses allocate more resources to recruitment than to workforce development with poaching viewed as a faster, cheaper alternative.

When poaching becomes the norm however, training declines, the pool of qualified drivers contracts and fewer people gain entry to the profession, harming employers, clients and prospective drivers alike.

A paradigm shift is needed. Training must be recognised not as a liability but as a shared obligation and a critical investment in the sector’s sustainability.

If every trucking business in Australia committed to training at least one new driver annually - particularly from underrepresented demographics, the industry could reduce its dependence on poaching and build a robust, future-focused talent pipeline.

The benefits would include enhanced safety, improved service delivery and a workforce that better reflects Australia’s diversity.

Industry fleet data indicates approximately 19,000 Australian businesses operate fleets of 20 vehicles or more. If each of these companies recruited and trained just one new female driver annually, the sector would welcome thousands of new female drivers annually.

Over a decade, this would translate into tens of thousands of female drivers entering the sector in a transformation that would greatly enhance inclusivity & help resolve persistent driver shortages.

References

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SA Remote Area MC Driver Amanda Brown

“Easier on the Gear”

A Throwaway Line That Fails Female Drivers

One phrase gets tossed around the sector with surprising regularity - *“Women are great to employ because they’re easier on the gear.”*

On the surface this sounds like a compliment, an acknowledgment of the care and diligence female drivers bring to their work - but dig a little deeper and it becomes clear this is just another platitude - a convenient soundbite that hasn’t translated into increased recruitment, retention or reform.

The assertion that women are “easier on the gear” is not unfounded - as most do exhibit a higher level of care for their vehicles which can lead to lower maintenance costs and longer equipment lifespans.

This conscientiousness however, comes with a caveat, because women are also far less likely to operate a vehicle they deem unsafe or defective.

This reluctance - rooted in legitimate safety concerns often clashes with the expectations of unscrupulous operators who prioritize deadlines over driver and road safety.

Many male drivers - conditioned by industry norms and perhaps fear of being labelled a “princess” are more inclined to get on with the job - despite substandard equipment.

Female drivers, by contrast, are more likely to push back – increasing the risk of bullying, and harassment and the allocation of non-conformance or show-cause letters for “refusing to follow workplace instruction.”

Refusing to drive defective equipment should be seen as a professional, safety-focussed decision however – in many cases it triggers a toxic backlash - with the ultimate goal being to pressure the “difficult” driver to resign.

The end result then becomes a vicious cycle: low female participation leads to isolation,

which leads to vulnerability - which ultimately leads to attrition.

Bullying in the sector isn’t just a workplace norm - it’s a mental health crisis that sees many female drivers labelled as trouble-makers - forced to leave the industry altogether to seek safer, more respectful environments.

Bullying and Harassment. A Deep-Rooted Cultural Crisis

In 21st century Australia, the road transport sector continues to grapple with a deeply entrenched culture of bullying and harassment – as evidenced by the volume of emails that flow into WITA.

From senior management to frontline workers – sexist and demeaning behaviour is often normalized and dismissed as “just a joke” or “just the way things are.”

Phrases like “harden up” or “take a teaspoon of cement” are routinely used to silence those who speak out, reinforcing a toxic environment where vulnerability is mocked.

For female drivers, the challenges are even more acute. Beyond the general culture of intimidation - they face a dogged undercurrent of misogyny, sexual harassment and gender bias with their presence often met with scepticism or hostility and their concerns frequently trivialized or ignored.

Adding another layer of complexity is the fact that aggressive behaviour in male dominated environments is often mistaken for toughness or leadership, thereby engendering environments where bullying is tolerated - or even rewarded.

Bullies are regularly protected by their tenure, established relationships or their perceived value to the company, leaving victims isolated and their complaints ignored.

Internal investigations often fail – cementing the need for external, impartial involvement in the complaints review process. Training and support for employees to safely intervene or report bullying can also shift the culture from passive to proactive.

Leaders must be evaluated - not just on performance metrics but on how they foster psychological safety and inclusivity, because real change will only occur when anti-bullying policies are embedded into hiring, training and promotion.

Invaluable initiatives such as “Are You Okay Day” can feel hollow when they’re not backed by structural change.



Cupcakes and platitudes don’t help if the same people handing them out ignore or enable toxic behaviour.

Neil Reid
 [redacted] you must remember to handle the gear stick like its a mans penis nice and gentle with nice slow changes too fast and hard with the changes and u wont get into the next gear. You'll have to stop and start all over again.
 1 h Like Reply
 Message Hide

This behaviour is not isolated to a few bad actors. It is structural, cultural and widespread and requires leadership willing to confront uncomfortable truths. If those tasked with change are unwilling to challenge the status quo, nothing shifts.

