



OPTIMISING PERFORMANCE: GENDER EQUALITY IN BUSINESS

COMMUNIQUÉ OF THE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES SUMMIT



Global Compact Network
Australia



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

NATIONAL COMMITTEE
AUSTRALIA

THE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES

- 1** Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality.

- 2** Treat all women and men fairly at work - respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination.

- 3** Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers.

- 4** Promote education, training and professional development for women.

- 5** Implement enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practices that empower women.

- 6** Promote equality through community initiatives and advocacy.

- 7** Measure and publicly report on progress to achieve gender equality.

The Women's Empowerment Principles – a joint initiative of UN Women and the UN Global Compact – aim to provide companies with practical guidance on how to empower women in the workplace, marketplace and community. More information on the Women's Empowerment Principles can be found at www.wepinciples.org.

UN Women is the United Nations' entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Australian National Committee for UN Women is one of 15 global national committees aimed at promoting gender equality in Australia and supporting the goals of UN Women in the region and around the world. www.unwomen.org.au

The UN Global Compact is the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative. In Australia, the business-led Global Compact Network Australia brings together signatories to the UN Global Compact to advance corporate sustainability and the private sector's contribution to sustainable development. www.unglobalcompact.org.au

FOREWORD

Despite some progress towards women's economic empowerment, Australian women still continue to face inequalities in the workplace, marketplace and community.

Striving for gender equality in the workplace has many financial and organisational benefits, as well as broader societal and economic ramifications. There is growing recognition of the business case for empowering and advancing women and data increasingly confirms the relationship between gender equality and improved financial performance.¹ The Grattan Institute has calculated that a 6 percent increase in women's workforce participation would likely increase Australia's gross domestic product by \$25 billion.² However, the fact that gender equality makes sound business sense needs to be communicated more effectively to business leaders to highlight the financial gains that can be achieved through a more gender equal workplace.

The *Women's Empowerment Principles* (WEPs) provide a framework for businesses looking for guidance on how to implement better strategies for gender equality within the workplace. The framework can help practitioners apply a gender lens to corporate strategy with the hope of illustrating the benefits of gender equality.

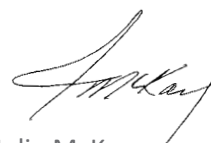
The purpose of the inaugural Women's Empowerment Principles Summit was to create a space for Australian businesses to consider the barriers to women's workforce participation and design solutions which would be implemented in the coming years. It is hoped that the Summit will become an annual event co-hosted by the Australian National Committee for UN Women and UN Global Compact Network Australia.

This year, participants were asked to consider practical measures which they could implement to advance gender equality and women's participation. The roundtable discussion topics included all seven principles. This allowed for a holistic discussion of workplace strategy. Participants concluded that increased female leadership is crucial for gender equality in the Australian workplace.

We are proud to be able to present this Communiqué to the business community. The recommendations and ideas generated at the Women's Empowerment Principles Summit are substantial contributions which, if implemented, would help correct gender imbalances in Australian workplaces. However, in order to achieve these goals, we need business leaders to champion the cause and implement the suggested changes in their companies.



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1 Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *The Business Case for Gender Equality*, 1, 4. <https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-04-29%20BRANDED%20FINAL%20businesscase%20for%20web.pdf>

2 John Daley and Cassie McGannon, *Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry on Childcare and Early Childhood Learning 2014* (Melbourne: Grattan Institute) 4.



LEADERSHIP COMMITMENT ON GENDER EQUALITY

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Businesses should develop and distribute a simple, company-specific 'business case for gender equality'.
2. Business leaders should develop and announce specific targets for women in leadership positions.
3. Business leaders should ensure that fostering diversity and inclusion is considered a key performance indicator in the measurement of performance and rewards of all staff.

BACKGROUND

One indicator that gender equality has not yet been achieved is the fact that women are under-represented in the leadership of almost all Australian industries.³ As of January 2015, 35 boards in the ASX 200 still have no female members.⁴ Women comprised 27 percent of new appointments to ASX boards in 2015 which represents a decrease from 30 percent which were appointed in January of the previous year.⁵ Although there has been significant increase in the percentage of women on boards of ASX 200 companies over the last 5 years, this recent decrease indicates that without continued focus, this issue will not be solved.

The *Women's Empowerment Principles* aim to promote female leadership as a means of fostering gender equality in the workplace. Research has shown that increasing the number of women in management can increase organisational innovation, cause a fundamental positive change and enhance corporate governance.⁶ However, despite the comprehensive research, many Australian businesses have not translated this evidence base into practical policies, with only 55% of men believing that gender parity results in financial benefits for organisations.⁷ This suggests that the business case for gender equality has not been effectively communicated.

3 Elizabeth Broderick, Cassandra Goldie and Elena Rosenman, 'Gender Equality Blueprint' The Australian Human Rights Commission 2010 (Sydney: The Australian Human Rights Commission)

4 Australian Institute of Company Directors, Statistics 2015 <http://www.companydirectors.com.au/Director-Resource-Centre/Governance-and-Director-Issues/Board-Diversity/Statistics>

5 Australian Institute of Company Directors, Statistics 2015 <http://www.companydirectors.com.au/Director-Resource-Centre/Governance-and-Director-Issues/Board-Diversity/Statistics>

6 London Business School, *Innovative Potential: Men and Women in Teams*. 2007. (London: Bi-annual Forum, The Lehman Brothers Centre for Women in Business).

