

# DIVERSITY INCLUSION BELONGING

Increase the proportion of women in senior leadership roles to 50% in the government sector by 2025

## Gender Balance in Leadership – Benefits from an Organisational Perspective

Gender balance in leadership provides organisations with a range of positive outcomes. Improving the number of women in leadership positions is not only considered good organisational practice, but also supports diversity in thoughts, experiences, knowledge, ideas and perspectives. These elements all contribute to improved problem solving, decision making and lead to more integrated approaches to healthcare and policy development. Equality in leadership fosters balance in teams and may encourage greater empathy in a healthcare setting, leading to better patient outcomes and satisfaction. Organisations that value and promote diversity in gender are better able to attract and retain high performers and in turn improve operational performance.



What can employers do to achieve the target?

- *Be aware of the opportunities for flexible working for roles within the organisation*

The NSW Government is committed to continued flexibility across the NSW public service. Encouraging flexibility in the workplace attracts talent, and encourages female participation in the workforce, with studies showing that females who work flexibly are equally committed to achieving career goals and potential compared to those without flexible arrangements. Furthermore, flexible workplace practices allow both male and female employees to meet the demands of both work and personal commitments and better balance responsibilities.

Employers and managers play a key role in driving support for flexible working arrangements. The Public Service Commission NSW has developed policy resources and case studies on [flexible working provisions](#).

NSW Health employs staff in a wide variety of roles, including frontline service delivery positions. In these cases, flexibility can take the form of better rostering practices, part time and casual work. It is important that organisations consider what flexible options are appropriate to the wide variety of roles in the health system, so that service delivery and patient care needs are met. NSW Health is currently working towards the Premier's Priority to increase the number of women in senior leadership roles to 50% in the government sector by 2025.

- *Be aware of entitlements that assist female employees*

NSW Health provides a range of leave entitlements that can assist with flexible working, including FACS leave, Carer's leave, parental leave, leave without pay and support for breastfeeding mothers. Managers should be aware of these entitlements to assist all employees in planning for the needs of work and home life. Policy Directive PD2018\_046 *Leave Matters for the NSW Health Service* sets out leave provisions for the NSW Health Service.

- *Aim for gender balance in shortlists for leadership and executive positions*

All Senior Executive Service (SES) and Health Executive Service (HES) non-clinical executive positions must have at least one female on the short list for interview. Care should be taken to avoid unconscious bias, particularly in relation to what may be considered traditional male or female roles. Consideration should be given to encouraging women to consider traditional male roles, for example, through provision of career information, training, and targeted promotion of job opportunities to women.

- *Provide training and education in identifying unconscious bias and breaking stereotypes*

Unconscious bias refers to the prejudices, attitudes and stereotypes we form as part of normal everyday thought patterns which go beyond our regular perception of ourselves and others. Unconscious bias affects our thoughts not only with reference to gender, but also our perceptions of others based on age, ethnicity, parental status and others in minority groups. Unconscious bias affects all facets of how work is approached and completed, from the interactions between colleagues to the decisions made in a recruitment process. Helpful links and resources include:

- Externally facilitated training programs (at cost): Diversity Australia deliver the **Managing Unconscious Bias at Work** program targeted to managers and leaders to help understand the nature and prevalence of bias and frameworks to identify and reduce bias. The Australian Human Resources Institute (AHRI) provides the **Managing Unconscious Bias**



**course** targeted to all staff to educate on both conscious and unconscious bias and its impact on decision making in the workplace.

- *Establish mentor and sponsorship programs*

Mentor and sponsorship programs provide connections between senior leaders and other staff members to facilitate professional development. Mentor programs entail the exchange of advice, perspective and guidance between mentor and mentee. Sponsorship programs require matching high potential employees with executives who have decision making authority and can provide access to opportunities such as experiential learning assignments and make personal recommendations. Effectiveness of such programs is contingent on both genders participating in the process, with research indicating that male sponsors and mentors are equally important as female sponsors and mentors in supporting leadership development.

Both programs require some structure to ensure clear goals are developed and beneficial outcomes achieved. Helpful resources include:

- **The Workplace Gender Equity Agency paper on mentoring and sponsorship**
- **Catalyst Sponsoring Women to Success report**
- **Postgraduate Medical Council of Victoria Mentor Training Program**

- *Consider the work of the Male Champions of Change Initiative*

The Male Champions of Change initiative is a network of male executives from both the public and private sector who are committed to working together to address gender inequality. The network is dedicated to driving change in their organisation and industry and sharing best practice strategies to address the economic and social issue of gender inequality in the workplace. The [website](#) contains numerous publications detailing the initiatives implemented and progress made to bridge the gender gap.

- *Form a women's network/leadership network*

Establishing a women's leadership network provides an opportunity to build a mutually supportive network with colleagues to meet formally or informally to discuss initiatives and challenges, share ideas and personal stories of leadership as well as opportunities to connect on a social level. Such networks may also include male representatives to build understanding of the importance of gender equity in the workplace rather than create segregation.

The London NHS Leadership Academy has published a literature review on [the power of staff networks](#), including information on establishing networks.

Online resource group Diversity Best Practices has published the [Diversity Primer](#), with Chapter 10 – Employee Networks and Affinity Groups providing information on best practices and examples of corporate networks.