Without change, the sector risks perpetuating a cycle of harm that undermines safety, equity and dignity for all workers.

The complexities inherent in employer response to bullying and harassment are too broad to cover off in a one page discussion piece - but rather require a dedicated full-scale investigation examining hiring practices, workplace culture, safety protocols and mental health outcomes.

Only then can the industry move from rhetoric to reform.

Andrew Draper
Charlie Heseltine no wave your pink hanky and a suck a couple of real truckies for assistance

Peter Carter
 As long as she doesn't get to be a big head and a smart arse ive seen a lot of birds come into the transport game and turn into bitches
 1 d Like Reply Message

John Campagnolo
 What happens during PMS and hormonal tantrums 🤔🤔?

References
 ABC News: Push for more female truckies
 NHVR: Promoting gender diversity in heavy vehicle industry
 Big Rigs: Workplace bullying and harassment
 Trade Trucks: Gender equality in transport

Andy Lauder
 Employ all the females you want them make sure everything's set up so they don't have to reverse,change tires,tarp,load general on a mezz deck super drop,fuck me you don't even have to lift the bonnet the check oil/water the computer does it for you and when shit goes south just call the service truck driven by a male and watch while he sorts it out for you.
 Equality at its finest.

Case Study No 1 – Bullying And Harrassment

WiTA first met BJ early 2023 when she phoned in seeking access to mental health support having endured a campaign of bullying and harassment from her previous (and first) road transport employer.

After lengthy discussions, staff referred BJ to a mental health provider for further support and at the same time encouraged her to apply for the FitD program to upgrade her licence from HR to MC.

During preliminary discussions, we learned BJ was experiencing difficulty securing HR work - the result of her previous employer providing misinformation regarding her work performance to prospective employers.

During the FitD assessment stage, it became evident that BJ – as a newly licensed and enthusiastic HR driver – had been little more than collateral damage to a results driven metro earthworks company not interested in vehicle maintenance or driver safety.

Allocated an old rigid truck day one - which her pre-start listed as having no accelerator pedal, significant hydraulic oil leaks, a wired-on bottom step and a broken taped up mirror, BJ assessed the vehicle as “unsafe to operate” and requested a replacement.

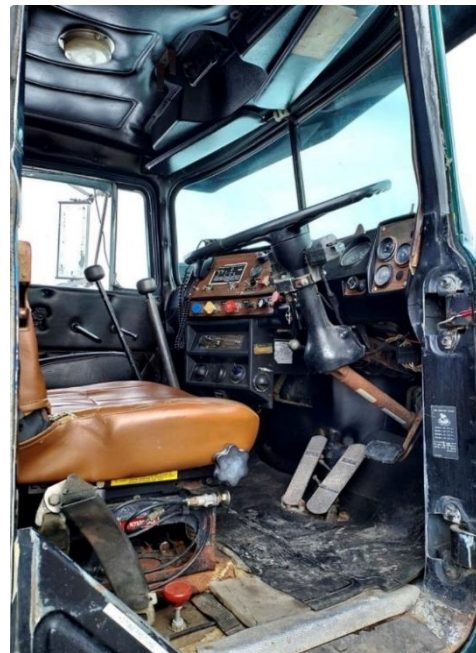
She was advised that the “other drivers had no problem with the truck” and that the worksite was “just around the corner.”

Not wanting to rock the boat - BJ attempted to operate the vehicle but found the steering wheel had an eight to nine inch play in response and faulty brakes, so found herself sent home for the day with the promise of a different truck the following day.

The next morning, BJ was allocated the same truck and after a week of sleepless nights and fruitless discussions with mechanics and management - all of whom deemed the vehicle mechanically sound - BJ was issued with a “show cause” letter for “not following reasonable directions from her supervisor” a male who spoke to her at all times with contempt and dismissiveness.

In an effort to protect her mental health, BJ resigned and contacted WiTA seeking support and guidance.

On completion of her FitD assessment, BJ was deemed an excellent candidate, who brought a strong employment background, excellent driving history and a positive flexible attitude to the program.



Some weeks later, when BJ graduated as an MC driver, WiTA reached out to a national employer who - after discussions around her training needs and competencies - agreed to put BJ on as a full-time HC driver under the FitD program.

Despite comprehensive communiques around the need for BJ to spend at least 12 months honing her HC skills - a combination of her being sucked into the vortex of a large busy company depot and lack of communication between management - BJ found herself allocated MC work.

