
ELIZA'S PROJECT: GENDER INCLUSION IN THE CME SECTOR IN AUSTRALIA

BY ALLISON ORR



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ABOUT PER CAPITA

Per Capita is an independent progressive think tank, dedicated to fighting inequality in Australia. We work to build a new vision for Australia based on fairness, shared prosperity, community and social justice.

Our research is rigorous, evidence-based and long-term in its outlook. We consider the national challenges of the next decade rather than the next election cycle. We ask original questions and offer fresh solutions, drawing on new thinking in social science, economics and public policy. Per Capita's operating model is to invest in highly qualified researchers who work on applied policy development, rather than the more abstract, theoretical approaches of academia. Our audience is the interested public, not just experts and policy makers. We engage all Australians who want to see rigorous thinking and evidence-based analysis applied to the issues facing our country's future.

ABOUT THE BCCM

The Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM) is the national peak body representing co-operative and mutual models of enterprise. It is the only organisation uniting the entire diverse range of member-owned businesses in Australia. Formed in 2013, the BCCM brings together the sector of businesses owned by members or formed to benefit members, with the common objective of increasing awareness of these models of enterprise. The Council highlights the contribution co-operatives and mutuals make to the national economy and social development in Australia and provides leadership in the important areas of research, education and advocacy to build a strong sector.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Allison Orr is Manager, Research and Operations at Per Capita. Allison has worked at the ABC, Amnesty International and for the Australian Democrats, in campaign, policy and coordination roles. She has a Bachelor of Music, a Master of Arts (International Relations) and a PhD in Political Science, focusing on political language in the digital age.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women make up 46 per cent of the Australian workforce, but in every industry and sector, women are under-represented in leadership positions. This is true for the corporate sector as well as the co-operative and mutual sector.

As well as being under-represented in the top jobs, women are over-represented in lower paid occupations and lower grades of all industries. Vertical and horizontal segregation push women into lower paid occupations. These patterns arise from more than just choices at the individual level; they are the result of structural factors and social norms. Women continue to do the majority of unpaid care work, which drives women into flexible, casual or part-time work, restricting the roles available to them and curtailing their opportunities for advancement. This in turn, deprives organisations of talented staff and decreases diversity at the executive and board levels.

For the co-operative and mutuals sector, there is more than just a business case for inclusion and equality. Cooperative and mutual enterprises (CMEs) are controlled by members and are guided by values and principles that promote inclusion. From their earliest days, CMEs have empowered ordinary people with the means to control their own financial futures and to have a stake in their own enterprises. These are organisations already imbued with the characteristics that can make this sector a leader on inclusion and the empowerment of women.

This research has looked at the current position of gender inclusion in the sector, and via a survey and symposium, asked members of the sector what they want to improve this situation.

While there is no single solution to addressing the under-representation of women in leadership in CMEs, several patterns emerged.

People want access to flexible work, not just as a “tick the box” policy, but as a workplace practice that is embedded in the culture and has full support of the leadership.

People want access to leadership training and sponsorship. There is a clear pattern of women getting “stuck” in middle management, and what is needed are initiatives to help women move beyond this point, and that, once again, these are supported by the leadership.

A commitment to change starts at the top, with boards and executive teams.

This report is a starting point for the CME sector in Australia. It provides the sector with a picture of the status quo and puts forward recommendations that will put the sector in a leadership position on gender inclusion in Australia.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2016 the Business Council of Co-operatives and Mutuals (BCCM) joined with Per Capita to undertake research into gender diversity and inclusion in the cooperative and mutual enterprise (CME) sector in Australia. This was following research published by the International Labor Organisation (ILO) in 2015 into women's empowerment and gender equality in the co-operative movement.

The ILO research, based on surveys and interviews with experts and practitioners from the co-operative, labour and women's movements, was published in the report, *Advancing Gender Equality: The Co-operative Way*.¹ The research found that while the co-operative model can be adept at addressing women's empowerment and gender equality concerns, it also identified obstacles to women's empowerment and persistent gaps in gender equality within the co-operative movement. It showed that globally, while women are among the most involved in and served by co-operative organisations, they are among the least likely to hold high-ranking decision-making roles.

The BCCM/Per Capita project was initiated to investigate whether this pattern is repeated in Australia. While there is a large and growing body of data, research and evaluation on gender equality in Australia, there is currently very little that is specific to the CME sector.

All sectors have a tendency to show a pyramid structure – the closer you get to top leadership positions the fewer women there are – and our initial dataset showed that this is true of the CME sector in Australia. The data, drawn from publicly available Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) reports, shows that same outcome seen by the ILO survey: that while women are the majority of employees of co-operatives, they are by no means the majority of management. In fact, our data shows that the higher you go, the worse the ratio of men to women.

1.1 ELIZA'S PROJECT

With the first round of research showing the same pattern as the ILO results, the BCCM and Per Capita launched Eliza's Project at the BCCM Leaders' Summit in November 2016. Eliza's Project was initiated to research and evaluate the current state of gender equality in the CME sector in Australia, and with industry engagement, develop a strategy document with actionable recommendations to give the co-operatives sector a leadership position on gender inclusion in Australian workplaces.

The co-operative sector is in a unique position to take a leadership role in addressing gender inequality. Firstly, the member-led governance structure offers great potential opportunities for women. The women surveyed in the ILO report outlined the characteristics of co-operatives that further their empowerment: they are owned and controlled by members; and they are guided by values and principles that encourage democracy, concern for community and open membership.

A second characteristic that makes co-operatives an obvious leader for gender inclusion is that there is already a great history of empowerment of women in this sector. Gender equality has in principle been a part of the co-operative sector from its earliest history. In England, the Rochdale Pioneers' rules gave full membership rights to both women and men, and in 1846 Eliza Brierley, after whom this project is named, lined up with a queue of male mill workers to hand over her one pound to become a full member. At a time when women were still the property of their father or husband, and decades before women got the vote, Eliza forced the co-operative society to accept her as an equal.

However, it took three-quarters of a century after that, 1922, for the first woman, Mary Cottrell, to appear on a board of a co-operative, and it's this same pattern of women as members and workers but not as leaders that the research shows has carried through to today.



We have named this project after Eliza not just to pay tribute to her courage, but also to highlight the kind of leadership the sector itself can engender. The objective of this project is to produce a strategy for the CME sector to be the most inclusive sector, to create an environment in which all people can thrive. Gender inclusion is ultimately about economic participation, and ensuring women can get to the top is about access to power. The co-operative sector by its very nature already promotes inclusion, and disperses ownership and decision-making power. As a sector it also has less disparity in wages from top to bottom than other sectors. While the research results show that the CME sector in Australia currently exhibits similar characteristics to the corporate sector with regards to gender inclusion, the history and values of the sector are a driver for change. The CME sector in Australia can play a vital role in the economic empowerment of women.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

After the launch of the project in November 2015, a Working Group was established, which was made up of the following members:

- > **MELINA MORRISON** - CEO BCCM
- > **LICIA HEATH** - Financial Consultant
- > **LOUISE AUBUSSON** - Executive Manager at Select Encompass Credit Union and head of Women in Mutuals
- > **ROWAN DOWLAND** - Chief Strategy Officer at Bank Australia
- > **OLIVERA MARJANOVIC** - Director of the Co-operatives Research Group at Sydney University
- > **MICHELLE SOMERVILLE** - Non-Executive Director at Challenger
- > **LISA MCINTYRE** - Non-Executive Director and Chair of iCare
- > **ALLISON ORR** - Manger, Research and Operations at Per Capita

This Working Group has provided advice and feedback on research scope and design.

The research in this project has three elements: quantitative research to map gender patterns in the sector, a survey of employees in the CME sector in Australia, and qualitative research of the broader gender inclusion literature.

This report is divided into four sections. The first section outlines the background of Eliza's Project; the second section reports on the research results, from both the data mapping and the survey; the third section highlights the two main issues that emerged from the research: flexible work and executive sponsorship. The fourth section makes the case for inclusive workplaces and puts the results in the context of changing workplaces. The

final section of the report makes recommendations, which have been determined in collaboration with sector representatives.

There are three parts to bringing about meaningful change: research to understand the problem; using that research to make recommendations for change; and leadership to follow through. This report is the beginning of that process.

1.2.1 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

The initial part of this research was undertaken in 2015, and drew upon publicly available data from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) to evaluate the participation of women in the top 100 co-operative and mutual enterprises (CMEs) in Australia. We took the list of these top 100 from the 2015 National Mutual Economy Report.²

Of the top 100 CMEs, 60 reported to the WGEA in 2014-2015 year (the most recent year for which we had data when this research was undertaken). Only 1 CME is listed as noncompliant with the WGEA.

