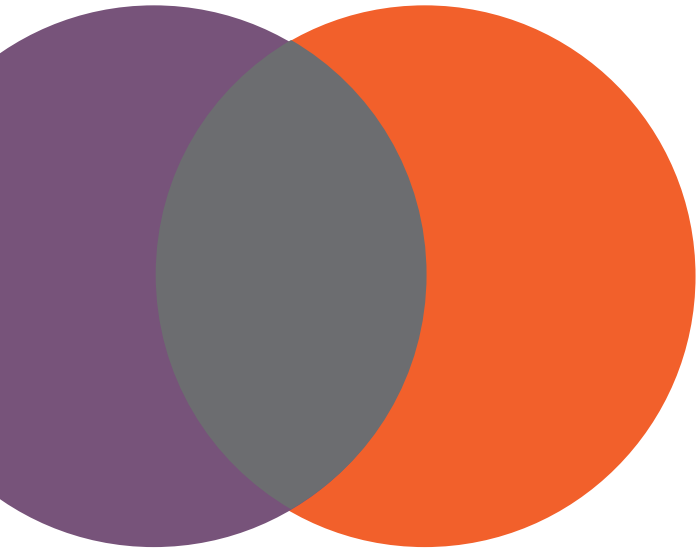


BACKLASH & BUY-IN

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY

Chief Executive Women

Women leaders enabling women leaders

MALE CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

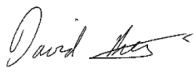
Frances Adamson
Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; MCC Special Adviser, CEW member

Joe Agius
Director
COX

Mark Anderson
Chief Executive Officer
Collingwood Football Club

Paul Anderson
Chief Executive Officer
Ten Network

Graham Ashton
Chief Commissioner
Victoria Police



David Atkin
Chief Executive Officer
Cbus

Ken Barton
Chief Financial Officer
Crown Resorts and
CEO, Crown Digital

Todd Battley
Chief Executive Officer
Australia and New Zealand,
AECOM

Paul Baxter
Commissioner
Fire and Rescue New South Wales

Spencer Beasley
Former Vice President
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons

Jenny Boddington
NED, CEW member

Glen Boreham AM
Non-Executive Director

John Bradley
Secretary
Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Elizabeth Broderick AO
Non-Executive Director;
Founder and Convener,
Male Champions of Change,
CEW member

Daryl Browning
Chief Executive Officer
ISPT

Gordon Cairns
Non-Executive Director

Jonathan Callaghan
Chief Executive Officer
Investa Property Group

Lieutenant General Angus Campbell, AO, DSC
Australian Army

Shaun Carter
Principal Architect
Carterwilliamson Architects

Raelene Castle
Chief Executive Officer
Rugby Australia, MCC
Special Advisor

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Managing Director
Boston Consulting Group

Brian Clohessy
Senior Practice Director
BVN

Andrew Colvin APM OAM
Commissioner
Australian Federal Police

Brian Cook
Chief Executive Officer
Geelong Football Club

Dr David Cooke
Chairman and Managing Director
Konica Minolta Business Solutions Australia

Gerard Corcoran
Chief Executive Officer
HASSELL

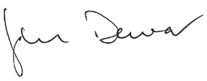
William Cox
Managing Director
Australia and New Zealand
Aurecon

Daniel Crabtree
Managing Director
Meritor Heavy Vehicle Systems Australia

Paul Craig
Chief Executive Officer
Savills Australia and New Zealand

Rowen Craigie
Non-Executive Director

Greg Crossman
Chief Officer and Chief Executive, SA Metropolitan Fire Service



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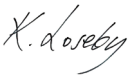

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Chief Operating Officer
MCC Special Adviser

Craig Drummond
Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer
Medibank

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General Manager Australia
GHD

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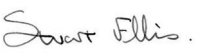
Secretary
Department of Premier and Cabinet

Stephen Ellis
Chief Executive Officer
Knight Frank



Stuart Ellis
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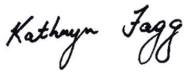
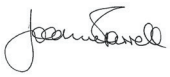
Australasian Fire and Emergency Service Authorities Council



Kathryn Fagg
Non-Executive Director; President, Chief Executive Women



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Netball Australia, MCC Special Advisor

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Adam Fennessy
Partner, EY

Alan Finkel
Chief Scientist of Australia

Matt Finnis
Chief Executive Officer
St Kilda Football Club

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Managing Partner
Affirmative Investment Management

Shane Fitzsimmons
New South Wales Rural Fire Services

Mike Foster
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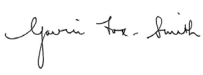
Fujitsu Australia

Stuart Fowler
Chief Executive Officer
Norman Disney & Young



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Chief Executive Officer
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Yarra Trams

Todd Greenberg
Chief Executive Officer
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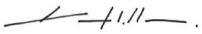

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Managing Director
PACCAR Australia

Toby Hall
Chief Executive Officer
St Vincents Health Australia

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NSW Managing Director
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Jacobs

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Global Head of Real Estate
AMP Capital;
PMCC Special Adviser

