Filling the Pool
Committee for Perth
Filling the Pool - Report
A landmark report to achieve gender equality in Western Australia
June 2015
Achieving gender equality is everyone’s responsibility

The Committee for Perth, Dr Terrance Fitzsimmons and Professor Victor Callan.

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Report
A landmark report to achieve gender equality in Western Australia
June 2015
Filling the Pool has been a two year project and like any worthwhile undertaking, it has been a journey. Our starting point was that in the discussions that the Committee for Perth was having about our region’s future there was a lack of women around the table.

As the leading think-tank focused on the long term prosperity, liveability and vitality of Perth we looked at the facts and Western Australia’s performance by any relevant indicator was poor. We had the least number of women on boards and as CEOs in the country and also the largest pay gap.

It then became clear that the Committee had an important role to play.

After reading an article by Dr Terrance Fitzsimmons which stated there was a significant gender difference in the backgrounds and experiences of men and women who were CEOs of ASX listed companies, I flew to the Business School at the University of Queensland to meet him. After two hours of quizzing Terry about his research findings, I was convinced we had our man.

With a proposal in hand to uncover why women were graduating at parity in most degrees but leaving the corporate sector in droves 10 years after graduation, I outlined the research scope to the Board. Their view was that a project of this size needed buy-in from others. Thankfully, Shell Australia, through project champion Michael Schoch and then Country Manager Ann Pickard, underwrote 75% of the research cost.

EY, Westpac, WorleyParsons and the Department of Local Government and Communities came in as supporting funding partners. The WA Divisions of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Committee for Economic Development also supported our efforts. I can’t thank them enough for their financial and intellectual support.

However, it is the candid thoughts, views and experiences of the 173 people that were interviewed and a rigorous analysis of the literature that helped us to achieve more than we hoped to.

While the findings for Perth are not unique, the comprehensive roadmap of 31 recommendations are crafted to address local conditions. They are aimed at government, the private sector, women, and men too, so that more women are in decision making and influencing roles to ensure a bright future for the Perth region.

Marion Fulker
CEO, Committee for Perth
Project Manager, Filling the Pool
From the Steering Committee Chair

In acknowledging the fact that Australia rates poorly against other OECD nations in relation to female participation at senior levels in organisations, and Perth in turn fares poorly against the rest of the nation, the need to understand the underlying ‘How?’ and ‘Why?’ is compelling. Even more important is the need to understand what can be done to redress that imbalance.

At Shell, our success depends on the ability to attract, affiliate and motivate a diverse and talented workforce, and for that to be sustainable. Filling the Pool was a unique opportunity for us to assist in gaining a better understanding of these issues in the capital city of our Australian office, where most of our Australian workforce resides, and where many of our industry partners, suppliers and stakeholders base themselves.

After announcing Shell’s support for the project, the personal challenge put to me was that if I recognise the imbalance, what was I prepared to do about it? Indeed, if not me then who, and if not now, then when?

Having underwritten Filling the Pool, Shell was joined by six like-minded organisations. All of us contributed senior representatives to a gender-balanced Steering Committee that received regular briefings from the researchers, subjecting their feedback to robust debate, analysing the draft of the final report, and ultimately challenging the recommendations for their impact and ability to be implemented.

The 10 workshops involving 350 people, where the recommendations were presented by Dr Terry Fitzsimmons, were vital to gain feedback on their relevance, achievability and acceptability. Only an organisation with the brand credibility of the Committee for Perth, with its membership base and project management capabilities, could have led such an initiative.

I believe that the output of the Filling the Pool Project is something that the researchers and the Committee for Perth can be proud of. Having recognised the gender imbalance in corporate Perth as counter to the Committee’s aspiration of improving the liveability and global competitiveness of our region, we have created a holistic roadmap for retaining and nurturing female talent towards leadership roles for the greater good of our community. It has been Shell’s privilege to lead the initiative.

Michael Schoch
General Manager Crux Development, Shell
Chair, Filling the Pool Steering Committee
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Aims

The Filling the Pool research project was scoped and commissioned by the Committee for Perth and undertaken by Dr Terrance Fitzsimmons and Professor Victor Callan of the University of Queensland Business School.