1.2.2 SURVEY

In conjunction with the Working Group, a survey was developed, with the intention of complementing the statistical data, to understand the real world experiences and needs of those working in the sector, and to locate genuine barriers to inclusion. This survey was open to employees and members of CMEs in Australia, and was undertaken using Survey Monkey.

The survey was open from 26 July to 19 August 2017. The survey received 190 responses. Just over one-third of respondents (66) were men. Four respondents did not indicate gender.

Respondents were a cross-section of employee levels, with 2 per cent recent graduates, one-third (34 per cent) indicating they were an experienced employee, 20 per cent middle manager, one-quarter (24 per cent) senior manager, 15 per cent executive manager, and 6 per cent CEO. No respondents were Board directors. The majority of respondents fall between experienced employee and senior management, which gives us a good insight into the opinions of those who are most likely to be in need of initiatives or culture change to break out of middle management.

When comparing the gender and employee level of the respondents, we see the same pattern of men being over-represented at the top, and women being over-represented in the middle that was revealed in the analysis of the CME data outlined below. Of the 13 respondents who indicated they are a CEO, the majority were men (9 of out of 13, or 70 per cent). Of those who indicated they work in middle management, the majority were women (29 out of 36, or 80 per cent).

Respondents to the survey were overwhelmingly from the financial services sector (77 per cent), with 9 per cent from health insurance, 2 per cent from motoring, 2 per cent from agriculture, 1 per cent from superannuation, and 9 per cent selected "Other", which included ageing services, human services, health and wellbeing, marketing, education, insurance, retail and food processing.

The full survey questions are in Appendix I.

1.3.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

There is a large and growing body of research on gender inclusion in the workplace, both globally and in Australia. In order to place the CME sector results in context, and to compare with other sectors, we have referenced reports from global organisations, such as the WEF and ILO, as well as national reports from the WGEA, KPMG, Male Champions of Change and others in this research.

2.0 THE RESULTS

In this section, we outline and analyse results from the three areas of research: the data mapping, the survey and the desktop research. The discussion around the results in this section has been arranged into the four main themes that emerged out of the research: workplace segregation, inclusion as a “women’s issue”; quotas and targets; and workplace culture.

2.1 WORKPLACE SEGREGATION: GLASS WALLS AND GLASS CEILINGS

Analysis of the WGEA data of the top 100 CMEs in Australia shows two significant findings: that women are under-represented in top management positions, and that occupations are divided along gender line. This workplace segregation is common in Australia beyond the co-operative sector. In fact, Australia by international standards has a highly segregated workforce. Six in ten Australians work in an industry dominated by one gender, and this has remained constant over the last twenty years.³

It is a pattern that is also seen globally. While the percentage of women in the workforce has increased significantly over the last few decades, there has not been an overall increase in all occupations, industries and sectors. Women have become concentrated in particular jobs. The ILO report, Women at Work: Trends 2016 found that women are over-represented in the lowest paid occupations across both developed and developing nations.⁴

Workplace segregation has two forms:

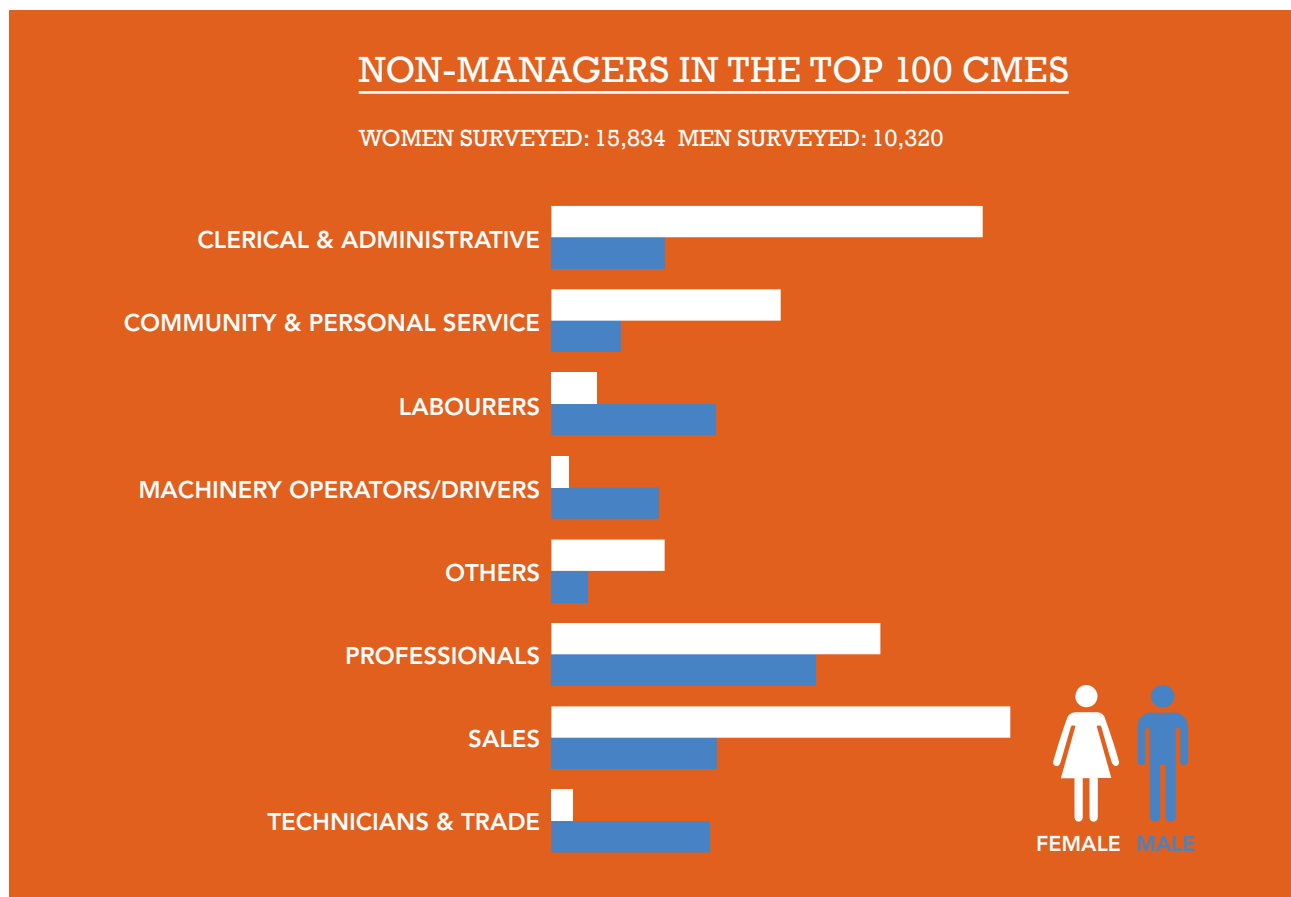
- **Vertical**, where one gender is segregated into a limited range of lower grades within industries, which has for a long time been known as the “glass ceiling”, and
- **Horizontal**, where genders are divided into a limited number of occupations, known as “glass walls”.

These barriers create workplaces that are highly segregated along gender lines, and have a big impact on women’s economic inequality. Segregation tends to push women into lower paid occupations, and is considered one of the contributing factors to the persistence of the gender pay gap.

2.1.1 HORIZONTAL SEGREGATION

Our analysis of the top 100 CMEs in Australia found workplaces that are highly horizontally segregated. In the chart below, we can see this horizontal segregation. With the exception of Professionals, the listed occupations show a wide disparity of the number of men and women doing these jobs. Clerical and administrative work is four times as likely to be done by women; Labourers are three times as likely to be men. Nine times as many men are technicians as women.

CHART 1: NON-MANAGERS IN THE TOP 100 CMEs



In November 2016, the Australian Senate launched an inquiry into gender segregation in Australian workplaces and its impact on women's economic equality. The report found that segregation patterns arise from more than just individual choices. The same patterns occur across professions and occupations because they arise from structural factors and social norms.⁵

Census data continues to show that women do the overwhelming majority of unpaid care⁶. This places pressure on women to find work that can fit around these caring responsibilities. This drives women into industries and occupations that provide access to flexible and part-time work, restricting the roles available to women.

Expectations around traditional gender roles also play a role in segregation, influencing choices around education, training and occupations. The Eliza's Project survey results indicate that expectations around gender roles continue to shape people's career choices. When asked to indicate barriers to advancement respondents have experienced, one-quarter of respondents (25 per cent) ticked gender stereotypes around work and a slightly higher percentage (28 per cent) chose societal expectations around caring and housework.

The lack of women in traditionally male-dominated occupations, and vice versa, reinforces stereotypes, since "you can't be what you can't see". Comments from the survey also show a frustration around this. The following comment was received in response to same question on barriers:

"Cannot underestimate the lack of female role models and leaders already winning at the top. If our workforce cannot see someone doing it well, how do they know it's possible?"

