

EQUAL FOOTING

*A practical manual to help you promote
gender equality at your organisation*

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ABOUT THIS MANUAL

This manual is divided into 4 parts:

PART 1: THE BASICS

Aim: To help you familiarise yourself with terms, issues and concepts relating to gender equality. This is essential reading before you move on to the part of the manual most relevant to you and your role.

Recommended for: Everyone.

PART 2: ORGANISATIONS

Aim: To help you start shifting culture and behaviours at a collective, all-inclusive level. This section is the lengthiest, as this is where you should be making the biggest investment if you want to achieve sustainable change.

Recommended for: CEOs, HR Managers, Diversity and Inclusion Managers, Training and Development Managers.

PART 3: LEADERS

Aim: To help leaders manage teams by using a lens of gender equality and respect, rather than seeing it as a separate issue or problem to address.

Recommended for: Leaders, Managers, Supervisors, anyone who has staff reporting to them.

PART 4: INDIVIDUALS

Aim: To help you and other individuals understand the important issues around gender equality, learn how to start useful conversations, and behave in ways that make a real difference.

Recommended for: Individual staff members, managers who want to share ideas with their staff.

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE 'EQUAL FOOTING' PROGRAM

This manual is based on a program that was run in the first half of 2015 with eight organisations from the business community in Melbourne. These organisations included banks, retail, hospitality and technical-focused businesses, as well as two community-based organisations.

The 'Equal Footing' program was funded by the Victorian Government, via the Office for Women and Equality, Department of Premier and Cabinet, State Government of Victoria.

An organisation called En Masse developed and delivered the program and has prepared this manual so that you can cherry-pick the aspects that are most useful to your organisation.



A '*Background Paper*' explaining why and how the 'Equal Footing' program was run can be found in the Resources Pack (Document **A01**)



You can also have a look at the outcomes from this research project at the VicHealth website: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

WHAT'S BEHIND THE INVESTMENT INTO GENDER EQUALITY AND RESPECT PROGRAMS IN WORKPLACES?

The short answer is that we want to change the way Australians think and act on a broad scale (both in and outside of work).

There is clear room for improvement in Australia in terms of how we think about men and women: 1 in 5 people still think men should be "head of the household", for example. While we can't go into homes and ensure people complete training programs, we can reach them through their work.

'Equal Footing' has been designed to help workplaces understand gender discrimination and inequality and what can be done to tackle the issue in a practical and sustainable way. Its primary goal is to achieve better diversity and fairness in the workplace but, as with all gender equality programs, it also has its eye on the bigger picture. Equality in the workplace will help lead our society towards greater respect for women, which will, in turn, help us combat one of the biggest problems affecting Australian women's health today: violence.

Research has clearly shown that problems like violence against women will only improve when societies shift their beliefs and attitudes and accept that men and women are equal. While this imbalance in power and economic resources remains unchallenged, Australian women will continue to have less opportunity, gain less respect and be more likely to find themselves in abusive relationships.

There were more than 65,300 reports to police of family violence in Victoria in 2014. Around one-third of these involved children, and many more went unreported.¹ Research shows that countries where there is a significant gender power imbalance tend to have corresponding problems with family violence.²

The 'Equal Footing' program doesn't focus specifically on violence against women, but it does promote respect and reinforces the mantra that both men and women should be treated fairly and equally. This is an essential foundation if we're to successfully challenge the larger gender-related issues faced today by society.

You can roll out the complete 'Equal Footing' training in your workplace, or just choose parts of it. Refer to [Page 43 in part 2](#) for a step-by-step guide to gender equality training.

The most important thing is that you are taking action – as an organisation, team, and individual – towards achieving gender equality at work.



PART ONE

THE BASICS

This part of the manual will help you familiarise yourself with terms, issues and concepts relating to gender equality. This is essential reading before you move on to the part of the manual most relevant to you and your role.

QUESTIONS YOU WILL BE ASKED – AND HOW TO ANSWER THEM

You might be reading this manual because you're the CEO of an organisation, a Human Resources Manager, a team leader or manager, or an employee. Regardless of your role, you're clearly interested in effecting change within your workplace when it comes to gender equality.

To achieve this, you'll need to engage people – and that means having lots of conversations about this topic. So, it's important you feel completely confident that you understand the basics, including being able to answer the following questions:

- what is 'Gender'?
- what is the difference between 'Equality' and 'Equity'?
- what is 'Bias'?
- what are the advantages of gender equality at work (and beyond)?
- what about 'Flexible Work'?
- but aren't working parents less focused and more distracted?
- what is 'Bystander Action'?
- what is the 'Gender Pay Gap'?
- is setting targets and quotas for women's participation and advancement a good idea?
- what is 'Merit'?
- won't gender targets and quotas mean women will 'take' men's jobs?
- what if people don't believe that we have an equality issue to address in Australia?

You will find answers to each of these questions on the following pages.

WHAT IS 'GENDER'?

The state of being male or female with reference to social or cultural differences rather than biological differences

The word 'gender' is often mistakenly used when referring to a person's 'sex' – so it's understandable if you're confused about its meaning. Although the terms are related and are often used interchangeably, they are actually two very distinct things. Someone's 'sex' is the biology that defines whether they are male or female, while their 'gender' refers to society's expectations about how they should think and behave as boys and girls and then as men and women.

As the writer, philosopher and feminist Simone de Beauvoir once wrote, "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" – and the same is equally true of men. Gender is a social construct: something that is taught to us by the society or culture we live in. We are introduced to the concepts of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' from birth and these tell us who we are supposed to be, what kind of roles we can and can't perform, how we should act and respond to whatever life throws at us – even how we should dress.

Societal expectations about gender are reinforced every day of our lives – whether it's in the media, by our family, in our community, or in the workplace – and sometimes in very subtle ways. This has resulted in the creation of gender stereotypes that we're all expected to fit into – even though most of us realise they are overly simplistic, don't reflect our individuality, and help perpetuate unfairness and inequality between the two sexes.

Gender stereotyping incorporates things like personality traits (the assumption that men are confident and aggressive, women are submissive and nurturing), behaviours and skills (women are better carers for children, men are more adept at household repairs and mowing the lawn), career paths (construction workers are men, secretaries are women), even how we should look (women are short and petite, men are tall and imposing).

This becomes problematic when adherence to gender stereotyping gives some people power or control over others – specifically, that men should be 'in charge' of households, organisations, or our society as a whole.

Gender stereotypes are very hard to overcome, as they are so ingrained within our culture. In fact, members of both sexes who don't follow gender stereotypes are often punished (for example, assertive or strong women can be labelled 'bitches', and men who lack physical strength seen as 'wimps').

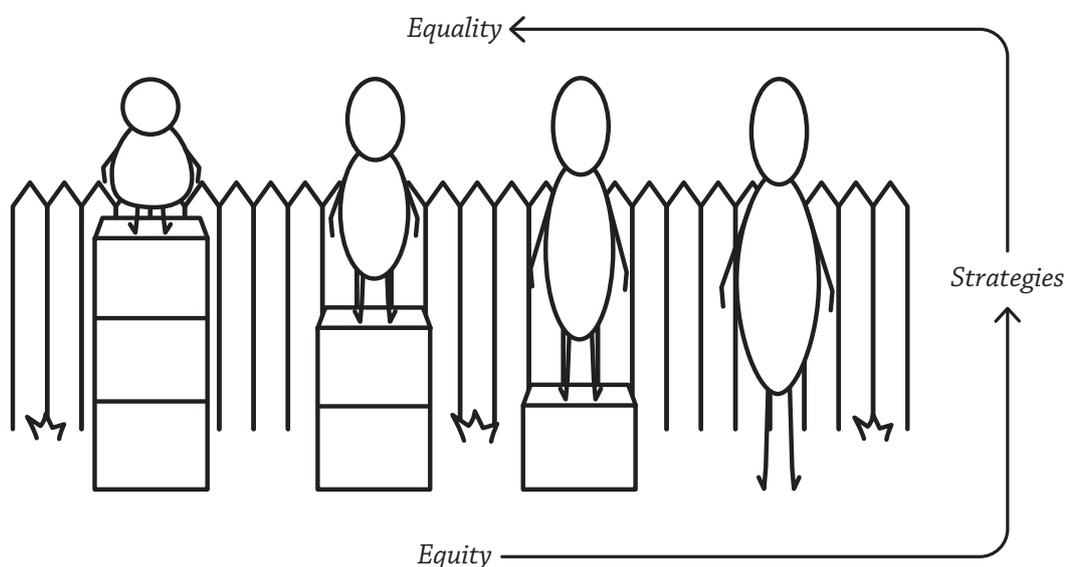
WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN 'EQUALITY' AND 'EQUITY'?

It's been said that "equity is the process; equality is the outcome" – but what does this mean, exactly?

'Equality' is about ensuring everybody has equal opportunity to reach their potential and receive equal treatment. The ultimate aim is equality of results. Within the context of gender, this means ensuring equality for men and women in all aspects of their lives, be it in society, the workplace, in education or in the community and, in regards to the law, without allowing gender stereotyping to affect or restrict their rights and choices.

'Equity' is about recognising and enacting the strategies that are needed to achieve equal outcomes. This means providing access to the resources, opportunities, power and responsibility people need to reach their full potential. Equity is all about fairness and justice, and recognising that some people are disadvantaged and may require additional help to reach the same level as the majority.

A useful analogy to demonstrate the notion of equity is to imagine being in the standing room area of the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Grand Final Day. To ensure everyone has the chance to view the game equally, we employ equity strategies – in the figure below, the equity strategy is represented as a milk crate to stand on and watch the game with an uninterrupted view. Equity is recognising that some people are shorter than others, through no fault of their own, and they'll require an additional crate to see properly and be on the same level as everybody else.



WHAT IS 'BIAS'?

Inclination or prejudice for or against one person or group, which may be unconscious

Society's ingrained attitudes about gender have led us, inevitably, towards 'gender bias': a prejudice (either overt or hidden) based on someone's sex that influences our beliefs, behaviour and decision-making.

Gender bias stems from our expectation that people will conform to the gender stereotypes associated with their biological sex – for example, that a man will show strength in a certain situation while a woman may become emotional, or that women make better parents because they are usually more nurturing than men. These assumptions can be harmful.

In most cases, we aren't being malevolent or deliberately discriminatory when we show gender bias – it's something we do automatically, without realising it. This is called 'unconscious bias', and we often reveal it when we're forced to react impulsively and emotionally to a situation without giving our response any analysis or thought. Most of us are biased because gender stereotypes are so consistently reinforced by society and the media that our subconscious has accepted them as fact.

A good example of unconscious bias is some recent American research that found almost 60 per cent of corporate CEOs in the US are over six feet tall – a remarkable statistic when you consider less than 15 per cent of the US male population is over six feet. Clearly, people don't set out to hire a tall male CEO, but their unconscious bias tells them that a tall man makes a strong leader, so they are irresistibly drawn to the gender stereotype.³

In Australian workplaces, treating somebody unfairly based on their sex is punishable by law – but that doesn't stop gender bias from occurring (although it's subtle, or not officially acknowledged, as nobody wants to be dragged into court). The key here is to recognise when you lapse and make a hasty judgment based on gender bias.

When gender bias happens at your workplace (and it will), you need to pause, step back and review. For example, the next time a group of colleagues is assessing resumes for a job position, discuss "the kind of person" you're all expecting to fulfill the role. Question one another: it will raise your awareness of any biases you may be carrying, probably without realising it. Simple changes like using a more formal rating system while interviewing can reduce the impact of our social instincts or personal feelings resulting in an unconscious bias for or against someone.



You can do a quick unconscious bias test by visiting Harvard University's 'Implicit Project':
www.implicit.harvard.edu/implicit

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF GENDER EQUALITY AT WORK (AND BEYOND)?

Most people associate 'gender equality' with improving the situation for women, both socially and in the workplace. It's a valid assumption, as women continue to earn less than men, are under-represented in leadership roles, and are less likely to spend as long in the workforce. But gender equality isn't only about women. The truth is that men are also victims of gender assumptions and inequality at work.

One of the best examples of this is flexible working hours. Flexibility is a key driver of employment decisions for many men, particularly those who are older and approaching retirement and (most especially) young fathers. Of this last group, 79 per cent would like to choose their start and finish times, and 37 per cent had seriously considered leaving their organisation because of a lack of flexibility.⁴ Due to expectations about gender roles, there is a definite culture within Australian workplaces that it's acceptable for female employees to ask for flexibility but men shouldn't, as they would create a perception that they aren't "serious" about their career. In fact, fear of future career penalties is the main reason why men remain silent on this subject.

Similarly, in many organisations, men are offered emotional support less often after personal trauma (e.g. a divorce or separation) and are referred to employee assistance programs less often than women. Of men returning from paternity leave (a month or less), 27 per cent reported that they experienced discrimination.⁵

The overarching point is that by breaking down rigid gender roles and creating a more equal and fair workplace, both sexes will benefit. Women will have greater opportunity to succeed (hopefully in roles that have historically been viewed as "male") and men will no longer have the pressure of constantly proving themselves, or of being seen as the strongest or best.

The goal of gender equality in workplaces is that everybody - both men and women - can pursue any career, be remunerated appropriately, and be free to exhibit attributes and behaviour without them being viewed as "feminine" or "masculine".

WHAT ABOUT FLEXIBLE WORK?

There is growing evidence and awareness that allowing people some flexibility in when, where and how they work makes for a happier, healthier and more productive workplace. Supporting this is a recent study that found the majority of Australian firms believe flexible working has a positive impact on employee health and morale, with 59 per cent reporting that employees feel healthier and 64 per cent reporting an increase in energy and motivation. In addition, 79 per cent of Australian small and medium businesses reported higher levels of employee productivity due to flexible working practices.⁶

Flexible work requests may include arrangements around starting times, a reduction in hours worked, changed patterns of work (split shifts, job-sharing), or even the work environment itself (working from home).

Australian employers have a legal obligation under the *Equal Opportunity Act (2010)* to provide flexibility for several groups of people in their workplace. An employee may request flexible working arrangements if they:

- are a parent or have responsibility for a child of school age (or younger)
- are a carer
- have a disability
- are 55 or older
- are experiencing violence from a family member
- provide care or support to a member of their immediate family or household who is experiencing violence from a family member.

However, as already identified, gender expectations still weigh in heavily when discussing flexible working. Male employees with families often have to challenge rigid gender stereotypes to gain flexible conditions – and, even if it's offered, they can be reluctant to use it for fear of career penalties, such as a missed promotion or the perception that they aren't "a team player".

A 2012 Diversity Council report titled *Men Get Flexible! Mainstreaming Flexible Work in Australian Business* was based on the surveying of fathers of small children all over Australia, and found that:

- 79 per cent would prefer to choose their start and finish times, but only 41 per cent currently do
- 79 per cent would prefer to work a compressed working week, yet only 24 per cent actually do
- 56 per cent would prefer to work part of their regular hours at home, while only 13 per cent currently do
- 37 per cent have seriously considered leaving their current employer, due to a lack of flexibility
- very few young fathers take extended leave at the time of their child's birth, with only 9 per cent taking longer than six weeks.⁷

Female employees with children (or even those who are planning to have children) often suffer from a lingering assumption that their priority is actually "running around after their kids" or they'll be unreliable and "missing in action" for some of the working week. This means that many professional women miss out on promotions, struggle with career advancement, and often aren't taken as seriously as male colleagues.

Flexibility at work is an increasingly important issue for many professional people – even those who aren't parents. To recognise this, many businesses find that providing flexibility to all employees is beneficial, as it doesn't breed resentment among those who don't fit under a specific category.

The issue of trust is another hurdle when talking about flexibility. This isn't easily overcome, even when employees who have been granted flexibility complete their work on time and to a high standard. Many employers and managers are naturally inclined to want to monitor their people and would prefer them to be physically at their work desk, preferably from 9 to 5.

The move towards greater flexibility in the workplace will take time, and requires a further shift in thinking. A big part of this shift includes overcoming the gender stereotyping that still surrounds this issue.

There are several things you can do at your organisation to help this process along:

- offer flexible hours and working conditions to all employees and actively encourage fathers to accept them
- make sure leaders within the organisation take on flexible hours, as they will act as role models for other parents and break the perception that a change of hours could damage their career
- give parents (and fathers, in particular) the opportunity to share their flexible working experiences with other working parents.

WHAT ABOUT WORKING PARENTS?

People may ask, aren't working parents less focused and more distracted? This is a common assumption and it is one of the main reasons why people are hesitant about asking for flexibility at their workplace. Employees of both sexes can be professionally penalised by the perception that parenthood makes them less reliable, less committed, less competent, and less focused. This is most often levelled at working mothers – or even women who have become pregnant.

In a US study of employers' recruitment practices, mothers were less likely to be interviewed for positions than fathers or childless women and were rated as deserving lower salaries than childless women. Closer to home, a 2014 Australian government study revealed that nearly one in five women who recently had a baby reported workplace discrimination related to their pregnancy. The most common types of discrimination were pregnant women missing out on promotions and/or being excluded from training and development opportunities. Pregnant women also reported being left out of long-term projects and were often excluded from any decisions about the hiring and delegation of tasks for their maternity leave.⁸

However, research shows that working parents are actually assets to a business, not liabilities. In 2012, the Federal Reserve Bank of St Louis initiated a study to assess the impact of having children on highly skilled women. The study looked at the amount of research published by more than 10,000 academic economists (both male and female) over a 30-year career to find out how parenthood affected their productivity. The research paper (published in January 2014) showed that both women and men with at least two children are more productive across their careers, on average, than those who have only one child, and parents of one child are more productive than those with none.⁹

These results suggest that parenthood doesn't cause employees to take their eyes off the ball – in fact, it gives them an advantage by teaching them the skills they need to be more efficient and productive at work. This is particularly true of working mothers, who still spend more time with their children than fathers and are more involved in making the day-to-day decisions at home.

The skills that parents bring to the workplace include:

- **multi-tasking** – parents have to be expert planners. A woman with two or more kids manages multiple schedules, coordinates pick-ups, play dates, school meetings, birthday parties. She's a skilled juggler
- **flexibility and adaptability** – parents need to be flexible, to roll with the punches, to change course unexpectedly. Once you have kids, you realise the world is completely out of your control and you learn to adapt incredibly quickly. This ability to think on your feet is an asset to any workplace
- **time management and efficiency** – parents need to achieve a lot within aggressive timeframes. For example, a report might need to be written by 3pm, when a working dad has to collect his child from school. Parents get stuff done, and in less time
- **a sense of responsibility, and more determination** – single-income families are becoming increasingly rare in 2015 and most women work full-time because they *need* the income. Having mouths to feed at home is a big responsibility and it forces parents of both sexes to take ownership of their lives and “to reach higher, do more, and give their kids the best they can.”¹⁰

WHAT IS 'BYSTANDER ACTION'?

When a person is present at or witnesses something and decides to speak up or take action

A key feature in establishing a fair and equitable workplace is ensuring that both sexes are treated with equal respect and consideration. In keeping with this, sexist language and jokes, discrimination based on sex, or any sexual harassment is to be acted on quickly and decisively. No workplace can achieve gender equality if employees (of either sex) are being targeted in this way, and not acting upon sexist behaviour can have a devastating effect on workplace culture.

'Bystander action' is encouraging and equipping all staff to speak up and step in when they observe or hear sexist behaviour. This does not include intervening in unsafe or violent situations.

Bystanders should carefully consider four steps before taking action:

1. Is the behaviour I'm seeing or hearing sexist, discriminatory and/or sexual harassment? What do the policies and procedures at my workplace say about behaviour like this?
2. Do I feel safe to step in? Will I be supported by management if I do? Is this something I'm expected to challenge myself – or am I better off seeking assistance? Is there any risk of escalation of violence here?
3. Is taking action going to prove helpful? If I were on the receiving end, would I want somebody to step in for me? Will it make a positive difference to a person's behaviour or to the workplace culture?
4. How serious is it? How should I respond? What should I say?¹¹

There is a bigger picture here. Research has shown that constructive bystander action sets a compelling example to others. The creation of more respectful relationships between men and women can help to change the very attitudes that have created gender inequality in the first place.