Discussions with her male supervisor resulted in comments along the lines of “we’re not a nursery” and “if you can’t do the job, you shouldn’t be here.”

Again - after just one week BJ was handed a letter of dismissal from her supervisor - signed off by a manager she’d never met - advising her she’d failed to meet “performance expectations” in terms of aligning with company integrity and reliability.

Disappointingly, heartbreaking stories of bullying, gaslighting and harassment are all too common among female drivers and predominantly stem from them raising safety concerns or being allocated tasks beyond their capabilities as a form of sabotage.

We’re pleased to report that BJ did find her dream employer, is loving her trucking career out on the road finding her feet as an MC driver.

Case Study No 2

Workplace Harassment and Gendered Hostility

Victorian based HC driver Jacqui works for a civil construction company operating a range of vehicles including tandems, truck and dog combinations, agis, water carts and NDD trucks.

Despite her capability and experience - as the only female among eighty onsite workers, Jacqui's experiences graphically illustrate the scale and severity of gendered harassment that women in civil construction trucking continue to face.

Joining the sector four years ago, Jacqui quickly progressed her skills which demand technical proficiency, adaptability and on-site coordination across multiple vehicle types.

Despite this, she is routinely subjected to gendered assumptions about her competence and her right to be in the job. Comments questioning her ability to reverse a trailer, her suitability for truck driving and her family responsibilities are common.

Jacqui reports experiencing near-daily sexual harassment over the UHF from unknown male operators including requests for sexualised acts, explicit comments about her body, being called derogatory names, threats of sexual violence that include threats of rape, men making sexual noises directed at her over the radio and requests for nude photos and invitations to sexual encounters.

The anonymity of the UHF creates a power imbalance - given perpetrators know who she is, but she has no way of identifying them. This has led to escalating anxiety and a decline in her mental wellbeing.

While most harassment occurs over the UHF, Jacqui has also experienced inappropriate behaviour onsite.

In one incident, a male concrete tester (30 years her senior) stood behind her and made repeated comments about her legs and appearance.



After she reported the incident, the man received a warning, however this is the only time a perpetrator has faced any form of accountability.

Beyond sexual harassment, Jacqui experiences ongoing gender-based disrespect and exclusion, including men using women's toilets and deliberately leaving them unclean to make female workers uncomfortable, being labelled "difficult" when she calls out inappropriate behaviour and persistent assumptions that she cannot perform her job because she is a woman.

These behaviours create a hostile work environment where misogyny is normalised and women are expected to tolerate harassment as "just a joke" and part of the job.

The cumulative effect of this ongoing harassment has significantly impacted Jacqui's mental health. Knowing men on the UHF can identify her truck, her appearance

and her employer while they make threats of sexual violence has created a sense of vulnerability that now affects her daily work. As a result, Jacqui reports increasing anxiety about attending work and a lack of confidence that the industry will protect her.

Jacqui’s experiences reflect broader structural problems across civil construction and trucking including a lack of accountability mechanisms for UHF-based harassment, normalisation of misogyny in male dominated worksites, an absence of safe reporting pathways for women, cultural acceptance of gendered bullying and harassment and assumptions about women’s competence and family roles.

Jacqui’s story is a clear example of the persistent, gendered hostility women face in civil construction trucking. Her experience underscores the urgent need for industry-wide reform, stronger accountability systems and a cultural shift that recognises women’s right to safety, respect and equal opportunity in heavy vehicle driving.

Her case demonstrates that harassment is not isolated or incidental but rather embedded in everyday interactions and reinforced by silence, inaction and cultural norms.



Case Study No 3

“Jobs for the Boys”

A persistent “jobs for the boys” culture continues to shape access to heavy vehicle driving roles across Australia and the scale is impossible to ignore.

WiTA is contacted regularly by qualified, motivated female applicants who describe being overlooked, dismissed or blocked from opportunities that should be open to any competent driver.

Their messages and social media comments paint a consistent picture of entrenched bias and long-standing hiring habits that determine who gets a start far more than merit or workforce need.

PK’s story draws on her experiences to illustrate how deeply this culture is embedded. Addressing bias is essential to building a fair, safe and sustainable driver workforce into the future.

PK first reached out to WiTA in a state of emotional distress following her removal from her first on-road quad driving role.

With extensive driving experience in open-cut mines, PK was eager to move into on-road trucking, so had invested in her MC licence and was actively chasing MC work to build her experience.

When a major company advertised trainee MC driver positions, PK applied and was delighted to be accepted into the week-long trainee school.