In addition, there is evidence that it's not just that women are more likely to enter certain professions, but that some professions become less valued and less well paid when the ratio of women rises.⁷ The 2016 KPMG report, *She's Price(d) Less*, outlines how the higher the percentage of women in an industry, the lower its perceived prestige. Even where men's low-wage jobs demand less skills and certification, they are usually paid higher than women's.⁸

Importantly, desegregating the workforce can bring significant results. The same KPMG report found that for "each 10 per cent increase in the ratio of men to women in an industry increases the average wage by 1.9 per".⁹

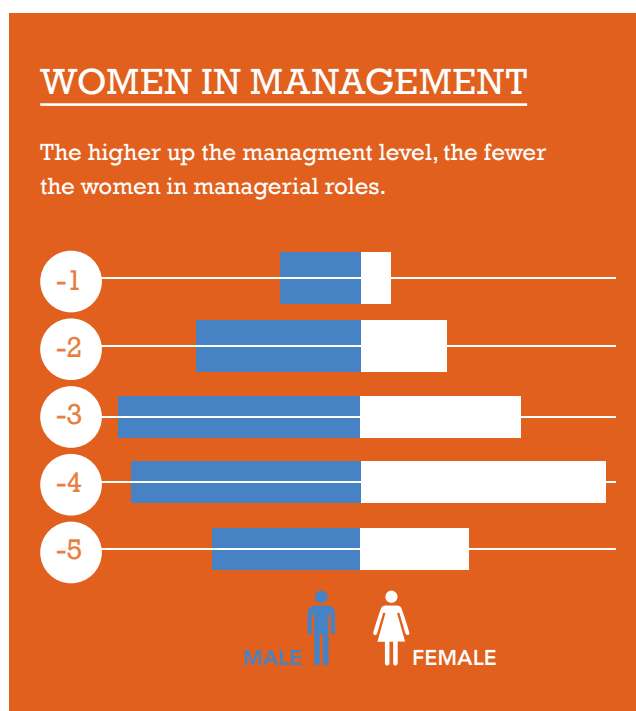
The wage issue is most problematic in sectors that involve caring work, activities that are considered traditional women's work. These are not highly valued in the labour market; caring work is seen as a natural fit for women rather than a workplace skill. The undervaluing of feminised work has substantial economic consequences for women. There is an expectation that women will gain an "emotional reward" for this kind of work, and these occupations are not highly paid.

2.1.2 VERTICAL SEGREGATION

Vertical segregation is where one gender is segregated into a limited range of lower grades within an industry. Our analysis of the WGEA data of the top 100 CMEs in Australia shows that the CME sector in Australia is highly vertically segregated. Looking at the data in chart 2, we can see that the higher up the Management level, the fewer the women in Manager roles. But it's not just that women are outnumbered at the upper levels; the higher they go, the more they are outnumbered.

The chart shows manager reporting levels, up to -5 under the CEO, and we can see this vertical segregation.

CHART 2: MANAGERS FROM THE TOP 100 CMES.



At a -3 reporting level to the CEO, there are one-third more men than women; at -2 it is nearly double; at -1, the next level under the CEO, there are nearly three times more men than women. The proportion of men to women goes up the closer you get to the top.

It is only when you get to level -4 under the CEO that women outnumber men. Women are clearly overly represented at the "other management" level, showing women are overwhelmingly reporting to men, not the other way around. The large number of female Managers at -4 reporting level indicates women are getting "stuck" at this middle management level. Given that chart 1 showed that women outnumber men as Professionals, both full-time and part-time, it's clear that it's not a pipeline problem: there is a large pool of professional women to promote into management, and a large pool of middle-management to promote further. There obviously remain significant barriers to the progression of women to the top jobs.

Once again, this is a pattern that is not unique to the CME sector. A Baker McKenzie/Women's Agenda report from earlier this year outlined "5 Bold Ideas for Shifting the Dial for Women in Business by 2020". Idea No. 5 focused specifically on mid-level women, arguing that initiatives shouldn't just target senior women. It pointed out that often senior women get plenty of visibility; it is women at the middle point of their careers, that have ambitions of leadership, who struggle to get heard and recognised.¹⁰ The report puts forward a series of recommendations aimed at mid-level and mid-career women, including targets and formal sponsorship programs.

A desire for access to these kinds of programs was a repeated theme in the survey results. In

answer to the question, "If there were one aspect of your current workplace that could be changed to improve your career opportunities, what would it be?", answers around mentoring, coaching, sponsorship and access to opportunities were the second most repeated issues after access to flexible work.

"Access to senior leaders and feedback and coaching on performance and to be taken to events and meetings."

"More career growth opportunities."

"Staff development."

"Short term development course in any field that someone is interested in."

"To be given the opportunity to be seen in a professional capacity by a variety of people, especially those in the senior executive/leadership roles."

"Less micro-management, more opportunities to explore working outside of head office, giving staff the chance to be accountable."

"The opportunity to use the skills learned through educational and development programs. At the moment much of the training and development is theoretical, due to the small nature of the business there is little opportunity for promotion and career development."

"Deeper understanding of peoples skills and experience not just current role or technical skills."

"Being more open around how to advance."

"Career coaching for over 50's."

"Career counselling - help work out strengths and areas of interest."

"Specific training and development for my desired role. Stop intimidation."

"Improved capability of people leaders to develop and coach team members."

"Better understanding of skillset and using that experience for the company."

"Clear development paths."

"More opportunity for exposure at a senior level."

"Maybe more in house training, continuing education of other business divisions, similar to yearly conference which was very beneficial."

It's not surprising that the majority of these comments come from women ranging from experienced employee to executive management. They suggest that mid-career women are either unclear about how to move up, or feel that opportunities to showcase their abilities for senior roles are lacking. The evidence indicates that this could be a factor contributing to women at this level being "stuck". It is noteworthy that the last four comments are from men, indicating that men are also looking for more direction on how to get exposure and how to move up.

The vertical segregation can be seen most clearly at the top. Of the CMEs for which we have data, only 3 per cent have a woman CEO. This is lower than for the top 200 ASX-listed companies, which is 5 per cent.¹¹ When you run down the list of the top 100 CMEs in Australia, you get to 49th before

you get to an organisation with a woman CEO. Both of these numbers are very low. Earlier this year, analysis of Australia's CEOs revealed that there are more men called John (or Peter or David) running large Australian companies than women.¹²

These are very low numbers. A 2015 PwC CEO Succession Study reported that the number of women CEOs is slowly creeping up, but describes the current number as "minuscule". The same report found that women CEOs are more likely to be forced out of office than their male counterparts.¹³

The picture at the Board level is only marginally better. Of the top 100 CMEs, 15 per cent have women chairs, and the first organisation to have a women chair is 13th. This is better than the ASX200, where only 10 are chairing boards, or 5 per cent of the total.¹⁴

In the CME results we can also see some horizontal segregation. More than half of the women chairs are in the financial services sector. Given that 40 per cent of the CMEs in the Top 100 are financial services companies, this is a good result for that sector. Of the 18 CMEs listed as being in the agriculture sector in the top 100, only one has a woman chair.

None of the top 100 CMEs has both a women as CEO and Chair (excepting mutually owned super funds).

In some cases, the lack of diversity of leadership at the top level is very obvious to employees of CMEs, as shown in some comments from the survey. In response to the question, "What is the aspect of your current workplace that could be changed to improve career opportunities?", answers included the following:

"More diversity at Board level, less aged white males from the 70's".

"Hire more female executives... all of a sudden the masses will believe it is possible to do it".

"More female leaders in senior roles – change in perspective".

"Stronger belief in female capability".

"Lack of understanding at Board level."

Workplace segregation has significant impacts for women, particularly on their earnings. The existence of these glass walls and ceilings is a crucial factor in the persistence of the gender pay gap. Women are over-represented in lower paid occupations and lower grades of all industries, and substantially under-represented in the top jobs. Moreover, employees in female dominated industries have lower salaries on average than those dominated by men.¹⁵ The gender pay gap in favour of men can be seen in all industries, female-dominated, male-dominated or mixed, however female managers working in male-dominated industries are more likely to earn salaries closer to their male counterparts.¹⁶

This goes all the way to the top. Research by the WGEA in 2016 on industry segregation found that women are more likely to hold CEO or high-level management positions in female dominated industries¹⁷, but they are still outnumbered by men. Research by KPMG¹⁸ for the Diversity Council of Australia in 2016, and by the WGEA¹⁹ in 2017 found that even in industries that are female-dominated, women are still more heavily concentrated in lower income brackets. This same pattern is seen in the results for the CME sector in Australia.

