

women in transport.

driving diversity, boosting the bottom line

the key to ignition.



The business case for boosting the number of women in the transport industry is increasingly compelling. More female recruits would help to overcome driver shortages. Improved gender balance could also strengthen customer engagement, insight and advocacy in a sector that's moving closer to end-users.

We've joined with Transport Women Australia and Women in Trucking Australia to set out practical ways to get more women behind the wheel and into management. The report draws on the latest Randstad Employer Brand Research¹ that investigates what makes an employer attractive and first-hand accounts from women who work in transport.

why your
business needs
more women to
drive it forward.



When people see a truck, train, or cab driver, it's almost invariably a man. Women make up barely a quarter of the industry's workforce here in Australia².

Of these, most work within administrative roles rather than as drivers or company executives³. More than a third of Australian transport businesses have no women at all in key management positions⁴. Could they be missing out as a result?

1. tackling driver shortages

Australia is suffering from a worsening truck driver shortage. More than half of employers report difficulties in finding drivers⁵. Moreover, many of the qualified ones are coming to the end of their careers.

Your business may not be able to deliver for your customers unless it urgently boosts recruitment. Women make up a vast and still largely untapped source of new talent with so few female drivers working in Australia.

“Whilst the transport industry has long been dominated by men, tapping into women as a new talent pool would help to remedy truck driver shortages and also lead to improved business outcomes such as increased safety, productivity and workplace culture.”

Lauren Bourke
National Transport Manager
Randstad



2. keeping pace with disruption and change

As a transport business, the inexorable rise of digital commerce means that you now have much more contact with end-customers. Where once you would have delivered to a factory or store, you're now going to the doorstep. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated this shift.

Half of your customers are women. Shouldn't your customer-facing workforce reflect this? They're your representatives and your eyes and ears on the ground. More women would, therefore, boost customer engagement and insight.

Transport is also a sector facing mounting digital disruption. We can already see this in areas ranging from drone delivery to the use of big data and artificial intelligence to anticipate and respond to demand. Looking ahead, the advent of driverless vehicles is just around the corner, which is a sector that will need as much brain as brawn from each gender.

Women often find it difficult to break into tech roles – the IT industry is only slightly more diverse than transport⁶. Transport, therefore, has an opportunity to embrace women looking for tech careers that may not be open to them in other industries.

3. profit

Just as you would benefit from more female drivers, more women in management would bring fresh perspectives on how to navigate the changing landscape and capitalise on the opportunities. Businesses with at least 30% of women in leadership positions are 15% more profitable⁷.

“Women will bring new ideas, different perspectives, and it's a very good thing. It has been proven that diverse companies are better than non-diverse companies.”

Suzanna Freitas Dos Santos

M5E Transition Manager of WestConnex

the roadblocks
holding up
diversity.



If women could boost the bottom line in transport, why are there so few of them?



1. an image problem

Transport is finding it challenging to attract male as well as female recruits into the industry. According to the latest Randstad Employer Brand Research⁸ findings, transport and logistics rank a lowly 14th down the list of sectors that Australians would like to work.

It's clear that the industry could do more to promote reasonable rates of pay and the range of career paths on offer. "There are so many opportunities in the transport industry, it's just that people don't think of that... when they leave school," says Australian Trucking Association board member Julie Russell, who also runs a trucking company. "People don't find it a sexy industry," says Victorian Transport Association (VTA) CEO Peter Anderson. "They don't see that they can build a good career and a lifestyle out of the heavy vehicle industry⁹."

Do we now have a chance to shift perceptions? Drivers' heroic efforts in keeping lock-downed households supplied during the COVID-19 pandemic may well have changed attitudes. It's vital for the industry to build on this, especially among the many women our Randstad Employer Brand Research shows are looking for meaning in their careers.

“Throughout my 14 years as a truck driver, I’ve never encountered a company that offers a maternity leave scheme. This means that women who want to start a family feel as though they cannot consider truck driving as a career.

Many women also want to come back to truck driving after they’ve had a child, and are not met with any support from transport companies. The transport industry must be more flexible, offering part-time or casual hours to support and entice female talent.”

Natalie Kascak
Career Truck Driver
Member of Women in Trucking Australia



2. discrimination deters women

It remains a male-dominated industry in which women don't always feel welcome. Exclusion can be compounded by recruitment advertising and media stereotypes that rarely put women in the driving seat.

A survey carried out by Transport Women Australia found that more than 70% of women in the industry face challenges like discrimination, dismissive attitudes, and uneven playing fields¹⁰. The gender pay gap is 15.9% in favour of men (the national average is 13.9%)¹¹, reflecting an industry where few women work in the best-paid roles.

