Filling the Pool is an exploration of how Western Australian businesses can increase participation rates of female leaders in order to enhance their long term prosperity.

As we look to the future of Perth, it is clear that systems, processes, institutions and individuals need to take fresh and more contemporary approaches in the face of continued population growth and development challenges.

A key ingredient of this overhaul of corporate practice and attitude is the representation and participation of women in middle and senior levels of the corporate landscape.

**Aims**

Filling the Pool will be an 18-24 month research project that aims to:

- produce a clear understanding of Perth’s corporate landscape in terms of middle to senior level women;
- identify the similarities and differences of that landscape with other Australian capital cities;
- provide recommendations to retain professional women and increase participation rates; and
- provide women with a guide to success in the corporate world.

**Outcomes**

The outcome of the research will be a publication that can act as a guide for businesswomen and for corporations in Perth about how to achieve success in corporate Perth; and how to retain and nurture female talent to achieve senior and leadership roles.

It will be a positive, solutions focused report which will identify and articulate:

- facts/statistics about women in the workplace – representation from graduate level to board level and pay disparity between men and women;
- the characteristics of women in leadership roles in Perth;
- the views of leading women on corporate culture in Perth today;
- personal strategies that women who have become leaders have used to achieve success;
- ways that successful women have managed to balance work and home life and company policies that have been of assistance or that have hindered their ability to achieve this;
- additional ideas for women and for companies to assist women in achieving improved work/life balance;
- perceptions of the gender pay gap – why women think that women are paid less than men for the same roles;
- opportunities for training that may assist women achieve success in a corporate setting; and
- the importance of mentoring and opportunities to increase mentoring for emerging leaders.

**Benefits**

The broad resulting benefits of the research and final publication will be:

- greater participation by women in the corporate sector in decision making and influencing roles;
- that this greater level of participation will, over time, contribute to a larger pool of potential directors;
- a move to stem the loss of women from corporate life 10+ years after graduation at which point there is almost universally 50% representation; and
- ultimately a redress of the gender imbalance.
International Context

In order to appreciate the potential value of this research to the Committee for Perth, its members and the broader community, it’s important to consider the context in which it is currently framed.

In developed countries, women have made very considerable advancements in the workplace in the last 50 years and make up nearly half of the workforce but research shows that women still lag behind men when it comes to securing the top posts.

On a global scale corporations, associations and even governments are recognising the imbalance in gender representation in board positions and middle and senior management and are taking steps to address this.

As far back as 2003, Norway introduced a law prescribing that boards of all publically listed companies had to be made up of at least 40% women. Now at 36% they have one of the highest rates of female representation in the world.

In November 2012 the European Union announced plans to set goals for all publically listed companies to meet similar targets by the end of the decade.

The USA still lags in its representation of women on boards. While in 2012 over half of the Fortune 1000 companies had more than one woman on their boards only 33% have 20% female representation or more.

The table below, originally produced in the notable Lord Davies’ report of February 2011 shows the current world wide trends clearly and positions Australia midway at 8.4%
According to the Census:

**Boards**

- Women in Australia hold just 12.3% of ASX 200 directorships, up from 8.4% in 2010.
- Women hold 9.2% of ASX 500 directorships.
- Of these, there are six female chairs in the ASX 200 and a total of thirteen in the ASX 500.

The industry sectors with the highest percentage of female directors across both the ASX 200 and ASX 500 are the insurance and banking industries.

An approximate comparison with other countries that have a similar style of corporate governance shows that Australian boards have more women than the United Kingdom and New Zealand, but fewer than the United States, Canada and South Africa.

**Key Management Personnel**

- Women hold 9.7% of executive key management personnel (executive KMP) positions in the ASX 200, up from 8.0% in 2010.
- Women hold 9.2% of executive KMP positions in the ASX 500.
- There are seven female CEOs in the ASX 200 (compared to six in 2010) and a total of 12 in the ASX 500.
- 60.6% of ASX 200 companies do not have any female executive KMP, similar to 61.9% of companies in 2010. For ASX 500 companies, 63.1% do not have any female executive KMP.