2.1.3 PART-TIME WORK

One final way men and women's workplace experiences are different is full-time versus part-time work. The overwhelming majority of part-time workers are women.

Our analysis of the WGEA data of the top 100 CMEs shows that across the organisations, women make up 87 per cent of all part-time employees in the non-manager category. For clerical and administrative jobs, women are 94 per cent of part-timers.

In the manager category, 13 per cent of all women managers are part-time, while only 5 per cent of men are part-time managers.

Overall, across all categories, one-third of all women employees in the top 100 CMEs work part-time. This shows women have access to work that can balance caring responsibilities, but it might be a factor in why women are getting stuck in middle management. The Senate report has found that women even choose part-time or casual employment that is below their skill level so that they can manage their paid employment and their unpaid caring responsibilities.²⁰ So lack of access to flexible work exacerbates vertical segregation.

Some comments from the survey indicate that working part-time can be detrimental to career advancement. This was a direct question in the survey, "Has working part-time or working flexible hours hindered your opportunities for promotions or pay rises?", and showed mixed results. More than half (49 per cent) responded "N/A", while 21 per cent answered "Yes", and 29 per cent answered "No". All these responses had a mix of men and women for each answer. Given how much people want to be able to work flexibly (discussed in further detail below), the results are concerning.

They indicate that more than half have not worked under flexible or part-time arrangements. Of those who have, one-in-five feel that it has hindered their careers.

Some comments also indicate that part-time workers feel like second-class citizens in the workplace. These comments include "Less discrimination on part-timers", and that when you work part-time you have to accept a "loss of control and involvement because you are not always there". Given that the WGEA data showed that one-third of all women employees of the top 100 CMEs work part-time, more work needs to be done to engage these employees.

There is also no reason for employers to have negative attitudes towards part-time workers. A 2015 report by Ernst and Young found that women working part-time are the most productive in the workforce. The report found that this group of employees wastes the least amount of time at work (11.1 per cent) compared with the rest of the workforce (14.5 per cent). They also waste less time than their male part-time counterparts (14.2 per cent).²¹

Segregation of men and women in the workplace—vertical, horizontal or by type of employment—means that women dominate the lower end of the earning spectrum in most occupations, and are missing out on opportunities to advance their careers. They are horizontally segregated into a limited number of occupations and vertically segregated into a limited range of lower grades within those industries. This has detrimental impacts on women's working lives and their financial security. It also denies organisations access to good talent for top jobs. This latter point will be discussed further in Section Three.

2.2 INCLUSION AS A “WOMEN’S ISSUE”

Too often, equality in the workplace is framed as a “women’s problem”, diverting focus from workplaces, attitudes or behaviours that create or impact this inequality. This tends to lead to solutions that target women for their deficiencies rather than changing the system.

The structures that cause women to remain “stuck”, the under-representation of women at high levels of leadership, are part of a system that is deeply rooted in a male-breadwinner archetype. It’s seen as much easier to “fix” women to fit into this system, than to change the system to the benefit of everyone.

Catherine Fox’s 2017 book, *Stop Fixing Women*, outlines the ways we expect women to fix their own problems and to fit in with the existing culture, rather than expecting the culture to change to accommodate new workplace practices. This relies on a “deficit model” viewpoint, where women are seen as deficient in assertiveness and risk-taking, but better at emotional and caring work. A focus on women, and diversity programs for women, leaves the impression that there’s something wrong with women. According to Fox, the most successful interventions across a range of companies—government, small business, corporate—have a common theme: they focus on how workplaces, not women, are operating.

One of the issues that came up in the survey is the idea that inclusion and processes to ensure fair access to opportunities are something specific to women. This is despite the fact that men also have an interest in ensuring that workplaces have processes in place to ensure inclusion. If opportunities to advancement are closed off from

some, this is a problem for everyone. Equality and inclusion in the workplace is not a women’s issue; it’s an economic and social issue.

There’s some indication from survey responses that employees of CMEs feel that this issue is sometimes viewed only as a women’s problem. When asked about barriers to advancement that respondents have themselves experienced, the following are some comments received:

“It being a woman’s problem for women to solve”.

“Not being in the tent. Gender equality being an issue for women to solve”.

“Really dislike ‘women’s forums’ and groups. It makes the problem a ‘women’s problem’ and makes it separate rather than mainstream. If women could fix the issue, they would have - but it is not within their control so why are they asked to come up with the solutions and implement it?”

This is not unique to the CME sector. According to a 2016 report from the Australian Diversity Council (ADC), *Men Make a Difference*, men show less support for gender equality than women. The report suggests this is because systemic bias and sexism in the workplace can seem less like a problem but rather normal, or even invisible.²² There is some evidence from the survey that this might be the case in CMEs. The very first question to the survey, “Do you feel your workplace has a gender inclusive culture?”, had an overwhelmingly positive response, with only 13 per cent saying “No”. However, it is noteworthy that all the “No” respondents were women. Additionally, the question “Does your workplace provide opportunities to show your capabilities?”, again

the same percentage, 13 per cent, said “No”, and once again, these were all female respondents. The results of both these questions show an overall positive view of the culture of CME workplaces, however also indicate that there are perhaps issues in the workplace that are not visible to men.

Women make up nearly 47 per cent of the Australian workforce, and in some industries, such as healthcare, social assistance and education, are the overwhelming majority of employees.²³ Initiatives need to focus not on women but on an organisation’s workplace culture, and the culture or informal rules that work to the advantage of men and disadvantage women. Telling women to behave “like men” doesn’t work. This means that men, particularly powerful men in leadership who can direct change, need to be involved. They represent the system.

2.2.1 “MEN FOR WOMEN”

The Male Champions of Change (MCC) initiative was a reflection of this need to bring men into the equation. Launched in 2010 by then Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, the program brings together a group of male CEOs and Chairs, to use their individual and collective influence and commitment to ensure women’s representation in leadership is elevated to the top level. There were 29 founding MCCs, including the CEOs of Telstra, CBA, Woolworths and KPMG. In 2015, MCC separated from the Human Rights Commission, and launched the Male Champions of Change Institute.

The MCC initiative sets clear targets, and brings the management system into the process to make change. It’s designed to ensure that gender equality goes beyond being a problem that only women should deal with, and encourages current corporate leaders to lead through real actions in their own workplaces.

There were no CME leaders in the founding group of champions. However, in 2015 Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins established the Male Champions of Change Victoria, and Ian Silk, CEO of Australian Super, was a founding member. In 2017 there are now 122 business leaders that make up the MCC coalition, and Silk continues to be the only representative from the CME sector.

2.3 QUOTAS, TARGETS AND MERITOCRACY

When talking about improving gender equality, particularly in top management jobs and on boards, the setting of targets and quotas is frequently raised.

Targets and quotas are often used interchangeably, but they are different. A target is a specific measurable objective set by an organisation, with their own criteria and their own timeframe for implementation. They are voluntary, and may involve no penalty for non-compliance. Quotas, like targets, are also specific measurable objectives, but unlike targets, are usually set externally, have mandated outcomes and usually involve penalties for failing to meet them.

Because they are enforceable, quotas can work quickly to bring about change.²⁴ Being forced to comply means organisations need to broaden their search for candidates, and they can build a pipeline of women who can be promoted through to top jobs. The problem with unenforceable targets is that they are slow, may be ineffective in bringing about any meaningful change, and may be closer to aspirational goals than real proposals for achieving specific outcomes. A 2016 KPMG report on ASX corporate governance compliance on diversity found that while there had been an increase in the number of organisations reporting on gender and diversity policy, and that most companies set objectives for improving diversity, very few set quantitative objectives. The report found that very few companies set specific measurable goals such as “30 per cent director seats to be held by women by 2018”, and that a number of companies reported on aspirational objectives like “achieving a culture of inclusion”, which is difficult to measure progress against.²⁵

Quotas are most often raised in reference to board positions. Elizabeth Proust, Chair of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), has set a target of 30 per cent female board representation of ASX 200 by 2018, but she said in June 2016 that progress is so slow that unless quotas are put in place, that target won’t be reached.²⁶ In 2015 the Victorian government established a quota for women on paid government board positions. They must now be at least 50 per cent women. In making the announcement, they noted that the aspirational target they had set hadn’t worked because it hadn’t been enforced.²⁷

While they may be effective in bringing about real cultural change, the primary argument against quotas is that they undermine meritocracy. The idea that quotas give one group a distinct, unearned advantage at the expense of another is a strongly held view, and they continue to be a subject of debate. Even the WGEA concedes that quotas are not a “silver bullet to deal with this issue. Regulation of this nature often leads to a “tick a box” mentality which does not promote the necessary cultural and structural change to ensure sustainable improvement.”²⁸

A negative viewpoint towards quotas was heavily reflected in responses to the survey. When asked to rank in order the areas respondents think are the most beneficial to advancing gender equality in the workplace, quotas received a distinctly divided result. It was the third highest option respondents chose first, although at only 12 per cent it was far behind the first option (flexible work hours 47 per cent) and the second option (leadership mentoring 19 per cent). However, it was also to a significant degree the option people chose as their last ranked option. More than one-third (34 per cent) ranked this option last, a significantly higher proportion than for any other option.