7 Melanie Sanders et al, 'What Stops Women from Reaching the Top? Confronting the Tough Issues' Bain & Company; Chief Executive Women 2011 (Melbourne: Bain & Company Inc.) 3.

SUMMIT DISCUSSION

The Summit discussion reinforced that leadership commitment to gender equality was not enough to drive organisational and behavioural change. What works is the setting of measurable targets and objectives. All participants agreed that this agenda needed to be championed by the CEO and driven by senior leaders.

Participants reported that one of the significant ‘triggers’ for leadership conversations about gender equality had been the establishment of the Male Champions of Change in 2010. This group has engaged in significant public discussion about the importance of male leadership for gender equality and continues to challenge their male colleagues to set targets, report results and commit to equality. Summit participants also recognised the importance of ensuring that gender equality is not considered a ‘women’s issue’ and that men need to be educated and engaged in the reasons why gender equality in the workplace will benefit them.

It is essential that employees are engaged in the process of advancing gender equality in the workplace. Participants concluded that ‘making gender equality personal’ was the most effective strategy for furthering whole-of-organisation engagement. The merit of utilising a storytelling model⁸ is that it gives real life meaning to the *Women’s Empowerment Principles*, which eliminates the theoretic component of gender inequality. Personal storytelling shapes expectation and demonstrates the practical impact of gender diversity issues.

The business case for gender equality is compelling. The Workplace Gender Equality Agency released a report showing that businesses which value diversity attract and retain higher performing employees and have improved operational performance.⁹ Summit participants identified senior appointments and promotions as a key example of where the business case for gender equality is yet to be fully realised and implemented. Participants highlighted that senior appointments continue to be overwhelmingly given to men, and attributed this to the fact that men still make the vast majority of decisions regarding senior

promotions and often look for qualities that mirror their own approach to work. This often produces gendered results. Australian based research backs these observations, finding the majority of men promote people with a similar style to themselves, which often centres on perceived masculine qualities.¹⁰

One of the key recommendations from participants was to ensure that gender equality expectations are incorporated into hiring and promotion selection criteria. Elevating gender diversity to the same level of importance as other criteria clearly demonstrates commitment to diversity and can produce tangible results in reaching gender equality goals. This strategy would help remove some of the internal barriers to women’s advancement and would ensure a more objective recruitment process that is in line with the company’s gender diversity values.



Julie McKay, Australian National Committee for UN Women

8 The ‘storytelling model’ was outlined by Elizabeth Broderick as a method of sharing stories and examples about gender issues. This method personalizes abstract concepts by demonstrating that they occur in into real life situations.

9 Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *The Business Case for Gender Equality 2013*, 1. https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/business_case_web.pdf

10 Melanie Sanders et al, ‘What Stops Women from Reaching the Top? Confronting the Tough Issues’ Bain & Company; Chief Executive Women 2011 (Melbourne: Bain & Company Inc.) 6.

Participants noted that sexism remains a significant challenge for women in the workplace, impacting women's performance, health, recruitment and retention. Participants suggested the best way to implement cultural change that challenges unconscious bias in the workplace is through open communication and training. It was noted that many larger organisations have instigated unconscious bias training programs but many small and medium sized businesses have not. Thought leaders argued unconscious bias training should be a priority for all businesses. Additionally, the implementation of zero tolerance policies on micro-aggression that are actively enforced by the CEO and executive level employees was viewed as essential for eliminating this behaviour at all levels of business.¹¹

WEPs in Practice

The Male Champions of Change initiative, led by Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, has received widespread support from the Commonwealth Bank and its CEO, Ian Narev. Narev's strong leadership in gender diversity was emphasised at the Summit, with the Commonwealth Bank announcing that the company was in the process of becoming a signatory of the *Women's Empowerment Principles*. Commitment to the principles helps to elevate the issue of women's representation in leadership, giving it the same treatment as other transformational business objectives.

WEPs in Practice

Aurizon has created an award-winning safety strategy that has been fine-tuned over the last five years. Panellist Catherine Baxter discussed how the same approach to safety was being utilised by the company to tackle gender equality. Baxter argued that the key to their success was that the initiative was led by the executive staff. It was made clear to Aurizon employees and stakeholders that safety was a top priority and that all employees were expected to strive to reach the company's safety goals. A similar approach has been implemented for Aurizon's gender diversity goals. The benefit of a public announcement is that it generates urgency and responsibility for the success of the goal. The Aurizon Board of Directors and CEO Lance Hockridge have made a public commitment to increase the gender diversity of Aurizon employees to 30% within 5 years.¹²

11 The term 'micro-aggression' refers to everyday slights, insults and snubs of a verbal or non-verbal nature, which communicates hostility to people based on their membership to a marginalized group.
12 Lance Hockridge 'Keynote Address' (Speech delivered at the Israel Chamber of Commerce, Tel Aviv, 23 July 2014) 6. <http://www.aurizon.com.au/Media/Documents/FINAL%20Speech%20for%20Lance%20Hockridge%20Australian%20Israel%20Chamber%20of%20Commerce.pdf>



OPTIMISING PERFORMANCE: FLEXIBILITY IN THE WORKPLACE

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Current workplace flexibility policies should be reviewed to ensure they provide realistic access to flexible work arrangements for men and women. Employees, both male and female, should be encouraged to consider using these policies.
2. Senior leaders working flexibly should be publicly profiled.