Women can often find it harder than men to secure the training and licences they need to move up from light to heavy vehicles. Big trucks also tend to be designed with men in mind, rather than accommodating the shorter stature of some women. In short, many women just haven't had the opportunity to get in the cab and drive.

3. lack of flexibility

Flexible working is the benefit that people seeking employment in transport would prize most. Unfortunately, it's also the area with the most significant gap between what people want and what they experience when they work in the industry.

Men and women both want flexibility. But despite some change, women still shoulder the bulk of childcare responsibilities. Without flexibility and support, they may well look for a job or career elsewhere.

designed with women in mind.



Ryder System, a US commercial fleet management company, now offers a female-friendly vehicle package for lease. Could this be a model for the industry in Australia?

The customised vehicle design includes 15 unique specifications to better meet the needs of female drivers. These include adjusted height and placement of cab grab handles, adjustable seat belt shoulder straps, improved placement of dash cluster gauges, and better access to oil and coolant checks and fill ports.

Ryder recognises the industry challenges created by driver shortages and is working closely with manufacturers and the US Women in Trucking Association to promote the employment of more women to help bridge the gap.

“Our intent is to not only help attract more women to the industry but also to make the vehicles easier and safer for a broader range of drivers to operate. As an industry leader, we feel a responsibility to leverage our influence and find creative ways to deal with the professional truck driver shortage,” said Scott Perry, Vice President of Supply Management and Global Fuel Products, Ryder¹².

opening

the road.



The transport industry is gradually opening up to women. Industry bodies in the sector have reported their commitment to support the contribution of women in the industry and promote more effective networking and mentoring for women. We also see welcome developments in areas such as vehicle design. How can your business and the transport industry as a whole accelerate progress?

1. shift perceptions

If the stereotype of a driver or mechanic is a man in overalls, then it's time to put women in the picture. It's also essential to present the diversity of roles within the industry, from client service and software development to finance chief and CEO.

The images in your recruitment advertising and on your website are a good starting point. You can then reach out to schools and colleges as part of a more comprehensive recruitment drive. In turn, identifying and promoting female role models can inspire women in transport and convince them that their aspirations can be met.

2. train, mentor and promote women

Training for a heavy goods licence is a costly and lengthy process. Many women are deterred by the lack of support and sponsorship within companies. Many also fear that even with the right qualifications, the door to employment could remain closed.

Stepping up investment in training and development could, therefore give your business the edge in a tight recruitment market. Support this with mentoring and networks for women within your business.

To help bring more women into management, identify biases – conscious and unconscious – that may be holding them back or steering them into predominantly female roles such as admin. Back this up by ensuring that at least one person on the selection and interview panel is a woman.

challenging
stereotypes.

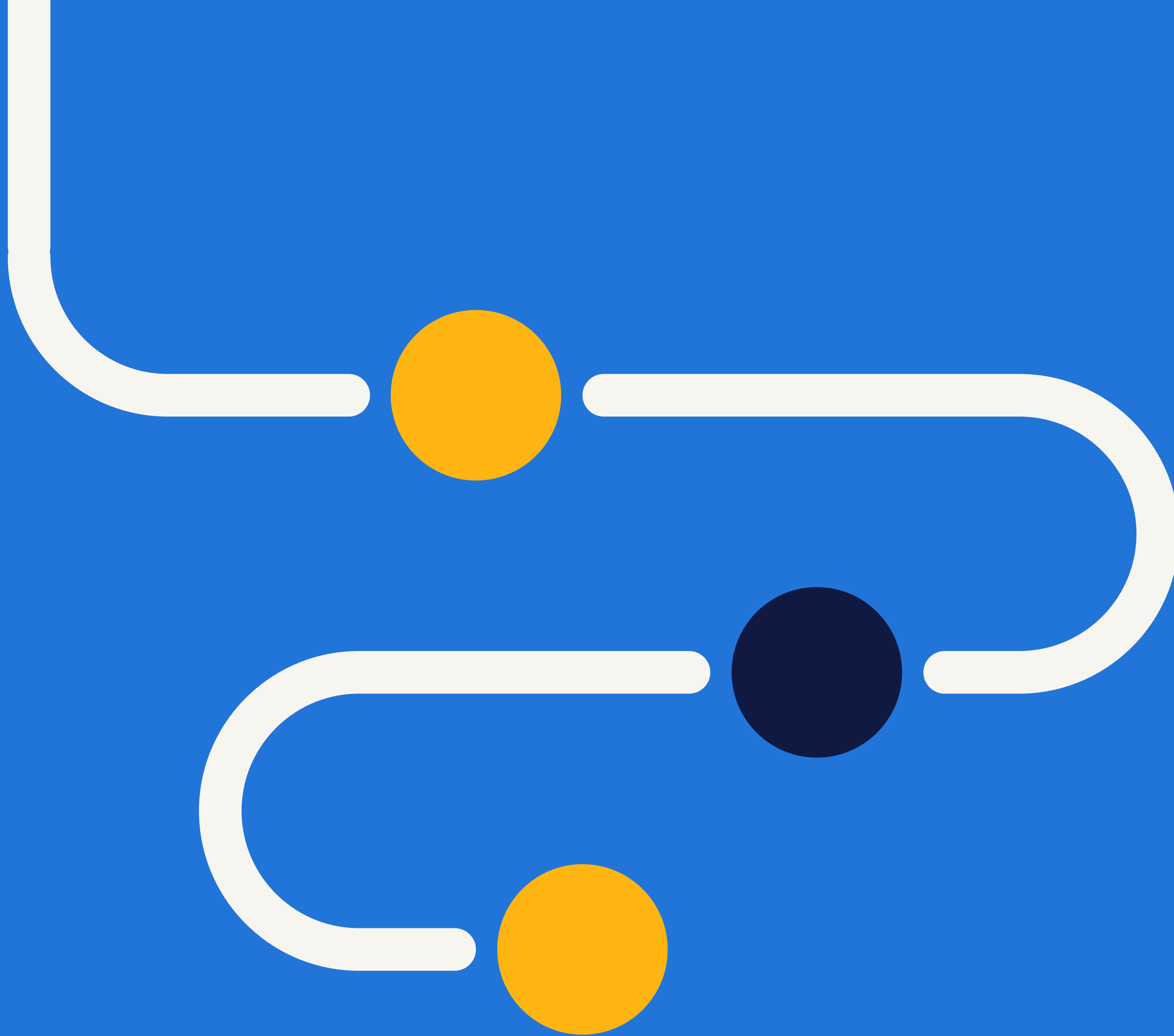
MTR Hong Kong transports five million passengers every day across its rail network. MTR uses real employees to convey its attractions as an employer.