Comments from the survey also displayed some hostility to quotas, particularly in their potential to undermine achievement on merit.

“Women chosen above males to fill a quota. Males are now discriminated against.”

“Losing an opportunity potentially because of quotas.”

“Gender diversity should not be about imposing a quota, but about equal opportunities and open mindset when hiring talent.”

“Gender diversity should not be about quotas or statistics, but about understanding the differences between the genders and finding value in both.”

“I don’t believe the quota system is a good idea. Would prefer people to get selected on merit not on gender.”

“The main thing needed for gender diversity is for any role to be filled based on the applicants abilities and with the same salary structure in place.”

“Merit based selection and promotion is the most important factor supported by a framework to reduce person bias.”

Given that there was no specific question asking people their opinions of quotas, it’s remarkable how many felt the need to comment specifically on that topic. It is noteworthy that these responses come from a mix of men and women. It’s clear that the issue of quotas is highly contentious.

A resolute confidence in meritocracy is interesting, given that it requires a fundamental belief that workplaces always function as perfect meritocracies and that merit is always recognised and rewarded. It also implies that merit is somehow more heavily bestowed on specific demographic groups, i.e. white men. Former Prime Minister Julia Gillard pointed out the problem with this argument in a speech in 2013:

“If you believe as I do that merit is equally distributed between the sexes, then in any institution, a cabinet, a court, a corporate board, [that] does not comprise around 50 per cent women and 50 per cent men, women of merit have been excluded.”²⁹

The problem with arguing for meritocracy is that it is inherently an argument for the status quo. Without deliberate action, power and privilege tend to reinforce themselves. It seems counter-intuitive, but in order to ensure merit can be fairly rewarded, programs need to be place to overcome the bias that privileges the status quo.

2.4 WORKPLACE CULTURE

The first question in the survey asked participants if they feel their workplace has an inclusive culture. The response was overwhelmingly positive: 87 per cent of respondents said Yes. In addition, when respondents were asked if they have ever turned down a promotion or opportunity to act in a more senior position due to lack of support or flexibility within the workplace, again the response was positive; 92 per cent of respondents said No. A high proportion of respondents, 87 per cent, also said that their workplace provides opportunities to show leadership and decision-making abilities.

A high proportion of respondents also indicated that CME workplaces have good policies in place to facilitate gender inclusion. 93 per cent of respondents have workplaces that provide paid parental leave; 82 per cent have options to work part-time or job share; 80 per cent have access to flexible work options; 70 per cent allow working from home; and 44 per cent offer leadership mentoring programs.

These results indicate both that CME workplaces have implemented some good policies around gender inclusion, and that employees of CMEs have a very positive attitude towards their workplaces.

Comments from respondents also indicate that many employees in the CME sector perceive their workplaces to have a very positive and inclusive culture.

“My current workplace is great. Inclusive and understanding of my needs as a working mother.”

“Personally I haven’t experienced any barriers to career progression.”

“Range of leadership training programs & cross-functional projects and working groups”

“Our workplace is changing and is starting to provide avenues and opportunities for leadership and decision makers”.

“I feel as though my contributions are genuinely valued”.

“Easy access to senior leaders and encouragements of new initiatives regardless of seniority/role”.

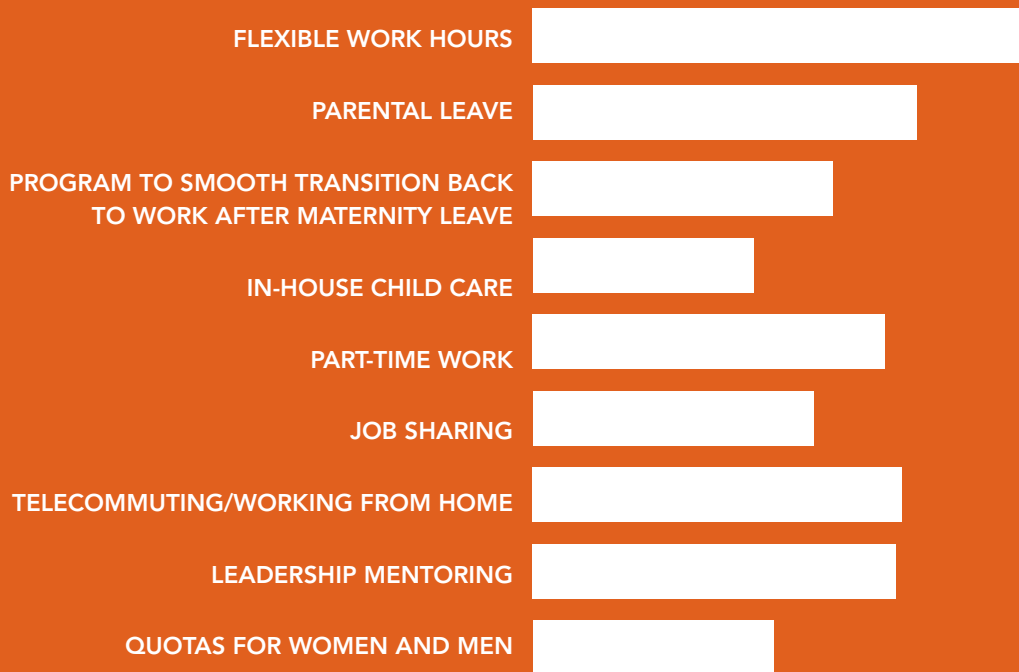
“Ability to work on projects, be part of committees, opportunities to present to senior management”

Other responses, however, indicate a more negative view of workplace culture. While a huge majority say they are given opportunities to show their capabilities, comments such as “Yes, but not enough nor is it followed through” and “it’s more based on who your manager is”, suggest that in some case more needs to be done to ensure opportunities provide a real chance to advance a career.

Moreover, question 5 asked respondents to select any barriers to advancement they have experienced, and more than half (54 per cent) selected workplace culture. This is hard to reconcile with the response to question 1, where 87 per cent said their workplace is inclusive. Some answer to this disparity can be found in respondents’ comments, some of which indicate a less than inclusive culture.

PLEASE RANK IN ORDER THE FOLLOWING AREAS YOU THINK ARE THE MOST BENEFICIAL TO ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORKPLACE

ANSWERED: 188 SKIPPED: 2



“We need to address hiring managers unconscious affinity and other biases, e.g. feeling that men in their forties are the most capable and saest hire”.

“For my team to be more bold in changing it’s working habits. Have a manager who delegates truly and gives proper autonomy and space to be able to lead.”

“I think that being emotionless and ‘tough’ is still a requirement for advancement. People with softer skills are not as valued.”

“Stronger demonstration that the whole senior leadership team is open to new (more contemporary) ways of working.”

Research done by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) in early 2017 shows just how important workplace culture is to any gender inclusion strategy. Dispelling the Myths of the ‘Gender Ambition Gap’ shows that our attitudes around women and gender are often plain wrong.³⁰ The report shows that women start their careers with just as much ambition as men, and when ambition levels start to vary, they vary by company, not by gender or family status. When companies create a positive culture, all women—mothers included—are eager to advance. Their conclusion is unequivocal: motherhood does not make women

less ambitious. Disengagement from work and any falling ambition level is connected to women's day-to-day experience of the workplace. An ambition gap opens up when women feel that advancement is an "uphill battle to an unattractive summit", at that point women can make the entirely rational decision to step off the leadership track.

Importantly, an inclusive culture benefits both women and men. Companies showing the most progress on gender equality have both men and women who are more ambitious. The gains of women do not come at the expense of men.

Among the actions the BCG report recommends to improve gender inclusion is access to flexible work. Their survey data shows that both men and women view flexible work as the most effective way to improve diversity. One of the main reasons both men and women may be reluctant to advance at their company, mentioned by nearly 60 per cent of men and women in that report, is the challenge of meeting increasing job responsibilities while still managing outside commitments.³¹

2.4.1 FLEXIBLE WORK AND WORKPLACE CULTURE

Access to flexible work was one of the most commonly raised issues in the survey, and the responses to questions and the comments on this issue give us insight into what's actually happening in workplaces, and where cultural change is required.