With a poor track record in Western Australia of women making it into corporate leadership roles, the aim of the project was to investigate what could be done to increase the participation and rates of progression in order to ‘fill the pool’ of female leaders in decision making and influencing roles so as to address the current imbalance.

Western Australia compares poorly to other States around female representation in leadership roles. An analysis of the Dun & Bradstreet database (Dun & Bradstreet, 2014) undertaken as part of this project revealed that the State has half the national average of female directors, less than half the number of female CEOs and less than one third the number of female board chairs in its top 80 firms.
The study comprises the interviews of 173 business men and women primarily from Western Australia. They included chairpersons, executive recruiters, human resources professionals, female executive and senior managers, women who have recently left the corporate sector and female graduates. The mix of interviewees is also broadly reflective of the dominant sectors of the Western Australian economy. The focus in these interviews was on factors which facilitate or serve as barriers to the progression of women to executive level appointments and boards in Western Australia.

Additionally, the issue of gender equality was examined through what is known in the literature from over 300 separate studies conducted elsewhere in Australia, the United States and Europe. Where possible additional statistical sources have been used to support and validate the interview findings.
Major findings

Facilitators

The economic argument
Over the past decade, numerous studies at a global and national level have identified the economic rationale for gender equality. There is a compelling economic case for gender equality to be seen as a strategic imperative at organisation, industry and State levels. The GDP foregone every year is estimated at 20%. For Australia, this represents hundreds of billions of dollars per year in lost revenue and therefore profits. This represents an annual loss of around $300 billion to the Australian economy (ABS, 2014a), reducing the revenue available to fund major infrastructure projects that states like Western Australia rely upon.

An engaged, tight entrepreneurial business culture
Perth’s corporate community is described as tight and highly interconnected. This can be seen as one of Western Australia’s greatest strengths as well as one of its greatest weaknesses. In terms of implementing the recommendations of this report, Perth is in a unique position to enact change. Perth has also been described as a highly entrepreneurial ‘can do’ city, used to change and volatility. Unlike other cities of Australia and globally, if the most influential males in Perth were to adopt and implement the recommendations of this report the effects would be profound and felt immediately.

Barriers

Traditional Culture
This study has identified a highly masculine corporate and social culture in Perth that differs significantly from the east coast of Australia. At its core is the historical importance of the mining, energy and construction sectors in Western Australia. These sectors are highly male dominated. Male dominated cultures are perpetuating gender roles and stereotypes. This in turn leads to heightened levels of direct and indirect discrimination as well as bias in recruitment, selection, performance and progression decisions. Additionally, critical corporate networks, which are reported as tight and male dominated, are proving difficult for females to access.
Access to childcare

‘Filing the Pool’ identified a ‘perfect storm’ limiting access to childcare in Perth relative to the east coast capitals. Since women are the primary carer of children in over 90% of households these factors impact upon them disproportionately. Partner and extended family support, paid childcare options and workplace flexibility are critical pillars that enable women to remain in the workforce and to progress. On average, women in Perth have partners who are absent from home overnight more than partners in other states; recent immigration patterns have meant that fewer women can rely on help from extended families; there are fewer childcare places per capita in Western Australia compared to any other state and the mining, energy and construction sectors and the sectors which service them are reluctant to institute flexible work practices.

Gender and pay

The gender pay gap in Western Australia, at 25.3% is the largest pay gap in Australia and is predominately caused by male dominance in higher paid industries such as the mining sector; male dominance in higher paid operational roles and their predominance in senior roles. A systematic bias in the remuneration of females was widely reported by interviewees and uncovered in all organisations which had conducted gender pay audits. Managerial discretion in pay setting and gender differences in the willingness to negotiate salary were identified as playing a significant role in perpetuating gender pay gaps.

Operational roles

Western Australia’s economy is driven by mining, energy and construction which are operationally focused and very few women are progressing through operational roles and on into executive roles in these industries. Of greatest concern is that currently less than 15% of graduates entering engineering related operational roles at a graduate level are women. This is a significant problem for Western Australia due to the dominance of operational role experience as a criterion for progressing through to CEO and board roles in these sectors. It heralds that unless criteria for these roles are revisited the issue of gender equality may persist for generations to come.