BACKGROUND

Despite significant evidence which demonstrates that flexible work increases productivity, by allowing people to work when they are most productive and 'present', it remains underutilised in Australian workplaces.¹³ Flexible work is largely associated with allowances made to women with children to enable them to do school drop-offs and balance caring responsibilities with their careers. This over-simplified notion, though, prevents workplaces maximising the opportunity that workplace flexibility presents.

An ideal worker bias exists in Australia where a higher 'value' is placed on workers who are always available and have no visible caring responsibilities. However, research indicates that women in flexible roles are the most productive members of the Australian workforce.¹⁴ Further, offering flexible work options 'expands and deepens' the talent pool available to a business both by widening the range of potential employees and by its increased ability to attract and retain the most talented people who can afford to be selective about their work.¹⁵

While studies have shown that flexible work arrangements enhance both workplace productivity and employee satisfaction, ideal worker bias presents barriers to workplaces trying to reap the benefits of flexibility.¹⁶ The cultural change needed to mainstream flexibility must be driven by strong executive leadership and committed support for managers implementing and administering flexibility within their teams.

13 Fair Work Ombudsman, Best Practice Guide – Work & Family: The Right to Request Flexible Working Arrangements 2013 (Canberra: Fair Work Ombudsman) 1.

14 Katrina Nguyen-Thai et al, 'Untapped Opportunity: The Role of Women in Unlocking Australia's Productivity Potential' Ernst and Young 2013 (Sydney: Ernst and Young) 3.

15 Australian Institute of Management, Managing in a Flexible Work Environment 2012 (Sydney: Australian Institute of Management) 17.

16 Australian Institute of Management, Managing in a Flexible Work Environment 2012 (Sydney: Australian Institute of Management) 1.

SUMMIT DISCUSSION

There was consensus that leaders need to visibly endorse flexibility schemes in order to challenge the notion that flexible work is less valuable than standard work hours. Leader-led action promotes acceptance for change, grants authority for that change and helps foster results. Participants discussed how publicising senior executives utilising flexibility schemes would assist the normalisation of flexible and family friendly work arrangements as it would help to change the mindset of the business and legitimise flexibility schemes for other employees.

One of the challenges in implementing flexibility schemes is the persistent view that flexibility is more relevant to women than men, meaning that some men are reluctant to consider flexible options. However, an increase in the number of dual-income families and, across society, higher expectations that parenting responsibilities are shared have triggered a growing interest amongst men for access to flexible work. Despite this, there continues to be stigma attached to working flexibly and companies with flexible work arrangements need to proactively encourage male employees to consider pursuing these options. Increasing the focus on men is crucial to mainstreaming flexibility. A larger focus on men's involvement in company flexibility schemes would help reduce the gender stereotype of flexible work.

A related issue that was discussed was the needs of parents returning from parental leave, which often differ from other employees. More family friendly return-to-work options, such as allowing for a gradual return to work or a flexible return, can help retain more employees after parental leave. Thought leaders advocated for the creation of a return-to-work ombudsman position emphasising that having an assigned mentor or point-persons can lessen the stress for returning employees.

Technology is key for the implementation of successful workplace flexibility programs. New technologies allow greater access to work from home schemes, which creates more opportunities for working parents to balance their work and home responsibilities. Teleworking should be encouraged as a method to reduce absenteeism and to improve staff morale. Summit participants acknowledged the start-up costs of teleworking schemes can be high and suggested investigating whether the government could underwrite the costs to enable greater teleworking schemes across Australian businesses.

Training managers to effectively administer flexible environments is also a vital component of successful flexibility schemes.¹⁷ Summit participants suggested that managerial career advancement could be tied to a requirement that some form of flexible work arrangement be trialled for a period of time. This requirement would foster greater understanding of the benefits and productivity levels of flexible arrangements.

¹⁷ Australian Institute of Management, *Managing in a Flexible Work Environment 2012* (Sydney: Australian Institute of Management) 21.

WEPs in Practice

Summit participants were keen to hear about the ways in which flexibility in the workplace can be successfully implemented. Troy Roderick shared Telstra's experience of implementing a company-wide flexible work approach. In their experience, Telstra found that there was only moderate uptake of the initiative and that the majority of employees preferred traditional work hours. This outcome is contrary to the fear many businesses have - that there would be an overwhelming number of applications if a company-wide flexibility scheme were created. Telstra has found that the initiative has contributed to an increase in female hiring and has been found to encourage a more productive work environment.

UN Photo/Rick Bajornas





EQUAL TREATMENT AT WORK: DEVELOPING A GENDER INCLUSIVE HEALTH AND SAFETY CULTURE

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Businesses should adopt a 'diversity share' at the opening of each meeting as a mechanism to make diversity 'core business'.
2. Businesses should conduct a review of workplace health and safety policies to ensure they are gender aware and gender sensitive.
3. Businesses should implement early intervention measures for health and safety, training employees to recognise warning signs for domestic abuse and mental health issues from their colleagues.
4. Businesses should consider whether specific leave provisions can be made for women experiencing violence.

BACKGROUND

It is widely accepted that fostering a strong safety culture is critical to business success. Australia has one of the lowest workplace fatality rates in the world, however, continued safety improvements minimise both financial and human costs. The Australian Human Rights Commission released a report in early 2014, which argues that the ability to work in a safe environment should be regarded as a basic human right.¹⁸ Most businesses define safety in a fairly narrow way, focussing largely on on-the-job accidents, however the *Women's Empowerment Principles* ask us to go

¹⁸ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Ending Workplace Sexual Harassment: a Resource for Small, Medium and Large Employers 2014* (Sydney: Australian Human Rights Commission) 1.

further and consider some of the external health, safety and well-being issues that affect employees.