For example, the public face of the company's award-winning apprenticeship scheme is Sze Hua-Fai, who was featured in a popular TV advertising campaign in Hong Kong. Sze was considering becoming a nurse but chose to train as a technician with MTR instead.

“What we wanted to show in the commercial were the career paths we offer and the diversity within our workforce¹³.”

Morris Cheung
Director
MTR Human Resources

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“There are lots of clients and potential employers that are open to female representation but don’t know where to find it. So, if I had one piece of advice for someone looking to begin a career in transport, it would be network, and you’ll reap the rewards. Buddy up with a mentor, maybe a male, who can help you out if you face any challenges.”

Lauren Bourke
National Transport Manager
Randstad

learning from mining.

3

Like transport, mining is still seen as a male-dominated world of “big holes and giant trucks”, with little room for women. Several leading companies, including BHP and St Barbara, are looking to challenge perceptions and capitalise on the diversity dividend as revenue increases in line with female representation in the workforce. What can transport learn from their experience?¹⁴

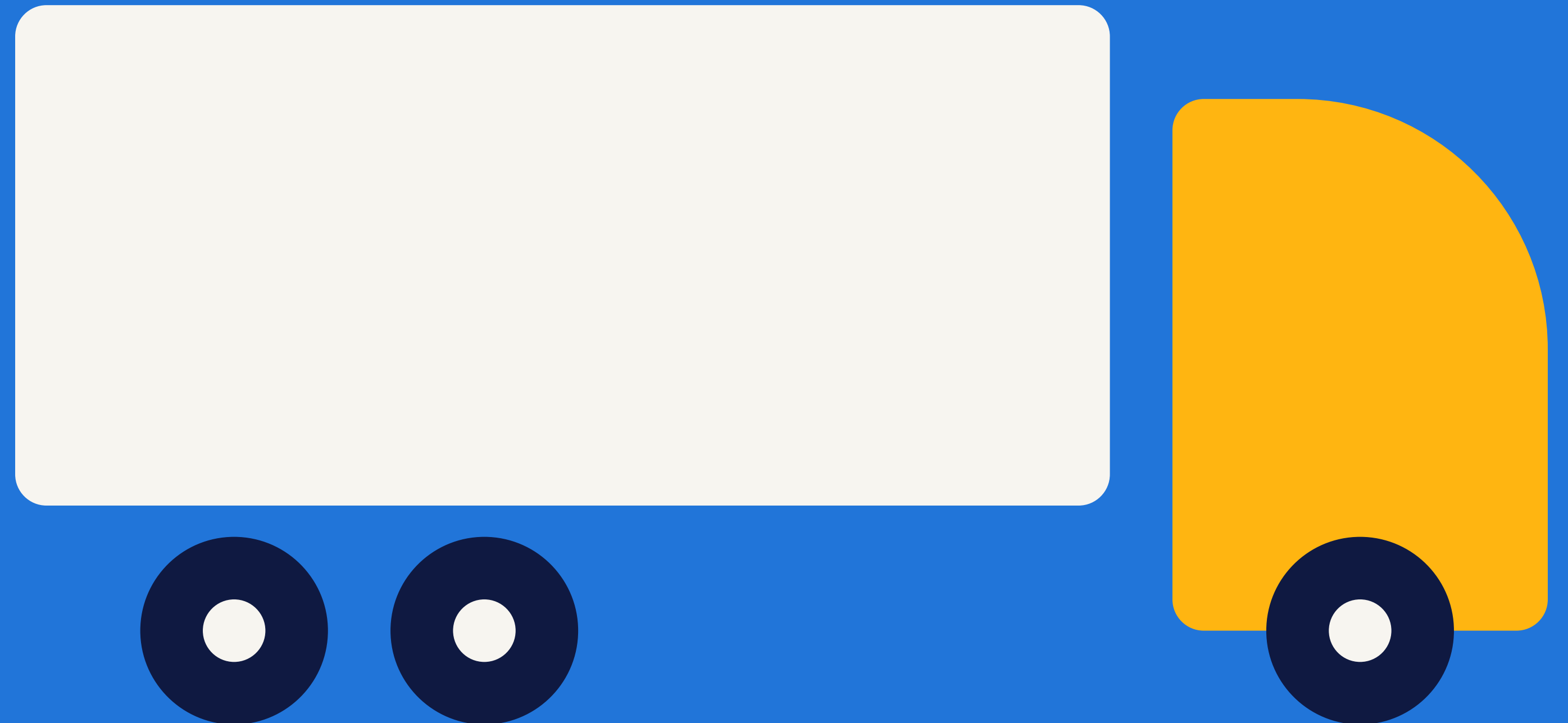
Val Madson, St Barbara’s General Manager HR & HSEC: “We’ve really tried to address changing the perception of women in mining, right down through to people in early age... We’re working with children in primary and secondary schools to encourage them to think about careers in mining.”

“You can see from the companies that are doing this well that they know the value diversity brings: people are much more engaged, more willing to share ideas and work together to solve challenges,” says BHP’s Head of Planning, Maria Joyce. BHP wants to achieve gender balance across the company, globally by 2025. “By the end of the 2018 financial year, 915 more women were employed at BHP than the same time the previous year,” said Ms Joyce.

“In order to see change, we should start at the top. It’s okay to employ female drivers but a lot of males in operation roles don’t know how to engage or tend not to treat women the same way. Companies should employ women into operation or managerial roles with a male that does the same job.

Women can have someone to look up to and go to for support, and I think that’s huge for a company like Linfox. When they employ women in management, that will encourage women to feel okay in that environment and supported by their female peers.”