The study generated 31 recommendations and a roadmap identifying the connections between the recommendations is provided. The roadmap acts as a strategic blueprint for action on gender inequality. Like all effective strategies, these recommendations need to be approached holistically. The recommendations are an inter-connected framework, requiring each to be implemented to support the others.
What Government can do

Investigate & remedy the number & cost of childcare places as well as the provision of before & after school & vacation care programs R2 & 3

Raise awareness of cultural norms holding women back from contributing to the economy R1

Develop a program to increase the number of girls undertaking STEM subjects R4

Succession plans should be linked to greater diversity & commence at graduate intake level R16

‘Targets with teeth’ should be adopted as a change mechanism R9

Gender metrics & gender pay gap data to be collected to inform decisions & policies R7 & 8

Accountability for targets to flow to managers R10

Embrace the economic argument R5

Change must be driven from the top R6

Greater retention & progression of women in Western Australia

What Organisations can do

Childcare assistance R22

Need for travel R12

Honest conversations R11

Flexibility strategies R13

Review pay, promotions & recruitment policies R18, 19, & 20

Document pathways for progression R17

Targeted training & development activities R14

Initiate sponsorship & mentor programs R15

Ensure an inclusive environment for networking R21

What Women can do

Bring men into the conversation R30

Plan around the family R29

Be true to yourself R27

Build self confidence R25

Start with the end goal in mind R23

Be strategically opportunistic R24

Understand effective self promotion & networking R26

Acquire sponsors & mentors R28

Take on mentoring or sponsoring another woman R31
‘Filling the Pool’ makes a number of recommendations for promoting the retention and advancement of women in the private sector in Perth over three areas: what Government can do; what organisations can do; and what women can do.

The recommendations for Government and organisations are made as steps towards a more equitable environment. The recommendations for women are practical pieces of advice from other women in leadership roles and are offered as steps to achieve success in the world we live in today.

**What Government can do**

1. The Western Australian Government needs to develop a long-term campaign to raise awareness of the cultural norms which are hindering the progress of women. This should address intergenerational inequity through a series of demographic case studies.

2. As part of the Red Tape Reduction Campaign, the Western Australian Government needs to investigate and remedy the relative lack of childcare places in the Perth and Peel regions as well as investigating means of reducing costs and extending hours.

3. In order to allow for greater participation in the workforce by women, the Western Australian Government needs to facilitate a greater range of before and after school care and vacation care offerings.

4. The Western Australian Government needs to lead an integrated initiative to increase the number of girls undertaking STEM subjects at high school in order to grow the pool of women qualified to work in the mining, energy, technology and construction sectors. Industry is required to support this initiative through programs similar to that of ‘work inspirations.’

If not now, then when?
What organisations can do

5. Boards need to understand and embrace the economic rationale for gender equality as a strategic competitive advantage which will provide the imperative for the need to change.

6. The CEO needs to be made accountable for championing and driving the issue of gender equality in the workplace. The responsibility for implementing and driving the change process should not be delegated.

7. Organisations should undertake a pay equity audit, by applying processes such as those developed by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), by June 2016.

8. Organisations need to ensure that they have the appropriate gender metrics in place in order to understand and measure current areas of gender inequality. Once established they need to regularly engage with the rest of the organisation to determine the causes behind them and find solutions to the inequalities uncovered.

9. Based upon the rigorous measurement and investigation of gender inequalities, adopt targets with teeth and develop a suite of policies to deliver on them.

10. Accountability for the delivery of targets needs to be embedded in the organisation through the use of valid and reliable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) attached to real consequences for success or failure.

11. As a retention strategy, organisations should engage in honest conversations with employees regarding policies and expectations, surrounding the timing, benefits and shape of returning to work, prior to their parental leave departure and develop means of maintaining contact during their absence.

12. In recognition that not all staff are able to work away, organisations should rethink the reasons for travel and encourage and promote virtual connections where possible.

13. As a flexibility initiative, organisations should conduct independent job analyses, involving both the Human Resource (HR) department/ function and line management to determine if flexible work options are available for employees both in the workplace and remotely.

14. Organisations should adopt a gender equality strategy accompanied by a program of targeted training and development activities aimed at explaining the rationale for the overall strategy and the specific policies for overcoming gender inequality.