Flexible work is listed as the number one response to the question "Rank in order the areas you think are most beneficial to advancing gender equality in the workplace". Nearly half (47 per cent) ranked this as their number one, and these respondents were both men and women. The flexible work option is ranked well above the next highest option rated a number one, which is leadership mentoring at 19 per cent. When listing programs already in place in CME workplaces, most respondents (80 per cent) indicated that they have access to flexible work. However, 40 per cent of respondents then selected lack of access to flexible work options as a barrier to advancement. These two responses seem to be contradictory, but the explanation lies in the comments.

In answer to the question, "If there were one aspect of your current workplace that could be changed to improve your career opportunities, what would it be?", a large proportion of respondents mentioned flexible work. The comments show that while flexible work options are offered, as indicated in the survey results, there is not a culture of support for people to really make the most of it.

“Improved support for flexibility. Policies exist, but the support doesn’t.”

“Introduce flexible working arrangements with senior leader support.”

“Improve manager capability across the organisation to support flexibility.”

“Continue to showcase those leaders that work flexibly.”

“For all staff at all levels to really get behind flexible work practices. Despite there being support from the top, there are barriers at the lower levels to really support this. Education is probably the answer here.”

“Stronger demonstration that the whole

senior leadership team is open to new (more contemporary) ways of working.”

“Ability to telecommute when needed rather than being forced to take leave (i.e. while looking after a sick child who will for the most part sleep or such).”

Access to flexible work also came up in the final question, where people were offered the opportunity to provide comments on anything they would like to raise or have addressed. The responses here show that it’s not just women who want access to flexible work; there’s a strong opinion that flexible work needs to be offered to men as well as women.

PLEASE TICK ANY OF THE FOLLOWING BARRIERS TO ADVANCEMENT YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED



“Flexible work arrangements for working dads.”

“I think men have a lot of barriers when it comes to flexibility. While the men in our industry support the women with flexibility and at times are more understanding than women...it’s only until they become drivers themselves and role model family friendly practices will it break down the barriers down for women - it will say ‘this is the norm for everyone’.”

“Societal expectations around roles of men and women (particularly fathers and mothers) can lead to women being the only ones to take advantage of flexible options. So long as this is the case, women

are likely to be disadvantaged. One way the sector could positively influence these societal expectations is by making it possible and normal for men to work flexibly and take parental leave.”

“You can’t create equality by discriminating against certain groups. Nearly all initiatives are aimed at women even though in a truly equal society, fathers have the same challenges regarding childcare and flexibility requirements which are not accommodated due to gender roles bias. Restricting initiatives to women only creates a barrier to my partner in her career as she has no choice but to assume the bulk of the childcare duties and traditional “female” roles.”

The survey results show a disconnect around flexible work in CME workplaces. Both men and women want it; workplaces are, in theory, offering it; but a lack of support by leadership means that people feel they can’t really access it. These final comments show that in order for people to genuinely have access to flexible work, there needs to be a culture shift to normalise flexible work practice, for men and women.

In the next section we will look further at how to address this discrepancy.

3.0 WHAT PEOPLE WANT

While there's no silver bullet for moving the numbers on women in leadership in Australia, research does reveal patterns. From the survey, two issues were raised repeatedly: access to flexible work and access to leadership training, mentoring and executive sponsorship. These are also issues that appear commonly in the broader literature on gender and the workplace.

In this section, we will look further at what the literature says around these issues, to see what's been tried and how we can move closer to a process that addresses what people actually want.

3.1 WHAT PEOPLE WANT: FLEXIBLE WORK

Access to flexible work arrangements, as noted above, was an issue repeatedly raised throughout the survey, by both men and women. The survey results suggest a discrepancy in flexible work practices, with many workplaces offering it, but few feeling they can really take it up without having their career prospects negatively affected.

This is also a common theme in the broader gender equality literature. There's no doubt that many companies now have flexible work policies. Our survey results showed that 80 per cent of respondents had access to flexible work practices. The 2016 KPMG report on ASX corporate governance compliance on diversity already mentioned above found that "by far" the most common diversity program identified was flexible work arrangements. But it's not clear if the policies are merely a box ticking exercise or represent programs that advance people's genuine needs.

Increasingly we are seeing a shift on this issue on two fronts. Firstly, an understanding that having policies in place isn't enough, you need to have a culture that genuinely supports it; and secondly, an increasing number of men are wanting access to flexible work.

Large organisations and government departments are implementing strategies for going beyond just having policies in place; they are focusing on shifting the culture on flexible work. A recent report outlining a gender equality strategy for the Australian Public Service targets flexible work practices as an area where there is a case for cultural change:

“Flexible work is seen largely as an accommodation for women, and as incompatible with working in a leadership role. Workplaces that take a flexible approach to how, where, and when work is done attract the highest-calibre employees—and keep them in the long term.”

Male Champions of Change reports refer not just to implementing policies for flexible work, but to “mainstreaming” and “normalising” flexible work, for men and women. The WGEA also recommends that managers should support flexible working by setting an example themselves.³²

There are other novel ways of showcasing flexible work. This year Australia celebrated the inaugural Flexible Working Day on 21 June, and the Power Part-Time List is an annual list celebrating men and women who work part-time at the top of their professions.

Increasing support for flexible work also brings benefits to the employer. The BCG report cited above showed the connection between gender inclusion, flexible work and an engaged workforce. Flexibility is the top employment driver for parents³³, and research done for Flexible Working Day found that four in ten people say they would leave a job if they don’t get the flexibility they need.³⁴ A lack of work-life balance is driving women into lower status and lower paid jobs, or hindering their advancement. And as noted above, women are even choosing part-time or casual employment that is below their skill level so that they can manage paid employment with unpaid caring responsibilities.³⁵ For example, the submission by the Police Federation of Australia to the Senate Inquiry into workplace segregation noted that eighty per cent of police on flexible

work arrangements are women. Of this group, 86 per cent are constables, with sergeants and commissioned officers under-represented. The submission notes that because they are not full-timers they are overlooked for promotions and not offered training.³⁶

Australian workplaces appear to be particularly deficient at getting women into work and retaining them. Workplaces have not adequately addressed changes in work patterns: the desires around work and the demands of workplaces and caring responsibilities are out of synch. This means that instead of sharing caring responsibilities, they are being split, and generally along traditional gender lines. This reinforces gender stereotypes around caring responsibilities and gives the impression that women are less committed to their careers.

Australia has one of the highest rates of part-time work in the world, and lower than average rates of women in full-time work.³⁷ The normalising of flexible work across occupations, sectors and levels of employment would help to improve this situation, and help to dismantle horizontal and vertical segregation. It would also give men more choice around their careers and caring responsibilities.

3.2 WHAT PEOPLE WANT: LEADERSHIP TRAINING AND SPONSORSHIP

The research indicates that women are getting “stuck” in mid-level positions in the CME sector, finding it harder to go higher. This pattern is repeated across Australian workplaces. There appears to be little problem getting promoted to a certain level, but beyond middle-management the number of women drops off dramatically. Even in female dominated industries, women are not moving through to leadership positions. It’s clear that there are genuine barriers to advancement that require action.

When asked to name a workplace program or initiative that has helped pursue a promotion or gain more desirable working conditions, coaching, mentoring and sponsorship programs were the most frequently mentioned. As mentioned earlier, this was the most common response after flexible work to the question of what would improve career opportunities.

The responses show that a wide variety of programs are in place to train and develop staff in the sector. The most common programs cited were mentoring and executive sponsorship, but responses also included leadership training programs, emerging leaders program, executive shadowing, informal mentoring, women in leadership program, and access to committee work to demonstrate skills to different management groups. Some of the comments indicate that women see these programs as beneficial for developing skills to help them navigate workplace culture, such as “executive sponsorship – learning to ask, which I think is hard for women (we hope to be recognised for our efforts without, or programs that can “help employees to openly established

boundaries around their own ‘non-negotiables’.” Both of these responses were from women at the Senior Manager level.

3.2.1 MENTORING VERSUS SPONSORSHIP

Mentoring and sponsorship were both commonly cited responses in the surveys; there were about the same number of results for each. But these programs are not the same.

In *Stop Fixing Women*, Catherine Fox is heavily critical of mentoring programs as a means of helping women up the ladder. She says they are often implemented with very little preparation and very little scrutiny on what they are actually expected to deliver. They can also, she says, reinforce the “fixing women” idea, that the experienced men need to give out the “keys to the kingdom”.³⁷ The WGEA is also sceptical of their efficacy.³⁸ Mentoring programs have been implemented in workplaces for decades, but we still have a problem getting women to the top in high numbers.