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Fairfax

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Global Managing Partner
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Executive Managing Director
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Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director
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Damon Johnston
Editor
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Oceania Chief Executive Officer
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Rhys Jones
Chief Executive
Fire and Emergency New Zealand

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Australian Statistician
Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Non-Executive Director

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Transdev Australasia

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Commissioner
ACT Emergency Services Agency

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Emergency Management Commissioner
Emergency Management Victoria

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Managing Director
Beca Australia

Duncan Lewis
Director-General of Security
ASIO

Cain Liddle
Chief Executive Officer
Carlton Football Club

Ming Long
Non-Executive Director; Convener, Male Champions of Change, CEW member

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Larry Marshall
Chief Executive
CSIRO

Peter Massey
Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer
Calibre Group

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President
Court of Appeal
Supreme Court of Victoria

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Non-Executive Director

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Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director
Lendlease

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Engineers Australia

Darrin McKenzie
Chief Fire Officer
Forest Fire Management Victoria – Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning

Gillon McLachlan
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Football League

Anthony Moore
Chief Executive Officer
Basketball Australia

Chris Moraitis
Secretary
Attorney General's Department

Ken Morrison
Chief Executive
Property Council of Australia

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John Mulcahy
Independent Non-Executive Chair
Mirvac

Dr Jess Murphy
Executive Director
Convener, Architects Male Champions of Change

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Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

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Chief Executive Officer
ANSTO

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Chief Executive
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Australia and New Zealand

Grant Pelton
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SA

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Telstra

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SMEC

Stephen Pitt
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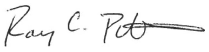

Ray Pittman
President and Chief Executive Officer, Pacific
CBRE

John Prentice
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Woods Bagot

Tim Reed
Chief Executive Officer
MYOB

Patrick Regan
Group Chief Executive Officer
QBE Insurance

Ben Rimmer
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City of Melbourne

Ian Roberts
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Chief Executive Officer
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Chief Executive Officer
Swimming Australia

George Savvides
Non-Executive Director

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Australia Pacific
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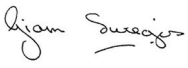
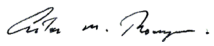
Chief Executive Officer
Cricket Australia



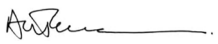
Giam Swiegers
Global Chief Executive
Aurecon

Sean Taylor
Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer
Komatsu Australia

David Thodey
Non-Executive Director



Giles Thompson
Chief Executive Officer
Racing Victoria



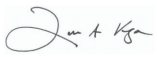
Andrew Thorburn
Chief Executive Officer
National Australia Bank

Craig Tiley
Chief Executive Officer
Tennis Australia

Adam Tindall
Chief Executive Officer
AMP Capital

Troy Uleman
Director
PTW

Peter Varghese, AO
Chancellor
The University of Queensland

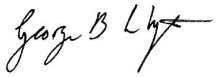


Louis Vega
President
Dow Australia and NZ, Vice President, Olympic and Sports Solutions

Andrew Vesey
Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer
AGL

Philip Vivian
Director
Bates Smart

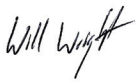
Dr Ian Watt, AC
Non-Executive Director



George Whyte
Managing Director
Aggreko Australia Pacific

Geoff Wilson
Non-Executive Director

Gary Wingrove
Chief Executive Officer
KPMG Australia



Will Wright
Managing Director
Douglas Partners

Scott Wyatt
Chief Executive Officer
Viva Energy Australia

Dear Colleague,

Chief Executive Women (CEW) and Male Champions of Change (MCC) share a common goal to achieve gender equality and advance more women into senior leadership positions.

This is a fundamental economic, business and social issue. Women and men in positions of power must work together to deliver sustainable change.

Many organisations have taken innovative approaches to shift the systems that result in inequality. For example, in 2016 CEW and MCC published *In the Eye of the Beholder: Avoiding the merit trap*, a report highlighting how the misapplication of merit can allow biases to flourish. We suggested that unless leaders examine our biases and take account of both performance and potential, we will not: tap into the full talent pool; identify the best candidate for a role; and take full advantage of diverse thinking, perspectives and experiences. If we continue to define merit as people 'like us' who have done what we have done, the status quo will continue, and gender equality will elude us.

We have also encountered a level of resistance to our approaches – as is often the case with major change initiatives.

Such responses manifest as internal and public debate on issues such as: gender fatigue; the demise of meritocracy; reverse discrimination; experiences of gender-based harassment and discrimination; and the rise of identity politics. There is a view that efforts to achieve gender equality have simply 'gone too far'. Some call this backlash.

The reality is there is still a long way to go. As the 2017 CEW Senior Executive Census shows, despite some advances, few organisations have achieved gender equality at senior levels and most organisations are very far off this. In fact, men hold 79% of executive leadership roles in the ASX 200 and 95% of ASX 200 CEO positions.

In this report, we explore the range of responses we have encountered, and provide our insights to continue progress toward gender equality in the workplace.