At first glance, most workplace health and safety policies appear to be 'gender neutral', in that they do not mention the specific needs of men and women. However, often developed within male structures, by men, many of the policies are 'gender blind'.¹⁹ Strategies to ensure that organisational policies are gender sensitive will be important if gender equality in the workplace is to be achieved. A gender

¹⁹ European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, *Mainstreaming Gender into Occupational Safety and Health 2005* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities) 6.

sensitive approach might give consideration to some specific risks facing men and women differently in the workplace. For example, men generally suffer more lost time injuries and accidents at work, while women are more likely to disclose health issues.²⁰ The *Women's Empowerment Principles* encourage employers to review their workplace policies and take into account the differential impacts between women and men.²¹

The process of gender mainstreaming occupational health and safety policies was recommended in the European Union by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work in reports released in 2005 and late 2014. The Agency found that adding the gender dimension was an effective way to address women's needs in terms of health and safety at work.²² The transition from a gender neutral to a gender sensitive approach needs to be done diplomatically. As a gender neutral approach has generally taken the average male worker as the standard, many male workers do not have any issue with the existing approach and do not see a need to alter it.²³ In November 2014 the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work released another report focusing on gender mainstreaming and highlighted successes of this strategy.²⁴

Further, there is increasing awareness in the Australian business community that violence against women and children, most often occurring in the home, needs to also be considered by business as not only an issue of human rights, but also a workplace health and safety priority. With one in three Australian women experiencing violence in her lifetime, the impact on her work is likely to be significant. Moreover, the likelihood that businesses employ both women experiencing violence and men perpetrating violence is not insignificant, and therefore ensuring that workplace policies and processes are suitable and responsive is critical.

20 European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, *Gender Issues in Safety and Health at Work: A Review 2003* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities) 10.

21 UN Global Compact and UN Women, *Women's Empowerment Principles – Equality Means Business 2010*, 4. <https://unwomen.org.au/sites/default/files/WEPs.pdf>

22 European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, *Mainstreaming Gender into Occupational Safety and Health 2005* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities) 5.

23 European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, *Mainstreaming Gender into Occupational Safety and Health Practices 2014* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities) 7.

24 European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, *Mainstreaming Gender into Occupational Safety and Health Practices 2014* (Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities) 8.



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SUMMIT DISCUSSION

Summit participants recommended that health and safety policies be amended to incorporate a gender-sensitive approach that would address imbalances between men and women.

In 2012, participants of the Gender Equity in the Workplace Summit called for companies to review their existing occupational health and safety policies to ensure that gender sensitive strategies were in place. While some participants thought that their companies had done this, others felt that it was not a top priority. A key barrier appeared to be a lack of understanding of how to conduct a gender policy audit. While it was outside the scope of the Summit discussion, consideration will be given to the tools needed to help businesses undertake these processes.

Recognising and promoting mental health is an essential part of creating a safe and healthy workplace. Further, as overall rates of depression and anxiety are significantly higher in women than men,²⁵ mental health issues need to be approached in a gender sensitive manner. In relation to this issue, Summit

25 Black Dog Institute, *Facts and Figures about Mental Health and Mood Disorders 2012*, 3. <http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/docs/Factsandfiguresaboutmentalhealthandmooddisorders.pdf>

participants discussed the possibility of implementing more early intervention measures, which can benefit overall productivity and morale. However, persisting stigma around addressing mental health issues reduces the likelihood of employees seeking help. Another challenge is reluctance by managers and colleagues to interfere in what they consider 'personal issues'. Participants suggested these issues could be addressed through additional managerial training aimed at equipping managers with the tools required for the resolution of sensitive issues.

Summit participants were challenged by Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick to consider how workplaces could take responsibility for violence against women. Traditionally, it had been seen as an issue 'in the home' that was not relevant to business. However greater awareness and research has clearly demonstrated the workplace impact and economic cost of violence against women. A report conducted by KPMG in 2009 notes that the annual cost of violence against women is \$8.1 billion. This includes the cost of services delivered and health impacts, but also costs to business of absenteeism, lost productivity and staff turnover.²⁶

Some participants shared that their companies had adopted domestic violence leave provisions, providing additional, paid leave for women who are experiencing violence and have used up their sick leave provisions. The issue of reporting was also discussed by Summit participants, as it is widely reported that women experiencing violence are most likely to disclose their situation to a friend or colleague. Supporting employees to understand the prevalence of violence against women in our community, and how to support someone who discloses that they are experiencing violence is necessary. Summit participants discussed the need to have widespread educational campaigns to raise awareness about violence, very clear 'no tolerance' policies that are widely distributed and regular discussions in the workplace about where people can seek help, would all be steps towards making the workplace more inclusive and safe for women.

Finally, Summit participants discussed the significant similarities between building a safety culture and building a culture of diversity and inclusion. It was agreed that both involved major cultural change programs, and that the diversity sector could learn

from the experience of safety initiatives. Critical to making safety a top priority for many businesses were leadership commitment, investment in education, accountabilities and continued monitoring and evaluation. These factors are equally important in embedding diverse and inclusive workplaces.