Fox argues that executive sponsorship programs, with concrete actions and outcomes, are more effective. Unlike mentoring, which may be informal and limited to infrequent meetings, executive sponsorship is a long-term commitment by the sponsor to specifically promote the advancement of high-performing individuals who might otherwise be left behind. Research has found that men are more likely to have sponsors whereas women are more likely to have mentors.³⁹ This means men are getting better advice on how to advance their careers and better access to those who can make it happen. Often women don’t recognise the role sponsorship can play in advancement, and so do not actively seek it out.⁴⁰ This puts greater emphases on the employer to formalise these arrangements.

It is an encouraging result for the CME sector that

there appear to be many programs in place and widespread awareness around these programs among their employees. It is also noteworthy that mentoring and executive sponsorship were mentioned about equally by men and women.

4.0 DIVERSITY, INCLUSION AND THE FUTURE OF WORK

There are broader implications for organisations that fail to implement inclusive workplaces. Globalisation, technological change and automation are bringing huge change to workplaces. In an economy in transition, it is vital that those with the skills and talent are getting the right jobs and getting to the top. Limiting opportunities for people to participate in the workplace according to their gender is not good for individuals, organisations or the economy.

4.1 THE CASE FOR INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES

There is a very strong case to be made for improved gender inclusion in the CME sector on the grounds of equality. Co-operative and mutual organisations are controlled by members, and are guided by values and principles that promote inclusion. From the days of Eliza, these organisations have been about giving ordinary people the means to control their own financial future, to have a stake in their own enterprises. This set of values can be harnessed to improve inclusion.

However, it's important to also make clear that there is a business case for organisations to embrace gender inclusion. An increasing body of research confirms the link between improved gender inclusion and better and more profitable businesses and a healthier economy. A 2012 Grattan Report, *Game Changers: Economic Reform Policies for Australia*, reported that removing disincentives for women to enter the paid workforce would increase the size of the Australian economy by about \$25 billion per year.⁴¹ They identify this as one of the major opportunities big enough to be a game changer for Australia's economic prosperity, and should be an economic reform priority for Australian governments.

This same report also points out that increasing the number of women in the workforce would also mean Australia would get a better return on its investment in higher education. Women make up more than half of Australia's tertiary education enrolment. The WEF's 2016 Global Gender Gap

Index report ranked Australia No. 1 for educational attainment for women, but 42nd for economic participation and opportunity.⁴² As a nation, we are failing to translate our highly educated women into workers and leaders. That same report confirms a correlation between gender equality and GDP per capita. Empowering women brings about a more efficient use of a nation's human capital. Improving incentives for women to remain in the workforce, to increase choices on the types of occupations to make use of those skills and training, and to provide greater opportunities to build on those skills is a win for the Australian economy.

Diversity and gender inclusion is also good for individual companies. A 2015 McKinsey report, *Diversity Matters*, found a statistically significant relationship between a more diverse leadership team and better financial performance. Companies in the top quartile for gender, racial or ethnic diversity were 15 per cent more likely to have financial returns that were above their industry median.⁴³ Over time this will shift competitive advantage towards companies that embrace inclusion and diversity.

While the McKinsey report authors attribute this finding to correlation not causation (i.e., improving diversity will not automatically bring greater profits) they maintain there are clear reasons why these companies are more successful. More diverse companies bring new perspectives to their decision-making processes, and they are better able to attract and retain the best employees. A 2016 report on the gender pay gap by Glassdoor showed that this latter point is likely to become of increasing concern to organisations that don't address gender inequality. In a survey of employees across the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, The Netherlands and Switzerland, it found that 63 per

cent of people say they would not be likely to apply for a position with a company they know has a gender pay gap. Among younger respondents, this was even more pronounced. Of those aged between 18-24, 81 per cent said they would be unlikely to work for such a company.⁴⁴ This presents real problems for organisations that do not address gender inequalities; they will be unable to attract talented staff.

Separate to this, there's some evidence that gender inclusion can actually increase profitability. A 2016 study by the Peterson Institute for International Economics analysed results of 21,980 global publicly traded companies in 91 countries from various industries, and their analysis showed that having at least 30 per cent of women in leadership positions (board and C-suite positions) add 6 per cent to the net profit margin.⁴⁵ Interestingly, this research indicates that the impact of having more women in the C-suite is bigger than having a woman on the board or as the CEO, but also found that having more women on the board statistically correlates with more women in the C-suite. The report argues that the link between women in leadership and increased profitability may come from improved diversity at the decision-making level, and that more women in top management indicates merit is being rewarded: there is less gender discrimination throughout management ranks, which helps to recruit and retain talent.

The business case for inclusion is clear. There is a strong economic case for keeping highly educated women in the workforce, and organisations that embrace inclusion are more profitable and can attract and retain the best talent.

4.2 THE FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF WORK

The Fourth Industrial Revolution is the name given to the set of technological changes expected to sweep through our economy in the next couple of decades. This revolution will alter the way we work, transform our workplaces, and is likely to change the very idea of work.

For women, the Fourth Industrial Revolution may be a blessing, as traditional ideas around work such as the eight-hour day and “presenteeism” become obsolete. New flexible ways of working may be available. However, workplace segregation, as outlined above, could have a profound impact on the way women navigate these changes. Since women are more likely to be employed on a part-time or casual basis and are more heavily represented in the lower paid and lower skilled ranks of every sector, they are more exposed to job losses from automation.

Workplaces that are highly segregated along gender lines will not be a good fit for an economy based on skills. Segregated workplaces are not just a problem for women and wages. There are broader implications for this kind of workplace rigidity. It limits the capacity of Australian workplaces to respond to changes in the global economy. Currently, gendered patterns shape who is likely to undertake particular training or take up a particular job. This will be problematic for both men and women.

Seventy-five per cent of the fastest growing jobs in Australia require science, technology, engineering

and maths (STEM) skills.⁴⁶ It is expected that the most sought after and highly paid jobs will be in STEM industries. Currently, only about 30 per cent of STEM graduates are women, but this is changing. The number of women with STEM qualifications has increased by 23 per cent between 2006 and 2011.⁴⁷ Encouraging women into STEMs training and work will increase the number of workers in an industry likely to suffer skills shortages.

Active steps need to be taken, however, to bring about this horizontal desegregation. The 2016 WEF report, *The Industry Gender Gap, Women in the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, asked the Chief Human Resources Officers (CHROs) of the world’s largest employers how they see women’s participation in the workforce might change up to the year 2020. The report found that globally, across all industries, companies reported that the level of difficulty of recruiting women was directly proportional to the existing gender composition of the industry.⁴⁸ This presents problems for tech companies that have a low female participation rate.

Horizontal segregation may also have negative implications for men in the changing labour market. Many traditionally male-dominated occupations, such as manufacturing, are in decline, whereas female-dominated industries, such as health care and social assistance, are growing. A shift to desegregate workplaces will also help men make this transition. For example, in a female-dominated industry like nursing, skills shortages are expected despite the fact that the industry itself is projected to grow.⁴⁹ Shifting cultural expectations around caring and health roles, as well as shifting professional recognition and acknowledgement, would encourage more men into the profession, providing skilled employment where it is needed.

5.0 CONCLUSION

The research has shown that women in the CME sector in Australia are significantly under-represented in executive and leadership positions. The higher up you go through an organisation's structure, the higher the ratio of men to women. While this is a similar pattern seen in other sectors, the CME sector has a history of empowering women, and organisations in this sector are founded on principles that promote democracy and inclusion. For this reason, there is a unique role for the CME sector to show leadership on this issue. Moreover, as has been outlined in this research, there is a strong business case for inclusion and equality.

This report has outlined the current state of gender inclusion in Australia, through quantitative and qualitative research, and through a survey of sector employees, has sought to understand the barriers faced by people to greater inclusion.

From this research, patterns emerged that point to areas where leadership can drive change. These areas include access to flexible work, in particular embedding already existing policies within organisational culture and getting commitment from managers and the executive to support non-traditional work practices. Another area was leadership training and sponsorship, to provide opportunities for women to move beyond middle management.

The sector has committed to driving change to be the most inclusive sector, to create an environment in which all people can thrive. This is a commendable goal and speaks to the unique characteristics of CMEs to empower individuals for economic participation.

The following recommendations have been devised in collaboration with representatives from the sector, and are proposed as a way to achieve this leadership objective.

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Eliza's Project Working Group along with representatives from the CME sector met at a symposium on 6 October 2017 to develop recommendations from this research.