Chief Executive Women

Women leaders enabling women leaders

MALE CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

PROGRESS AND RESISTANCE TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

THE BUSINESS CASE DRIVES OUR ACTIONS

There is a demonstrated business case for gender equality. Evidence shows it improves the bottom line, promotes innovation and enhances decision-making amongst other benefits. Gender equality and diversity enable organisations to be representative of, attractive to, and better able to meet the needs of clients, customers, shareholders and communities. Findings from a sample of recent research are detailed below:

- McKinsey & Company's 2018 "Delivering through diversity" study of more than 1,000 companies in 12 countries found a correlation between diversity at the executive level and not just profitability but also value creation.
- The Boston Consulting Group's 2018 "How diverse leadership teams boost innovation" report found "companies that reported above-average diversity on their management teams also reported innovation revenue that was 19 percentage points higher than that of companies with below-average leadership diversity—45 per cent of total revenue versus just 26 per cent".
- Deloitte's 2017 "Access Economics Westpac Diversity Dividend" report found that businesses could record an average 2.1 percentage point increase in profitability through reaching gender parity in senior management.

ACROSS OUR ORGANISATIONS WE'VE TAKEN ACTION, FOR EXAMPLE:

- Setting targets
- Enabling flexible working arrangements for all employees
- Reframing the concept of merit and how it is applied in recruitment and promotion decisions
- Ensuring gender equality in recruitment and development
- Committing to pay equality in like-for-like roles
- Addressing everyday sexism, sexist behaviours and sexist attitudes in the workplace
- Building inclusive cultures
- Reporting on progress

THERE HAS BEEN PROGRESS, BUT WE STILL HAVE A LONG WAY TO GO

While many organisations have made significant progress towards gender equality, including in their leadership teams, there is still a long way to go:

- The 2017 CEW Senior Executive Census shows that the vast majority of people at the very top of Australia's largest companies are men [1].
- According to the Census, 95% of CEOs and 91% of CFOs in the ASX 200 are men [2].
- The OECD's 2017 *The Pursuit of Gender Equality* report names Australia as a mid-range performer across most gender equality outcomes. For example, women hold 36% of manager positions despite making up 59% of all graduates from undergraduate degree programs [3].
- In the 2017 World Economic Forum's 'Global Gender Gap Index', Australia's progress towards gender parity on women in leadership has stalled and by some measures is regressing [4].

We still have a long way to go...

- **Men hold 79% of executive leadership roles in the ASX 200**
- **95% of ASX 200 CEOs are men**
- **21% of ASX 200 companies have only men in their executive leadership team**

[1] Chief Executive Women, 2017 'Senior Executive Census'
[2] Chief Executive Women, 2017 'Senior Executive Census'
[3] OECD, 2017 https://www.oecd.org/australia/Gender2017-AUS-en.pdf
[4] World Economic Forum, 2017 https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2017

WE ARE ENCOUNTERING A RANGE OF VIEWS – NOT EVERYONE BUYS IN

As with any major change, individual attitudes to diversity initiatives differ. There are those who understand the need for change, embrace it as an opportunity, and are committed to building inclusive and meritocratic workplaces. At the other end of the spectrum, some may perceive gender equality strategies as a zero-sum game where there are 'winners' and 'losers'.

WHAT IS BACKLASH?

Backlash is a negative reaction to social or political change. In recent times, there has been particular backlash driven by the perception that focus on gender equality initiatives and the promotion of women to leadership roles is unfair and not meritocratic.

These mindsets and behaviours can exist at all levels of an organisation – from graduate to senior executive level, both men and women. Negative responses often surface when individuals fear personal impact or the status quo has changed.

We need to recognise, understand and address the range of responses to overcome resistance and achieve buy-in.

Views and experiences of gender equality efforts differ. A CEW / Bain & Company study found different perceptions of meritocracy and fairness in promotions. Some referenced gender equality efforts as the reason for their belief. The survey showed:

- 40% of men and 58% of women in the non-government sector do not believe their organisations are meritocracies
- Of these men, 43% cited 'reverse discrimination' as the main reason for their belief
- 49% of women cited 'networks' as the reason for their belief their organisation is not meritocratic

The world is at a crossroads with women's leadership and gender equality being contested in many nations. The global movement is profoundly uneven, a fragmented picture of acceleration in some contexts and stagnation in others. But the backlash for those who promote human rights and gender equality has become more and more pronounced in recent years.

– Elizabeth Broderick, MCC Founder and Convener

RECOGNISING WHAT DRIVES THE RANGE OF RESPONSES

LACK OF UNDERSTANDING

People may resist change they view as unnecessary or misguided. This may happen if the business case for gender equality, and the benefits it brings, are not clearly communicated, well-understood or accepted. When the business case is not made clear, conversation stalls at opinion and may not advance beyond differences of view.

CHANGE FATIGUE

Leaders may feel they do not have the time, skills or support to implement change. They may also feel that they have tried many strategies without success. This can be exacerbated when gender equality is perceived to be a 'nice to have', rather than a driver of better performance.

INDUSTRY NORMS

Disrupting the status-quo – including traditional industry practices and workforce demographics – may feel uncomfortable, unnecessary or counter-intuitive. Some feel gender equality initiatives are diversity for the sake of diversity and believe certain industries are gendered because they are more suited to either men or women.