Advertised as focussing on the development of MC competency skills, the program was designed to attract new drivers to the industry by offering company-funded MC training and licensing.

Assigned to a quad road train worksite, PK commenced her training - initially operating the triple “back-up” rig – an insurance

strategy to replace quads in the event of a breakdown.

Two months into her tenure, the third trailer was removed for reconditioning and PK spent the following six months running the road train as a double.

A few weeks after PK commenced, a second MC Trainee arrived onsite. After several months operating a double spares truck, he advanced to quad operations - despite having limited on-road experience.

On learning of the other trainee’s rapid progression, PK requested quad training beyond occasional passenger rides, however was promptly informed that progression was contingent upon completing 500 driving hours - a requirement she was not only unaware of but also has likely met after doing seven months of 12-hour shifts.

Enquiring further, her supervisor explained that a week’s leave earlier had delayed her progress. He also advised that with no trainer/assessor on-site, they were unable to proceed with her training in the short-term.

Months later, with the third trailer reattached, a trainer/assessor arrived onsite. Day one, PK operated her triple then day two, she drove a quad with the trainer/assessor in the passenger seat.

During these sessions, training was minimal and the assessor spent considerable time discussing inappropriate, non-work-related topics. Later, he admitted to deliberately focusing on distraction to determine whether “driving was second nature” to her.

PK was not immediately informed of her assessment outcome. Instead, during a team meeting held on her days off, she was told she had passed the triple but not the quad assessment.

Soon after, she received a letter stating, “as you are aware, this is a quad-only site now and as you did not successfully pass, you are no longer required on site.”

Industry Commitment to Female Driver Recruitment

The “Driving Diversity” Pledge - An Annual Industry Initiative

Commencing Q1 – 2027, WITA proposes to introduce an annual industry pledge aimed at encouraging every medium to large trucking company to train a minimum of one new female driver annually.



QLD MC Truck n’ Dog Driver Dani

The proposed “Driving Diversity” Pledge will carry significance beyond mere statistics, as it will signal to the wider community that the industry values diversity and is prepared to invest in its future.

By signing the annual “Driving Diversity” Pledge each January, companies can demonstrate their commitment to building a stronger more diverse workforce that reflects communities the industry they serve.

With a view to recognising outstanding DEI commitment, the “Driving Diversity” Award will be presented annually on National Female Truckie’s Day during WITA’s prestigious TOOT’s Awards gala dinner.

The implications are profound - as the introduction of countless thousands of female drivers over a ten-year period into the sector will not only help address workforce shortages - but also enrich the industry with diverse perspectives, improved safety outcomes and heightened innovation.

Together, stakeholders can forge a future where opportunity is accessible to all and the sector is poised for enduring advancement.

SE QLD Livestock Driver Claire Strasberg



From Symbolism to Substantive Reform

The time to end marginal interventions and tokenism when it comes to female heavy vehicle driver recruitment - is now.

The road transport sector must begin to openly recognise the existence of gender bias, rather than continue to blame female “preferences” or “lifestyle choices” for low participation rates.

As the industry continues to struggle under the weight of acute driver shortages, the increasing demand for skilled professionals necessitates substantive, effective change.

In this context, facilitating female driver entry into the sector is not only a matter of equity, but an essential step towards meeting Australia’s critical road freight requirements.

Whilst we applaud companies doing genuine work in the female driver training and recruitment space - we note that historically, initiatives aimed at encouraging women to pursue driving roles have generally lacked depth and impact.



QLD MC driver Lisa Biega

Occasional promotional events, superficial marketing materials or the inclusion of a female driver in advertising campaigns may fulfil diversity metrics - but fail to deliver meaningful progress.

What is now required is a transition from tokenistic measures to comprehensive and systematic reform.

There is a groundswell of interest from women wanting to establish trucking careers, women motivated by the same factors that attract men = competitive remuneration, secure employment and an opportunity to play a pivotal role in Australia’s supply chain.

Many seek the independence, the diversity of work and the chance to experience the country through their profession - yet despite evident interest, women continue to encounter significant barriers previously outlined.

WiTA has been a leading voice spotlighting these barriers and pushing for real change by encouraging recruiters to actively address gender bias as the first step towards an inclusive industry.



NSW HC driver Ash Brennan with daughter Ella who has her sights set on being a truck driver like Mum

Recommendations

Enhancing Heavy Vehicle Employment Pathways for Australian Women

Implementing even a handful of the DEI recommendations below will - for many companies mark the beginning of genuine gender diversity progress. Those who take these first steps can be confident they will witness enormous benefits employing female drivers – benefits that will quickly expand, strengthen and refine their businesses as their workforce becomes more inclusive.