While the recent increase in female board membership of ASX 200 companies is positive, it is evident that while 45.7% of all employees in Australia are female, few women are employed in leadership positions and it is evident that women fare better in some sectors than in others.
Western Australian Context

Significantly for Western Australia, the materials sector and the energy sector are among the worst performing sectors in Australia.

As a result, women hold just 7.5% of board positions in the 53 materials companies listed in the ASX 200 and 8.5% of board positions in the 19 listed energy sector companies.

This is reflected in statistics for the number of women in board and executive positions in this state – which are the worst in the nation.

Boards

- Women in Western Australia hold just 4.0% of board positions in ASX 200 companies with headquarters in Western Australia
- Women hold only 3.5% of directorships in ASX 500 companies in Western Australia.

Western Australia has the lowest representation in Australia behind South Australia at 10.3% and 7.8% respectively and significantly tailing the Australian Capital Territory which has 16.7% and 14.3% representation.

Key Management Personnel

Western Australia also lags far behind other states in female executive representation.

- Women in Western Australia hold only 4.9% of executive KMP positions in ASX 200 listed companies.
- Only 5.1% of ASX 500 listed companies executive KMP are female.

These figures compare to 12.9% and 12.6% in Victoria and 11% and 9.3% in Queensland.

The Department of Commerce also tells us that Western Australia has a gender pay gap of 26%, the largest in Australia.

According to the Australian Institute of Company Directors, many board appointments are made to ex-CEOs, so if women are not being appointed to the most senior positions, they have reduced opportunities to be appointed to boards.
Project scope

There have already been many international studies that have gathered statistics on the global gender imbalance and yet more on the reasons why it is in businesses’ best interest to reject this trend. Filling the Pool is a unique and valuable project due to the fact that not only will it focus entirely on local issues, it will also go further than much academic and economic data has to date with its recommendations and practical applications.

By undertaking research specific to Perth’s corporate environment we intend the findings to empower women to help themselves further their careers and to assist Perth based businesses to identify practical ways that they can help to attract, develop and retain talented women and provide them with leadership opportunities both as executives and board members.

The research outcomes will be significant and it is anticipated that Filling the Pool will:

• provide a clear understanding of Perth’s corporate cultural landscape as it relates to gender equity in leadership in the private sector.
• Compare and contrast Perth with other Australian capital cities in the areas of gender equity issues in leadership in the private sector.
• Provide recommendations for the retention and advancement of professional women in the private sector in Perth.
• Provide women with a guide to achieving success in climbing the corporate ladder in Perth based corporations.

The Process

The project will progress in three stages:

1. The preliminary stage, will involve:
   • Stakeholder meetings aiming to establish the level of support they are willing to bring to the project. A critical role for stakeholders will be in facilitating access to key respondents.
   • Research into how WA compares to the rest of Australia in the areas of female representation at both board and executive team levels as well as how this may differ by industry. An outcome of this work would be the production of a map detailing a significant proportion of WAs corporate environment based upon market capitalisation and/or contribution to the WA economy. This ‘map’ will be necessary to ensure that the sample of CEOs, HR managers and chairs, as well as female leaders and managers, is capable of producing findings that are valid, reliable and generalisable to the whole of the WA private sector.
   • Research regarding nuances of the WA economy/corporate culture which may be responsible for lower female representation in middle and senior leadership and executive roles.
   • Examination of data relating to the gender pay gap in WA, which is the highest in Australia.

2. The intermediate stage will comprise largely of data collection via semi structured interviews. In addition to the interviews, stakeholder meetings would also be held to discuss trends emerging from the data analysis to date.
   Intermediate stage (approximately 12 months): interviews with:
   • 30 female leaders in Perth at CEO or senior executive level
   • 30 female managers at middle or senior management levels
   • 30 board chairs or board members with executive appointment experience
   • 30 executive recruiters and/or senior internal HR professionals
   • 30 female managers who have ‘opted out’ of management roles

3. The final stage will involve:
   • Compilation, review and presentation of a report detailing the findings underpinning the four research outcomes.
   • Presentation of the findings to key stakeholders and interested groups identified by the stakeholders and the Committee for Perth.
The Team

Producing the calibre of research that we believe is required will require a world class research team.