CULTURAL NORMS

Family dynamics, personal relationships and life experience have all informed our perception of what is 'normal'. For some, major change challenges these assumptions and can feel uncomfortable, while for others change hasn't come soon enough.

FEAR

Some are concerned they may lose opportunities, status and position if there are gains by women in the workplace. Successful women may feel their achievements are dismissed as token as a result of gender equality initiatives. Some, while fearful, embrace uncertainty and actively work to drive gender equality.

Now more than ever it's important for CEOs and Chairs to show they are neither fazed by backlash nor will their commitment waver. Leadership is key to achieving gender balance in Australian organisations.

– Kathryn Fagg, President Chief Executive Women

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING THE RANGE OF RESPONSES

As with any business change, understanding the range of responses to change is the first step to identifying opportunities to address them. Gender equality strategies are no different.

	WHAT YOU MIGHT HEAR	OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE
SUPPORT FOR CHANGE	**IT'S POSITIVE FOR ME AND THE ORGANISATION** · 50:50 recruitment pools have made me aware of the talent I was missing out on · More women in leadership means we are more relevant to our customers · My gender is no longer a barrier to success · My partner and I can now pursue our careers and enjoy better balance with the family life we want	· Encourage those making progress on gender equality · Celebrate success stories, relating them to the business case and organisational goals · Build on the existing buy-in by inviting people to share their experiences
	I NEED SUPPORT TO DRIVE CHANGE · It's important, but there's so much to get through in a day – it's just another thing on the to-do list · How can I bring others along? I feel like I'm championing this, but we're not making any progress · How important is gender equality compared to other initiatives?	· Listen and provide opportunities to discuss the barriers to change · Allocate resources to support and promote gender equality initiatives · Keep stating the case for change through clear and consistent messaging about appointments and promotions
	IT'S IMPORTANT BUT NOT MY PRIORITY · I'm fair in how I manage my team. The rest of the company isn't my problem · Gender balanced teams are great, there just aren't any women who want to be in this team · It's an issue, but I can't change it on my own · We have bigger issues to deal with than gender equality	· Explain why gender equality is an organisational priority and tailor the message to the audience · Provide examples of actions leaders at all levels can take to advance gender equality · Integrate gender equality into performance KPIs on recruitment, retention and representation of women in leadership
	IT'S DAMAGING MY CREDIBILITY · I don't want to be singled out for special treatment because I'm a woman · I'm more likely to be penalised for flexible working than a woman	· Demonstrate how change benefits all employees · Communicate the rationale around appointments and promotions and how merit was applied to make the decision · Mainstream flexible work, not attaching working flexibly to women only or working mothers
	IT'S UNFAIR · I got here on my own - others should too · It's got to the point where if you're not a woman you have no chance of promotion · Our company promotes hopeless women above competent men. It's gone too far	· Clearly communicate the facts and explain the reasons for gender equality strategies and new appointments · Invite employee groups to be part of developing and executing action plans to achieve gender equality · Directly address behaviours that reflect sexism, discrimination or harassment
BACKLASH	**WE DON'T HAVE AN ISSUE** · Why change the natural order of things? · Women don't want to work in this industry · There's no issue to solve. We have lots of women · It should be best person for the job, not diversity for diversity's sake · It's an okay idea but it doesn't make financial sense	· Share the stories and experiences of women in the organisation/industry · Clearly communicate the business case for gender equality and the strategic requirements for the business in the future · Demonstrate that the organisation is hiring for the skills required now and in the future – merit-based appointing

WHAT WE CAN DO TO DRIVE BUY-IN

Using the Leadership Shadow model, guide and assess your performance on advancing gender equality and enhancing your impact.

- Are you continuing to reflect on your Leadership Shadow?
- Do you understand and address different attitudes and experiences of gender equality in what you say, how you act, what you prioritise and how you measure?

WHAT I SAY

- ☐ I reflect on whether there are things I say which may create backlash and adapt my communication to support all employees in progress toward gender equality
- ☐ I regularly speak about gender equality as an organisational priority
- ☐ I reinforce the business case for gender equality, specifically as it relates to my organisation
- ☐ I tell stories which have impact and describe how challenges have been overcome
- ☐ I encourage others to ask questions and have respectful, open discussions to ensure all views are heard

HOW I ACT

- ☐ I seek to understand and address the 'unspoken responses' or covert backlash
- ☐ I commit resources to build leadership skills on gender equality
- ☐ I bring leaders and employee groups together to work collectively on gender equality
- ☐ I sponsor talented men and women employees and expect my leaders to do the same
- ☐ I personally engage key team members whose leadership on gender is critical
- ☐ I address employee behaviour which falls short of inclusive values

WHAT I PRIORITISE

- ☐ I include gender equality metrics in my KPIs and those of my executive team
- ☐ I place importance on the 'why' as well as the 'how' of gender equality initiatives
- ☐ I make it clear that gender equality initiatives are core business, not another project
- ☐ I set clear behavioural expectations of my leaders, explaining it's the right thing to do, but also the right thing for our business

HOW I MEASURE

- ☐ I use both quantitative and qualitative measures of success
- ☐ I use cultural surveys to understand the experiences and views of my colleagues and the types and level of resistance and buy-in in my organisation
- ☐ I reinforce gender equality initiatives with formal mechanisms which support the changes I'm asking people to make, holding others accountable for progress
- ☐ I reward leaders who work constructively and support gender equality

OUR RESPONSE TO SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: Is this just a leadership frolic?