Bystander action also draws an important line in the sand about what is unacceptable and appropriate behaviour in the workplace and in society. It has been cited as an important preventative technique to eliminate bigger problems like the culture of violence against women, for example.

While looking at the bigger picture, you can also think of workplaces as potential bystanders to sexism itself. A workplace that makes a strong and public commitment to gender equality and respect at work is sending a clear message to the broader community and drawing an important line in the sand.

WHAT IS THE 'GENDER PAY GAP'?

The difference between the average weekly earnings of female and male workers

In Australia, it is calculated on the average weekly earnings for full-time employees published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The gender pay gap doesn't take into account part-time earnings, casual earnings and overtime payments.

Australia has had a persistent gender pay gap. Since 1990, the gender pay gap has remained within a narrow range of between 15 and 18 per cent.

However, the Australian gender pay gap widened to 18.8 per cent in February 2015. This figure is based on data collected in November 2014, and is the biggest gap recorded between the two sexes since 1994.

The latest ABS data shows that:

- the average man working full-time earns 18.8 per cent (or \$298.10) more each week than the average woman working full-time
- the average weekly ordinary time earnings of women working full-time are \$1,289.30 per week, compared to men who earn an average weekly wage of \$1,587.40 per week
- the national gender pay gap has increased 1.4 per cent since November 2013, when the gap was 17.4 per cent.¹²

The gender pay gap is influenced by a number of interrelated work, family and societal factors, including gender stereotypes about the work that women and men 'should' do, and the way women and men 'should' engage in the workforce. Other factors that contribute to the gender pay gap include:

- women and men working in different industries (industrial segregation) and different jobs (occupational segregation). Historically, female-dominated industries and jobs have attracted lower wages than male-dominated industries and jobs
- a lack of women in senior positions, and a lack of part-time or flexible senior roles. Women are more likely than men to work part-time or flexibly because they still undertake most of society's unpaid caring work and may find it difficult to access senior roles
- women's more precarious attachment to the workforce (largely due to their unpaid caring responsibilities)
- differences in education, work experience and seniority
- discrimination, both direct and indirect.¹³

IS SETTING TARGETS AND QUOTAS FOR WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION AND ADVANCEMENT A GOOD IDEA?

In addition to challenging inequalities and gender stereotyping, many organisations are trying to increase opportunities for women in their workplace by setting targets and introducing quotas. Most of these targets involve leadership, management and senior roles, where women are most under-represented. Targets and quotas are an attempt to break what is called "the glass ceiling": an unseen yet difficult-to-breach barrier that keeps women from rising to the upper rungs of the corporate ladder, regardless of their qualifications or achievements.

Programs that mentor, support and train women to better prepare them for senior roles (and efforts to re-imagine senior roles in more accessible, flexible modes) should run alongside targets.

Gender targets are an encouraging and welcome initiative, doing much to transform the notion that the ideal worker is a man who is available for work 24/7 and is unencumbered by any care responsibilities. Exploding this myth will assist more women (in general) to enter the workforce. In turn, this will help address the gender pay gap, which is at the biggest it has ever been – now over 18 per cent and widening.

While targets are widely supported, the introduction of actual quotas has met with some controversy and resistance. During 2013, the Reibey Institute interviewed 100 of Australia's leading corporate women. Of those surveyed, 80 per cent were in favour of setting targets to help ensure women's progression through the organisation, but only 50 per cent believed quotas should be a part of a company's gender strategy.¹⁴ The reasoning behind this is the fear that women may be placed in senior roles simply *because* they are women. Some may think this is tokenistic and the fallout from it may damage women's interests more generally.

Despite these misgivings, setting quotas does garner results. In 2003, Norway was the first country to pass legislation mandating quotas for women's representation on listed company boards. The quota set a requirement for 40:40:20 representation (40 per cent male, 40 per cent female, with the remaining 20 per cent made up of either gender). The proportion of women on boards increased from just 7 per cent before the legislation to 40.3 per cent in 2010.

We talk and talk, but I have found it's only when we set measurable, serious targets that we start to take real steps in the right direction. People arc up, but it makes them accountable. When there's a target in place, it makes us ask, 'if not, then why not?' rather than just roll along as we always have.

– Mel, 34

While setting gender targets and quotas is a step in the right direction for any organisation, the concept is not without its critics and requires careful thought. Tokenism will do gender equality more harm than good, so factors such as merit should also be included in any strategy. Unfortunately (as you will read next), judging people (and women, in particular) on merit only can also be problematic.



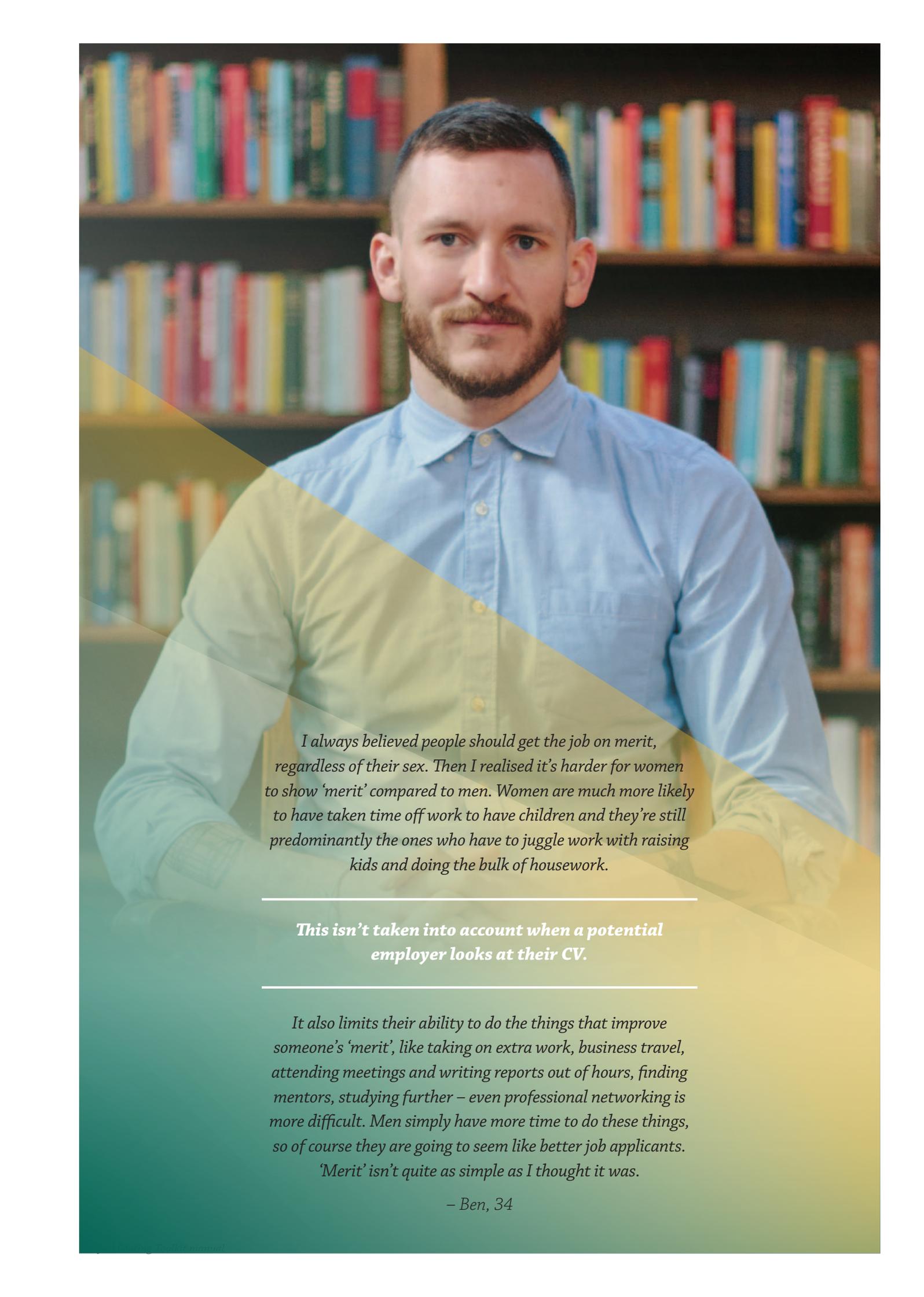
The WGEA has excellent guidelines for setting targets at:

www.wgea.gov.au/learn/gender-target-setting-toolkit

Quotas and targets allow people to say: 'She's only there because she's a woman'.

Quotas let people say: 'She only got it because they needed the numbers'.

Gender quotas treat women as if they don't have the qualities to reach the top by themselves. They make it mandatory to select women on the basis of their gender – this does them a disservice. Women, just like men, should be chosen on the basis of their individual qualities and abilities. Gender shouldn't play a role at all.¹⁵



I always believed people should get the job on merit, regardless of their sex. Then I realised it's harder for women to show 'merit' compared to men. Women are much more likely to have taken time off work to have children and they're still predominantly the ones who have to juggle work with raising kids and doing the bulk of housework.

This isn't taken into account when a potential employer looks at their CV.

It also limits their ability to do the things that improve someone's 'merit', like taking on extra work, business travel, attending meetings and writing reports out of hours, finding mentors, studying further – even professional networking is more difficult. Men simply have more time to do these things, so of course they are going to seem like better job applicants.

'Merit' isn't quite as simple as I thought it was.

– Ben, 34

WHAT IS 'MERIT'?

The quality of being particularly worthy or able, and deserving praise or reward as a result

In the workplace, the 'question of merit' is most often raised during recruitment or promotion. Within the context of gender equality, it involves eliminating gender from any human resources decisions, so that candidates of both sexes can be assessed purely on their skills, experience and ability.

While this seems to support equality in the workplace, using the 'ability card' assumes that everyone has already had equal opportunity to begin with. The reality is that female job candidates are more likely to have been already disadvantaged in their careers and their CVs may not stack up when compared to that of a male candidate. This could be because:

- women are often steered towards roles and responsibilities deemed 'suitable for a woman' during their career
- women remain much more likely to be the ones juggling work with home duties and responsibilities, and this juggling has inevitably had an impact on their career advancement. They may have taken extended leave from work, reduced their hours, or even changed roles to be able to manage their 'unpaid work' at home.

Judging people on merit is all very well in theory, but it doesn't take into account that men and women don't come from an equal playing field. Women are unlikely to have comparable career experience to men, mainly due to gender bias and gender-based assumptions. And how can you measure something if it's not there?

Another criticism levelled at the concept of merit is that it's usually only raised when somebody is considering appointing a woman - men are rarely subjected to the 'on merit' test. Some take this criticism further, suggesting that merit is only used when women are seeking a senior role to which a man ordinarily would be appointed.

Be aware that merit can be a gendered concept.

WILL GENDER TARGETS AND QUOTAS MEAN WOMEN WILL 'TAKE' MEN'S JOBS?

Yes, this sounds a bit overreactive (and a little churlish, given that men already occupy most positions of power in organisations), but there is a real possibility of this occurring in some business contexts. If an organisation rushes into making changes (perhaps because they are long overdue, or a new leader wants to set targets), it can cause resentment, fear, and create a sense of injustice among male employees.

We were told by our new General Manager that the business would be 30 per cent female by 2020. He was thrilled to announce it, but we were all just standing there in shock. Our workforce is only 3 per cent female at the moment, so how exactly is this going to work?

If a woman applies for any job, is she going to get it automatically, just so we can reach these targets? Meanwhile, we've been slogging away for years and all our chances of moving up in the business will disappear overnight because of a bloody quota. How is that fair?

– Sunny, 38

It's important that leaders not only explain the targets and why they are a crucial part of the organisation's strategic direction, but also explain how they will be achieved. Fair and transparent processes are vital in these situations.

It's wise to listen to people's concerns, rather than just brushing them off as negative thinking. There's usually a collaborative way forward if you talk about things honestly.

WHAT IF PEOPLE DON'T BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE AN EQUALITY ISSUE TO ADDRESS IN AUSTRALIA?

We all have different experiences and there are undoubtedly people in your organisation who genuinely don't think there's still an issue in Australia with gender inequality – and that probably reflects their life experience and deeply held beliefs.

Here are some questions you might pose to them:

- why is there still a gender pay gap favouring men in all industries in Australia (and globally the picture is much the same)?
- why are there so few women in top positions in organisations in Australia?
- why is it still women who give up work and income to raise children, and only rarely is it men who do this?
- why do older women constitute the single largest group living in poverty in the world (and Australia is no exception)?
- why do one to two women die each week in Australia from domestic violence?
- why do men continue to struggle to get flexible working arrangements so they can share more of the domestic work and childcare responsibilities?

WHAT TO SAY TO THE DOUBTERS

When you are talking to people who dismiss or put up roadblocks to gender equality, it's wise to have some evidence-based facts and stats on hand. This can prove helpful when you hear statements like:

1. *But we solved gender inequality years ago...*

"In a 2013 study based on over 17,000 Australians, 19 per cent still think that men should be 'head of the household' – that's about 1 in 5 people who believe men should have more power than women at home. In regards to public life, 1 in 4 people believe men make better political leaders than women.¹⁶ Does that sound like we've achieved gender equality to you?"

2. *This 'gender inequality' stuff is nonsense. My manager is a woman...*

"Women make up half the workforce in Australia but hold just one-quarter of management positions – so I'd suggest that your female manager is an exception, rather than the rule. Even if a woman finds herself in a management role, she often has to deal with outmoded, socially constructed ideas that 'men make better executives'. This assumption is an unfair (and untrue) gender bias – female executives do just as well as men, if given the same opportunities."

3. *Gender equality is all about women...*

"Research shows that 'flexibility within their role' is one of the top employment drivers for men. It's what men look for and want in a job – but they're hesitant to ask for flexibility at interviews or in negotiations as it's still viewed as a 'woman's domain' and they're wary of creating a perception that they're not committed or serious about work. Men are also much more likely to have their request for flexibility declined by managers. It isn't as though the need for flexibility doesn't exist for men: 64 per cent of fathers have a partner also in the paid workforce, and 31 per cent have elder care responsibilities.¹⁷ But they still don't ask for it. It's not only women who are imprisoned by absurd gender stereotypes. Equality will benefit men, too."

4. *The gender pay gap wouldn't exist if women asked for more money...*

"Women aren't expected to negotiate for higher pay in the same way that men do. They're expected to take a less assertive stance, purely because of their gender – and, as a result, they often don't achieve their goals, including getting paid more. Conversely, when women *do* negotiate for money in a more assertive manner, they can be negatively viewed as being 'pushy' and lacking in warmth, which also counts against them.¹⁸ So, it isn't quite as simple as women demanding more money – society doesn't really support this option."

5. **Women are responsible for the gender pay gap, as they keep choosing career paths that pay less. They also choose to work part-time, instead of full-time, and this skews the statistics...**

“There is some truth in what you’re saying. Australian girls perform better than boys at school but they tend to enrol in humanities tertiary courses, which subsequently pay relatively lower wages in employment, rather than the sciences, which usually offer higher career wages. It’s also true that women often seek jobs that provide greater flexibility for part-time work, so they can accommodate family responsibilities. So, yes, both of these things are influential in determining that Australian women earn (on average) \$298.10 less than men each week.¹⁹

However, we need to look at the bigger picture. Let’s start by talking about “choices”. Do you think that the “choices” women make might be largely determined by gender expectations? Doesn’t society still push women towards traditional career paths like teaching, nursing, or admin? These roles generally pay between \$50,000 and \$70,000 annually. If society shifted its views about ‘gender appropriate’ career paths for women, perhaps they would follow a path to higher-paying professions.”

6. **Women don’t work as long as men do, so why bother pushing for equality?**

“You’re right: Australian women retire up to 8.5 years earlier (on average) than men do, with the average retirement age of 50.²⁰ But do women actually want to retire earlier, or do they retire because society expects them to? After all, women accrue less retirement savings and are 2½ times more likely to live in poverty in old age than men. Currently, the average superannuation payout for Australian women is just one-third of the payout for men: \$37,000 compared with \$110,000.²¹ If society was more accepting of older women remaining in the workforce, it is likely that a lot of them would postpone giving up work, especially given the financial realities they’ll face when they do retire.

There is also a persistent perception within society that a woman’s career “use-by date” occurs earlier than a man’s. Many older women find themselves pushed to the periphery within organisations (especially when they occupy client- or customer-facing roles) because their age is viewed as less attractive, or less dynamic.

A 2015 survey of 14,000 Australian women has revealed that almost half believed they had personally been discriminated against because of their age, and 62 per cent believed employers were more likely to hire a candidate under the age of 40.”²²

After 20 years in client services, I was told informally that I ‘didn’t really fit’ with the new branding and young, fresh image. As a 60 year old woman, I felt my looks, age and gender were being judged above my years of acquired knowledge, my abilities, and my strong work ethic. I have never heard that kind of thing being said about older men: they are usually praised and highly valued for their experience.

– Liz, 60

7. Achieving gender equality won't make any difference to this business...

“That’s not true, actually. Australian companies where women are most strongly represented at Board or Senior Management level are also the companies that are doing better and are the most profitable. A January 2015 study by McKinsey & Co. (*‘Diversity Matters’*) looked at financial results and the composition of management and boards of 366 public companies in the UK, US, Canada and Latin America. It found that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity are 15 per cent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians.²³

This is backed up by 2014 research by Gallup, which suggests that gender diverse teams perform better than single gender teams for several reasons:

- men and women have different viewpoints, ideas, and market insights, which enables better problem solving, ultimately leading to superior performance at the business unit level
- a gender diverse workforce provides easier access to resources, such as various sources of credit, multiple sources of information, and wider industry knowledge
- a gender diverse workforce allows the company to serve an increasingly diverse customer base
- gender diversity helps companies attract and retain talented women – this is especially relevant as more women join the labour force around the world. Companies cannot afford to ignore 50 per cent of the potential workforce and expect to be competitive in the global economy.²⁴

It’s excellent business sense for organisations to make gender equality a priority.”

8. I don't think our CEO is interested in addressing the gender pay gap...

“Interestingly, research has found that when CEOs have daughters, the pay gap between males and females in their organisation shrinks. A Danish study released a report called *‘Like Daughter, Like Father: How Women’s Wages Change When CEOs Have Daughters’*.²⁵ The study surveyed 6,321 organisations and found that male CEOs with daughters closed the gender pay gap by 0.5 per cent in the year after his daughter’s birth. If she was the male CEO’s first born child, the gap narrowed by 2.8 per cent.

Responsible CEOs should be willing to address gender equality in their workplace, especially once they learn it will positively impact the business bottom line – but it also helps if they see it as a personal issue.”

The first daughter ‘flicks a switch’ in the mind of a male CEO, causing him to attend more to equity in gender-related policies, including wages.

9. Gender targets and quotas are rubbish and never work...

“There are differing schools of thought about gender targets and (particularly) quotas, with many fearing that the forced hiring of women is tokenistic and will actually damage the push for gender equality. However, there is no doubt that targets and quotas work when introduced. In 2011, the Australian government set a target to have a minimum of 40 per cent women on government boards by 2015.²⁶ As of 30 June 2012, women held 38 per cent of government board appointments.²⁷ When Norway introduced mandatory quotas for women’s representation, the proportion of women on company boards increased from just 7 per cent in 2003 to 40.3 per cent in 2010.”

In March 2015, the Victorian premier, Daniel Andrews, announced a state government gender target, promising that at least 50 per cent of all future appointments to paid government boards and the courts would be women. The commitment was prompted by findings that female representation on government boards had slipped to 35.6 per cent in the previous four years. It will be interesting to see how this unfolds and whether it actually turns the tide of what we identify as normal governance structures.