Natalie Kascak
Career Truck Driver
Member of Women in Trucking Australia



3. create an inclusive culture

The starting point is the tone from the top that makes it clear that women are a valued part of your organisation and that discrimination has no place within it. Show how women can contribute to the business as it looks to bridge skills gaps, engage with customers, and build a winning brand.

Confront harassment, sexism, and dismissive attitudes head-on. Encourage women to speak out if they face any of these issues and support them when they do.

You can reinforce this commitment by building diversity and support for inclusion into management objectives and incentives.

Some men may still see equality as a second-order priority or even something to resist. It's therefore crucial for women to take the initiative, make a case for change and call out discrimination. The success of the Transport Women Australia and Women In Trucking Australia shows how much can be achieved when women come together.

4. embrace flexibility

Almost two-thirds of Australians taking part in the Randstad Employer Brand Research¹⁵ feel the greatest sense of inclusion when an employer offers flexible work options. It isn't just about women, but rather offering the agile and empowered ways of working that Australians – men and women – now want.



“If I ever had any doubts, I would have a chat with the girls from Women In Trucking (WIT), and they would give me the inspiration to keep going. There was a time that I wanted to give up, but they helped me to get through it all, and now I don’t have any regrets.

It was very exciting to get on board with other like-minded women and work together to break the stigma that transport is an industry that only men can work in.”

Gabby Bennett

Young Career Truck Driver

Member of Women in Trucking Australia



let's get

moving.

The transport industry needs more women at all levels. Gender balance would help to make businesses stronger. It also brings benefits to the entire workforce – a more inclusive culture and more empowered ways of working.

Yes, there may be obstacles, but they can be overcome when companies make the cultural leap to embrace diversity as central to their future success.

“If you ask me what advice I would give to talented women who are interested in working in the industry, I’d urge them to dream big, speak up, work with passion, understand that you are equal and your voice will be heard.”

Suzanna Freitas Dos Santos
M5E Transition Manager of WestConnex



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