1. **Encourage** gender bias and diversity training for recruiters and management
2. **Consider** flexible work arrangements, job sharing and part-time driving roles
3. **Track** and publish gender-disaggregated industry data annually
4. **Partner** with educational institutions to promote trucking careers to young women
5. **Address** the gender pay gap with transparent pay structures
6. **Develop** female driver career progression pathways
7. **Invest** in targeted female recruitment, training and mentorship programs
8. **Expand** subsidised driver training for women
9. **Appoint** a dedicated gender diversity lead to drive and co-ordinate this work.
10. **Promote** inclusive workplace cultures that challenge gender stereotypes
11. **Increase** visibility of female driver role models and promote their success stories
12. **Utilise** community engagement strategies to increase female interest in trucking careers
13. **Encourage** government and stakeholder collaboration to set diversity targets
14. **Acknowledge** and support the work being done by WITA
15. **Call-out** myths around women’s suitability for driving roles
16. **Consider** flexible scheduling to accommodate carers and parents
17. **Establish** robust reporting mechanisms to respond decisively to harassment and bias
18. **Create** opportunities for female drivers for specialist driving positions

As the national road freight task continues to expand, those dependent on road transport are increasingly impacted by driver shortages.

The solution – the industry is now learning, is not simply to recruit foreign drivers - but to actively support future generations of female drivers including bringing the current cohort of unemployed fully licensed female drivers in from out of the cold.

Lasting change can only come from industry-wide-commitment - not from tokenistic gestures and not from one-off diversity programs. The discourse must now progress from questions of justification to strategies for implementation.

Incremental approaches are no longer sufficient. The time come to enact genuine change to ensure the highways are open to all.



Cassie Lee. SA based HC Bitumen sprayer

Driving Social Change

The Broader Impact of Increased Female Driver Numbers

When Australian women are supported into trucking careers, the ripple effects go far beyond filling vacancies. What we see is a

structural shift with social, economic and cultural benefits reaching well beyond depot gates.

Table No 11 The Broader Impact of Increasing Female Driver Numbers

<p>Safer Roads Safer Workplaces A more gender-balanced workforce shifts the safety culture from “she’ll be right” to “let’s do it right.”</p>	<p>Research across industries like transport and logistics show that when women enter operational roles in greater numbers, safety outcomes improve. The reasons are practical:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≈ Women adhere more consistently to safety protocols ≈ Lower rates of risk-taking behaviour ≈ Stronger communication and reporting culture
<p>Stronger, More Stable Communities A woman with a secure trucking job often becomes the economic anchor of her household</p>	<p>When women secure well-paid, long-term careers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≈ Household financial stability increases ≈ Children benefit from improved economic security ≈ Regional and rural communities retain skilled workers ≈ Families experience reduced stress & greater social mobility
<p>Workforce Renewal Industry Sustainability Women are the only large, immediately available, safety focussed domestic workforce capable of reversing driver shortages</p>	<p>Australia’s driver shortage isn’t just a numbers problem, it’s a demographic crisis. Bringing more women into the vocation will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≈ Expand the talent pool dramatically ≈ Reduce reliance on short-term overseas labour ≈ Build a younger, more diverse, future-ready workforce ≈ Strengthen long-term productivity and profitability
<p>Reduced Exploitation Improved Industry Reputation Women entering the workforce in significant numbers forces the industry to lift standards because women won’t tolerate unsafe, or disrespectful environments</p>	<p>A more diverse workforce helps break the cycle of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≈ Under-trained, under-supported international recruitment ≈ Safety corners cut to maintain margins ≈ Cultural and safety issues that drive good drivers out of the industry
<p>Cultural Change Modernisation Shifting the culture from “old-school trucking” to a modern, skilled, respected profession</p>	<p>When women are visible in trucking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≈ Harassment and bullying behaviours decline ≈ Professionalism increases ≈ Communication improves ≈ The industry becomes more attractive to the next generation
<p>Economic Gains for the Nation Every woman who becomes a professional driver contributes directly to Australia’s economic resilience</p>	<p>Supporting women into trucking generates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ≈ Higher workforce participation ≈ Increased tax contributions ≈ Reduced welfare dependency ≈ Greater national productivity

Role Modelling
Intergenerational Impact
Visibility changes what young
women believe is possible