10. Men make better managers as they're more likely to have studied management and business at Uni...

“When it comes to university, it’s true that more men study management-related courses than women – although not by much. In 2012, 11 per cent of men studied in this field, compared to 9 per cent of women.²⁸ But when it comes to VET courses (those offered through TAFE, etc.), nearly one-third (29 per cent) of women study management and commerce, compared to only 15 per cent of men. That’s a ratio of women to men of about 2 to 1.²⁹

Looking at the bigger picture, women are actually better educated than men in Australia. Of Australian women aged 25-29, 41 per cent have achieved a Bachelor degree or above, compared to only 30.6 per cent of men. Almost two-thirds (62 per cent) of women with a postgraduate degree were employed full-time, and just over half (53 per cent) of women with a bachelor degree were employed full-time.³⁰

However, despite being more educated, women only account for less than 1 in 4 professionals in top management roles in Australia. In 2014, it was found that only 17.6 per cent of ASX200 directorships are held by women and only 5 per cent of ASX200 chairs are women.³¹ Clearly, once employed, well educated and qualified women are being disadvantaged because of their sex.”

11. *She's shown real results, I suppose, and everybody here really likes her... but I reckon he deserved to be made manager more. He looks like a real gun...*

“Men are more likely to be promoted on the basis of potential (how good they’re going to be) and women more likely to be promoted on proven performance. A study showed that in a woman’s performance review, the issue of likability and personality was found in 71 of 94 reviews, compared to only 2 out of 83 reviews for men.”³²

12. *I'm sick of working mothers raving about discrimination. It doesn't happen! Just look at the stats...*

“An Australian Human Rights Commission study found that one in two women (49 per cent) experienced unfair treatment around maternity, but only 8 per cent complained within their organisation and 10 per cent took it to a government agency. In contrast, almost one-third chose to avoid confrontation by looking for another job – or even resigned. Interestingly, 27 per cent of men who take parental leave (just 1 month or less) also experienced discrimination when they returned to work.³³ So, you can see that the stats aren’t representative of what’s really going on, as most working parents (both women and men) fail to report discrimination when it happens.”

13. *It's a choice for women to stay at home raising kids. They can't expect to return to work after a long break and start at the top...*

“There’s no doubt a woman’s career trajectory is impacted when she takes years away from work to have and raise children, but the ‘lost’ time doesn’t completely explain the disparities in pay and career advancement that occur when she returns to work. What really causes the damage is how she is negatively viewed and perceived by colleagues and management. There is a persistent attitude and assumption that having children means women (and, to a lesser extent, men) become less committed to their careers and are suddenly not as reliable or focused. This is not true. In fact, parents bring a whole set of advanced skills to a workplace.”

14. *Why should it be left up to me to do something about this?*

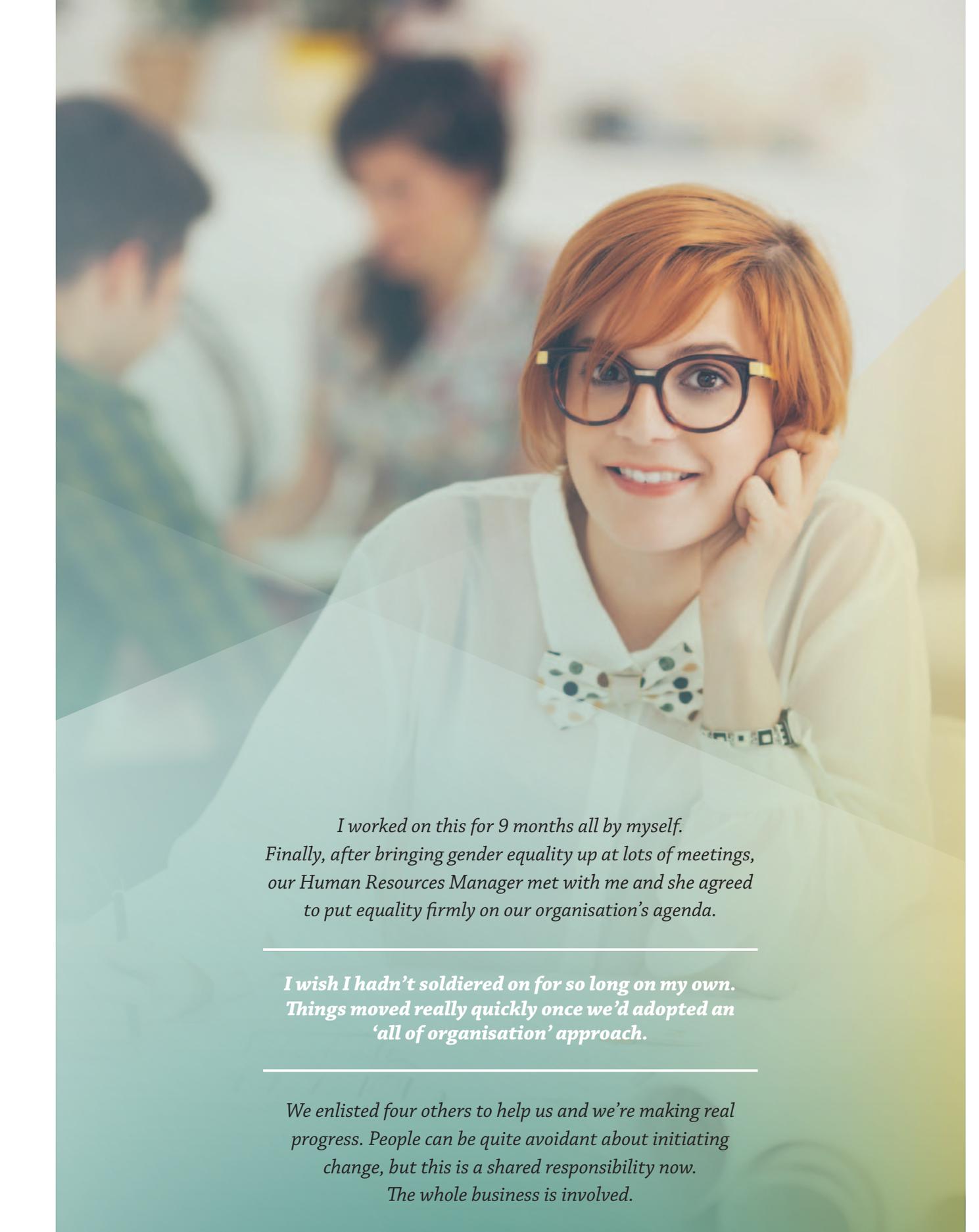
“Individual attitudes are crucial in achieving gender equality at work. If achieved, the workplace will set a good example for society as a whole. We need to learn to respect women more, and this means speaking up and being proactive about equality.

Almost half (47 per cent) of Victorians who had observed sexism, discrimination or violence against women reported “either saying or doing something in response, or taking some other form of action”. Thirteen per cent wanted to do something but didn’t for various reasons. But over 98 per cent of Australians expect their employers to ensure that women are provided with the same opportunities as men, and to ensure that none of their female employees are treated unfairly or harassed.”³⁴



A research summary on *Violence Against Women* is available from the VicHealth website, along with other publications on this topic:

www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/violence-against-women-in-australia-research-summary



I worked on this for 9 months all by myself. Finally, after bringing gender equality up at lots of meetings, our Human Resources Manager met with me and she agreed to put equality firmly on our organisation's agenda.

I wish I hadn't soldiered on for so long on my own. Things moved really quickly once we'd adopted an 'all of organisation' approach.

We enlisted four others to help us and we're making real progress. People can be quite avoidant about initiating change, but this is a shared responsibility now. The whole business is involved.

– Paula, 30



PART TWO

ORGANISATIONS

This part of the manual will help you understand what we mean by a 'whole of organisation approach' to gender equality and provides you with some useful ways to start your journey.

It is divided into four key sections:

1. **Introduction:** some useful background information
2. **Preparation:** practical information to help you get started
3. **Action:** step-by-step guidelines on how to roll out the 'Equal Footing' program within your organisation
4. **Future Focus:** information on how to develop strategy and a business case in the longer term

1. INTRODUCTION

Most organisations want to:

- cultivate more equal and respectful relationships between men and women
- improve the productivity and morale of all staff
- increase career opportunities and improve the retention of women
- promote attitudes that are supportive of gender equality.

Unfortunately, many organisations don't really know how to achieve these things. The information that follows will help you get started. Let's begin by learning about what we mean by a 'whole of organisation' approach.

WHAT IS A 'WHOLE OF ORGANISATION APPROACH' TO GENDER EQUALITY?

The best way to achieve widespread and lasting change at your workplace is to implement it on a broad organisational level. This is called a 'whole of organisation approach', and it is when most people at your workplace are united behind a common aim, or an agreed course of action – in this instance, achieving gender equality.

The best way to apply this approach is to ensure that everybody is clear about, and shares:

- a sense of the overall purpose
- knowledge about the specific steps and priorities that will help achieve that purpose
- a set of guidelines, policies or principles that will help guide the organisation's approach to achieving that purpose.

But let's be more specific. When the purpose is to achieve gender equality, a 'whole of organisation' approach would look at the most effective ways to:

- promote equal and respectful relationships between men and women at work
- promote gender equal norms and prevent sexual discrimination or harassment
- improve access to resources and systems of support.

Imagine the shared goal of gender equality runs through your workplace like a river. When a 'whole of organisation' change is introduced (a policy about gender equality, for example), it creates a current in this river. As your processes and procedures improve, when key leaders act as role models and talk about equality and respect, managers make inclusivity a priority, and surveys or working groups are conducted, this current becomes one of equality and respect. Individuals within the organisation can't help but be swept up by this current – it becomes "the norm" and "the way we do

things". Some will swim with the current, most will just be swept along, and some may actively try to swim against it – but the flow is irresistible, and everyone will end up downstream eventually.

Taking a 'whole of organisation' approach to equality and respect means not focusing too intently on giving individuals swimming lessons. Instead, it means keeping your eye firmly on the big picture and doing structural things (like including equality in Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and thinking about setting diversity targets) to make the river flow freely.

A big part of a whole of organisation approach is to look at and change processes. This involves being both reflective (looking at the way things have always been done) and anticipatory (working out the best ways to solve future problems or issues).

For example, imagine Leila has worked for a company for three years and is about to go on parental leave. Instead of scrambling to find a suitable replacement for Leila and then expecting things to magically revert back to normal when she returns, an organisation with foresight would consider introducing a policy or program that incorporates succession planning to make temporarily losing an employee a more seamless process. They may have a plan for staying in touch with people on leave, as well as including strategies to make it easier for employees like Leila to re-enter the workplace and access opportunities as they resettle. With policies like this in place, everyone who comes after Leila will also benefit.

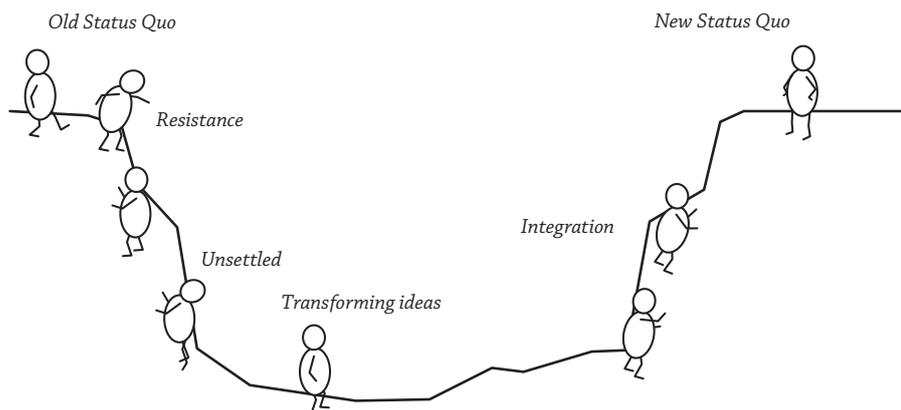
If Leila has a great manager who skilfully oversees her individual situation, there's a risk that the need for long term policies and programs is overlooked. We can become reliant on key individuals to do the right thing. While it's important that individual managers champion gender equality, the reality is that key people move on, priorities within the business change, and positive attitudes and momentum can easily be lost. Long-term structural and policy changes are more sustainable and more effective in transforming assumptions and behaviours at work. This is a great place to invest time and money. Cultural change occurs when people come to think, "that's just how things are done around here".

When good practice that promotes gender equality becomes the norm in your organisation, you will see real progress.

IT WON'T HAPPEN QUICKLY

No matter what the change, the process usually takes time in any workplace. There will be people who are very attached to familiar ways of thinking and acting. They may see suggestions of change as a criticism and feel defensive about changing. It's good to try to position the changes as non-personal and organisation-wide.

The diagram below reflects a common pathway as people who are resistant to change come to terms with new ways of thinking:



These changes take time and can't happen if employees don't understand how their workplace operates when it comes to gender. Most people need to be helped to see that the many assumptions they make each day about men and women can have a negative impact - only then can they start to think twice before making judgments and decisions and have new kinds of conversations.

The first step is to move your organisation in the right direction. Momentum will build over time and more people will come on board to help you. Don't expect a complete turnaround - ideally, you'll be thinking in terms of a 3-5 year plan. But each organisational decision, each step, each year should yield some noticeable changes.



We had a great situation unfold at the office the other day. There were a few of us in the boardroom, setting up a morning tea for some visitors. Someone said,

‘Why don’t we grab some of the girls off the phones to help out?’

One of my male colleagues said, ‘We don’t say stuff like that anymore. Why wouldn’t we ask some of the guys to help us?’

It was fantastic!

– Mel, 37

ENLISTING THE SUPPORT OF SENIOR LEADERS

You will need to spend some time thinking about the best ways to engage the people who make the big decisions in your organisation, including senior leaders like the CEO and CFO. Gaining support at an executive and board level is crucial, as these leaders can champion gender equality to management and a trickle down effect will occur across your entire organisation.

Of course, seeking the support of 'leaders' still overwhelmingly means seeking the support of men. Only 3.5 per cent of CEOs in Australia's top 200 companies were female in 2012, and women held approximately 10 per cent of executive management positions – so it's important to realise it's predominantly men you will be asking to help you drive organisational change.³⁵

Why is this important to know? It will inform the way you approach this issue. The truth is that it's very easy to turn gender equality into an "us and them" situation and paint all men as the oppressors of women. The statistics about inequality are very damning and certainly help support this stance. But it's obviously a mistake to cast all men as villains and all women as victims. As you will learn, gender bias, gender expectations, and gender inequality are deeply entrenched in our society and they mostly occur unconsciously, without men (and women) even realising it.

Gender inequality isn't anybody's fault – and it would be a huge tactical error if you approach your initiative for change by pointing the finger at men. Being accusatory is only going to make people defensive and they may disengage. Remember: this is all about equality, and you're pursuing it so that both sexes will benefit from a more fair and equal workplace. You need men on side to make this work.

There is another important factor to take into account: many people mistakenly believe gender equality has already been achieved, and is no longer an issue in the 21st century. Sometimes inequality is subtle or hidden, so it's easy for a senior leader to look around their

workplace, see a lot of women at desks, observe both sexes working harmoniously together, and dismiss gender discrimination and inequality as a past problem that has been "fixed".

Younger men are particularly likely to believe this, as it simply hasn't been their experience. They may have had more female than male classmates at university as women's participation in higher education continues to increase. And they probably also entered the workforce with a solid representation of women at the graduate level. You may need to show them that these perceptions are illusory and, in fact, the foundations for gender inequality are laid early. For example, there is a very high probability that the female graduates they started work with are actually earning less money than they are, for doing the same job.³⁶

When talking to leaders and management about gender equality, you'll need to:

1. Show them that gender inequality exists
2. Make it personal in some way, so they engage
3. Show that achieving equality is good for business
4. Reiterate that gender equality benefits everyone
5. Explain that it's a process.



All five of these points are explained fully in a tip sheet called 'How to Bring Leaders (Especially Men) on Board', which is document **A02** in the Resources Pack.

Too many organisations look to women alone to change the organisational practices that maintain the status quo. Such an approach fails to recognise the site of most organisational power. The fact is that in most businesses both the human and financial resources are controlled by men. Creating change therefore requires men to take the message of gender equality to other men. It requires men to get on board, to take action and to encourage their peers to do likewise.

– Elizabeth Broderick, Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner, speaking at the UN Women National Committee Japan Symposium, December 2013

ENLISTING THE SUPPORT OF THE WGEA

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) is an Australian Government statutory authority created by the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*. The Agency is charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces, so it is useful for you to talk with them before you try to secure a commitment from leaders within your organisation. The WGEA works collaboratively with employers, providing advice, practical tools and education to help them improve their gender performance. Their staff members are workplace gender equality specialists and can provide industry-specific advice.



See the WGEA website at www.wgea.gov.au or call them on (02) 9432 7000 or 1800 730 233.

Achieving gender equality is important for workplaces not only because it is 'fair' and 'the right thing to do', it is also vitally important to the bottom line of a business and to the productivity of our nation.³⁷

'THE BUSINESS CASE FOR GENDER EQUALITY': A USEFUL DOCUMENT

There is also an extremely useful document by WGEA titled *'The Business Case for Gender Equality'*, and this will really help you frame conversations with senior leaders and managers at your organisation.

The document talks about how improving gender equality allows organisations to:

- attract the best employees
- reduce cost of staff turnover
- enhance organisational performance
- improve access to target markets
- minimise legal risks
- enhance reputation
- engage men.

All these topics are certain to pique the interest of leaders in your workplace. Talk to them about the positive results they'll achieve by choosing the path towards gender equality. They're sure to sit up and take notice.



You can find a fact sheet about *'The Business Case for Gender Equality'* in the Resources Pack. Refer to document **A03**.



The business case can also be viewed online at: www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/business_case_for_gender_equality.pdf

THE WORKPLACE GENDER EQUALITY ACT

It's helpful that the principles of gender equality at work are upheld by legislation. In Australia, we have the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*, which is a great motivator for senior people to take action.



A government fact sheet about the *Act* can be found in the Resources Pack. Refer to document **A04**: *'Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012'*.

The principal aims of the *Act* are to:

- promote and improve gender equality (including equal remuneration between women and men) in employment and in the workplace
- support employers to remove barriers to the full and equal participation of women in the workforce, in recognition of the disadvantaged position of women in relation to employment matters
- promote among employers the elimination of discrimination on the basis of gender in relation to employment matters (including in relation to family and caring responsibilities)
- foster workplace consultation between employers and employees on issues concerning gender equality in employment and in the workplace
- improve the productivity and competitiveness of Australian business through the advancement of gender equality in employment and in the workplace.³⁸

2. PREPARATION

You've read the first part of this manual titled 'The Basics', so you should already be familiar with some terms, issues and concepts relating to gender equality. But there are some further questions you need to ask of yourself and your organisation before you can move into 'action mode'.

WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO EDUCATE MYSELF?

Another effective way to ensure you are up to date with the issues is to complete some online learning. It doesn't have to take long: modules on this topic are very concise.

The WGEA has an e-learning module called '*What is Workplace Gender Equality?*' This provides an overview of the key concepts of workplace gender equality, the current state of gender equality in Australia, why these issues exist, and why they are important to address.

www.wgea.gov.au/learn/elearning-modules

The Australian Human Rights Commission have made gender equality a key action area, with the aim of removing the inequality and discrimination faced by women. They have published numerous reports and guides on their website, covering issues such as pregnancy and parental leave, sexual harassment, male dominated industries and women in leadership. These resources can be accessed on their website:

www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination

These are useful resources for anybody who is interested in understanding and removing the barriers to gender equality we are facing in Australia.

WHAT ARE WE CURRENTLY DOING ORGANISATIONALLY?

Before you leap into action or even consider a business case, you need to ask and answer this question. Your organisation probably already collects some kind of data on gender: this will help you create a clear picture of where you're presently positioned, and also help inform what still has to be done. To move forward towards gender equality, you first need to build an accurate profile of where the business currently sits in regard to it.

There are many ways of gathering information. Try to see it as a "stocktake", rather than a criticism of what might be missing. Your findings will make writing a compelling business case that much easier.