Participants in that Symposium were:

- > **NORA ALEXANIAN**, *Manager, Bank Australia*
- > **LOUISE AUBUSSON**, *Executive Manager, Sales and Lending, Select Encompass and Convener of Women in Mutuals*
- > **EMMA DAWSON**, *Executive Director, Per Capita*
- > **ROWAN DOWLAND**, *Chief Strategy Officer, Bank Australia*
- > **LICIA HEATH**, *Financial Consultant*
- > **TINA HIETSOS**, *General Manager, Human Resources, Police Bank*
- > **CUSHLA MCINTYRE**, *Teachers Mutual Bank*
- > **MELINA MORRISON**, *CEO, BCCM*
- > **ALLISON ORR**, *Manager, Research and Operations, Per Capita*
- > **TRACEY POWELL**, *People, Capability and Performance Manager, CUA*
- > **MICHELLE SOMERVILLE**, *Director, Bank Australia*
- > **HEIDI SUOMINEN**, *Chief People Officer, RACQ*
- > **TONY TAYLOR**, *Chief Executive Officer, Police Bank*
- > **JOANNE ZARB**, *General Manager, People and Culture, EML*

The recommendations are divided into three broad areas: culture and leadership; implementing flexible work; and training and mentoring. This will take leadership from the top, at both board and executive level.

CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP

A cultural change is needed to bring about a shift in attitudes across the sector, and leadership on this is needed from the top. Executives and managers need to develop a more open mindset that will bring about a culture that is more accepting of diversity, inclusion and non-traditional work practices.

This commitment to inclusion should not begin and end with gender. Inclusion should be understood in broad terms, consistent with cooperative values of economic empowerment and participation for all.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

CMEs should implement programs for organisational-wide cultural change for greater inclusion.

Programs could include training for managers and executives on inclusion and diversity, and developing a more open mindset around diversity and non-traditional work practices. Leadership needs to come from the top to drive this change and training is needed not just to implement and manage programs around inclusion, diversity and non-traditional work practices such as flexible work hours, job sharing, telecommuting, but also for managers to accept that this is not less productive and not too hard to manage. Managers and executives of both genders should also be encouraged to be role models for non-traditional work practices.

Companies should implement programs to change the narrative around those who are “committed workers”, from those who are high on the presenteeism scale to instead highlight good workers as those who are productive. This will help engender a culture of inclusion.

Other initiatives that can bring about cultural change include showcasing internally employees and managers implementing diversity and inclusion programs. Storytelling around employees, and in particular executives, who commit to inclusion programs can be a powerful signal for culture change.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

Empower middle managers to enact culture change.

Middle managers should be entrusted to implement programs that further inclusion and increase diversity. This culture change should be around programs specifically to address the gender gap, for instance flexible work, but also on programs to bring about greater inclusion in a broader context. Managers need to be given the autonomy to manage and report on implementation on these programs within their own teams as suits the needs of the individual business unit.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

The BCCM should develop a leadership role.

The BCCM is a networking umbrella, which can bring people together for knowledge sharing opportunities.

Quarterly or annual reporting on policy implementation, and the best practice sharing on flexible work trials, should be collated and reported on by the BCCM.

The BCCM can also encourage the sector to be more involved with mainstream diversity and inclusion programs, such as Male Champions of Change or the Panel Pledge.

In addition, the BCCM's commitment to implement these recommendations includes a commitment to broader inclusion across the sector.

IMPLEMENTING FLEXIBLE WORK

The research showed that CMEs need to move beyond just having a policy on flexible work to embed flexible work practices in the culture of organisations. This shift from a focus on presenteeism to flexible productive work needs to be led from the most senior levels of management, because employees cannot take up the option to work flexibly if it's not genuinely supported or taken up by the executive team.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

CMEs should commit to implementing an "all roles flex" policy across the workplace

Except where roles are unable to be made flexible (for example, in-person customer facing roles or caring work), CMEs should implement a company-wide policy to have all roles offered on a flexible working basis. This might include offering part time hours, job sharing, working off-site (at home or elsewhere), or allowing full time workers to choose different start and finish times.

RECOMMENDATION 5:

Introduce training for managers to support a flexible workforce

To implement flexible work practices, companies should offer training to team managers to educate them to measure productivity through criteria other than attendance in the office. This needs to be done at both the executive level and the middle-management level.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

Instigate flexible work trials.

Policies should be implemented to allow teams within organisations to trial flexible work for a 3- or 6-month period, and then evaluate the impact on productivity, employee wellbeing and the representation of women in the workforce.

These trials and subsequent evaluations can be used to develop best practice around flexible work arrangements to share among the sector.

RECOMMENDATION 7:

Annual reporting on the number of employees working flexibly.

To ensure that managers deliver on flexible work policies at the operational level, organisations should report annually how many people are working flexibly and their seniority level.

RECOMMENDATION 8:

Make implementing flexible work arrangements part of management KPIs

To ensure the commitment to flexible work practices is taken seriously and implemented consistently, reporting on the take up and effectiveness of flexible work practices should be part of management KPIs.

RECOMMENDATION 9:

Implement practical team scheduling in the office to make it easier for people to work flexibly

Implement practical time management arrangements to facilitate flexible work, for example having staff meetings on the day or time everyone is in the office and avoiding scheduling important meetings during school holidays.

RECOMMENDATION 10:

Put the infrastructure in place to support flexible working

To ensure that staff can work from home or work part-time and still meaningfully participate in their team, companies must invest in the infrastructure to enable remote work and job sharing. This will include sufficient IT resources and the provision of lap top computers and other devices that allow remote working, and ensuring office systems can be accessed remotely and outside standard operating hours.

TRAINING AND SPONSORSHIP

As a sector, CMEs need to invest more in our own, and share knowledge and expertise within the sector. CMEs need to create opportunities, such as the WiMBA (Women in Master of Business Administration) scholarship program to develop expertise within the sector that specifically targets middle management women.

RECOMMENDATION 11:

Develop sponsorship programs specifically targeted at women

CMEs need to develop formalised executive sponsorship programs with concrete actions and outcomes that specifically target women, and then raise awareness around these programs. The survey results showed that even when these opportunities exist, women either don't know about them, or may not understand their importance. Employers need to specifically encourage women to be involved in these programs, and give them the requisite time to participate. Where possible, these programs should be offered on site and within working hours.

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4. HAVE YOU EVER TURNED DOWN A PROMOTION OR AN OPPORTUNITY TO ACT IN A POSITION DUE TO A LACK OF SUPPORT OR FLEXIBILITY WITHIN THE WORKPLACE?

- Yes
- No

5. PLEASE TICK ANY OF THE FOLLOWING BARRIERS TO ADVANCEMENT YOU MAY HAVE EXPERIENCED

- Workplace culture
- Lack of female leaders
- Gender stereotypes
- Lack of flexible work practices
- Affordability and accessibility of childcare
- Sexism
- Lack of mentors
- Societal expectations regarding gender roles (e.g. household work/childcare)
- Other:

6. DOES WORKING PART-TIME OR FLEXIBLE HOURS HINDER YOUR OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROMOTIONS OR PAY RISES?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

7. ARE YOU GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES TO SHOW YOUR CAPABILITIES, TO SHOW LEADERSHIP AND DECISION MAKING ABILITIES?

- Yes
- No

8. HAS ANY WORKPLACE PROGRAM OR INITIATIVE HELPED YOU PURSUE A PROMOTION OR GAIN MORE DESIRABLE WORKING CONDITIONS? PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF THE PROGRAM (EG, MENTORING, QUOTA SYSTEM, EXECUTIVE SPONSORSHIP)

9. IF THERE WERE ONE ASPECT OF YOUR CURRENT WORKPLACE THAT COULD BE CHANGED TO IMPROVE YOUR CAREER OPPORTUNITIES, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

10. HOW MUCH OF A PRIORITY IS GENDER DIVERSITY TO YOUR CEO?

- A top priority
- An important priority
- Not too important
- Not important at all

11. HOW MUCH OF A PRIORITY IS GENDER DIVERSITY TO YOUR BOARD?

- A top priority
- An important priority
- Not too important
- Not important at all

12. WHAT SECTOR DO YOU WORK IN?

- Super
- Motoring
- Financial Services
- Health insurance
- Agriculture
- Other

13. PLEASE SELECT YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYMENT LEVEL

- Board director
- CEO
- Executive management
- Senior manager
- Middle manager
- Experienced employee
- Recent graduate

14. PLEASE INDICATE YOUR GENDER

- Female
- Male

15. IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN, PLEASE INDICATE THEIR AGE(S)

- Under 6 months
- Under 2 years
- Under 5 years
- Under 10 years
- Under 15 years
- Under 18 years
- Over 18 years

16. PLEASE ADD ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE, OR RAISE ISSUES YOU THINK SHOULD BE ADDRESSED

SYDNEY:

Suite 205, 61 Marlborough Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Phone: (02) 9310 5000

www.percapita.org.au

www.twitter.com/percapita

www.facebook.com/PerCapitaAustralia

MELBOURNE:

Level 2, 2/16 Northumberland St
South Melbourne VIC 3205
Phone: (03) 9650 0595