- When girls see women driving B-doubles and road trains - it:
- ≈ Normalises women in non-traditional roles
 - ≈ Expands career aspirations
 - ≈ Breaks gender stereotypes
 - ≈ Inspires future generations to pursue skilled, well-paid work

Strengthened Social Cohesion
It signals that Australia values
contribution over outdated stereotypes

- A trucking workforce that reflects the community it serves:
- ≈ Builds trust and reduces social division
 - ≈ Improves public perception of the industry
 - ≈ Demonstrates fairness and opportunity
-

*“Supporting women into trucking isn’t a diversity initiative.
it’s a nation-building strategy delivering safer roads,
stronger families, healthier workplaces
and a more sustainable road transport sector.*”

*Increasing female driver numbers reduces reliance on
overseas labour, lifts industry standards and unlocks the potential of
tens of thousands of Australian women who are ready to drive”*

Lyndal Denny. WITA CEO



Next Steps

National Female Heavy Vehicle Driver Recruitment Agency

A Strategic WiTA-Led Industry Partnership

Female drivers are one of the most powerful and underutilised workforce options available to the Australian road transport sector - yet despite statistically demonstrating strong safety performance metrics, a notable lack of meaningful industry investment in their training and recruitment continues.

Contrary to industry opinion, 2% female driver participation rates are not due to a lack of interest, but rather limited access, insufficient training pathways and employers not fully prepared to facilitate their entry.

To address this critical issue, WiTA proposes the establishment of Australia's first female heavy vehicle driver recruitment agency - a national, industry funded initiative staffed by a team of specialists focused exclusively on attracting, preparing and placing Australian women into safe, long-term trucking careers.

Whilst every company has a duty of care to contribute to a national driver pipeline, a shared recruitment agency removes individual risk whilst reducing and sharing the cost and administrative burden of driver recruitment across the sector.

The Proposed Solution

A National Female Driver Recruitment Agency

A dedicated female driver recruitment agency will provide pre-employment preparation, coordinate training, licensing & onboarding, track retention and provide mentoring and on-going support.

Why WiTA?

Given the unique barriers women face entering trucking, the complex licensing and regulatory environment and current workplace challenges, WiTA is the only organisation with the lived experience, national networks and credibility to successfully deliver this groundbreaking initiative.

Proposed Funding Framework

Partners financial contributions are pooled to fund a dedicated team of ten full-time specialists including:

- ✓ Recruitment Consultants
- ✓ Training Coordinators
- ✓ Safety And Compliance Advisors
- ✓ Employer Engagement Managers
- ✓ Candidate Support Officers
- ✓ Marketing And Outreach Staff
- ✓ IT And Systems Support
- ✓ Financial Management Specialists

Proposed Sponsorship Tiers

Platinum Partner

Annual Salary of two staff members giving:

- ~ Priority access to candidates
- ~ Co-branding on national campaigns
- ~ A seat on advisory board,
- ~ Annual workforce strategy report

Gold Partner

Annual Salary of one staff member giving

- ~ Early access to candidate pool
- ~ Branding on recruitment materials
- ~ Quarterly insights briefings

Silver Partner

50% of one Annual salary giving

- ~ Access to candidate shortlist
- ~ Inclusion in employer network
- ~ Annual benchmarking data

Bronze Partner

25% of one annual salary giving

- ~ Listing as supporting employer
- ~ Access to training pathway graduates

In-kind Partners

IT, insurance, marketing, equipment etc

- ~ Case by case basis
- ~ Ongoing recognition as in-kind contributor

Call to Action

WiTA warmly invites stakeholders to engage collaboratively in bringing this pioneering, world-first female driver recruitment initiative to fruition.

This is a vital opportunity to show true industry leadership - not merely through words but through meaningful investment and action.

The reality is that a sustainable, safe and diverse driver workforce is not possible without a coordinated, industry-funded solution.

The time for incremental change has passed. The time for collective action is now.

So how do we end the driver-shortages? Not by looking offshore and not by repeating the same short-term fixes. The key is to invest in the female workforce already here, a workforce that consistently delivers safer roads, safer depots, stronger productivity and better commercial outcomes.

Given a realistic timeline matters as much as the strategy itself, we anticipate the earliest credible, professionally executed and industry-ready launch for Australia's first Female Heavy Vehicle Driver Recruitment Agency would be Q1, 2028.

With industry support, Australia's world class first female heavy-vehicle driver recruitment agency will help steer the sector back toward what it should have always been - an industry where safety, productivity and profitability are the norm - not the exception.

It will also open the door to tens of thousands of Australian women who are willing and capable of stepping into driving roles.