You can:

- **Talk to senior leaders** about their impressions of where the business currently stands in achieving gender equality and their hopes for the future (confirming their buy-in is essential, so it's great to do this first)
- **Brainstorm a list of what's currently happening with key people** to identify what already exists to support equality in your workplace. Find out what's going on by asking the following questions:
 - is gender equality mentioned in our existing policies and procedures?
 - do we currently have targets or a quota to ensure equal gender representation?
 - is gender equality mentioned in our existing induction training?
 - is gender bias ever discussed or considered during recruitment or promotion?
 - is gender bias an issue when selecting people for training and development opportunities?
 - is our access to workplace flexibility or parental leave free from assumptions about gender roles?
 - do we have women in senior positions who can act as mentors (or aspirational examples) for our female employees?
 - is gender equality built into existing Key Performance Indicators?
- **Send an open invitation for all staff to share their thoughts on the topic.** Ask staff to email their observations and opinions about what the organisation currently does, how well they think it's working, and suggest ideas about what they would like to see happen next. This kind of freeform invitation to "have a say" can be a real eye-opener. Don't be worried about complaints: even negative comments will help build the picture
- **Run focus groups.** Invite a few people from every level of the organisation to have their say via focus groups. Here are some questions that you might think about asking:
 - are you familiar with the goals of the organisation in regard to gender equality?
 - do you know which policies and procedures exist to support equality?
 - have you discussed appropriate behaviours with your team?
 - do you consciously manage your teams with a view to gender equality - and, if so, in what ways?
 - how often have you witnessed behaviours that undermine equality?

- how are these addressed?
- what is the outcome?
- how would you describe the attitudes of most people to the aim of achieving gender equality in the organisation?
- do bystanders tend to step up and say something if there's an equality issue?
- what do you want to know more about?

Make sure that all responses are recorded by an observer in the room and remember to watch out for possible bias. There's also an issue of some people just agreeing, or some more strongly spoken individuals answering for the whole group.



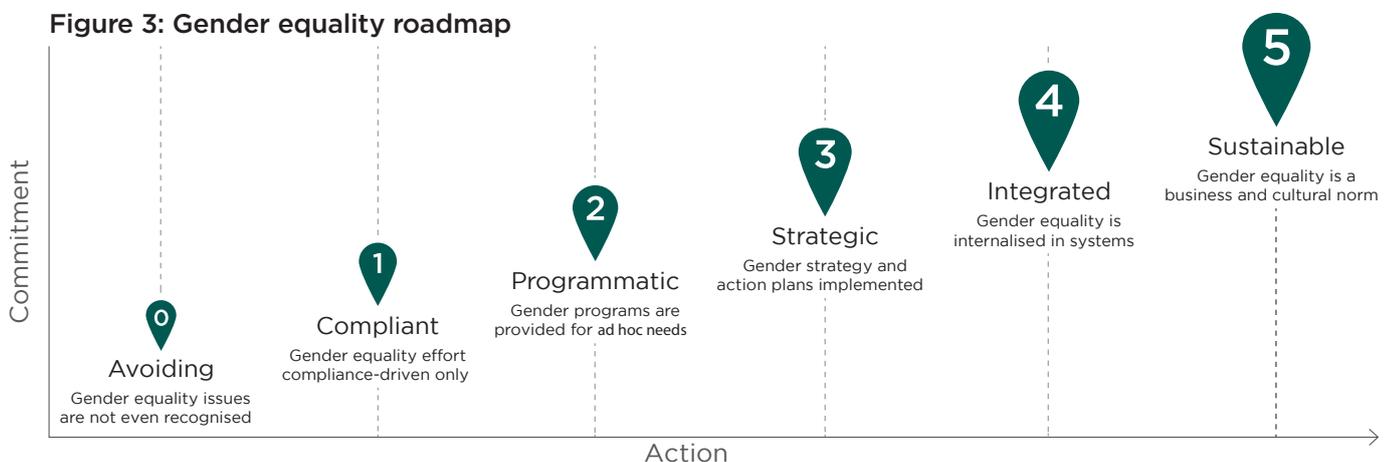
The Resources Pack includes a 'Focus Group Sessions Plan' and some ideas for the questions you can pose (document **A05**).

- **Send out a survey** to formally ascertain how your people perceive levels of gender equality and respect. The benefit to this more structured approach is that the data helps you build a business case for investing in changes that will achieve equality. You can build an evidence-based approach and accurately report on progress along the way. You can use the same measure again (perhaps after 12-18 months) after you have rolled out some training, policy revision and a poster campaign, etc.



You can find information about the 'Equal Footing' pilot program survey in a fact sheet, which is document **A06** in the Resources Pack.

This is a useful diagram adapted from the Diversity & Inclusion Pathway© model, for thinking about where your organisation currently sits:



*Adapted from the Diversity & Inclusion Pathway© model developed by Diversity Partners Pty Ltd (www.diversitypartners.com.au) and shared with their permission.

WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE IN OUR ORGANISATION?

Begin by developing your vision: paint a broad picture of how much better things could be. Have a think about what true gender equality in your organisation might look like. How would you know when you've achieved it? What would be different?

Gather together some people to help you explore this question before you start setting targets or goals. This may result in you creating a working group.

For example: you might decide that if you worked in a genuinely gender equitable organisation, it would be a place where

- there is explicit leadership endorsement of gender equality as a priority in the business
- there is an agreed understanding that achieving gender equality is a major strategic goal and people are aware of the documented steps being taken and how they can get involved
- people are aware of clear policies that demonstrate a commitment to eliminating discrimination and promoting equitable work practices
- women and men have equal access to and appropriate supports to ensure they can raise families and take on carer responsibilities at different times of their lives
- people reach their professional goals, access training and mentorship opportunities regardless of gender
- there is zero tolerance for sexual harassment, sexist comments or put downs
- people question, think twice and speak up when gender based assumptions are made
- people report that they feel confident to speak up against sexist comments, and feel they can question or complain about how gender issues are managed
- recruitment is handled in ways that avoid unconscious bias and promote access for women and roles are created without any gender attached to them (either overtly or more subtly)
- the gender pay gap is quantified and eliminated
- gender equity is considered and reflected in all work with clients and all aspects of service delivery (this is not just an internal issue).

You will have your own style and priorities – these are just examples.

Remember: you might have 10 aspects to your vision, but only decide to work on 3 in the first year of your initiative. That's okay.



You can find an example of a template in the 'Future Plans: What Next?' fact sheet, which is document **A07** in the Resources Pack.

WHAT MIGHT CULTURAL CHANGE ENTAIL?

Sometimes it's hard to see the patterns that already exist in our workplaces. This excerpt is from 'Genders at Work', a report that examines the role of workplaces in preventing men's violence against women, compiled by Scott Holmes and Michael Flood. It will get you thinking.

Contemporary workplaces continue to be organised in ways which reflect and reinforce gender inequalities. These are evident, for example, in the timing of work and norms of leadership and management. Despite the move to 24/7 retail trading, and some other factors such as continuous manufacturing lines, the vast majority of workplaces still operate on a 9am to 5pm basis – a pattern that, in most places, is not aligned with school operating hours.

This pattern assumes that the worker has no responsibility for delivering children to school or picking them up again. Factoring in the time that is often taken in travelling to and from the workplace, it may well mean that the worker is also unable to participate in the daily routines of young children. It is, in other words, a pattern that assumes the traditional gendered division of labour.

This pattern is also discernible in the number of hours worked per week, with men more likely to be working full time, and women more likely to be working part-time or casually... Women's participation in the workforce has generated adaptations to this gendered pattern in the form of flexible working arrangements. Interestingly, numbers of reports suggest that both men and women are reluctant to make use of these arrangements, recognising that there could be penalties for using them because they are contrary to the acceptable norm.

– Scott Holmes and Michael Flood, 'Genders at Work',
University of Wollongong, 2013



You can read the full article at:

www.whiteribbon.org.au/uploads/media/Research_series/WRIB-470_Genders_At_Work_Paper_v03.pdf

Clearly, lots of things will need to change if you are aiming towards a culture where both men and women negotiate appropriate flexibility, meetings and events are scheduled for when most people can attend, and women are better supported to work full-time if they want to. Don't try to tackle everything at once – make gradual moves in the right direction.

WHO CAN I ENLIST TO HELP?

As already mentioned, it's imperative to seek and receive the support of senior leaders and other managers within your organisation. Get them involved very early on.

Keep in mind that you need to be specific with the leadership group about their level of support. They may tell you that your push for equality has their full support, but that might mean they are solely interested in:

- starting conversations about gender in the business
- gathering baseline data about what's currently happening
- training managers in gender equality best practice.

These alone are significant changes and it would be a tremendous kick-start to your initiative if you receive commitment at a leadership level to try to achieve them. But it's important not to automatically assume the decision-makers are also on board to close the gender pay gap, or to transform the way people work by bringing in new flexible work practices, or to set targets for increased participation for women. There are lots of different elements on the road to gender equality and you need to make sure you move slowly and keep management informed of your progress. Some things are harder to achieve than others, but they will happen if you maintain momentum. Something like introducing extra flexibility at work (how and when people meet targets and report to management) has far ranging and multi level consequences. It needs to be planned for and thought through over time.

You will need help, as organisational change can be slow and it's normal to be met with some resistance from time to time.



There is a tip sheet titled '*How to Manage Resistance to Change*', which will help you out further. Refer to document **A08** in the Resources Pack.

People said, 'But we covered gender equality about 5 years ago', as if it was a done deal. I pointed out that nothing much had changed in 5 years: we still had our senior management meetings at 8.30am and not one woman had been appointed in a senior role in all that time. People need to see this as an ongoing commitment to equality, just like ensuring people aren't discriminated against because of their cultural background. It's ongoing.

– Renata, 26



You can also try contacting groups and forums that specialise in workplace gender equality:

The WGEA

www.wgea.gov.au or call them on (02) 9432 7000 or 1800 730 233

Australian Women Lawyers

www.australianwomenlawyers.com.au

Australian Businesswomen's Network

www.abn.org.au

Australian Women's Sport & Recreation Association

www.australianwomensport.com.au

National Association of Women in Construction

www.nawic.com.au

Australian Women in Resources Alliance

www.amma.org.au/awra

Australian Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry

www.awcci.org.au

Females in Information Technology & Telecommunications

www.aiia.com.au/?page=FITT

Women and Leadership Australia

www.wla.com.au

Working Women's Centres

www.wwc.org.au

Women in Mining & Resources (WA)

womeninmining.com

Women's Health Practice Group

www.aasw.asn.au/victoria/womens-health-practice-group

I am interested in removing the barriers to full participation for women. That could mean overhauling recruitment or ensuring genuine mentoring relationships are initiated – it means very different things in different industries. I use industry groups for advice.

– Clay, 49

Gender diverse teams are more innovative, because they draw on greater diversity of thinking and a range of cognitive approaches...

– The WGEA Gender Strategy toolkit³⁹

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO PLACE EQUALITY ON THE AGENDA?

After you've secured the support of leaders and management, you can start to look more broadly.

Ideally, it's good to prepare people at all levels of the organisation for a growing focus on gender equality and raise awareness before you start trying to build skill levels. This is much better than leaping into a training program. If you suddenly start delivering training or put up posters without any context, you may trigger initial resistance or negativity towards the program (e.g. "Why are women getting all this attention?"). Even though most people do want a fair and equal workplace, there can be some fears around changes of this kind. A gentle launch involving senior leaders and managers as champions is a much wiser initial step.



When you're ready, there's a tip sheet titled 'Suggested Comms' in the Resources Pack. Refer to document **A09**.

GETTING THE WORD OUT

Think about how you will elevate the issue of gender equality and ensure people see it as an ongoing priority.

- **having key leaders talk about the commitment to gender equality** in the organisation (and what they hope to achieve) is a great start – if people can view these changes as part of broader organisational strategy and see genuine senior level commitment, they make more sense
- **circulating small and easily digestible snippets of information** – ensure that the topics of equality and respect feature in newsletters or email bulletins, explaining how making changes creates a more successful, productive and healthier workplace. It's most effective if this information is dispersed in small chunks – long articles with too much detail or lists of stats and facts can be overwhelming, and are less likely to be read and absorbed. Short case studies or infographics work really well.
- **enlisting champions of change is also effective** – there will be some people in your organisation who are already committed to equitable work practices, who negotiate flexible arrangements, and avoid making gender based assumptions. Utilise these people and use them as role models. If you can get them on board, invite them to contribute to your plans and ask them to start some positive conversations.

Jim had an all-female finance team for years and was a very popular manager. People worked hard and he offered flexibility and had a few job share positions that lasted over a decade. Now he has 4 males on his team and he is still offering that flexible approach and bringing out the best in people. He is a champion in our organisation in the way he motivates people and takes a fair approach.

– Mal, 50

- **starting a Working Group** – this needs some consideration, as it's not always a great idea to place gender equality in the hands of a few keen people in the long term. Instead of your entire organisation learning to use a gender aware lens in everything it does, individual staff may think: "Oh, that committee will look after this stuff. We don't need to worry about it". However, an initial working group to get the program moving is a good idea.

Ensure that each member of the group has a plan for communicating back to their wider team the work that's being planned. Their role should be to start conversations that question stereotypes and raise awareness, engage people actively in making small changes right across the organisation, and help ensure their colleagues fill in surveys, contribute and attend events as required.

If you do start a Working Group or Committee, developing some clear 'Terms of Reference' (TOR) is wise. Here are some examples below:

- to develop and implement a strategy across the organisation to achieve gender equality
- to ensure gender equity through increased representation of women in senior and technical roles
- to grow an organisational culture that embraces gender equality
- to provide an environment where women can fully participate, contribute, where their work and life needs are valued and career aspirations are supported
- to provide an environment where men can negotiate appropriate flexibility and play a more hands on role at home
- to work towards becoming an employer of choice for women as measured by WGEA criteria.³⁹

You might also plan for this to be a short to medium-term group – perhaps for 12 months. This allows an opportunity to review and enlist new people when enthusiasm may start to flag. Ongoing open-ended groups tend to become stale after a year or so, even when they have an important agenda.

Eventually, you will be able to establish a formal body (ideally led by male and female leaders with influence) that can take your more formalised future strategies forward and communicate progress throughout the organisation. Remain optimistic that this won't always feel like an uphill battle.

- **sustaining a positive approach** – gender can be a contentious issue for some people. They can respond with comments like:

Don't we already bend over backwards for the women in this place?

Can't we have a break from this feminist stuff?

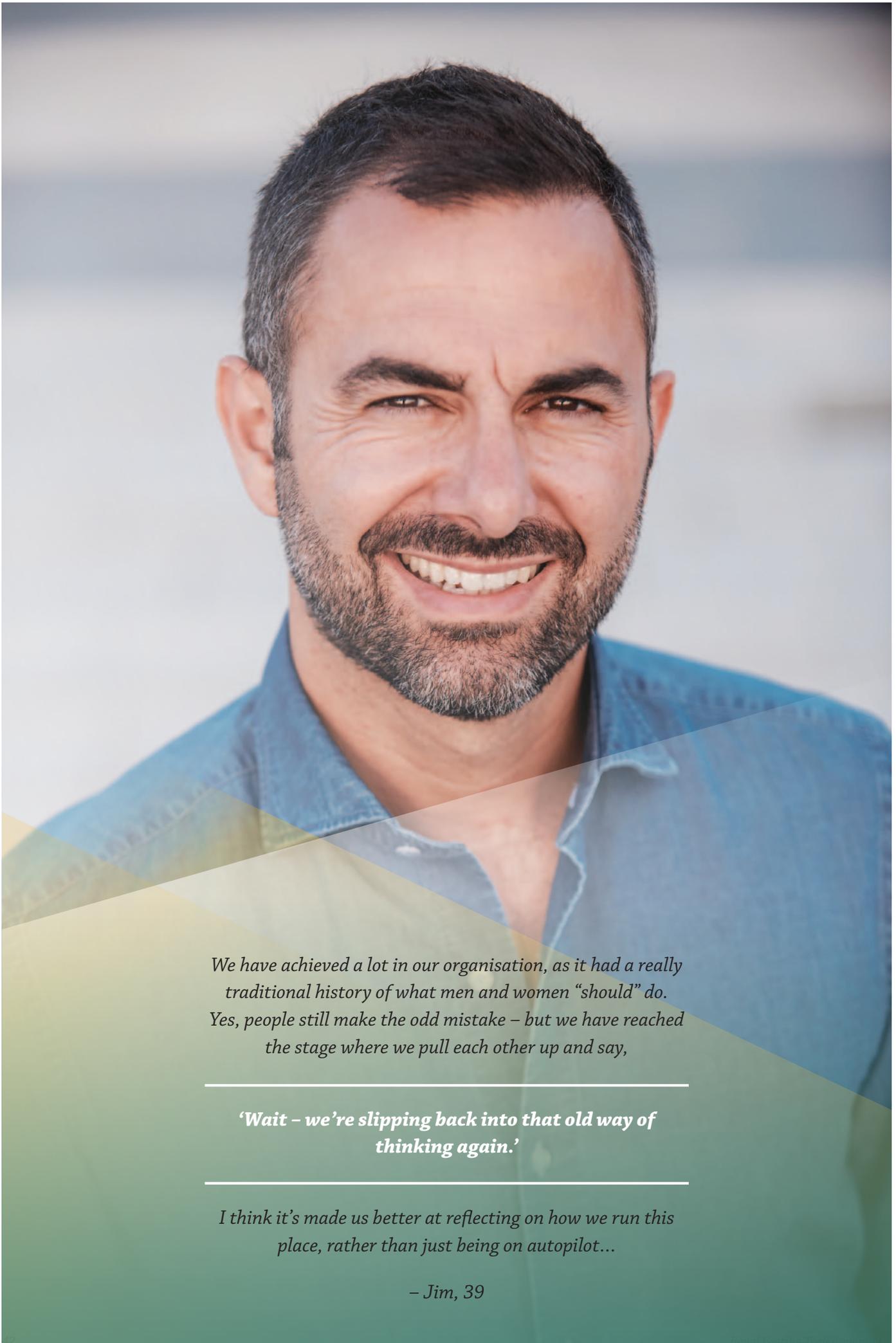
Is this really a good use of our money?

What about some initiatives that support men?

When you are driving change, it's easy to become frustrated and push hard when you meet with resistance. Remember that a positive, solution-focused “we can get there if we work together” approach will be most effective. If you find yourself becoming angry, talking in punitive ways, or accusing people of sexism, you'll be undermining the success of your initiative.

When running the 'Equal Footing' program, we had some managers who were concerned about some of the posters. They thought they would get their male staff offside. I tried to talk to them about a bit of discomfort being helpful, as it starts conversations and actually makes people think. I eventually compromised and gave them a choice of which posters they would use. Sometimes people just want to have a say: they aren't necessarily implying that you're wrong.

– Donna, 25



We have achieved a lot in our organisation, as it had a really traditional history of what men and women “should” do. Yes, people still make the odd mistake – but we have reached the stage where we pull each other up and say,

‘Wait – we’re slipping back into that old way of thinking again.’

I think it’s made us better at reflecting on how we run this place, rather than just being on autopilot...

– Jim, 39

3. ACTION

HOW TO ROLL OUT THE 'EQUAL FOOTING' PROGRAM IN YOUR ORGANISATION

Here is everything you need to know to conduct your own 'Equal Footing' program – you can choose the parts you like, or run the whole thing. This program is designed to raise awareness, improve respectful behaviours and set you on the right path to achieving gender equality.

This table represents the entire 8-step program at a glance. Detailed information about each step can be found on the pages that follow.