A: It's critical that we tap into a range of experiences and perspectives. That way, we maximise our performance, risk management and decision making. It's a matter of securing our organisation's future. Having equal representation of women and men at all levels is an obvious and proven way to access a wider spectrum of ideas, insights and capabilities. The societal benefits are in themselves crucial. There are also well-documented business benefits, which we intend to capitalise on.

Q: Do male leaders only care about this issue now because they are worried about career prospects for their daughters?

A: This can't ever be just personal. It's about getting to a better place for everyone. Above all, we want to make equality happen in our workplaces and communities. And we want that after listening to what both our head and our heart tell us. Do you hit that 'aha' moment by engaging only your head? No, often the 'aha' moment comes from your heart, for example you listen to the experiences of people close to you – wife, partner, sister, daughter, mother or female colleague. Don't you want to make it equal for these women, and free them from disadvantage? Of course you do. But it remains a joined up thing – personal, business and societal – and we don't need to shy away from any particular source of our actions. Wherever it comes from, it is to the benefit of all.

Q: Are senior women only focused on this issue because they stand to benefit?

A: The focus is on making gains for everyone. There are organisations who are working to expand the pool of women who are succeeding and pioneering in leadership positions. This includes organisations such as Chief Executive Women; AICD, 30% Club; the Workplace Gender Equality Agency; and women and men involved in to the MCC strategy. This is being done against a backdrop of a relatively small pool of women currently on Australian Boards, as CEOs and Executive team members. We are all working to develop a strong, inter-generational pipeline of women for leadership positions.

I think it is self-evident that diverse workplaces are more imaginative workplaces and more creative workplaces and the business case has been well-established that they ultimately make for better performing organisations. But, secondly, in terms of a sporting organisation, we are also an entertainment organisation and we need to continue to think about how we present ourselves in different ways to a rapidly changing audience and clearly women make up 50 per cent of our population.

– Brendon Gale, CEO Richmond Football Club

It's not a 'project', it's part of the organisation's core business. We report on gender in the same way as we report on safety.

– Andrew Vesey, CEO AGL Energy Ltd

Q: Aren't there just more men in the talent pool due to personal choices around caring?

A: Yes, people do and should be able to choose to prioritise caring responsibilities. We absolutely accept and celebrate that. What we don't accept is a situation where women (and increasingly men) with children want to, or need to work, but can't. And the reason they can't is lack of workforce flexibility; lack of affordable, flexible and accessible childcare; or lack of equal access to roles and development opportunities that may subordinate their careers. Our goal is to champion change in the system. We want to create a system where all parents can provide their children with the care they need. And, at the same time, one that makes possible accessing, advancing and succeeding in paid work.

Q: Isn't this just business succumbing to the politics of identity?

A: We understand there is a lot of talk that this is just identity politics. At its core, gender equality is about fairness and equality of opportunity for women and men. It's about enhancing productivity and innovation. It's about economic advancement and, more broadly, social cohesion. These are values that support and fulfill people; keep businesses operating and growing; build wealth and underpin our society.
Gender equality is about benefits for all, rather than any favoured group.

Q: Is this the end of meritocracy?

A: It's not the end of meritocracy. We must be equally fair and rigorous in performance expectations and management of all employees regardless of gender.

It's how we traditionally think about merit that is the key and a stumbling block. If, by merit, we mean recruiting and promoting like we have always done, all we are really doing is reinforcing the status quo. Leaders have to ask: Are we looking for people with similar backgrounds, capabilities and experience to 'mirror' others who have achieved in a role? If yes, the risk is that this approach favours people with typical career backgrounds and trajectories, often men.

Having a clearly defined and future-focused role description, and set of capabilities required for the role, will help to identify the best candidate, regardless of gender, and eliminate gender bias in recruitment processes.

Clearly communicating the rationale for new appointments mitigates against concerns for both men and women that recruitment decisions may be target or quota-driven.

We're not appointing women because they are women, we are pushing ourselves to be open, fair and get the very best people. Merit has become code for have you done this before. If you only hire people who've done it before, you self-replicate.

– Shayne Elliott, CEO ANZ

As a leader, if you're worried about explaining to someone why they didn't get the job they were after – then you're probably starting to break the merit trap. The main thing to overcome any potential backlash is to explain the fair and transparent process that was followed, what attributes were thought about, why that leader is the right choice and where you're trying to take that business.

– Cindy Hook, CEO Deloitte Australia

OUR RESPONSE TO SOME FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

There is another kind of merit. Fix your eye on what we need for the future. A high performer in the past may not be a high performer in the future. We need to creatively conceptualise roles so that potential is part of the equation as well as track record. This naturally expands horizons about the available talent pool for a position beyond the 'obvious' or typically 'meritorious' candidate. It leads to us elevating diverse experience and diverse thinking. It brings into focus what additional value a candidate will bring to teams and the way we manage our business.