WEPs in Practice

Summit panellist, Catherine Baxter, likened the cultural change program that was needed on gender diversity within Aurizon to the safety journey that the company had successfully embarked on in 2007. Ensuring that gender equality was considered 'core business' for Aurizon staff involved raising awareness and visibility of the issue. Using the widely adopted model of the 'safety share', Aurizon has now implemented a 'diversity share' in all meetings, where staff are asked to share their experiences or things they have witnessed that have an impact on diversity and inclusion. The symbolic importance of saying to staff that diversity and safety were equally important to the business is significant. Also, the raised awareness of the range of issues which are critical for diversity and inclusion programs to succeed has been beneficial.

WEPs in Practice

Telstra and a number of other businesses have introduced a domestic and family violence policy that allows employees who are victims of domestic violence to access to ten additional days of paid leave a year. The leave allows employees to attend medical appointments or seek legal advice or counselling. The policy also aims to provide support to employees and managers of employees who are experiencing domestic violence.



²⁶ The National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children, The Cost of Violence against Women and their Children 2009, https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/05_2012/vawc_economic_report.pdf



PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY THROUGH PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND TRAINING

KEY RECOMMENDATION

1. Businesses should publicly report the number of people attending training – disaggregated by gender and by full-time or part-time and set targets for each in company annual reports and with the Workplace Gender Equality Agency.
2. Specific efforts should be made to ensure training and development opportunities can be provided flexibly.
3. Each employee returning from parental leave should be assigned a ‘return to work’ support person to provide advice and support.

BACKGROUND

The *Women’s Empowerment Principles* highlight the importance of education and professional training for the advancement of women in the workplace.²⁷ The primary benefits of training and education programs include up-skilling, access to new thinking and the opportunity to build networks.²⁸ Additionally, employees often report higher engagement because their employer is investing in improving their skillset. While most Australian businesses have taken steps to remove formal barriers to women accessing training and development opportunities, biases remain which disadvantage women. For example, some training opportunities are only available for full-time staff members, or the training is provided within very structured hours which doesn’t allow for people working flexibly. Removing the barriers to women’s participation in training and development, and ensuring that an equal number of men and women access the opportunities, will improve employee productivity, skill and retention.

27 UN Global Compact and UN Women, *Women’s Empowerment Principles: Equality Means Business 2011* (New York: UN Global Compact and UN Women) 5

28 Government of South Australia, ‘Benefits of training your staff’, *Skills for All 2015* <http://www.skills.sa.gov.au/for-employers-business/training-your-staff/benefits-of-training-your-staff>

Another key area of professional development is access to mentoring programs. Successful mentoring programs help women to build their professional networks and to gain insights from other business leaders about upcoming projects and priorities, which could help their careers.²⁹ However, women may underestimate the necessity of networking and mentoring to career advancement.³⁰ Taking steps to implement effective mentoring programs is an important part of supporting female talent as it encourages the sharing of professional knowledge, expertise and experience. Another factor worth considering is how often informal mentoring occurs in environments which may exclude women – such as drinks at bars or corporate boxes at sporting matches.

29 Catalyst, *Mentoring: Necessary but Insufficient for Advancement 2010* <http://www.catalyst.org/uploads/mentoring-necessarybutinsufficientforadvancement.pdf>

30 Australian National Committee for UN Women, *Re-Imagining our Workplaces: Communiqué of the Gender Equality in The Workplace Summit 2012* (Canberra: Australian National Committee for UN Women) 8.

SUMMIT DISCUSSION

Summit participants acknowledged the importance of women accessing education and training to their professional development, engagement and ability to continue to climb the leadership ranks. Despite increasing focus on professional development, participants agreed that there was rarely consideration given to the gender balance of learning and development opportunities provided to staff. There was recognition that while it might be reasonably easy to measure the gender balance of formalised opportunities (i.e. funding to undertake an MBA program), the informal training and development opportunities were much harder to measure. As a first step, Summit participants recommended that employers consciously track and report the range of professional development opportunities available and the gender balance of participants. Targets for redressing any imbalances discovered were also recommended.

WEPs in Practice

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has been working on a range of strategies to ensure women can reach leadership ranks. One of the key promotion 'gates' for ADF personnel is Staff College. Since 2010, the ADF has been actively following the gender balance on Staff College and the results have exceeded expectations. Today, the percentage of women attending Staff College exceed the percentage of women at the required rank.

Summit participants raised concerns that even when training and development opportunities existed, they were often not compatible with flexible work arrangements or part time work. For example, rather than assuming that employees who are on parental leave were unavailable for the entire period of leave, employers could discuss opportunities for engagement at the employee's convenience. Ongoing engagement during periods of leave is found to increase employee engagement and the likelihood of return to work. Similarly, participants argued that employees' non-work commitments, such as school drop-off and pick up times, should be considered when scheduling training and networking opportunities.

It was noted in discussion that people who worked part time were less likely to be awarded training and educational opportunities. In 2013, 46.1% of all female workers worked part time and women constituted 69.9% of all part time employees.³¹ Therefore, the exclusion of part time workers from consideration in training programs disproportionately affects women.

³¹ Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Gender Workplace Statistics at a Glance 2013. Viewed 24 October 2014. https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-07-25%20-%20Stats%20at%20a%20Glance_FINAL.pdf

One solution to this is to expand distance-learning opportunities. Technological advances allow for distance training that can have a self-assigned pace of learning. These types of programs would offer greater flexibility for employees wanting to develop their skills but who have other non-work commitments.