<i>Step</i>	<i>Description</i>
1. Initial launch morning tea	Staff members are invited to a 30 minute get together, where they learn about the 'Equal Footing' program. This provides an opportunity to collect baseline data about their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours about gender equality and your workplace. For example you may wish to use a pre-program survey.
2. Focus Groups	If you used a pre-program survey, you may want to follow up your data collection by finding out more about a few issues with groups of 8-10 people. Focus groups will help you drill down and find out people's experiences and responses to these issues.
3. Poster campaign	You can choose from our collection of thought provoking posters to be displayed around your workplace. These are certain to start conversations.
4. Face-to-face training sessions <i>(90 mins for staff and 2 hours for leaders)</i>	Engaging, activity-based training sessions to help skill people up to effect change. Participants will learn what terms like equality, equity, and bias actually mean and understand how these issues impact lives. The sessions include practical skills in making changes at work for a more equitable playing field and how to speak up as a bystander. The leaders' session has an extra 30 minutes at the end that covers how to lead teams with a gender lens and how to apply it more broadly across the organisation.
5. Work on improving your policies and procedures	By having a few people work together to identify which policies need adjusting to better promote gender equality, you'll gain different perspectives and will be better placed to make some long-term sustainable changes. Meet regularly and make adjustments. Remember: there are opportunities to seek help if necessary – why reinvent the wheel?
6. Email bulletins and downloadable tip sheets for staff to take home	These engaging bulletins are emailed out so people can send them on to family and friends, or print and take home. They pick up some key themes from the face-to-face training, and help to continue raising awareness.
7. On a Roll 21™ workplace game	This game takes 3 minutes a day for 21 days and helps people practise some of the key messages from the face-to-face training day to day in their workplace. People can take part in On a Roll 21™ via their smart phone, tablet or on their computer. (This is the only element not included in this toolkit, it must be purchased separately from En Masse on (03) 9827 1388 if you are interested.)
8. Post program data collection	All those who completed the pre-survey are invited to complete the post-survey as described in the Resource Pack document A06.

EXPLORING EACH STAGE OF THE 'EQUAL FOOTING' PROGRAM IN DETAIL

1. INITIAL LAUNCH MORNING TEA

Overview

Staff are invited to a 30 minute get together to launch the program where they:

- share morning tea together
- hear from key leaders about the program and why it's important to the business
- take part in an activity to get them talking
- fill in a pre-survey to gather baseline data.

Tasks To Complete To Make It Happen

- invite key leader to speak
- book room and catering
- send invitations (asking staff to bring smart phones if they have them)
- provide pens and printed surveys for those without smart phones.

Resources That Will Help Bring It Together



See a complete overview of 'How to Launch 'Equal Footing' at Your Workplace' in the Resources Pack. Please refer to document **A10**.



Information about a pre-survey is in the Resource Pack. Please refer to document **A06**.

For more information on creating your own surveys see Section 8, Post-Survey Data Collection.

2. FOCUS GROUPS

Overview

If you used a pre-survey, you may want to follow up your data collection by exploring a few issues in more depth with groups of 8-10 people.

Tasks to Complete to Make It Happen

- book rooms
- issue invitations
- have two people running the focus group (one to take notes).

Resources That Will Help Bring It Together

It's good to have some issues ready to discuss as a group, plus some opportunities for participants to fill in some answers privately and anonymously. Set aside 50-60 minutes in a private area for the focus group.

Here are seven steps to follow when meeting as a focus group.

1. **Give participants some context:**

"You'll be aware that we are aiming to boost respect and equality here in order to achieve gender equality. A while ago, we collected information about gender equality and people's beliefs and attitudes and what they think happens here in a survey app. We gained some really interesting and useful information from this survey, such as [number] per cent of people believe [belief] and [number] said [belief]. This focus group is a chance for us to hone in on a few of these issues and find out more."

2. **Remind people about confidentiality:**

"What you say will remain confidential and any of your comments we record will not be attributed to you. We expect you to maintain confidentiality as to what is said in this session, too."

3. **Start with an icebreaker or warm up activity:**

"If an alien were to come to earth, how would you explain cats and dogs to them?"

4. **How would you explain the differences between men and women?**

You should gently start the conversation about sex vs. gender and highlight what's actually socially constructed. Reiterate that it's good to acknowledge differences, but inclusion and fairness are the best keys to advancing gender equality.

5. **Move on to some general questions like:**

"Do you believe we currently have an equal playing field for men and women at our workplace? If not, why not?"

6. **Then ask something more specific like:**

"What happens when people make sexist or unhelpful remarks that relate to gender while at work? Who speaks up? Who doesn't? How harmful is it? What needs to change?"

7. **Offer people a chance to answer some questions:**

Do this as a group and give them a chance to answer anonymously.

3. POSTER CAMPAIGN

Overview

The concept behind the 'Equal Footing' poster campaign was to take a series of gender-biased comments that could realistically be overheard at any workplace – typical “water-cooler” conversation – and then subvert them, swapping one sex for the other, to highlight the gender inequality embedded in each message.

Ideally, a selection of the nine posters should be displayed around your workplace throughout the four-week period before the 'Equal Footing' training. They are designed to be conversation starters – so you should change the displayed posters regularly, to keep people thinking, talking and intrigued about the upcoming training.

Tasks to Complete to Make It Happen

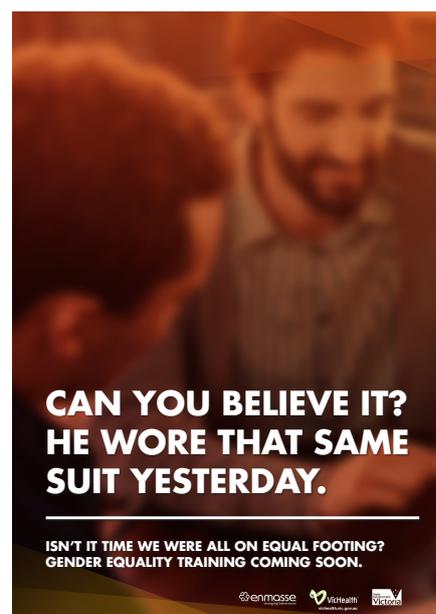
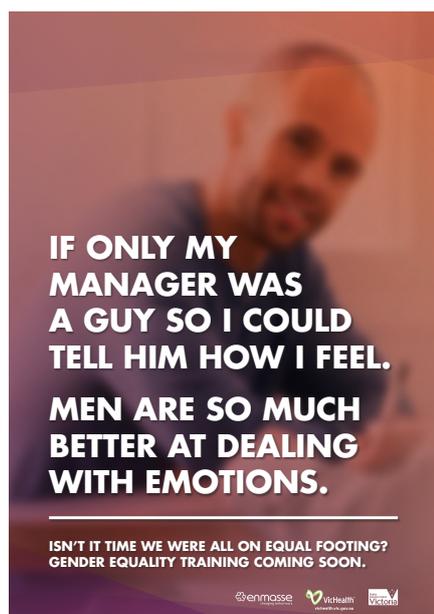
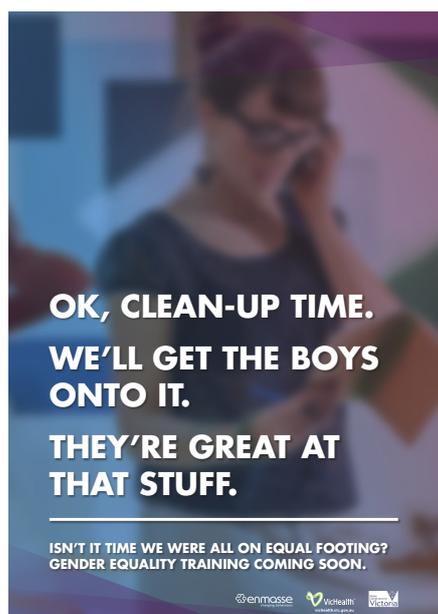
- seek opinions and decide which posters will best suit your workplace (but check with senior leaders and managers before displaying them)
- decide on the best positions for display (common areas including bathrooms and lunch rooms, your staff intranet, etc).

Resources That Will Help Bring It Together

You can find small versions of the nine posters on this and the next page.



There are high-resolution PDFs of all the 'Equal Footing' posters available on the VicHealth website: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

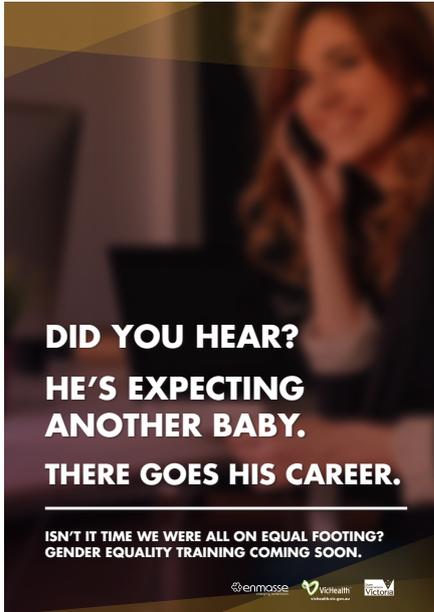




HE'LL BURST INTO TEARS IF YOU MENTION THAT. YOU KNOW WHAT MEN ARE LIKE.

ISN'T IT TIME WE WERE ALL ON EQUAL FOOTING?
GENDER EQUALITY TRAINING COMING SOON.



DID YOU HEAR? HE'S EXPECTING ANOTHER BABY. THERE GOES HIS CAREER.

ISN'T IT TIME WE WERE ALL ON EQUAL FOOTING?
GENDER EQUALITY TRAINING COMING SOON.



THESE MEN DON'T KNOW HOW LUCKY THEY ARE. THEY GET TO WORK PART-TIME AND PICK UP THEIR KIDS.

ISN'T IT TIME WE WERE ALL ON EQUAL FOOTING?
GENDER EQUALITY TRAINING COMING SOON.

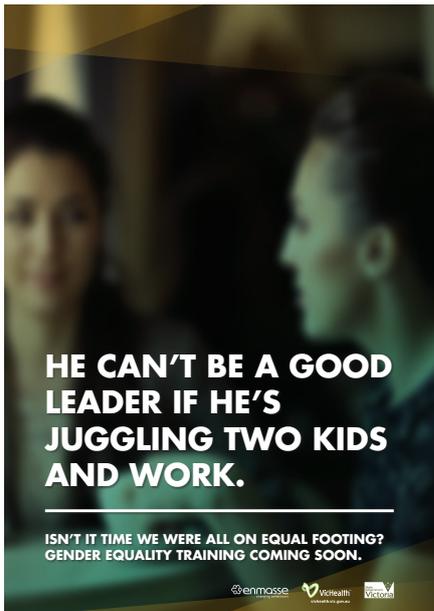
  



NO, DON'T BOTHER INVITING HIM. HE'S ONLY HERE TWO DAYS A WEEK.

ISN'T IT TIME WE WERE ALL ON EQUAL FOOTING?
GENDER EQUALITY TRAINING COMING SOON.

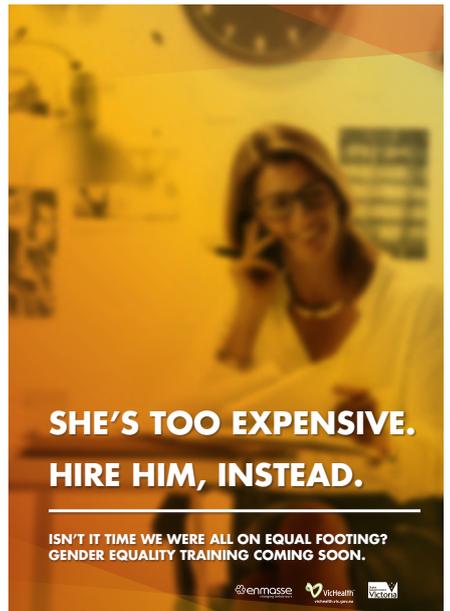
  



HE CAN'T BE A GOOD LEADER IF HE'S JUGGLING TWO KIDS AND WORK.

ISN'T IT TIME WE WERE ALL ON EQUAL FOOTING?
GENDER EQUALITY TRAINING COMING SOON.



SHE'S TOO EXPENSIVE. HIRE HIM, INSTEAD.

ISN'T IT TIME WE WERE ALL ON EQUAL FOOTING?
GENDER EQUALITY TRAINING COMING SOON.

4. FACE-TO-FACE TRAINING SESSIONS

Overview

This training has been designed for both staff and leaders/managers, and the initial 90 minute session can be attended by both groups. At the completion of the 90 minutes, the leaders should step outside for a 5 minute break while the remaining participants finish up and complete evaluation forms. The leaders then return and complete an additional 30 minutes, focusing on how they can pass on what's been covered to their teams.

Tasks to Complete to Make It Happen

If you plan to facilitate the training yourself, it's highly advisable you attend a 'Train the Trainer' workshop beforehand. To register interest in a fee-for-service workshop please email VicHealth through the website: www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

Resources That Will Help Bring It Together

The 'Equal Footing' training is very adaptable, and you can adjust or omit aspects you feel may be too challenging for your group. It's better to aim to get some conversations started and manage the group well, rather than test your comfort zone and end up in a difficult situation. Remember that the whole issue of gender can be contentious in workplaces. This is usually due to people:

- being nervous about changes
- thinking equality will make their job less secure
- feeling criticised or blamed
- being very attached to the makeup of their teams and the status quo
- genuinely believing gender equality is a non-issue.

Additional Advice and Preparation

In order to facilitate these sessions, the trainer will need to:

- be confident about explaining the concepts of stereotyping, gender and equality vs. equity
- be able to calmly manage people who say things like, "But what about men? They don't get any of the benefits", or make disparaging comments about feminists or people being too politically correct
- know the content well enough to explore it with the group, rather than just present it
- have a sense of humour and remember it's okay for people to disagree and debate.

It is ideal to have two facilitators - a male and female - presenting.



To register your interest in the 'Equal Footing' training materials, please email VicHealth through the website www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

5. WORK ON IMPROVING YOUR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Overview

All your efforts to achieve fairness and equality in your workplace are unlikely to succeed unless they are supported by clear policy: this needs to be developed, written down, explained to all employees, and then put into everyday practice.

Research by the ASX Corporate Governance Council shows that companies with diversity policies report improved corporate image as well as increased profits, greater opportunities to engage with a better and broader talent pool, and a more creative and ideas-driven working environment.⁴⁰ All these things will obviously benefit your organisation enormously – so it's time to get your head around policy and start writing.

When developing policy, you should aim to encapsulate gender equity and diversity principles and practices that will improve gender equality outcomes in your workplace. Policies about disability and cultural diversity may already exist at your organisation, possibly under a broader diversity policy or statement, which acts as a general umbrella. Your aim is to add a statement and list some objectives about gender equality to this list.

Your gender equality policies need to clearly outline what is expected of employees and who is responsible for policy governance. Your policies can include objectives and suggestions about how things can be measured, or they may just outline the intent and the aspects your organisation is prioritising. Be sure to have an organisation-wide focus, rather than looking only at the recruitment phase.

Here is some “best practice” advice you should follow:

- have two or three people (rather than the whole working group) work together to identify which policies need adjusting to better promote gender equality
- meet regularly and make adjustments – don't hesitate to seek help, if necessary
- consider good examples of gender equality policies that already exist in other organisations
- set a timeframe for completion and implementation – include future benchmarking and review processes
- plan how your staff will be informed of the policy changes.

Tasks to Complete to Make It Happen

- write or revise a gender equality policy
- update existing key documents to feature gender equality
- develop a goals document
- develop a gender equity principles document
- look at updating your current processes and procedures.

Writing Policy

When it comes time to actually write gender equality policy, these 10 tips can help:

1. ask people to be involved, consult and form a working group – don't go it alone
2. make a statement about why your organisation prioritises gender equality and how this fits in with your strategic direction
3. use clear definitions so everyone knows what the key terms like 'diversity' and 'equality' mean
4. use an objective that is clear and simple
5. state your strategies and expected outcomes in clear terms (could include targets here)
6. state who is responsible for making this happen (implementation)
7. be clear about any consequences if the policy is breached
8. link it to other relevant policies so they dovetail (discrimination, code of conduct, recruitment)
9. include how you intend to measure the policy's effectiveness (including monitoring, reviewing and reporting)
10. run it past at least one policy consultant of good standing to ensure you've got it right.

Resources That Will Help Bring It Together



There is a detailed fact sheet titled '*Developing a Workplace Gender Equality Policy*' in the Resources Pack. Refer to document **A11**.



Additionally, if you want to join the Diversity Council of Australia, you can use their Guide to Policy Writing: www.dca.org.au or phone (02) 9322 5197

Checklist

- do our new policies actively promote gender equality?
- do they mention things like unacceptable sexist comments and behaviour, gender bias, and discriminatory practices and attitudes?
- do they address equal pay for women, or mention equal access to work flexibility?
- will it be easy for our people to find and understand our policies and procedures about gender equality?
- do our policies include a list of people and organisations that employees can contact if they want help to deal with gender-based inequality?
- have we organised a timeframe to train and regularly remind our people about these policies?
- have we included these policies in our induction training process?

Featuring Gender Equality in Key Documents

It's likely that your organisation has a mission statement, or vision statement, or statement of strategic intent – you will need to start some conversations about including your gender equality goal as part of it. The statement can be as simple as:

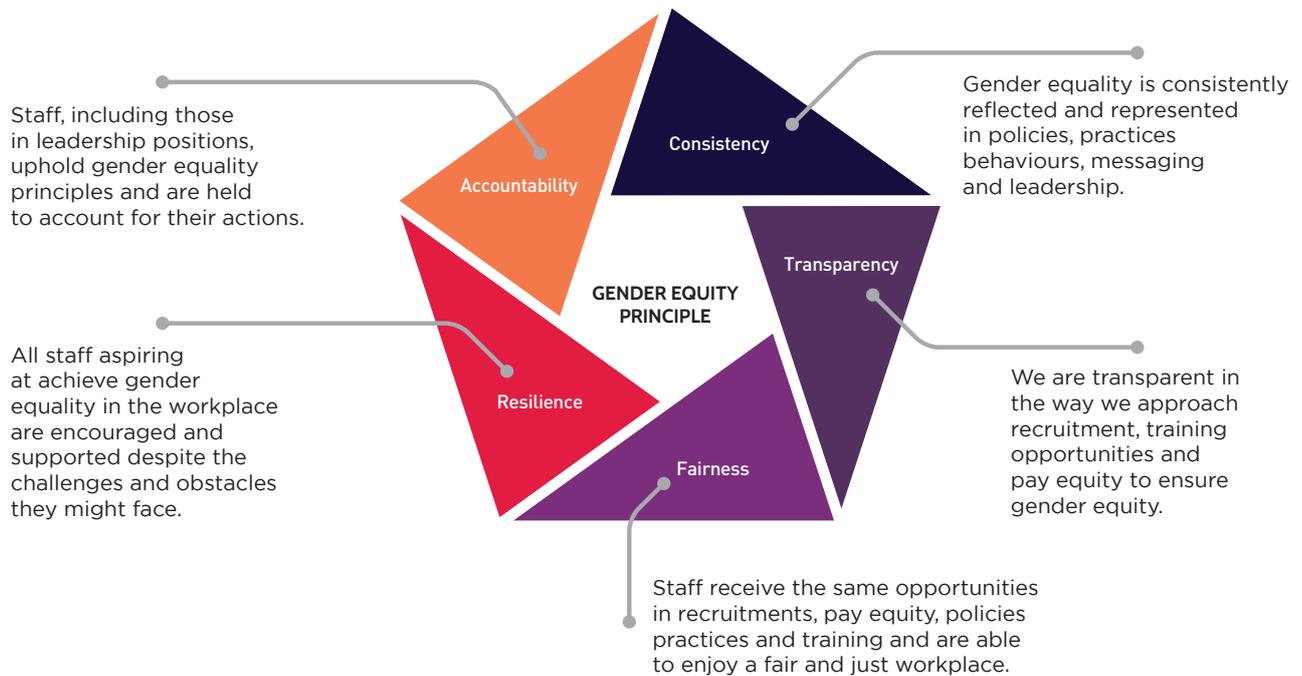
Our vision is for all employees of this organisation to access and enjoy the same rights, responsibilities, resources and opportunities regardless of their sex. We will help to achieve this by embedding gender equity principles across every level of our business.

It's wise to have this broad kind of statement about gender in a few documents, as well as having some updated policies in areas like equal opportunity, parental/carers leave, bystander action, and code of conduct.

Principles

You may wish to create a document of 'Gender Equity Principles', and this is a good task for a working group.