Dr Terry Fitzsimmons
Lead Researcher

Terry is a Chartered Accountant with over 25 years of experience. He is currently a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow with the University of Queensland Business School researching leadership transitions. He recently completed a PhD Thesis titled ‘Navigating CEO appointments: Do Australia’s top male and female CEOs differ in how they made it to the top?’ Terry is a management consultant who has worked with many of Australia’s largest firms, an international professional speaker engaged in the area of gender equity and inclusion and a lecturer in the areas of leadership, strategy, gender diversity and management. He consults to the Education Departments of Queensland, NSW & Victoria in the delivery of the National History Curriculum. He has served as national and state presidents of not for profit bodies as well as a director on boards of Listed Public Companies in Australia and overseas.

Terry’s thesis ‘Navigating CEO appointments: Do Australia’s top male and female CEOs differ in how they made it to the top’. Terry’s research uncovered a surprising statistic relating to the characteristics required for a woman to reach the top of the corporate ladder, namely that they are most likely to have survived a significant trauma in childhood and/or come from small business stock. He also discovered that the traits for men who succeed were quite different. They generally grow up in a stable household with a stay-at-home mum and a dad who has a professional career. It also helps to captain the school football team.

Professor Victor Callan
Researcher

Also on the team will be Professor Victor Callan. Victor is a Professor of Management at The University of Queensland (UQ) Business School and Research Dean (Business, Economics and Law Faculty), In these senior roles he leads the School and Faculty activities around industry consultancy and research. He has held prior roles as Dean and Head of School, and maintains an international reputation for his work on strategic leadership, organizational change and planning, organisational development, and cross-cultural management. For over 30 years, Professor Callan has designed and delivered leadership and management programs in the areas of leadership development, change management, strategic and policy planning, and program evaluation for a wide range of public and private sector organisations.
Steering Committee

Marion Fulker  
CEO, Project Manager  
Adjunct Senior Research Fellow,  
The University of Western Australia

Michael Schoch, Chair  
General Manager, Production  
Shell Australia

Joanne Neild, Deputy Chair  
Human Resources Manager  
Shell Australia

Suzanne Ardagh  
State Manager  
AICD

Liz Ritchie  
State Director for WA  
CEDA

Michael Bosley-Smith  
Manager Research and Evaluation  
Department of Local Government and Communities

Maria Osman  
Acting Executive Director Strategy & Development  
Department of Local Government and Communities

Karen Dill-Macky  
Partner  
EY

Bradley Farrell  
Partner, Advisory  
EY

Heather Murphy  
State HR Manager, WA  
Westpac Banking Corporation

Jay Watson  
State General Manager  
Westpac Banking Corporation

Jenny Phillips  
People Group Manager  
WorleyParsons

Shaun Poll  
Contract Director  
Transfield Worley WorleyParsons
Project funders

Shell is the major funding partner of the project and has provided core funding to Filling the Pool.

For this project to be successful it needs to have broad cross sector support from industry and key organisations which include the Committee for Perth Board and Members as well as relevant professional and industry bodies.

Our supporting partners are the Department of Local Government and Communities, EY, Westpac and WorleyParsons.

Project supporters

We are pleased to also have the support of two key organisations in the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Committee for Economic Development through their Western Australian offices.

Committee for Perth

The Committee for Perth exists to improve the cultural diversity, economic prosperity, sustainability and world class amenity of Perth.

This is possible thanks to the financial and intellectual contributions of our members who also want to realise a more vibrant and globally competitive region for the benefit of all.

One of our strategic objectives is to be recognised as the leading authority on the issues facing a growing Perth by demonstrably influencing the thinking and action that improves the liveability of Perth.

We seek to:
- inform debate through a fact based approach;
- enhance the quality of decision making;
- monitor outcomes; and
- be a visible and vocal stewardship organisation.

Filling the Pool will help us achieve these goals and realise our vision of a city and region with a bright future for all.

More information can be found at www.committeeforperth.com.au