Mentoring programs have been found to assist women's corporate advancement and can help retain female talent. Commitment to the program by the employer is vital for success. Therefore, senior management needs to take a leading role in making mentoring legitimate.

Summit Participants also raised the issue of supporting parents returning to work after periods of parental leave, acknowledging that the vast majority of long periods of leave were still taken by women. Participants recognised that for many women, returning to work after a period of leave can be daunting and allocating a support person could assist with their engagement. This is something that is common practice when an employee is returning from leave after injury, but has not been implemented for women returning from parental leave. A support person who can assist with negotiating flexible work and ensure that the employee is aware of policy changes and can access meaningful work would be an easy step for businesses to take to better support and engage women.

WEPs in Practice

The Commonwealth Bank has implemented a formalised sponsorship program within a few of their business units. Each program has a different approach to meet the needs and context of that business unit. For example, one program is centred on key projects where high performing women build their skills and are aligned to a sponsor, and another is structured as a mentoring relationship initially with the view to gaining sponsorship. Each program provides sponsorship for identified females at management level with guidance provided by a sponsorship toolkit produced by the Group Diversity and Inclusion team. The identified females are matched with a skip level sponsor within the bank and have exposure to Group Executives, Executive General Managers, senior female role models, skill building for their career management and an advocate network.

WEPs in Practice

PwC has recently appointed an external Diversity Advisory Board to support the CEO and Executive Board to implement their diversity and inclusion agenda. The Board members are providing coaching to Executive Members regarding all aspects of diversity and inclusion. This formalised coaching program showcases the importance of providing all staff, including senior leaders, with support to continue to develop their skills.

A photograph showing two women in a factory setting, likely a coffee processing plant. They are wearing purple and pink uniforms and are focused on sorting small, dark coffee beans on a light-colored surface. The woman in the foreground is wearing an orange headscarf. The background is slightly blurred, showing other workers and machinery.

**SUPPLY CHAIN ACCOUNTABILITY:
CREATING GENDER SENSITIVE
ACCOUNTABILITIES THROUGH
SUPPLY CHAIN PRACTICES**

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Businesses should develop and communicate 'principles' outlining their expectations of suppliers regarding gender diversity.
2. Business should commit to sourcing a minimum percentage of goods and services from women-owned and led businesses.

BACKGROUND

While the focus of many businesses with regards to gender diversity is on internal policies and practices related to human resources, one of the biggest opportunities to influence change on this agenda, is through the supply chain. The *Women's Empowerment Principles* call on employers to influence suppliers by prioritising businesses who have strong gender diversity policies and programs and expanding business relationships with women-owned enterprises.

There is scope for increased investment in women-owned and led businesses, especially as research indicates the number of women starting their own business has been increasing at almost double the rate of men.³² Businesses have the opportunity to tap into these growing networks of diverse, quality suppliers.

SUMMIT DISCUSSION

Summit participants discussed how best to implement supplier diversity targets and agreed that it would require leadership commitment to impose supplier targets and promote compliance. Participants recognised that one of the challenges with supplier diversity is that many businesses feel it would be hypocritical to impose high gender equality standards on their suppliers if they are still in the process of fixing gender equality issues internally. Currently, most companies have an imperfect model of gender equality. Participants stressed, though, that the adoption of supplier diversity programs is an important component of gender equality promotion that helps to contribute to the attainment of a more equal workplace. It should not be delayed but incorporated into a whole-of-organisation diversity strategy.

Participants felt that integration of gender diversity requirements into a company's tendering process would clearly communicate a standard that is expected from commercial partners. This would include embedding the company's diversity and inclusion expectations and measures into the code of conduct that would be made readily available to relevant commercial parties. This year's Summit participants reiterated the recommendation expressed at the 2012 Gender Equity in the Workplace Summit that an audit of a company's current suppliers should be undertaken so there is consistency in the expected requirements.

Summit participants recommended that part of this process should include companies adopting supply chain practices support their suppliers with education on gender diversity and the new expectations. Education forums could be part of the tendering process and could help assess the suppliers' commitment and attitude to gender diversity values. A correction plan for those who fell below a certain level would provide a method to address shortcomings. Additionally, providing education programs internally would also assist with the implementation of a supplier diversity program.

Increasing the number of women-owned businesses in corporate supply chains was also an opportunity for advancing gender equality. One challenge raised by participants was identifying women-owned businesses. WeConnect Australasia was suggested as one organisation that aims to connect women-owned enterprises and corporations under supplier diversity and inclusion programs.

³² Australian Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry, National Research on Women Business Owners & Female Entrepreneurs in Australia 2012 (Sydney: Australian Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry).

COMMUNITY INITIATIVES AND ADVOCACY FOR GENDER EQUALITY

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Businesses should ensure their sponsorships, corporate social responsibility investments and workplace giving programs include a component of support for women's organisations and gender equality programs.

BACKGROUND

The *Women's Empowerment Principles* call for the promotion of equality through community initiatives and advocacy.³³ All too often, corporates make strong public commitments to gender equality, but their community investments are not supporting causes that promote gender equality. One such example is the expenditure on corporate boxes at male sporting events. This not only fails to invest in women's sport equally to men's but it also perpetuates the 'boys club' by providing exclusive networking opportunities which might be more sought after by male employees.

By contrast, some progressive companies are allocating their community investments to promoting women's leadership. The Australian Business and Community Network piloted a program in 2012 that partnered professionals with students. This mentoring program aimed to connect female students with a range of different professionals who could encourage and inspire them in different careers.