The City of Yarra has developed an excellent, simple diagram that may inspire you:



*Used with permission from the City of Yarra's 'Gender Equity: Strategy for a Respectful, Just and Fair Yarra 2013-2016' resource.⁴¹

Goals

It's helpful to develop a goals document before you start working on your policies. These goals may include things like:

- gender will be considered in all planning and future policy development
- we will prioritise the representation of women in leadership
- we will eliminate the gender pay gap
- we will clearly define flexible work practices and apply them to all employees equally
- we will address gender bias in the business
- we will ensure all employees have equal access to professional development, mentoring and other opportunities.⁴²

Processes and Procedures

You will also want to consider your current processes and address “the way things are done around here”. This will entail looking through a gender lens at how the workflow is presently managed, who decides who does what, and how clients are approached, engaged, and serviced (and by whom). You may want to look at your common methods of allocation of work, projects, customers/clients procurement, and overall decision-making.

6. EMAIL BULLETINS AND DOWNLOADABLE TIP SHEETS FOR STAFF TO TAKE HOME

Overview

Learning about gender equality in the face-to-face training is one thing, but the messages conveyed in it need to be reiterated for the concept to really take hold.

Tasks to Complete to Make It Happen

Momentum is key here, and a great way to keep it going is to send out engaging email bulletins on gender equality, picking up on some key themes from the training.

Resources That Will Help Bring It Together

The bulletins should be short and informative but still pack a punch. Remember to attach a downloadable tip sheet, covering a particular aspect of gender equality.



You can consider the information below, and there are additional examples in document **A12** of the Resources Pack.

A Glimpse of Global Gender Issues

Worldwide, you're more likely to be poor if you're female.

That's a fact. It's also highly likely you're doing most of the work:

- *discrimination and injustice are major causes of poverty worldwide, and women and girls bear the brunt of it in every aspect of their lives*
- *around 70 per cent of the 1.3 billion people who live in extreme poverty are women and girls⁴²*
- *about two-thirds of the 759 million adults who lack basic literacy skills are women⁴³*
- *more than 350,000 women die each year from complications during pregnancy and childbirth — 99 per cent of these are in developing countries⁴⁴*
- *women perform 66 per cent of the world's work and produce 50 per cent of the world's food, yet earn only 10 per cent of the world's income and own 1 per cent of the world's property*
- *women hold only 19.7 per cent of parliamentary seats worldwide, and only 16.7 per cent of ministerial posts. Globally, only one quarter of senior officials or managers are women.⁴⁵*

7. ON A ROLL 21™ WORKPLACE GAME

Overview

This game takes approximately three to five minutes a day for 21 days and helps people stretch a little out of their comfort zones and put into practice some of the key messages from the face-to-face training in their workplace.



Here's a summary of how On a Roll 21™ works.

On day one, participants are sent an email inviting them to start playing by clicking on a link. This web link can then be saved as a favourite on their device (whether that be a smartphone, phone, iPad or laptop), so they can access it each day for three weeks. The game can be easily done on the train, while waiting in queues, or first thing each morning. Once on the app page, participants are asked to sign in using a simple login of their email address. They are then guided to roll a 21 sided virtual die, which will tumble across their screen and stop on a random number. That number will be linked with a task or mission for the day, which will pop up on their screen.

This mission will involve talking about how respect is shown in small ways at their workplace, or taking a photo of something they like to do that doesn't necessarily fit with gender stereotypes, or another simple challenge. They can then scroll through their colleagues' missions and see what has been posted, reply or comment on posts, and get a sense of what respect and equality means to those they work with.

This game was so much fun and people posted some great pics. It helped us move out of our daily routines and take the time to notice and acknowledge each other more. We had dropped that habit a bit over the years. There were some tasks that questioned assumptions around gender, and some just showing respect in simple ways at work. By day 21, I think we are more likely to step in if we see gender based assumptions occurring or anything we're not happy with.

– Deb Holder, Department of Transport

To register your interest in purchasing On A Roll™, please email VicHealth through the website www.vichealth.vic.gov.au

Tasks to Complete to Make It Happen

- arrange access via VicHealth
- send an email invitation to participants.

8. POST-SURVEY DATA COLLECTION

Overview

At this stage you should consider inviting all those who did the pre-survey during the program launch to complete the survey again. You could, for example, send the survey around in an email, or offer an incentive for people to complete the survey.

During the 'Equal Footing' pilot program the survey was designed to capture changes in knowledge and attitudes. You can check it out in the Resource Pack (A01) however your survey should be designed to reflect the changes you are trying to achieve in your organisation.

Options for Measuring What You Do

Even if you are only rolling out one aspect of the 'Equal Footing' program, it is a great idea to measure the impact of what you do. There is a genuine lack of evaluation in this area, so everything you find out will be useful. It is also important to collect and keep evaluation data, because:

- evaluation can be used as an ongoing management and learning tool to improve a program's effectiveness
- program evaluation, conducted on a regular basis, can greatly improve the management and effectiveness of not only the 'Equal Footing' program but your organisation as a whole
- effective programs are those that can demonstrate the achievement of results. Results are important, especially when trying to secure future funding or commitment from leaders.

Creating Your Own Surveys

You can, of course, choose to create your own surveys. Your first step is to come up with some core evaluation questions. What do you want to see once your interventions have been implemented? When you know what you want your results to look like, consider what type of questions would be able to represent this. Also consider who you will seek information from – for example, employees, managers or other stakeholders. In designing your survey or any other measurement tool you will need to consider the audience to whom you might be presenting the results. A staff committee, for example, might be looking for different kinds of data compared with an executive team.

Resources That Will Help Bring It Together

We suggest using a tool like Survey Monkey to help you www.surveymonkey.com. It's really simple and fast to learn (and use) and you can specifically design your own individual survey.

However, it's important to remember that while surveys may be able to tell you what has changed, they are limited in being able to tell you why or how those things have changed and whether or not they changed as a result of your interventions. For that kind of analysis you may need to consider the involvement of a consultant or specialist.

Some Final Things to Remember About Evaluation

Evaluation and the dissemination of its findings are vital, as this will help you to understand what important factors shaped your project, how it was implemented, identify and analyse the results, and decide whether it can be sustained. This will then help others to learn from its lessons and assist to allocate resources accordingly.

4. FUTURE FOCUS

The 'Equal Footing' program is a great kick-start towards achieving gender equality in your workplace. It ticks the following boxes:

- evidence-based training
- policy-driven sustainable change
- skilling up leaders to be better role models
- resourcing staff to raise awareness and have useful conversations about gender equality.

Hopefully, the 'Equal Footing' program has inspired the decision-makers in your organisation to provide a version of the training to all new staff, and/or to start a working group to lead future organisational change activity.

It's important to remember that the 'Equal Footing' program is just a first step and gender equality needs to become part of your ongoing workplace strategy, rather than just being explored in this training and then put on the backburner. There are undoubtedly other areas that you are yet to address, like looking at the best ways your organisation can close the gender pay gap, or whether you should introduce more flexible ways for people to complete their work.

To keep moving forward, you'll need to get strategic about gender equality, and consider building a business case to support future initiatives.

HOW DO I DEVELOP A STRATEGY AND BUSINESS CASE LONGER TERM?

Rather than just listing the initiatives you'd like to continue with, try developing a future plan that clearly identifies what you'd like to do and how these actions will benefit the business. Remember that people at all levels of the organisation will want to know how the plan benefits them - and make sure you highlight what you have already achieved, rather than only looking forward.



It's helpful to get some advice from the WGEA if you'd like to make a firm plan for the future. See their website at: www.wgea.gov.au or call them on (02) 9432 7000 or 1800 730 233.

WHAT ABOUT BENCHMARKING?

If you regularly submit reports to the WGEA, you'll also have some more data to utilise in your forward planning. Following the first year of full reporting against the *Workplace Gender Equality Act 2012*, the WGEA is providing all compliant reporting organisations with confidential customised benchmark reports.

The benchmark data provided in these reports is unlike any other data available around the world. Each reporting organisation is now able to understand their relative performance against different comparison groups: the Australian industry overall (all reporting organisations), organisations within the same industry, and others.

Understanding your performance – and relative performance in particular – is a critical step in setting goals to improve your gender equality performance, identify your strengths and areas for improvement, and develop tailored and specific strategies and actions. As you gain insights about your organisation's performance, the WGEA will provide employers with ongoing support to assist them to improve performance over time.

– Helen Conway, Director, WGEA



You'll find a document called 'The Benchmarks Insights Guide' on the WGEA website, which provides further details: www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Benchmarks_Insights_Guide_final.pdf



I was rapt to hear our CEO announce that, in the spirit of our company's commitment to equality,

HR was reviewing the process for returning to work after parental leave.

*And not just for women, but for men, too!
– James, 48*



PART THREE

LEADERS

This part of the manual outlines what you can do, as a leader or group of leaders, to help drive gender equality in your workplace.

It is divided into three key sections:

1. **Preparation:** practical background information to help you get started.
2. **Action:** ideas that you can put into action at work.
3. **Future Focus:** the different ways you can follow up on the ideas we have presented and help maintain a culture of equality and respect.

1. PREPARATION

As we highlighted in part one of this manual, a broader organisational approach with top-level support and structural and policy changes will achieve the best results. But if the leaders in your organisation set the right tone in meetings, act as positive role models for gender equality and respect, and manage teams with an awareness of gender equity, the outcomes will be even better.

WHAT LEADERS NEED TO UNDERSTAND

As a leader in your organisation, you've no doubt read part one of this manual and are now familiar with the terms, issues and concepts relating to gender equality. However, before you move forward, it's important to ensure the other leaders in your organisation have a firm grasp of the following concepts:

- gender is socially constructed
- the terms 'equality' and 'equity' mean different things
- we are all biased when it comes to gender
- both men and women win if we create more equal workplaces
- flexible work practices should be for everyone, including men, and this may require them to overcome traditional gender expectations and even unconscious bias. You should point out that employers have obligations under the *Equal Opportunity Act* to provide flexibility for parents and carers - but the new way of thinking is that flexibility should be for everyone
- parenthood actually gives employees an advantage by teaching them skills that they can also bring to the workplace
- bystander action makes a difference - if somebody in your team comes to you with a complaint or observation, you need to take it seriously
- the gender pay gap in Australia is currently above 18 per cent and widening - ask other leaders what your organisation is doing to address this
- setting targets and quotas for how many women work at senior levels has pros and cons
- 'getting the job' solely based on merit is a complex idea

- achieving respect and gender equality in the workplace is directly linked to broader societal issues, like preventing violence against women - what can you do, as a leader, to promote respect for women?
- many people don't believe we still have an equality issue to address in Australia - you will need to know your stuff to counter their claims.

Remember: refer your colleagues in the leadership group to Part One of this manual if they haven't already read it.

WHAT'S THE BEST WAY TO START?

With everybody on the same page (as far as knowledge is concerned) your next step should be to start productive conversations with other leaders about gender equality, as these have to happen before any change can be achieved. People need time to reflect on their biases, explore new ways of thinking, and consider how things like gender targets or new policies could impact the business.

A simple and effective approach is to:

- explain why the organisation should move towards achieving gender equality (you might invite a senior leader to one of your meetings to help articulate this)
- meet with other leaders to discuss the issue of gender equality - strategise, fill in checklists and be open to exploring how you can all improve
- participate in face-to-face training on gender equality and respect, or on bystander action
- be accountable for the goals you set yourself during these sessions (you can discuss them with your supervisor and set specific timelines)
- gather some simple resources to lead your team through some respect and equality discussions/activities.

WHAT ARE WE CURRENTLY DOING AS LEADERS IN THIS ORGANISATION?

It's helpful to gauge how much you and the other leaders in the business know about the issues and determine if you are currently doing anything proactive to promote gender equality. Talk with other leaders about the organisation's focus on gender equality and give them a simple checklist to fill in with you. Stress that this checklist isn't about ranking them or their teams in terms of knowledge or performance – it's about wanting to provide the information and support needed to fill the gaps.

Here are some examples of what you could include in your checklist:

- have I ever talked with my team about gender equality?
- have I shown bias or made a decision at work based upon someone's gender?
- is gender equality covered in induction training for new staff?
- do I provide equal access to flexible work arrangements?
- do I step in and provide feedback if I hear staff making sexist assumptions or comments?

THE LAW IN REGARDS TO WORKPLACE GENDER EQUALITY

Although Australia does not have a comprehensive Bill of Rights, there are a number of federal and state laws that contain human rights protections – and it's important that you and the other leaders at your organisation are aware of this. At the federal level, for example, there are a number of anti-discrimination laws that make it unlawful to discriminate on a number of particular grounds. One such law is the *Sex Discrimination Act, 1984 (Cth)*.

This *Act* makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of:

- sex
- marital status
- pregnancy or potential pregnancy
- breastfeeding
- family responsibilities.

The *Act* also makes it unlawful to sexually harass another person.

More recently, the Australian Government introduced legislation into Parliament (in March 2012) to improve the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace (EOWW) Act*.

The new *Act* is called the *Workplace Gender Equality Act* and the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency is now the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA).

The principal objectives of the amended *Act* are:

- to promote and improve gender equality (including equal remuneration between women and men) in employment and in the workplace
- to support employers to remove barriers to the full and equal participation of women in the workforce, in recognition of the disadvantaged position of women in relation to employment matters.

The aims of “removing barriers to participation” and “promoting equality” fit in well with your role of leader. As a manager of a team, you can do a lot to get people thinking and talking about better ways of working and how you can achieve an equal playing field in your organisation.

Another aspect of the new *Act* is consultation. The more consultative you are with other leaders and all the different people on your respective teams, the better the outcomes. Don't rely on people to speak up or complain if things aren't fair and equitable. If you don't ask people why they aren't accessing opportunities, or start conversations about potential barriers, you won't make any progress. Consultation is the answer and there are lots of different methods:

- informal conversations
- focus groups
- brainstorming in meetings
- raising gender issues as discussion points at planning days
- using social media or email to initiate conversations
- inviting people to physically write down ideas about gender equality via notes on the work fridge, or on noticeboards.



I once asked my manager why we couldn't discuss this gender stuff at our team meeting and he said,

'I don't want to stir up trouble.'

This shuts down consultation and doesn't make things better. People have a lot of ideas to contribute, but they give up if they feel they're not being heard

– Danni, 35

WHAT KIND OF LEADERSHIP IS REQUIRED FOR US TO ACHIEVE GENDER EQUALITY?

There is a high probability that you and most of the leaders in your organisation have never had to look at things through a gender lens. For you to all start doing so will require a shift in your thinking, attitudes and behaviours. This will entail:

- an understanding of what it means to manage a team with a gender lens
- knowledge of which policies impact gender equality
- positive role modelling to prevent problems
- how best to respond to problems/complaints about gender inequality.

AN UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT MEANS TO MANAGE A TEAM WITH A “GENDER LENS”

The term “lens” helps us imagine putting on a pair of glasses that allows us to take a broader view: a view where the experiences, needs and realities of being a working woman are added to the perspective of men. This may mean that you consult more to include women’s views and perspectives and that you initiate conversations with men about gender equality in the business.

As a manager, try to ensure you:

- encourage people to challenge the way things have always been done and suggest different approaches (these may have been based on male norms)
- place equal value on discussions about the similarities and needs of men and women, parents and non-parents, rather than only a focus on differences
- consider and discuss with colleagues the existing pre-requisites for being viewed as a high performer, promotion, leadership opportunities in your team – ask them, “Do these criteria favour one sex over another? If so, how can they be realigned?”
- think and talk about what flexible work options are appropriate for the men and women on your team
- view existing policies, procedures and documents with a critical eye that picks up insensitivities or bias towards men or women
- challenge gender stereotypes by asking questions and raising awareness in respectful ways
- initiate conversations by switching things around, where possible – perhaps ask people, “What if it were a man/woman experiencing that? How would it be different?”
- generate discussions about fairness and inclusion as keys to achieving gender equality.

My boss made a big deal of my team winning the State Basketball Comp. He even organised a cake! I really appreciated it, because there’s never any acknowledgement in my workplace that women play sport – it’s all about the men’s footy and cricket. I know it was only a small thing, but it gave us all something new to talk about and it inspired other women to speak about the sports they play, as well. Some of them had never talked about this at work before!

– Jane, 53

KNOWLEDGE OF WHICH POLICIES IMPACT GENDER EQUALITY

It is helpful to work with people in HR to develop broad statements about diversity and gender equality, under which your policies can sit. The obvious policies to consider are:

- gender equality
- equal opportunity
- sexual harassment
- parental leave
- carers leave
- flexible work.

However, everyday procedures for how work is allocated, how performance is monitored and how acting positions or other stepping-stones to leadership are negotiated also have a major impact. This is ongoing work and can’t be “fixed up” in a month or two – but start the process of questioning, consulting, and reviewing and you’ll find the way you do things will become fairer over time.

You may want to consider championing a ‘Family Violence Leave Policy’ in your business. This is a major health issue for women of every background, education, level and role at work. Within the population of women who have experienced violence, or are currently experiencing violence, the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimates that two thirds are currently in the workforce.⁴⁶ This means that a significant number of Australian workplaces will be impacted by women’s experiences of domestic and family violence.



For further information, see the ‘*Domestic and Family Violence – A Workplace Issue, a Discrimination Issue*’, developed by the Human Rights Commission, located in the Resources Pack as document **A13**.

Volunteering some of your time to contribute to policy development is a significant contribution by a manager to the organisation.

POSITIVE ROLE MODELLING TO PREVENT PROBLEMS

As a manager and leader, you are in a great position to prevent problems by:

- talking about gender equality often, in inclusive solution-focused ways (not always as a problem)
- inviting women to have a greater voice in how the team operates until there is equal input
- setting clear and simple guidelines for respectful behaviour in the team and ensuring that isn’t undermined by the presence of alcohol at social functions (you remain a role model at all times)
- challenging negative or inappropriate comments
- following up with individuals who don’t treat others respectfully
- promoting social connectedness within the team by encouraging collaboration
- checking in with people and asking about their experiences
- apologising if you get it wrong sometimes; this is far better than avoiding the issue to avoid making mistakes
- rewarding people who change their views and move with the times.

This may include being very specific about behaviours. You might like to make a list⁴⁷ and include things like:

<i>Helpful behaviours</i>	<i>Unhelpful behaviours</i>
Offering to and asking for help	Interrupting while others are talking
Speaking politely to one another	Speaking with a sarcastic or cynical or critical tone
Speaking enthusiastically about goals	Assigning blame when a problem arises
Acknowledging others’ efforts and contributions	Criticising someone behind their back
Requesting feedback for improvement	Reacting to things as if they are meant personally
Asking “what we need to do” when problems arise	Saying what won’t work without offering suggestions



You may want to seek some advice from the WGEA about how you can be a manager or leader who champions gender equality. See their website at: www.wgea.gov.au or call them on (02) 9432 7000 or 1800 730 233.

RESPONDING TO PROBLEMS AND COMPLAINTS ABOUT GENDER INEQUALITY

As a manager, it can be challenging to feel under the spotlight if someone complains about unfavourable treatment. Try to see it as a way of showing you are committed to a positive outcome. Don't be defensive or try to deny there's an issue. Tackle it in a respectful and positive way.

Follow these simple steps:

- listen and thank the person for bringing the problem to your attention
- don't promise an immediate solution – tell them you do take it seriously and will get back to them in 48 hours, once you have looked at the best options for tackling the issue
- seek help from a leader, manager or your HR department as to the best process
- consider seeking external advice from an advisory body (as well, not instead of, internal help)
- record the facts, dates, and details and keep this information up to date
- collate some options for possible ways forward
- meet with the person again and discuss options – seek their input
- outline the process that will be followed and a timeline
- check in with them as to how they are feeling about it – offer employment assistant programs (EAP) or appropriate support, if needed
- ensure you don't treat them differently or exclude them during this process – people should never feel punished or regret speaking up
- keep in mind that the person can choose to escalate the issue to a formal complaint at any time – it's their right to do so. Do not try to dissuade them
- follow up on everything you said you would do
- ensure the issue has been thoroughly dealt with and that the organisation has learnt from it – don't waste the experience, as it's likely to happen again
- ask for feedback at the end of the process to learn how the person felt it was handled.