The way forward is clear. When the industry chooses to back women - it chooses a future where driver shortages are a thing of the past and long-term sustainability becomes possible again.



SA MC "Paddock Runner" Gail Ritchie

Table 12 Recruitment Agency Implementation Timeline (July 2026 → January 2028)

Phase 1	July 2026 – November 2026	Secure Funding, Governance, Stakeholder Alignment
	July 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish internal project team Finalise proposal, budget and staffing model Identify 20–30 target industry partners
	August 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin CEO-level engagement Conduct formal industry briefings Secure early commitments (Platinum/Gold partners)
	September 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft funding agreements and MoUs Begin government engagement (federal + state) Lock in majority of funding partners
	October 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Form Advisory Board (non-governance) Begin legal and governance framework Start scoping IT systems and CRM requirements
	November 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve organisational structure Begin drafting job descriptions for all 10 roles
Phase 2	December 2026 – April 2027	Build The Team and Operational Framework
	December 2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commence procurement for IT, insurance and systems Begin branding and marketing development
	January 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise recruitment strategy and selection panels Advertise all 10 roles nationally and begin shortlisting/interviews
	February 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise IT vendor selection Begin development of employer portal and candidate CRM Complete interviews
	March 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct reference checks Issue employment contracts Begin building training pathway partnerships
	April 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onboard first wave of staff (leadership + core roles) Finalise office setup (physical and hybrid)
Phase 3	May 2027 – October 2027	Test systems, refine processes, prepare national rollout
	May 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Onboard remaining staff Develop recruitment campaigns targeting women
	June 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build national employer engagement strategy Conduct full operational readiness review Finalise all policies, procedures and compliance frameworks
	July 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin soft launch of employer portal Launch pilot recruitment in 2–3 regions Begin candidate intake and screening
	August 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Test training pathways with small cohorts Expand pilot to additional states
	September 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Begin employer placements with early partners Conduct safety and compliance audits Refine CRM workflows and reporting
	October 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate pilot outcomes Adjust processes, training and employer engagement Prepare national marketing campaign
Phase 4	November 2027 – December 2027	National Launch Preparation
	November 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalise national recruitment campaign Produce launch media assets
	December 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct industry briefings Prepare ministerial and government involvement Lock in launch event logistics
Phase 5	January 2028	National Launch
	Q1 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public launch event National media coverage Full recruitment operations open Employer portal live First national intake of candidates Begin quarterly reporting to partners

Breaking the Silence

WiTA's Push for Industry Peak Body Collaboration

Founded in 2020 to bridge gaps in female driver training and recruitment, WiTA has, in just over six years become a key national advocate for Australia's female heavy vehicle drivers.

As the road transport sector continues to evolve, meaningful collaboration among all industry stakeholders is essential to address workforce shortages and further progress gender diversity efforts.

Peak bodies have increasingly highlighted the importance of welcoming more female drivers into the workforce.

Nonetheless, there remain opportunities to strengthen recognition of and support for organisations like WiTA, ensuring that the voices and experiences of female drivers are central to industry conversations.

WiTA's unique connection to thousands of female drivers offers valuable insight into the opportunities and challenges faced in the sector.

Greater collaboration between WiTA and industry groups would help ensure these insights inform sector-wide strategies and drive positive change.

WiTA is keen to collaborate with National, State and Territory peak industry bodies to share knowledge, to consult broadly and to draw on diverse perspectives - with a view to encouraging the industry to more effectively meet its diversity objectives and create a more inclusive workplace for all drivers.

The broadening of peak body recognition to include both corporate-focused and rank-and-file driver organisations like WiTA will enhance the authenticity and effectiveness of industry efforts to support female participation in heavy vehicle driving roles.

With women currently accounting for just 2% of Australia's heavy vehicle driver workforce, there is significant potential for growth through collective action and shared commitment.

By working together to address long-standing barriers and create more collaborative pathways, the industry can ensure more women feel welcomed and supported to pursue and sustain careers in the sector.

As we look to the future, WiTA's commitment to advocating for greater female driver representation remains unwavering. As such, the organisation is eager to collaborate with all sectors of the industry to achieve shared goals.

WiTA will continue to prioritise employer education and, with the release of the WiT Report, proactively seek partnerships to create more inclusive, accessible career pathways for female drivers.

The journey ahead may be challenging, but with a willingness to innovate, with open-minded collaboration and a genuine commitment to inclusion, the Australian road transport sector can become a place where everyone has the opportunity to take the wheel - regardless of gender.