Such a view of merit works both ways – to the advantage of both men and women. It is critical that women are not seen as being 'parachuted' into roles to meet gender targets.

Q: Do 50:50 targets naturally mean that men will lose out?

A: Gender equality is not a zero-sum game. Taking a stand on gender equality means doing something about it. Setting clear targets for improvement is an important signal of commitment. It is a key tool for understanding and managing progress, or a lack of progress.

Asking "50:50, if not why not?" for example has helped to uncover systemic and entrenched biases in policies and processes that have clearly inhibited the advancement of women. Some have been the beneficiaries of these biases and we make no apologies for the fact that women now have more equal access to opportunities.

We know that team performance across a whole range of measures is better with gender-balanced teams. While 50:50 overall is the aim, a make-up of 40% women, 40% men and 20% of either will also deliver real benefits.

Q: You make a lot of noise about leading on gender but despite all the effort, you still complain about a lack of progress. Are you failing as leaders?

A: It's taken a long time to get to where we are now. We are squarely focused on fixing the issue which can come across as a lot of attention to what is not working. The noise that you hear is the friction created by a work in progress. Looking system-wide, there has been positive impact. For example:

- Australia now has more women in the workforce than at any other time in its history.
- Flexible workplaces are fast becoming a threshold for organisations considered to be "employers of choice" for the best talent.
- Australian businesses are now leading the way on organisational responses to domestic violence.
- More women are being encouraged and supported into non-traditional sectors such as STEM, where future job prospects are high.

I have heard the concerns from men who think they're at a disadvantage when they go for the same job as women. They're nervous they won't be given the same opportunity and that merit works in the reverse because of what we are trying to achieve. This is not the case, it's simply about providing a level playing field – because historically this hasn't always been done.

– Steve McCann Group Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director Lendlease

The concept of backlash isn't new. Our clear aspiration to achieve a gender balanced organisation is ambitious and it has really focused our minds. Our people have quickly recognised this is transformational leadership, a clear statement of what we want to achieve and why it's important. And that is supported by actions in areas like flexible work, which has enabled us to make progress but there is still more work to do.

– Mike Henry, President Operations, Minerals Australia, BHP

- We now have tools and strategies for understanding and addressing gender pay gaps in like for like roles
- We have achieved strong advances in women in leadership across the board compared to 10 years ago, even if representation percentages remain a challenge
- Successful women executives in our organisations have gone on to become prominent CEOs and Board members in other organisations
- We see teams demanding diversity of viewpoints in their work and celebrating the business benefits it delivers
- Australia has a prominent, national and ongoing conversation at the highest levels of influence about how to advance gender equality

Notwithstanding these outcomes, the pace of progress – particularly at Board and Executive levels – is not as fast as we had hoped and we need to do more to understand and address the reasons for that and any underlying resistance to change.

Q: Do you think gender equality efforts have given licence for men to be excluded and vilified in the workplace?

A: We aim to create respectful and inclusive working environments where all employees can thrive and be successful. As workplaces and societies evolve so do norms, expectations and tolerance of certain behaviours.

An easy way for men and women to appropriately relate to each other in the workplace is to abide by the law; the values and codes of conduct employees sign up to as a condition of employment; and to afford their colleagues the basic respect and dignity they would expect for themselves and those important to them.

In the past I think that we had a culture that either didn't encourage people to speak up, or, if they did speak up, they were ostracised; they were pushed to the margins. We needed to make it safe that you could come forward because I still believe that we needed to expose and air our weaknesses and challenges before we could really start to improve.

– Andrew Colvin, Commissioner Australian Federal Police

It is important to create a safe place, a space where people can genuinely respectfully disagree, put differences of view, have them tested and always play the issue, not the man or the woman. As a leader you've got to find a way to manage that disagreement.

– Martin Parkinson, Secretary Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

ORGANISATIONS ENGAGING WITH THE RANGE OF EXPERIENCES OF GENDER EQUALITY

AFP: ENGAGING WITH RESPONSES TO "BLIND" PROMOTION ROUNDS

OUR EXPERIENCE

In order to reduce bias and make merit based decisions in promotional rounds AFP undertook a new approach to "de-identify" applications. The identification process instructed applicants to not provide their name or gender on any documents, including their resume. More broadly, the instructions also advised not to include any information that could allow a panel member to identify them. This was done first for the executive level and then again for the sergeants' promotional round.

There was a range of responses. From those that fully supported the changes to those that were less sure of the intent and outcomes of the approach. For example, some men said "They say it's blind but there's no point in me applying for promotion because I will be overlooked for a woman" and some women said, "I don't want to apply for this promotion round because it will be viewed as the female-round and won't reflect the fact that I achieved promotion on merit".

This was not surprising. AFP has experienced backlash and mixed responses to a range of gender equality activities particularly since the release of the *Cultural Change: Gender Diversity and Inclusion in the Australian Federal Police* on August 22nd 2016. The most frequent concern raised in relation to gender equality activities, internally and externally, is that the AFP will lower its standards in order to meet diversity targets.