TALKING ABOUT WOMEN AS LEADERS

You often hear people say things like, “oh, I think women can make really good leaders”, which suggests that perhaps this is an exception. In fact, a recent US study has shown that women actually make more effective leaders than men in terms of getting things done, being positive role models, taking on challenges, ensuring that people act with integrity, and delivering results.⁴⁸

The study’s findings challenge the assumption that it’s only possible for women to excel at “nurturing” competencies, such as developing others, inspiring and motivating others, relationship building, collaboration and teamwork. Women *did* perform better in these areas than men, certainly. However, the competencies with the largest positive differences were: taking initiative, displaying integrity and honesty, and striving for results. These are not “nurturing” competencies and women leaders actually performed better than men in these areas.

What do women do that creates this difference in leadership effectiveness? One of the most commonly reported responses in the study was that women believe:

In order to get the same recognition and rewards, I need to do twice as much, never make a mistake and constantly demonstrate my competence.

The characteristics we usually associate with women (such as warmth, superior communication skills and empathy) are not contradictions of good leadership – in fact, research shows that women are taught to nurture these characteristics as children, and they become skills that make them a more approachable and understanding leader. Female leaders have proven to be highly driven and resilient; they are passionate about looking toward the future and improving their workplace. While all this is interesting, it does (unhelpfully) reinforce the stereotype of women leaders as being soft or inherently different in style from men

Not all women find it easy to be empathetic and communicate confidently – just as a lot of men struggle with the stereotypical male characteristics of being strong, decisive and assertive. These biased assumptions can undermine our natural strengths. In fact, women who are assertive at work and have the confidence to make tough decisions are often viewed in a negative way by society, as we are taught to believe that these qualities are undesirable in women.

We need to free ourselves from traditional ideas about what it takes to be a great leader and re-imagine roles in ways that bring out the best in people and allow them to play to their individual strengths. The reality is that some men will be kind and nurturing leaders and some women will be pragmatic, competitive leaders – and vice versa. Leadership is not the domain of one personality type, any more than it is the domain of one sex.

2. ACTION

Once you've had conversations with other leaders and have gained their commitment to gender equality, they'll undoubtedly turn to you and ask "what now?"

It's a great question, and one that requires some strategic thought. What are the best ways for you and other leaders to introduce this initiative within your teams? How do you infiltrate every part of the organisation?

STARTING DISCUSSIONS ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY IN TEAM MEETINGS

Ideally, you will be able to work with your team to develop a shared understanding on the kinds of behaviours that undermine gender equality. This shared understanding prevents many problems down the track and is much easier than managing complaints and distressed people. It tends to work best if you run this as a discussion, instead of simply saying: "you can't say this about people".

List the undermining behaviours on a whiteboard and ask:

- what assumptions underlie this?
- how can they be harmful?

You can view some ideas that one organisation came up with on the following page.

<i>Behaviour that undermines gender equality</i>	<i>What assumptions underlie this?</i>	<i>How can it be harmful?</i>
A group of men laugh about a female colleague's body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • we have the right to judge • this is fair game to talk about in a professional environment • it doesn't matter, as no one is offended or uncomfortable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is likely some of the men are in fact uncomfortable and wouldn't initiate this, but they don't know how to avoid it • it perpetuates the put downs of women and poor behaviour of this kind • if a woman overhears this, it impacts on her self esteem and feeling of safety at work – even if they are not the target • if the target hears about it, it offends them deeply, lowers productivity and will likely have a negative impact on mental health.
Commenting on a colleague's caring responsibilities: "Oh, he won't want to come to the conference. He isn't very serious about work: he's got kids and is only doing a nine day fortnight"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents are either committed to work or to kids – they can't focus on both • 'hands on' dads aren't interested in getting ahead • it's okay for women but not men. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • limits people's career opportunities, earning capacity, impacts reputation or image in the business.
Complimenting people on their appearance inappropriately (even if it's meant to be flattering): "Wow. Your **** look great in that top"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have the right to pass judgement on how you look • you're interested in whether I/we think you are sexy or not • people's level of attractiveness is a relevant issue in the workplace • I have the right to comment on any aspect of you, even if it has nothing to do with your job. 	Everyone is different, but it may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel humiliating to the person • cast the person in an inappropriate sexual light at work • downgrade the importance of how they do their job • make people angry and resentful • show others in the team they could be commented on next.
Sexist jokes or blonde jokes. Jokes about men being pigs, or obsessed with sex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • women don't mind if we put them down • you can say anything if you're "just joking" • repeated put downs don't impact on people • it's biology • men are just made that way, they're all the same, they can't change • if you don't go along with this, you're no fun – social penalties will result! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it's boring and at times hurtful • it supports the myth that women are less intelligent/capable • poor role modelling. It doesn't help other/ younger men understand that sexism has a harmful impact over time • perpetuates a dangerous myth that men can't control themselves and they aren't responsible for what they do.
Men or women creating cliques that exclude others (e.g. in a team of 6 women and 2 men, the guys are left out of things)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the differences between men and women are too large to overcome. We don't have anything in common • men can't understand (or don't care about) the things women are interested in. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suggests individuals better not step forward and say, "I don't like that" – the power of the mob.

SOME EXERCISES TO USE IN TEAM MEETINGS

Once your team has identified, considered and discussed gender inequality, you'll need to reinforce the lesson by conducting a series of exercises:

Exercise 1: "If I Had a Daughter/Son..."

Split the team in two and give each group a slip of paper. Written on one is, "If I had a daughter, I'd hope..." and the other says, "If I had a son, I'd hope..."

Ask the teams to generate a list of ideas. Compare them as a large group afterwards and discuss any differences and biases that emerge – this will really demonstrate that they weren't consciously thinking about bias during the exercise, but it still has an impact. This is just a little eye-opener for your team and usually works well.

Exercise 2: Ideas for Inclusion

The difference between habit and good work practice is taking time for critical reflection, asking:

- how did we tackle that?
- why did we do it that way?
- what were their obstacles and challenges?
- how can we do it better in the future?

Ask your team to generate some practical ways that people can spend scheduled time together to reflect on their work and swap ideas – this may only be one hour a month.

When you have a list of ideas (e.g. cross team meetings once a month, pairs of buddies or mentors meeting with colleagues to offer support, breakfast get-togethers for planning), ask them to apply a lens of INCLUSION. This means they are to ask themselves "How could we have included everyone equally?" This inevitably leads to discussion about barriers to inclusion, how to ensure part-time employees feel included, and how to include those with caring responsibilities, etc.

Ensure that the ideas generated are genuinely inclusive and appeal equally to both the men and women in the group. You might form a working group that represents the team to ensure these events actually happen and that they promote equality and fairness.

Exercise 3: Media Discussion

This is a simple exercise where you ask team members to bring in an old magazine from home to the next meeting. When you're all together, ask them to work in teams of two or three and flick through the magazine, tearing out pages where they see gender stereotypes of men and women.

Ask them a few questions to get the discussion flowing:

- what impact do you think these images have on girls and young women as they grow up?
- what effect do they have on boys and young men?
- to what degree do these images and stereotypes impact on how men and women are perceived and treated at work?
- how can we overcome the negatives associated with how the media represents men and women?
- are there brochures, posters, or images in our workplace that should be adjusted?

The idea is to get people thinking about how the media is both constrained by social/cultural norms (they use these images and ideas because it's what we as readers expect) and how it's also responsible for perpetuating these stereotypes (what people see is what they come to expect). This discussion will lead to consideration about what images you currently have around the workplace, and what you may need to change. Ask them to view brochures, posters, etc., with a critical eye.

SOME CASE STUDIES TO DISCUSS IN TEAM MEETINGS

There are also some case studies you can discuss with your team that effectively illustrate gender inequality:

Case Study #1: Anna

Anna had worked in the same role for two years when she became aware that a significant gender pay gap existed at her organisation. She decided she was going to address this by asking for an increase in salary at her upcoming performance review. However, when the day came and Anna sat down in front of her manager, her confidence about asking had waned. She had remembered overhearing somebody in the office talking about her once, saying: "Oh, Anna's husband earns a packet. She doesn't even need to work" and she suddenly felt uncomfortable asking for more money. Anna walked out of her review without asking for a pay rise.

Questions to Ask:

- why did Anna lose confidence?
- how might people describe a woman who is pushing for more money? And how might they describe a man?

Points to Make:

- women are generally not encouraged to speak up and be assertive, particularly about sensitive issues like money – there may be feelings of guilt that they don't deserve it, as well as a fear that they'll be perceived as aggressive or pushy
 - by not speaking up, Anna is perpetuating this stereotype, and disadvantaging women who come after her.
-

Case Study #2: Mike

Mike's mother has been diagnosed with leukaemia and will be undergoing chemotherapy soon. Both Mike's parents are elderly and his father is in complete denial about what's happening. Mike approaches his manager to ask for some flexibility with his hours, or even the possibility of going on carers leave. Although his manager is sympathetic, he's worried that Mike's team will miss his leadership if he's absent from work. He asks, "How long are we talking about here, Mike?" and also "Don't you have a sister?"

Questions to Ask:

- what beliefs and assumptions underlie this conversation?
 - if Mike was female, do you think he'd be asked if he had a brother?
-

Points to Make:

- it's much more difficult for men to ask for flexibility – even if it's something like carers leave – as there are assumptions based on gender that dictate our response to their request. In this instance, just like Mike's manager, we might be surprised that he would want to fulfil the carer's role, as we automatically assume that one of the women in Mike's life will take care of his parents
 - men are sometimes penalised for taking time off work, both in reputation and with career advancement – they rarely ask for flexibility and are reluctant to ask for leave.
-

Case Study #3: Group of Managers

A group of managers has been discussing what activity the organisation can do for its annual Christmas party. Having reached a shortlist, they send an email to all employees, asking them to decide between,

- paintball
- indoor rock climbing
- a shopping bus tour.

Questions to Ask:

- what are the managers trying to do here?
 - what would you think if you received this email, with these choices?
-

Points to Make:

- the inclusion of a "shopping bus tour" seems very tokenistic here, and is perhaps pandering to a gender stereotype – who's to say the female employees all love to shop? Similarly, there would be lots of men who wouldn't be keen on sweating and straining their way up a wall with colleagues holding a rope below
 - inclusion is about asking people what they want and reaching compromises.
-

MAINTAINING MOMENTUM AND REINFORCING THE MESSAGE

Introducing new concepts or initiatives to any group of individuals will usually require some follow-up action – and no matter how switched-on your team may be, you'll need to return regularly to the topic of gender equality for it to really sink in. People will leave the initial team meeting with lots of new thoughts and ideas buzzing around their heads, but it's very easy for these to be forgotten once their focus returns to their daily tasks, or when things get really hectic at work. As a leader, it's important for you to maintain momentum and keep reinforcing the message of gender equality to your team and across your organisation.

Here are some ways you can do that:

- share positive stories about competitors, clients, and industry groups who have made inroads towards gender equality – inject a sense of competition and the suggestion that your organisation will be left behind if you don't address gender equality. It's true – you will be
- keep raising awareness of the initiative through internal communications – think about starting a monthly newsletter or email that is focused on gender equality. Ensure it features good news stories, as well as raising issues still to be addressed. Ask female leaders to write about their experiences (both positive and negative). Celebrate business successes with a gender-related dimension or link. Utilise screen savers, sales team message boards, display posters in common areas, use the intranet to reinforce positive gender messages
- embed gender equality messaging into regular, routine business communications from the CEO and leadership team, keep highlighting positive role models, and reinforce the position that your organisation is an industry leader and shaper in the area of gender equality.

MAKING SMALL CHANGES FOR BIG IMPACTS DOWN THE TRACK

Talk to your team about some agreed ways to speak up if they notice inequities or sexist behaviour occurring – or even if they feel people are making assumptions and should rethink their approach.

Invite everybody in your team to say things in the future such as:

Hang on. We might be making this about gender, and it needn't be

We're making this sound like a job only a woman/man could do. It needs to be open to both sexes

Let's not assume they won't be interested in that opportunity just because they have three kids.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES AROUND PARENTAL LEAVE

Taking parental leave and then returning to work can be both a positive and stressful time for both women and men, as they may face significant workplace prejudices and misperceptions about the impact being a parent has on their focus, attitude and performance. They also have external changes happening at home, like sleep issues, and new skills to learn. These things will eventually right themselves, but support at work certainly helps. Think about whether you've ever heard (or said) comments similar to these at work:

No, she's just back from parental leave and I need somebody who's really focused for this project...

Look, I'd consider him for this role, but he's got a newborn at home

No, don't bother including her in this. She's having a baby next month and she won't be around much after that...

A 2014 report by the Australian Human Rights Commission revealed that one in two women in Australia (49 per cent) reported experiencing discrimination in the workplace during their pregnancy, parental leave, or on return to work. Over a quarter (27 per cent) of the 1,000 men surveyed in the report experienced discrimination when requesting or taking parental leave, or when they returned to work.⁴⁹

The research also found that discrimination takes many different forms, ranging from sexist attitudes and comments through to dismissal. It needs to be addressed properly, as it's not only damaging to your employee's mental and physical health, it's also detrimental to your business. Of mothers who experience discrimination, 91 per cent don't make a formal complaint – but 32 per cent of them resign from their job because of it. If you allow discriminatory behaviour to occur, you'll lose valuable people.

Even requesting parental leave may carry a stigma – and men, in particular, often don't ask for it for fear of career penalties. These may include a missed promotion, creating the impression that they've stopped taking their career seriously, or that fatherhood has suddenly made them unreliable, and they're no longer "a team player". Very few young fathers in Australia take extended leave at the time of their child's birth, with only 9 per cent of those who do taking longer than six weeks.⁵⁰

You have the power and influence, as a leader, to break down these prejudices and reduce the stress for parents transitioning in and out of work. You can do this in a number of ways:

1. Help to explode the myth that working parents are a liability to a business

Research actually shows quite the opposite, and you should share these facts with other leaders and your team. Parenthood gives both men and women an advantage by teaching them skills that make them more efficient and productive at work. These skills include:

- the ability to multi-task
- being flexible and adaptable
- great time management and efficiency capability
- a sense of responsibility and more determination to succeed.

There is more information about the skills that parents can bring to your workplace on [page 13 in part 1](#) of this manual.

2. Work to gradually improve every part of the parental leave process

Start with the request for leave process. Be receptive, positive and reassuring when somebody asks you for parental leave. Ensure they have the appropriate paperwork and talk to HR about their options so you are well informed. Remember, this is a celebratory time in someone's life: don't make him or her dread any part of it, or fear repercussions for taking time away from work.

When an employee puts in a request:

- determine key dates (both start and end of their leave)

- provide the right forms and information
- work out the best and most effective handover strategy – seek their opinion, and invite their full participation
- consider employment assistant programs (EAP) options to help them with this transition if there are other challenges
- ask if they've thought about what kind of arrangements they would like when they return to work (i.e. part-time, flexible hours, or a graduated return)
- tell them that you'd like to keep in contact during their leave, keeping them abreast of what's happening at work – reach an agreement about how regular this contact should be, and in what form it should take (a phone call, email, etc).

3. During parental leave, keep the employee regularly informed of events at your organisation, without distracting them

Give them choices about how much contact with work they would like. Being a new parent can be challenging, so ask how they're managing and what they are enjoying. Be aware that men also need support during this major life experience: one in 10 men with new babies will experience something similar to Post Natal Depression, but may not identify it as such or seek help.

This part of the process is a bit tricky as a manager: you don't want to intrude on this time or apply pressure, but it's also important not to let the employee feel isolated or cut-off from their employment. Ask them to any social functions you have at work, but ensure it's a low pressure situation.

4. Look at the return to work process at your organisation and determine how you can make the re-engagement easier for returning employees

This is a critical period: 35 per cent of women indicated they had experienced discrimination when they got back to work.

- arrange for a 'back on board' buddy for their first few days back – they will need an update on what's been happening
- provide private places where women can express milk or breastfeed
- set realistic performance targets – be mindful of the readjustment they're making
- create a support group of other employees who have also returned from parental leave
- think about a 'return to work bonus': a financial incentive to return to work, which can go towards childcare or something suitable.

BEING A GOOD ROLE MODEL

This includes respectfully correcting people who make inappropriate comments. It's important that this is done in a way that is not humiliating for the offender or victim. Consider the differences in these two responses:

A staff member says: *Jill won't give Mark too hard a time. She'll be his Mum, like always, and she'll just treat him like one of her kids. He'll be sent to his room if he doesn't meet deadlines!*

Response 1: *Manager looks stern, and says: That is inappropriate. Jill will be operating professionally as a manager with Mark, and the fact that she is also a parent is totally irrelevant.*

Response 2: *Manager smiles, but says: I'm sure Jill will be as professional as she always is and Mark doesn't need a mother figure at work. Personally, I believe the patience I've developed raising kids comes in handy when I have to manage anyone who is being uncooperative. It's a life skill.*

Notice how the second response subtly sends the message that parenting is not a negative – in fact, there are lots of transferable skills, and women do know how to separate professional and family issues.

However, if the person making the comment is a serial offender who has been corrected many times, you or their manager should arrange a one-on-one conversation. In this conversation, you can:

- explain the problem you have observed
- ask them what impact they think their behaviour has on others
- ask them about the attitudes or experiences that underlie this behaviour
- suggest they edit themselves and are more aware of respect and gender equality at work
- be clear that a marked improvement in behaviour is expected
- follow up with a positive email a week or so later if there has been an improvement, or a more formal warning if there is no improvement.

USING PERFORMANCE REVIEWS TO BOOST EQUALITY

As a leader or manager, it's highly likely you conduct regular performance reviews with members of your team – or you might even have weekly one-on-one meetings that focus on individual performance. Start introducing gender equality into this review process. These private meetings are the perfect opportunity for you to speak with individuals about gender issues and seek their thoughts about how gender expectations, assumptions, and inequity may be affecting them and the organisation as a whole.

Some ideas include:

- talking to men about flexibility, asking about the ways they are balancing home and work
- asking both men and women the same questions and offering the same feedback
- asking open questions like: "Tell me about..." or "can you explain...?" rather than assuming what is important to them
- gauging interest about mentoring opportunities
- being mindful of talking to women about attributes such as likeability and 'being nice' in ways that you wouldn't with men – research has shown this is a big issue
- asking for people's views on how the team and the broader organisation is going in terms of gender equality
- acknowledging and rewarding inclusive team behaviours.

USING EVENTS TO RAISE AWARENESS

Take the opportunity to raise awareness about gender equality, where possible. Organise a guest speaker, bring people together for a walk or morning tea, and participate in fundraising or poster campaigns.

Some ideas for event days include:

- World Day of Social Justice (20 Feb)
- International Women's Day (8 March)
- Harmony Day (21 March)
- Men's Health Week (third week in June)
- Week Without Violence (third week of October)
- Reclaim/Take Back The Night (usually last Friday night in October)
- Movember (this is a chance to talk to men about how male stereotypes aren't helpful. Check out the website <https://au.movember.com/> for workplace initiatives)
- White Ribbon Day, preventing violence against women (25 November)
- United Nations Human Rights Day (10 December)

ACTIVELY WORKING TO REMOVE BARRIERS AND INCREASE WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

Some ideas on how to do this are listed below:

- start conversations about what makes it difficult to participate fully and access opportunities – these are different in every workplace
- don't be afraid to raise issues around meeting times, annual leave, allocation of work, work outside of hours, social events for discussion
- ensure the issues that are brought to your attention are dealt with properly
- improve your induction program to promote gender equality and respectful behaviours.