“Women are the only large, immediately available, safety focussed domestic workforce capable of reversing driver shortages”

Female Driver Workforce Inclusion

The Proven Path to Safety, Productivity and Profitability

Female drivers step into one of the country's most demanding professions with eyes wide open - fully aware of the challenges and opportunities truck driving presents. As such, employees can be confident that female driver applicants are well prepared for the realities of the role.

Women who choose to drive heavy vehicles do not do so lightly. They have researched the vocation thoroughly, they understand the demands and are ready to meet them head on.

These women are colourful, resourceful and resilient individuals who enrich the industry and inspire others to follow.

The narrative needs to move from “Women don't want these jobs” to “What barriers are stopping these women from thriving in these jobs?”

Unemployed heavy-vehicle-licensed female drivers are no longer interested in excuses, platitudes or circular conversations around driver shortages - particularly when they are repeatedly overlooked for work in favour of foreign drivers.

These women are now asking for something far simpler and far more powerful.

They want industry powerbrokers, decision makers and governments to listen - not lecture. They want leaders who can adapt - not stand still. They want leaders who have the vision and courage to recognise the greatest untapped asset in road transport is onshore - willing and already capable.

Across Australia, thousands of women are ready to take the wheel - women seeking not just a job but a secure career, a safe and respectful working environment and a genuine opportunity to play a vital role in an industry that drives the nation forward.

Increasing female driver numbers won't just fill seats - women will also deliver greater productivity and profitability, safer roads and stronger workplaces. The data is clear, the benefits are proven and the opportunities for all - enormous.

It's true that modern trucks are far more comfortable and technologically advanced than the rigs of 50 years ago.

Power steering, automatic transmissions, better suspension, and safety tech have absolutely changed the physical side of the job but the idea that this makes trucking “easy for women” misses a huge part of the picture.

The barriers women face today aren't about whether they can physically handle a truck - they've proven that for decades.

The challenges are the same ones women have always had to push through - being underestimated, second-guessed, treated like they don't belong in the industry or being stereotyped as helpless princesses.

So yes, the trucks have changed. But the attitudes and obstacles women encounter on the job haven't evolved nearly as fast. And that's the part that deserves attention.

The WiTA Board

Boasting a remarkable 150-years combined heavy vehicle driving experience, the WiTA Board and Executive exemplifies a wealth of practical knowledge and industry insight. Each Director offers distinct strengths shaped by their diverse backgrounds, licensing credentials and leadership roles. This collective expertise not only underpins WiTA's mission to champion female representation within the sector, but also ensures the organisation is guided by individuals who have navigated the unique challenges and opportunities of Australia's road transport industry firsthand. Their commitment extends beyond technical proficiency, encompassing advocacy, mentorship and a shared vision for a more inclusive and accessible trucking landscape for women nationwide.



Board Chair – Natalie Kascak

WiTA Foundation Director - Seven Year Tenure
MC License – Nineteen Years Driving
SA based
Background - Paramedic



Darry Bothe - Board Vice Chair

WiTA Foundation Director - Seven Year Tenure
MR License – Twenty Years
SA based
Background IT Ops



Roslyn Anderson - Treasurer

WiTA Director - Five Year Tenure
HR License – Two Years
NSW based
Background Chartered Accountant CPA



Board Director – Barry Fletcher

WiTA Director – Five Year Tenure
MC License – 50 Years Driving
SA based
Background – Fleet Owner



Board Director – Kattie Risk

WiTA Director – Three Year Tenure

MC License – Remote Area Livestock – 16 Years

NT Based

Background - Managing Director Billirrawarra Truck & Training



Board Director – Danyelle Haigh

WiTA Director – Three Year Tenure

MC License – 13 Years Driving

NT based

Background - Director Murrarji Water Drilling

Director Athelle Outback Hideaway



Karen Hawker – Board Director

WiTA Director – Two Year Tenure

MC License – 8 Years Driving

QLD Based

Background - Owner Driver

Owner Wyandra Pub and Truckstop



Amber Wright – Board Director

WiTA Director – One Year Tenure

MC License – 10 Years Driving

WA Based

Managing Director Transport Industry Training Solutions



Peter Hill – Board Director

WiTA Director – Appointed 2025 AGM

CEO Sutton Road Training Centre

Australasian College Road safety

ACT Based

Lecturer – Charles Sturt University

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WA MC Quad side-tipper driver Julie





**Women in Trucking Australia
Driving Equality**



Women in Trucking Australia
PO Box 140
SEMAPHORE SA 5019
Phone 0429 333 082 eo@wita.com.au