SUMMIT DISCUSSION

Summit participants discussed the fact that community investment decisions were often made in isolation from other corporate priorities. They noted that to embed the commitment to gender diversity, greater attention needed to be paid to the corporate social responsibility investments being made to ensure they were directly aligned with business strategy.

There were three key areas where Summit participants felt that corporate investment could promote gender diversity. Firstly, programs that supported women's access to leadership roles such as leadership development programs and mentoring would enhance the pipeline of young women considering their leadership options. Secondly, Summit participants noted the importance of the business community taking greater responsibility for eliminating violence against women. Noting the statistic of one in three women experiencing violence in her lifetime, participants felt that employers should be more actively engaged in funding bystander awareness programs and victim support initiatives. Thirdly, investing in programs that seek to build women's employability such as work ready programs or TAFE courses aimed at women undertaking non-traditional careers was identified as an opportunity.

To build employee engagement with CSR programs, Summit participants shared their experiences and commented that staff are more likely to be engaged with the causes when they have had a role in choosing them. Summit participants felt that greater engagement of staff would lead to companies choosing to invest more in women's health and women's leadership programs.

Finally, it was acknowledged that supporting these types of programs was not just 'charitable' but a sound business move towards fostering diversity and gender equality within the workplace. There is a very clear business case for investing in the talent pipeline and in programs that empower current and future employees.



Ryan Burke, Grace Roberts and Jennifer Levasseur from Commonwealth Bank

³³ UN Global Compact and UN Women, *Women's Empowerment Principles: Equality Means Business 2011* (New York: UN Global Compact and UN Women) 5.

WEPs in Practice

Participants at the Summit reiterated the importance of community engagement and support being built into the foundation of businesses. It was discussed that companies should be investing in their local communities as well as supporting global causes as a key aspect of promoting gender equality. Commonwealth Bank gives back to the communities it works in, in a variety of ways. Its partnerships in the community range from sports such as sponsoring Cricket Australia's women's team, the Commonwealth Bank Southern Stars to supporting the Breast Cancer Institute of Australia and the Australian National Committee for UN Women. Through its partnership with the Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN), a selection of the Group's female leaders will participate in the Focus program which seeks to provide high potential young women from high needs schools with the essential leadership skills that they will need to engage in a meaningful career. These partnerships demonstrate its commitment to supporting women both within the workplace and across the community.



WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS DONE: IMPROVING GENDER EQUALITY REPORTING

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All businesses should set clear gender targets and publish them on their websites and in their annual reports.
2. Businesses should strive for WGEA accreditation as Employers of Choice for Women and share their applications via the intranet for staff to review.
3. Businesses should conduct analysis of employees' career progression by gender to determine where the genders' career trajectories diverge.
4. Businesses should conduct annual pay equity audits.

BACKGROUND

Reporting on progress is arguably the most important element to successfully improving a company's gender diversity outcomes. The adage 'what gets measured gets done' is referred to time and again by CEOs and executives on the gender equality journey who had been unaware of the extent of their businesses' unintentional gender disparities.

In December 2012, the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012* replaced the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999*. The new act required all non-public sector employers with 100 or more employees to report on key gender indicators to the Workplace Gender Equality Agency annually.³⁴ Transparent

³⁴ Workplace Gender Equality Agency, Reference Guide for the Workplace profile and Reporting Questionnaire 2013, 5. https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/20131220Guidelines_document_Final_Version_Website.pdf



Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Global Co-Chair of the Women's Empowerment Principles Leadership Group

reporting is an essential tool for creating gender equality in the workplace, and public reporting makes companies accountable for their progress.

The 2014 *ASX Corporate Governance Council Principles and Recommendations on Diversity* study by KPMG states that 98% of ASX-listed companies sampled in 2013 had established a diversity policy. From that sample, 86% reported they had established measurable objectives for achieving gender diversity.³⁵ These are significant improvements from the 2012 KPMG study where only 61.1% of ASX-listed companies sampled had established a diversity policy and of those companies, 59% had established measurable objectives.³⁶ Although these figures are encouraging, it is important to note that 70% of the Australian workforce is employed by small and medium sized businesses that are fewer than 100 people and as such, research and action must be expanded to include these.³⁷

SUMMIT DISCUSSION

Summit participants agreed that critical to the success of any gender diversity strategy was the development and articulation of measureable objectives. Some participants shared experiences where taking positive steps to implement transparent reporting mechanisms had helped to attract and retain talent and improve a business' reputation.

35 KPMG, *ASX Corporate Governance Council Principles and Recommendations on Diversity 2014* (Sydney: KPMG) 12; 21.

36 KPMG, *ASX Corporate Governance Council Principles and Recommendations on Diversity 2012* (Sydney: KPMG) 9;14.

37 SME Association Australia, *Small and Medium Enterprises in Australia 2012*, <https://www.smea.org.au/resources/careers>

This year's Summit participants proposed that public gender reporting should be mandatory for all businesses, regardless of size. The majority of women who work in Australia are employed by small business. Women also make up 31.5% of small business operators.³⁸ Measurable objectives for reporting need to be standardised for easy comparison across businesses and industries, and to reduce the perceived administrative burden, as companies need not devise their own reporting mechanisms. A 2014 KPMG report demonstrates that while the majority of companies sampled had established a diversity policy, this had not translated into the same number having measurable objectives for reporting the gender dimension in their business.³⁹ Cost is the major stated barrier to reporting, however if incorporated into existing reporting mechanisms, it should not create a burden of additional work.