Ensure the basics are covered, such as:

- provision of a plain language explanation of the gender equality policy statement or similar
- steps for raising an issue or making a complaint
- access to diversity/gender equality training (online or in person)
- face-to-face explanation by an organisational leader or manager about fairness and inclusion, and a discussion about encouraging women into leadership (e.g. a simple approach, like saying: "You are probably aware that women are frequently stereotyped as 'warm and friendly' and leaders are stereotyped as 'tough and strong'. Given this, women may find it hard to progress professionally – as will men who do not 'fit the mould'. This doesn't benefit women, men, or our organisation. Therefore, our approach is to [approach]").

Promote evaluation as a leader:

- explain the importance of gathering data, so you can monitor how the organisation is progressing
- if surveys need to be completed, do them as a team during a meeting
- attend focus groups with your team and encourage them to speak up, rather than viewing their comments as criticism – stay solution-focused.

3. FUTURE FOCUS

What are the follow-up steps for you, as a leader or manager? What's next for other people in the leadership group? It's important that they aren't just kept informed, but are actually charged with some responsibility to help maintain the changes.

TALKING SERIOUSLY ABOUT FLEXIBILITY

One of the big issues of the future for leaders is flexibility. Leaders can be brought together to talk about the practical implications of managing the need for flexibility at work. The future is not just providing more flexible work options for women with children, it is providing these options across the board – and that can be challenging for some leaders. They will need to discuss the degree to which this is possible and do some work on the 'how' aspect.



For further information on how to handle (and make) requests for flexible workplace arrangements, refer to the Fair Work Ombudsman's fact sheet, which is document **A14** in the Resources Pack.

Policies do not necessarily translate into practice. Often, barriers to increased flexibility reflect negative attitudes of employees (who fear stigma) and managers (who fear losing control). To make progress, organisations need to challenge assumptions, shift attitudes and build a flexible workplace culture.

Flexibility solutions need to be team-based, not just individualised. Progress also requires men (especially male leaders) to embrace, utilise and role model flexibility in all its forms. Only then will flexibility be normalised for employees of either gender or any background.

– The WGEA



*If my organisation was fair and supportive about women,
I imagine I'd treat an offensive remark differently.
I'd probably say something like, 'Okay, that was awkward',
the person would feel embarrassed and probably apologise,
and we'd move on.*

***But women are constantly feeling under fire in my
workplace and are denied chances to get ahead or
grow in our roles, just because we're female.***

*So, yes, I do complain if I feel discriminated against. If I
keep complaining, maybe some of the leaders will eventually
do something!*

– Kirsty, 23



PART FOUR

INDIVIDUALS

This part of the manual outlines what you can do, as an individual, to help shape the culture at your organisation so it becomes a more fair and respectful place for both sexes to work.

It is divided into three key sections:

1. **Introduction:** why you have a part to play in improving gender equality in your workplace
2. **Preparation:** useful background information to help you get started
3. **Action:** practical things you can do to improve gender equality in your workplace

1. INTRODUCTION

There is a lot you can do, as an individual, to help shape the culture of your organisation and ensure it becomes a more fair and respectful place to work for both sexes. Your personal attitudes and behaviours can inspire others and set a positive example for the entire organisation. You can also initiate or get involved in the bigger picture process to drive cultural change in your workplace. Whatever role you assume, it's wise to first make sure you understand the issue of gender equality thoroughly.

If you haven't already read Part One of this manual, we recommend that you do that now before reading this part of the manual. It is imperative that you understand the following concepts (covered in further detail in Part One) and be able to explain them to your colleagues:

- gender is socially constructed
- the terms 'equality' and 'equity' mean different things
- we are all biased when it comes to gender
- both men and women win if we create more equal workplaces
- flexible work practices should be for everyone, including men, and this may require them to overcome traditional gender expectations and even unconscious bias. Take flexible working conditions if they are offered to you and you want them – especially if you're male. The stigma attached (and the fear of career penalties) will only be overcome if there are positive role models who set the example for others.
- parenthood does not mean that employees 'take their eye off the ball' – it actually gives people an advantage by teaching them skills they can bring to the workplace
- bystander action is very influential in stopping gender bias and discrimination – it's your responsibility to speak up if you see or hear offensive remarks about gender. Things will never change unless somebody says, "actually, that's not okay."
- the gender pay gap in Australia is currently 18.8 per cent and widening – ask your manager what is being done to address this in your organisation
- achieving respect and gender equality in the workplace is directly linked to broader societal issues, like preventing violence against women – think about ways you can build respect for women in your workplace
- many people don't believe we still have an equality issue to address in Australia – you'll probably be met with some opposition when you start talking to people about gender equality, so know your stuff.

There are two clear avenues of action for individuals:

1. Effecting broad 'whole of organisation' change

You can do this by being a positive contributor and role model. You might contribute by having the right strategic conversations with senior leaders and encouraging them to make meaningful decisions around change. You might work on adjusting policies around parental leave, recruitment, or flexible work practices. You might initiate broad cross-organisation working groups, or come up with new campaigns to raise awareness of gender stereotypes at work. You might push for better leadership training around managing teams with a gender lens, or you might play an active part in building partnerships with external agencies that can help your business boost gender equality and respect. There are lots of ways to influence the broader organisational culture, but the key is to think big. Don't focus only on individuals; push for sustainable structural and policy changes for long lasting results.

You may be just one person, but you do have a part to play in helping your organisation achieve gender equality. The way you talk and how you behave can help set the tone for everyone. As an individual, you can be a positive role model and a champion of change, or you can be "part of the problem". Never underestimate the influence an individual can have on a workplace's culture.

Having said that, it's important to remain realistic about your role in all of this. Yes, you can drive the initial push for gender equality, but be aware that you'll need to surrender the wheel to leaders and decision-makers if change is going to occur at your workplace. When this handover occurs (and – remember – it has to, for this to work!), embrace your role as a champion for gender equality and offer to assist or gather information for the main drivers of the initiative.

2. Bystander action

Of course, you can also make a huge impact as a bystander who is willing to step in and speak up when you observe or hear something that's not right in regards to things like:

- a decision being made that is based on gender assumptions
- important meetings being held at times that exclude certain staff
- a colleague using derogatory language relating to someone's gender
- a carer or parent being given a hard time because of their caring responsibilities
- someone treating gender equality as a joke and undermining the direction the organisation wants to head in.

In all of these situations, bystanders should feel comfortable and confident to speak up and, what's more, expect their organisation to support them to do so.

You can also encourage colleagues to seek help or act on issues that are upsetting them. Remember, your colleagues have the right to escalate an issue into a complaint at any time – but the outcomes are usually better if they try talking to the person directly, asking their supervisor for assistance, speaking to a Contact Officer, or considering mediation or external help with the situation first. Although it's better if we can avoid problems escalating to this stage, complaints have to be lodged if all other avenues have been exhausted. These formal processes do eventually have an impact on how organisations manage difficulties in the future – so they are important.

2. PREPARATION

As an individual, it's hard to change the world overnight – but you can try to look after your little slice of it. Skill yourself up to:

- be inclusive and ensure everyone is respected
- notice wording in policies or other documents that could be changed to better promote gender equality (and letting the right person know)
- try to make sure that sexist stereotypes aren't used to limit what men and women want to do, or have access to
- recognise when unfair or sexist practices occur
- speak up in a productive way
- follow up with a manager or HR contact
- support colleagues who want something done about an incident.

Think about what you would do if you saw or heard:

- a group of colleagues ignoring another staff member because he/she had made a complaint about sexual harassment
- a senior person laughing off suggestions that proper process hadn't been observed
- a group of male managers teasing a new father because he wants to pick up his baby from crèche early on a Friday
- your work's social organiser laughing at complaints from women colleagues about a scheduled "Bloke's Golf Day"
- a female senior manager being repeatedly left out of drinks gatherings and other informal activities
- crude comments being made about a colleague's sexuality.

Sometimes it's wise to audit yourself, using this simple checklist:

- can I easily identify sexist, discriminatory, and gender biased behaviour at work?
- do I understand the impact of this behaviour on people of both sexes?
- do I know what our policies and procedures say about gender equality?
- do I feel comfortable to speak up and challenge gender inequality, gender assumptions, biases and expectations, and sexist behaviours?
- do I think expectations about gender dictate what roles people occupy in this organisation?
- do I think women are well represented within the organisational leadership group?
- do I view anybody within the organisation's leadership group as a positive role model for gender equality?
- do I think that flexibility is offered equally and without penalty to both sexes? If so, do both sexes take it up? Would I?
- do I believe a 'glass ceiling' or gender pay gap exists at this organisation?

DON'T FOCUS TOO MUCH ON THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

The key to gender equality is to focus on inclusion and fairness. It's important to acknowledge individual differences, but often they are to do with different personalities rather than whether that person is male or female. Yes, there are some basic differences in hormones, body size, etc., between men and women, but these things do not explain the very different ways we interact with the world. The social construct of 'gender' (what it means to be male or female in our society) is much more influential.

Individuals often become fixed in their certainty that the differences between men and women are innate and hard-wired and there's nothing we can do about them. We have often heard that men are better at spatial relations (parking cars, playing ball sports) and women are better at the softer skills (empathising with people and creative pursuits). This is a kind of 'neuro-sexism', which is challenged by people like Cordelia Fine in her book *'Delusions of Gender'*.⁵¹

*In fact, there are no major neurological differences between the sexes. There may be slight variations in the brains of women and men, but the wiring is soft, not hard. It is flexible, malleable and changeable.*⁵²

There are differences in male and female brains at birth, but they are tiny. Our upbringing, hobbies, the subjects we study, and our involvement in sports all impact the plasticity of our brain and, over time, we learn to be better at certain things. Similarly, if we are encouraged into leadership roles at work, spoken to about taking initiative and affecting change, and mentored and offered appropriate training opportunities, we will be much more likely to end up as leadership material. Trouble is, this currently happens much more commonly for men.



If you'd like to read more about the different pathways men and women tend to take (that have nothing to do with any brain differences), see the WGEA's *'Different Genders, Different Lives'* publication at:

www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/2014-03-04_PP_different_genders_different_lives.pdf

UNDERSTANDING GENDER EQUALITY AND THE LAW

We have laws about preventing and addressing discrimination in Australia. Sex discrimination is when a person is treated less favourably than a person of the opposite sex would be treated in the same or similar circumstances.

Gender equality laws now require workplaces to actively promote equality, rather than just deal with problems as they arise. The *Sex Discrimination Act* makes it against the law to treat you unfairly because of your:

- sex
- marital status
- family responsibilities
- pregnancy or potential to become pregnant
- because you are breastfeeding.

Obviously, the *Act* also makes sexual harassment against the law.



This definition appears in the Australian Human Rights Commission's publication *'Know Your Rights, Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment'*. You can find this at: www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/know-your-rights-sex-discrimination-and-sexual-harassment

Sexual harassment is any unwelcome sexual behaviour that is likely to offend, humiliate or intimidate. It has nothing to do with mutual attraction or friendship. Examples include:

- unwelcome physical touching
- staring or leering
- suggestive comments or jokes
- unwanted requests to go out on dates
- requests for sex
- emailing pornography or rude jokes
- sending sexually explicit texts
- intrusive questions about your private life or body
- displaying posters, magazines or screen savers of a sexual nature.

It's important to explain to others what sexual harassment actually means, if you recognise there are problems emerging. Everyone has the right to be safe while at work – so, if you do encounter problems, you need to act early. You can speak to your manager, HR team, or Contact Officer.

Sexual harassment gets a lot of attention (with 1 in 5 women experiencing it during their career), but it's even more common for people to experience years of micro-inequities, or small examples of unfair treatment. These may take various forms.

The law recognises three forms of discrimination:

1. **Direct** discrimination
2. **Indirect** discrimination
3. **Victimisation.**

Let's explore each of these in a sex discrimination context in more detail:

1. Direct discrimination

Direct sex discrimination is less favourable treatment of a woman than a man (or vice versa) because of their sex. This usually impacts individuals.

Increasingly, over a period of a year, I became aware that I was being used to lure people into the business. I was told exactly what to wear to various functions and events – including “something sexy” on one occasion – and I was coached to engage with clients and bring them back to our work functions. I said it was inappropriate but nothing changed. None of my male colleagues were ever told what to wear.

– Anna, 22

2. Indirect discrimination

Indirect sex discrimination occurs in a broader context. It's when an employer applies a policy or practice equally to everyone that puts one sex at an unfair disadvantage. Indirect discrimination can easily affect many people if left unchecked.

An internal position at the organisation's crèche was advertised in the usual way, but when I called for further information they were very dismissive of me, saying that they were looking for a nurturing mother who had experience raising children. I have good childcare qualifications, but they refused to even consider me.

– Ben, 25

3. Victimisation

This can happen when you are treated less favourably or bullied or excluded because you make a complaint of discrimination or support a colleague who was complaining. You might be branded or treated as a troublemaker, or stopped from accessing opportunities that are open to others.

Once you are clear about your rights, it's important to move gender discussions away from always being about discrimination to being more about fairness and inclusion.

Ever since I was caught up in Toni's sexual harassment claim, people don't trust me. The senior managers ignore me and I haven't been offered any training since it happened. I am wondering how I can prove that the organisation's attitude towards me has changed and some key people haven't forgiven me for telling the truth. It's pretty obvious, but rather hard to substantiate.

– Mark, 42

3. ACTION

WHAT CAN I DO TO IMPROVE THINGS AT WORK?

You can:

- raise awareness first, and start conversations
- find out what's currently happening in your organisation through HR and ask how you can contribute
- initiate requests for equality training
- be a positive role model.

THE 'DECIDE' MODEL

Here is a handy model that sums up what you, as an individual, can do about gender equality in your workplace:

- **D**on't put up with inequities in the workplace, at home or in the community – say something
- **E**ducate yourself by doing a course or reading more about gender inequities and inequality
- **C**ommunicate with colleagues, friends, family about it – start conversations
- **I**nforn someone if you see examples of inequities or discrimination. Raise their awareness in a respectful way
- **D**emand that sexism and sexual harassment is addressed in your workplace
- **E**mpower others to do something about it, too – work as a team.

HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE TO A GENDER EQUALITY INITIATIVE?

There are some great ways you can help propel a gender equality program forward. You can join a working group, contribute to the organisational plan, or (best of all) start collecting information.

It's helpful to talk to your manager or someone in HR about this first. Start by asking if they have any plans regarding gender equality and if they've tried to ascertain what's currently happening organisation-wide.

If you are given the go-ahead to gather information, start by asking individuals about standards of behaviour in their team and what they witness across the business. This can be done via workshops, focus groups, or a simple survey. This isn't an investigation; so don't gather names and dates of incidents unless that's what you have been asked to do. Instead, gather information on the kinds of general issues that regularly crop up. You might like to document some examples and alter the details. It's important not to circulate this information inappropriately through the business: take it to your manager or HR contact.

Useful questions to ask your colleagues include:

- are standards and expectations regarding behaviour clear?
- do people realise that we have some way to go to reach gender equality?
- does everyone know where to get information on the topic?
- do people recognise when inequities small or large occur?
- do they feel confident to speak up?
- are there ground rules about what bystanders might say if they see sexist behaviours or comments?
- do leaders role model appropriately supportive behaviours?
- what inclusive practices do you see at work?
- are men given equal access to flexibility if they want better work/life balance?

You can also volunteer to examine and assess your organisation's policies and procedures, and check if there is currently anything in them that relates to gender equality. You will need to look for things like:

- diversity policy or gender equality statement
- equal opportunity/anti-discrimination policy
- code of conduct/workplace behaviours policy
- parental/carers leave policy
- flexible work policy
- family violence leave policy.

Again, speak to someone in HR and find out if they would like your assistance.



I had a manager who was constantly saying things like, 'Time to toughen up, Princess' whenever I alerted her to sexist comments and issues in the (mostly male) team I worked with. She made it my problem, and took a 'I had to handle it and fight to get ahead... so should you' attitude.

I thought to myself, 'what if I was getting picked on about my cultural background?' Would she still be saying 'just deal with it'?

I eventually left that job. I couldn't change the culture of the whole organisation and I didn't think I should have had to.

– Leah, 26

WHAT KINDS OF THINGS CAN YOU SAY AS A BYSTANDER?

You will undoubtedly hear or observe behaviour that is discriminatory, sexist, and offensive during your working life – in fact, chances are it will be directed at you personally at some stage. It's important to know how to manage your response, and know how to stand up for yourself and others.

Your responses can range from:

- minor (raising an eyebrow and saying: "that doesn't sound right to me")
- moderate ("that is actually offensive. Please stop speaking in that way")
- major ("I'm going to report this behaviour. It's wrong, both ethically and legally").

You will know what kind of response you want to make, but make sure you feel safe to do so. If there has been a display of aggression in any way, seek some support from a manager or leader. If you feel there is no danger, it's important for you to stand up for yourself and talk to the person who has behaved badly.

The most common responses people are likely to make when they are pulled up for offensive comments or poor behaviour are:

What? Don't be ridiculous! I was only joking!

No, you've misunderstood me

You don't hear me complaining when women make jokes about men

There is no right way to deal with these difficult situations, but the important thing is not to lose your cool, or to get into an argument. Plan to always hold on to the principle of 'do no harm' during your discussion with the offender.

Imagine somebody has said something derogatory and sexist to you about "women belonging in the kitchen, not the workplace." Here are four steps that will help you handle the situation:

1. Stop and think about the idea or belief behind the comment. Yes, it's offended you, but where is it coming from? What gender bias or assumptions does it reveal? For example, in this case: Women are more naturally attuned to home duties than men.
2. Ask a clarifying question or make a response that is informed by this thought. For example:

So what you're saying is that you believe women have natural abilities that make them better than men at looking after a home? Do you really think that's true?

3. Make a response or ask a question that reflects wisdom in their idea or belief. This doesn't mean you agree with the overall statement. For example:

Perhaps women are, on the whole, more nurturing than men. But I'm not sure that this quality is innate. I think maybe society conditions women to be that way. What do you think?

4. Apply that wisdom to the topic at hand in a new way that is close enough to the person's way of thinking for them to be able to move forward with you. For example:

Society tells both men and women that they should act a certain way, or be good at a certain thing, or that they "belong" in a certain place. But do they really? Surely men are just as capable of cooking or cleaning a kitchen? If that's true, aren't women just as capable of working in an office or factory?

TIPS FOR ENCOURAGING RESPECT IN THE WORKPLACE (FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS)

- consider if there are gender inequities that you see and could be acting on
- notice when both men and women are treated unfairly or penalties are applied for thinking in different ways (e.g. a man arranged to attend his child's sports day and is given a hard time by others)
- focus on inclusion
- ask people on your team how they feel they are treated in terms of gender
- if you make a mistake and say something unfair, apologise and make a commitment that it won't happen again
- ensure everyone has access to opportunities at work
- support events and initiatives – be a champion of change
- build informal relationships by sharing articles or information or helping when colleagues are stressed or struggling
- assist others and ask for help when you need it
- share something of yourself, your interests, what you do for fun/exercise/your community
- be strict about boundaries – know what you will and won't do (e.g. when it comes to something like gossip, don't say anything you wouldn't say to the person's face. This is actually a great general guideline for anyone in any workplace)
- go out for a drink with colleagues if you want to, but know when to leave – if you become uncomfortable with behaviour within the group, excuse yourself (we should be doing this in any group situation)
- if you are excluded from something, speak up and say: "I would've liked to have been included". If they don't apologise, be more clear with your message: "Next time, please do include me"
- talk about things you have in common (politics, music, books, movies)
- if you are uncomfortable at times, it's okay to admit it ("yeah, sometimes it's awkward, but I find a way through") rather than deny it ("no, it's fine. I know you didn't mean it") or accept it as your lot ("yes, I really hate the comments. But I guess I have to expect them, being the only female in the team"). You need to let people know if they are making you uncomfortable
- if you are the victim of something more serious than an unintended but discriminatory comment, say something to the offender one-on-one, not in front of the group. If that doesn't work, ask them clearly to accompany you to your manager or to HR to work things out
- should I be taking responsibility for this or is this based on social conditioning of women to appease?



We are gradually getting better. There are still a few questionable jokes told from time to time – but no one laughs any more.

– Sam, 27

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