ACTION TAKEN

- **Communicated how and why:** Focus was placed on how the activity was merit based and how the change would bring equitable outcomes for all. It was clearly linked to presentations given by the Commissioner in relation to 'leveling the playing field' for all applicants by removing the potential for unconscious, or conscious bias.
- **Ensured leaders step up:** Senior leaders made time to connect with potential applicants. They encouraged and challenged why they weren't applying.
- **Resourced for change:** Extended timeframes and HR resources were put in place to manage the change.
- **Provided information and examples of the new process:** Comprehensive information sessions were held and example de-identified CVs were used to ensure a fair and equitable approach.
- **Embedded and improved for the long-term:** After the first blind promotion round the lessons learned were collated and the process adjusted to ensure better outcomes for next time.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

- Understand not everyone will get on board with gender equality initiatives but many will - some need time and information to get behind the work.
- The pay-off is worth the effort - the blind promotion rounds took more focus and resources than previous ways of doing things but ultimately they drove higher representation of women in leadership roles.
- The backlash against a particular initiative often subsides once implemented – the backlash against the blind promotional rounds has largely subsided since the completion of the process.
- Having clear and open communication that is supported fully by the Commissioner is critical to ensuring the success of gender equality activities and changing not only the gender balance but also the culture of the AFP, one process at a time.

SOUTH32: ENGAGING WITH RESPONSES TO FEMALE TARGETED PROGRAMS

OUR EXPERIENCE

South32's Board, CEO and Lead Team recognise that success relies on a strong team made up of a diverse range of experiences and perspectives, and have set ambitious diversity targets that focus on gender in the areas that they operate.

Programs have been run to improve gender diversity in their workforce, and South32 have implemented policies and practices to enable a more diverse and inclusive work environment.

While widely supported, there has been backlash.

It has been expressed as a fear that men are being pushed out of the organisation and women describing a feeling of increased scrutiny. In a recent employee survey, men said 'Obsessive drive towards women in the workplace means people being put into roles that they are not suited for', and 'People that have worked hard to earn a promotion no longer have that opportunity based purely on gender'.

As an example, as part of a review on gender balance in recruitment, it was identified that many female high-school students weren't aware of jobs that they could apply for at nearby mines. To address this, action was taken to invite female students onto the mine site to meet a variety of employees and help bridge this education and exposure gap.

For most this was not an issue however, questions were raised by some employees as to why their sons could not take part in this program. Their response was that it was unfair to only target female students.

ACTION TAKEN

- **Continued to implement the program:** Direct conversations with those employees who expressed concern were held, however the program moved forward as planned.
- **Communicated why:** Explaining why is a constant exercise – for a particular initiative like this and for gender equality overall. South32 explained that the program is focused on raising awareness of job opportunities so that the organisation can draw from its communities more fully (as opposed to females not applying for roles because of a lack of understanding). As part of a wider communication exercise, South32 organised tours and talks from Dr. Michael Kimmel, a renowned expert in engaging men in why diversity and inclusion is good for them too.
- **Listened to employee concerns and communicated existing opportunities:** It was helpful to direct employees to existing options to bring their sons to site during family days.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

- For progress to continue, it's important to have the challenging conversations, focusing on the benefit to all employees.
- Strong negative responses to gender equality will exist but this is not the dominant view people have – just 1.8% of all comments on employee surveys are challenging responses to gender equality.
- It is important to foster a culture that allows views to be voiced. All employee's experiences of work should be heard so that future communication and activity can be informed by this.

ORGANISATIONS ENGAGING WITH THE RANGE OF EXPERIENCES OF GENDER EQUALITY

CBRE: FINDING THE OPPORTUNITY IN RESISTANCE

OUR EXPERIENCE

Three years ago, championed by the CEO and executive team, CBRE set bold goals for gender diversity, including targets around senior female leadership and gender pay equality. The strategy is to fully leverage 100% of the talent pool and better reflect the demographics of the client base while supporting all of CBRE's people to achieve their full potential and drive greater productivity. While the strategy has been widely supported there has been a "low level" of resistance. The questions asked typically centre around the following two points: "Is this too much too fast?" and "Why aren't we just hiring the best people for the job?"

ACTION TAKEN

- **Held CEO led discussions with senior managers to explore the issues that were being raised:** The CEO led discussion in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane to try and understand the barriers that were being encountered and what could be done to encourage champions of change at a manager level. This involved sharing the CEO's personal and organisational commitment to gender equality and outlining key strategies such as the inclusion of gender equality KPIs in senior leader scorecards, including hard targets.
- **Shared the business case for gender equality:** It was effective to position this as a business strategy, not just a social program, as it helped people to get past the politics and better understand the business rationale for these programs.
- **Asked questions and created a space for debate:**

  Some of the questions asked of managers were:
  - What does diversity & inclusion mean for you as a manager, in your context?
  - Why is diversity & inclusion important for you, in your role at CBRE?
  - Why is diversity & inclusion important to you, personally?
  - What barriers do you face in advancing diversity & inclusion?
  - Why do we sometimes experience a backlash against diversity & inclusion efforts?
  - What can you commit to personally to get better at leading on diversity & inclusion in our organisation?