Thought leaders in this session discussed the need for companies to analyse career progression by gender. This reporting would show information as to the trajectory of women's careers compared to men's. Reports should include the percentage of women in each management layer of a company and those who were considered promotion ready. Participants agreed that a more precise breakdown of management make up would be more accurate, although they acknowledged the risk that some companies might customise senior management definitions to increase the number of women in managerial roles.

Finally, it was agreed that greater transparency in employment practices would engender greater equity. Summit participants called for annual equal pay audits to be made mandatory. The current gender pay gap in Australia is calculated to be 18.2%.⁴⁰ This is irrespective of whether the comparison is by hourly rate or full-time rate.⁴¹ The pay gap can start with graduate positions and applies to most types and levels of work.⁴² Where salaries are not publically disclosed, disparities are hidden and tackling inequality is more difficult. Transparency in pay reporting would provide the information and tools to close the pay gap. Similarly, disclosing position requirements can help reduce biases in selection processes for hiring and promotion, and combat views that businesses allow tokenistic appointments to increase diversity.

38 SME Association Australia, *Small and Medium Enterprises in Australia 2012*, <https://www.smea.org.au/resources/careers>

39 KPMG, *ASX Corporate Governance Council Principles and Recommendations on Diversity 2014* (Sydney: KPMG).

40 Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *National gender pay gap rises to 18.2%, 2014*. <https://www.wgea.gov.au/media-releases/national-gender-pay-gap-rises-182>

41 Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Parenting, Work and the Gender Pay Gap 2014*. https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2014-03-04_PP_Pay_Gap_and_Parenting.pdf

42 Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Gradstats – Starting salaries 2013*. http://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2013-01-07_GradStats_fact-sheet_tag.pdf.

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT PRINCIPLES SUMMIT 2014 AGENDA

Date: 1 October 2014
Time: Registration from 8.30 for 9am sharp start - 2pm
Venue: Commonwealth Bank, 201 Sussex Street, Sydney CBD

- 9:00** **Welcome**, Julie McKay, Executive Director, Australian National Committee for UN Women
- 9:05** **Introduction to the event**
Rhonda Brighton-Hall
- 9:15** **Introduce Keynote**, Julie McKay, Executive Director, Australian National Committee for UN Women
- 9:16** **Keynote Address: WEP #1: Establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality**
Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner & Co-Chair of the Women's Empowerment Principles Leadership Group
- 9:36** **Introduce Panel, Panel Discussion & Q&A: Top down and bottom up: exploring leadership and supply chain practices for gender equality (WEP #1 and #5)**
Focus areas: high level leadership for equality; empowering supply chain practices; measuring impact and maintaining momentum
Moderator: Julie McKay, Executive Director, Australian National Committee for UN Women
1. Fiona Davies, Senior Manager Strategic Support, Commonwealth Bank
 2. Helen Conway, Director, WGEA
 3. Yolanda Vega, CEO, Australian Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- 10:35** **Morning Tea**
- 10:55** **Introduce Panel, Panel Discussion & Q&A: Optimising performance: flexibility and maintaining health, safety and well-being (WEP #2 and #3)**
Focus areas: workplace flexibility, developing a health and safety culture that includes aspects of equality
Moderator: Julie McKay, Executive Director, Australian National Committee for UN Women
1. Catherine Baxter, General Manager Service Delivery in Coal North, Aurizon
 2. Troy Roderick, Head of Diversity and Inclusion, Telstra
 4. Louise Fowler, Head of Talent & Diversity at Lend Lease
- 11:55** **Networking lunch**
- 12:30** **Roundtable discussion sessions**
- 13:20** **Summary and next steps** Alice Cope, Executive Manager, Global Compact Network Australia
- 13:45** **Close & vote of thanks** Melanie Laing, Group Executive Human Resources, Commonwealth Bank
- 14:00** **Event ends**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Summit Steering Committee: Ryan Burke, Commonwealth Bank; Rebecca Tuma, Aurizon; Alice Cope, Global Compact Network Australia; Janelle Weissman, Australian National Committee for UN Women; Olivia Rothnie-Jones, Australian National Committee for UN Women and Grace Hill, Australian National Committee for UN Women.

The Australian National Committee for UN Women and the Global Compact Network Australia would like to thank Commonwealth Bank for generously providing catering and a beautiful venue for the inaugural Summit. We would also like to thank discussion facilitators: Fiona Davies, Commonwealth Bank; Ryan Burke, Commonwealth Bank; Catherine Baxter, Aurizon; Rebecca Tuma, Aurizon; Neil Cockroft, Graincorp; Lisa Annese, Diversity Council of Australia; Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner; Simone Shugg, Carnival Australia; Troy Roderick, Telstra; Kate O'Reilly, Optimiss Consulting; Amanda Mostyn, ASX; Catherine Hunter, KPMG.

We are grateful for the invaluable contributions of thought leaders: Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner; Fiona Davies, Commonwealth Bank; Helen Conway, Workplace Gender Equality Agency; Yolanda Vega, Australian Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Catherine Baxter, Aurizon; Troy Roderick, Telstra; Louise Fowler, Lend Lease.

We would like to thank Simone Burke for her valuable contributions to the Summit and this Communique. We also thank all event scribes who ensured that the ideas generated in the discussion groups were recorded for posterity.

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