

TOP REGIONAL INSIGHTS



There is a need to shift towards an apprenticeship type model for truck driver training in the Commercial Road Transport sector. One of the [Waikato RWP's](#) initial focus areas was on supporting the 'Road to Success' programme to build a pipeline of truck drivers in the region. This was guided by the Waikato & Bay of Plenty Freight Action Plan however, our efforts have since expanded through close engagement with industry. In partnership with Te Waka and Hanga Aro Rau the RSLG is seeking to gain a deeper understanding of talent attraction, retention and upskilling opportunities and barriers in the Commercial Road Transport sector. The RSLG (led by Te Waka) has engaged with industry and relevant WDCs, and identified that a shift towards an apprenticeship-type model for truck driver training needs will be explored in detail.

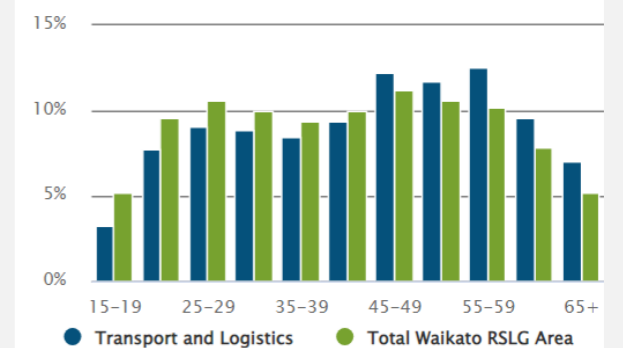
Truck driver shortages remain a key challenge for the Commercial Road Transport sector in the Waikato, according to the Waikato and Bay of Plenty Freight Action Plan 2022. Thirty seven percent of industry operators reported a current shortage of truck drivers, and within the next five years it is expected that approximately twenty percent of existing truck drivers will retire or leave the sector. While changes to immigration settings have gone some way to ease the labour shortage pressures, the ageing workforce means focus and investment in building the local talent pipeline is critical.

AT A GLANCE



2022 data shows that as 90 percent of the freight task in Aotearoa New Zealand is moved by trucks, the average age of a truck driver is 54 with a significant number aged 60 to 70 plus years old, and 90 percent of them are male. Despite many great industry initiatives, we are faced with an aging workforce, that is causing concerns for the industry as it tries to attract younger drivers.

What was the age profile of workers in 2018?



Source: NZTrucking / Infometrics



There are 23 approved course providers in the Waikato region that help meet the training requirements of obtaining Class 4 and 5 licencing. Ia Ara Aotearoa | Transporting New Zealand has collaborated with various parties to develop a programme called Te ara ki Tua - Road to Success. The programme connects potential truck drivers and employers to enable trainees to complete a 12-month training course with a mixture of online and paid on the job training. Launched in April 2021, the initiative relies on employers getting involved and taking on new trainees.

Source: NZTA / Road Transport Forum NZ

TOP LABOUR MARKET OPPORTUNITIES

A shift towards an apprenticeship model for truck driver training in the Commercial Road Transport sector. This needs to be explored in detail to garner feasibility of proposed approaches to attract and retain workers, around:

- **Encourage skill-based hiring, promoting diversity in the talent pool.** This could achieve clear career pathways for all age groups, with targeted programmes that explore school to industry for under-18s. Practically, this could be achieved by implementing efficient onboarding tools such as, promoting success stories to attract new recruits and utilise off-seasons creatively to maintain engagement to encourage job uptake within the industry.
- **Develop clear, professional career paths to combat skill shortages** by enhancing awareness and accessibility of professional development programmes for example, mentoring support for potential and existing employees and individualised learning plans to encourage retention. Additionally supporting employers to keep up to date with good practice (eg investing in good HR systems) that comes from industry sharing and adapting successful learning frameworks.
- **Foster strong industry-community connections & continuous engagement to enhance the industry's activity and maintain relationships and partnerships.** Potentially attained by utilising existing platforms to provide guidance aligning provider programmes with community goals. This could also be fostered by strengthening relationships with government agencies and Iwi to promote localised cluster development and shared resources. Practically this could be achieved by organising regional events like bus tours, job fairs, career expos, and youth forums to increase industry visibility connecting with future talent.

TOP LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

The top four areas hindering growth in the Commercial Road and Transport sector in relation to attraction, retention and upskilling workers are:

- **Operators do not have the capability/resources to utilise effective channels to connect with young people.** This is due to ineffective engagement with school-aged youth (rangatahi) leading to limited industry interest. Also, influencers (principals, teachers, career advisors, parents) are not promoting the industry as a viable career providing a barrier in the school to employment pathway.
- **Difficulty for operators to identify and access available training options, especially cost-effective ones limiting skills development in the Waikato.** There is inadequate practical training availability, creating challenges in hiring experienced individuals and providing on-the-job training increasing capability in the sector.
- **Lack of understanding of good/best practices for staff care.** Including seeing the value of pastoral care warranting investment and also the lack of resource to provide this.
- **The dearth of new ways of operating to address off-peak labour shortages:** This could be in the form of a collaboration between employers within the industry to close the skill gap that could be brought about by sharing workers across the network via an excess of labour sharing platform.

REGIONAL WORKFORCE PLANS

Insights from this report are feeding into related focus areas in Freight and Logistics (and actions that sit under these) in the [Waikato Regional Workforce Plan](#), such as:

- Action 28: Support 'Road to Success Programme' for the Waikato region which focuses on growing the pipeline of truck drivers, including exploring opportunities to increase the pipeline of female drivers.