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

- It is important to cascade a culture of change through our management structure framing gender equality as a business imperative, and an issue that is paramount for our clients and how they perceive us.
- Addressing resistance can help uncover core issues and perceptions to overcome. The CEO-led forums created robust discussion about the changing face of the business and some of the barriers that managers were facing, such as limited diversity in talent pools for certain roles and business lines.
- Manager accountability and buy-in for progressing gender equality is needed to drive change, including through KPIs in manager scorecards.
- "Push back" can move to "push forward" - as a result of the discussion groups, CBRE is preparing to launch a wide-ranging recruitment campaign to encourage more women into its Industrial & Logistics business.

KPMG: ENGAGING SENIOR LEADERS ON GENDER EQUALITY

OUR EXPERIENCE

Responses to gender equality work varies across the organisation and also in relation to the particular initiatives and actions in place. People surveys show both support for and challenge to KPMG's activity on gender equality. The feedback ranges from views that the firm's focus on improving gender diversity in senior roles is disadvantaging men, to views that the firm should continue to encourage and promote gender diversity at all levels of the business.

A program with significant impact in addressing attitudes and behaviours on gender equality at KPMG has been the Bird-Walton Sponsorship program. The program was originally designed to empower high potential women to take action when career opportunities arise and increase their organisational impact through senior leadership roles.

Importantly, however, participation in the program as a sponsor also impacts how senior male leaders use their own power and reputation to effectively advocate for women. It provides an opportunity for senior men to develop their understanding of the barriers and opportunities for change in gender equality, and often changes their views and responses to this work.

ACTION TAKEN

- **Equipped male partners:** with better understanding of current best practices, while developing their sponsorship skills.
- **Encouraged male partners to step outside of their comfort zone:** including participation in a six-month experience involving interactive workshops, coursework and one-on-one sessions to build capability as sponsors to high potential women.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

- For many men it's been invaluable to have had the opportunity to 'step into the shoes' of the women in the program and to have discovered the very different experiences these women have had within the same organisation.
- This insight is making a positive change; one that is filtering throughout the firm as these senior men bring both their learnings and change of mindset back to their respective business units.

ORGANISATIONS ENGAGING WITH THE RANGE OF EXPERIENCES OF GENDER EQUALITY

ARCADIS: CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SENIOR EXECUTIVES TO TACKLE THE CHALLENGES OF GENDER EQUALITY

OUR EXPERIENCE

As part of a broad consultation, it was identified that 'engaging male managers' was the single most important issue in creating gender equality in Arcadis. While the CEO had identified diversity as a key strategic priority, progress was markedly slow. Leadership acknowledged that most managers, unlike themselves, had limited opportunity to deeply engage on the issue – consider the business case, confront the challenges, and contribute possible solutions.

ACTION TAKEN

- **Engaged in a personal way as opposed to a mandated approach:** Rather than a top-down, mandated approach, a more personal, sustainable strategy was introduced. Managers were invited to take part in a half-day, experiential session where they:
  - Heard the CEO share his professional and personal reasons for identifying gender diversity as a key strategic priority
  - Considered the systemic and cultural barriers to women's advancement
  - Examined the genesis of beliefs and behaviours that inform workplace culture
  - Co-created concrete solutions to build inclusive teams and fair and equitable workplace cultures.
- **Tracked progress and followed up with support:** As part of the program, the CEO hosted quarterly follow-up sessions to track progress and provide ongoing support. With everyone on board, Arcadis increased the representation of women across its workforce by 5% in just one year.

WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

- Leadership commitment and communication is critical.
- There is value in empowering managers versus taking a prescribed approach.
- Engaging in a personal way provided significant change.
  - Managers have a greater appreciation of, and commitment to enabling initiatives such as flex work, shared care, sponsorship, unconscious bias training/interrupting, recruitment and promotion targets, pay gap redress.
  - An increase in manager-to-manager peer support to tackle challenges such as: navigating client expectations while managing flexible teams; finding female candidates with a limited STEM pipeline; introducing zero tolerance on everyday sexism; addressing the stigma of men working flexibly or accessing primary carer leave.
  - A more proactive approach to leading the change: For the first time, managers were coming to HR to offer their help in attracting more women to the firm and progressing up-and-coming, talented women.

ABOUT CHIEF EXECUTIVE WOMEN

Chief Executive Women is the pre-eminent organisation representing more than 520 of Australia's most senior women from the corporate, public, academic and not-for-profit sectors. Its mission is 'women leaders enabling women leaders'. Through advocacy, targeted programs and scholarships, CEW works to remove the barriers to women's progression and ensure equal opportunity for prosperity. CEW offers innovative and substantive programs aimed at enabling women's participation and future leadership.
www.cew.org.au

ABOUT MALE CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

The Male Champions of Change is a coalition of CEOs, Secretaries of government departments, Non-Executive Directors and Community Leaders. The Male Champions of Change believe gender equality is one of the nation's most significant societal and economic issues.

Established in 2010, by then Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, our mission is to step up beside women to help achieve a significant and sustainable increase in the representation of women in leadership.
www.malechampionsofchange.com