15. Organisations should instigate sponsorship, mentoring and advocacy programs both formal and informal.

16. As a progression strategy, organisations should link their diversity initiatives with their succession planning and extend succession plans from the CEO down to graduate level.

17. Organisations need to ensure that they have transparent and documented pathways for progression.

18. Organisations need to review their existing recruitment, pay, opportunity and progression systems and question assumptions around the validity of role and pay criteria. They should also adopt a policy of ‘if not, why not’ in recruitment in areas where there is not already gender parity.

19. Organisations should create a ‘fair’ process of recruitment in which every shortlist of candidates must contain a female candidate and if this is not achievable there must be an explanation as to why.

20. Recruitment selection panels should endeavour to always contain a female panellist and if this is not achievable there must be an explanation as to why.

21. Organisations need to ensure an inclusive environment for women at internal and external networking functions.

22. Large corporates and developers should consider the provision of on-site childcare where sufficient economies of scale are present as a means of providing certainty and reliability of childcare for their employees.
What women can do

Each of the 100 women interviewed was asked this question “What advice would you offer a woman at the start of her career if she were aiming at one day obtaining an executive position?”

The following recommendations are a summary of their advice which is backed up by literature.

23. Start with the end goal in mind

- CEOs and board members are usually appointed based upon an appropriate ‘breadth and depth of industry experience’.
- Knowing what these requirements actually look like is a good starting point in building a career plan.
- Some organisations are better at supporting women than others. Women need to research and identify these organisations and target them to support their career.
- Plans for having a family and the timing thereof are a critical consideration in the career plan since the ‘depth’ of experience criteria applied by organisations usually relates to the number of years spent in the industry. Every year taken out of a career makes a woman comparatively less competitive to males who have not had career breaks.

24. Be strategically opportunistic

- Having a career plan enables women to identify opportunities as they arise.
- Strategic projects and assignments are rare and women need to be ready to take these opportunities early in their careers. These usually require travel, a degree of risk and a stretch in current abilities.
- Women should clearly flag their openness to special assignments to their manager. Women should openly question missed opportunities with their managers to identify what they need to do to be eligible in the future.
- Where no explanations are offered or they are inadequate in explaining why assignments or projects were not offered, this may be a sign that a woman should consider moving teams, areas or perhaps even organisations.

25. Work on self-confidence

- Almost every female reported a relative lack of self-confidence.
- Confidence is a self-concept that is not gendered. Men are no more innately self-confident than women.
- Building self-confidence starts with building self-awareness through leadership training and self-development workshops/tools/activities.
- The second step is becoming ‘expert’ at role requirements and knowing the skills/abilities of those around the role.
- Knowing that you know the role at least as well as those around you makes it easier for women to back themselves, speak more confidently at meetings and take more informed risks.
26. Understand effective self-promotion and networking

- Work does not speak for itself; someone has to speak for it.
- If a manager or a sponsor does not readily promote a woman’s work, it is up to her to promote it herself.
- Effective self-promotion needs to be balanced in terms of its intensity, as well as being delivered at appropriate times and places.
- Maintaining meaningful networks is critical. Meaningful networks usually include colleagues in current and former organisations, industry associations and community or not-for-profit organisations. This then comprises a group of people who know a woman, know her work and are willing to advocate for her.

27. Be true to yourself

- There is a temptation to adopt the dominant norms of behaviour in an organisation. These norms, especially in mining, energy and construction are usually overtly male.
- Adopting behaviours that go against expected stereotypes are usually punished through diminished assessments of capability in general. However, adopting the traditional stereotypical view of female leadership, such as collaborative leadership, can be seen as acting too softly, causing a ‘double bind’.
- The vast majority of female respondents reported that it is better for a woman to negotiate the ‘too soft’ stereotype and to remain true to herself and never to compromise her femininity or personal values.
- There will be times, especially in male dominated environments, when understanding male ways of working will be essential in achieving outcomes.

28. Acquire mentors, sponsors and role models

- Most female interviewees reported the critical importance of having mentors.
- Formal mentors were reported as playing a significant role in providing an in-depth understanding of the organisation, its values, its drivers, a broad understanding of the field/industry and a context for internal decision making.
- Informal, often external, mentors were reported as providing a safe place to self-reflect, question and discuss outside careers options.
- Sponsors were seen as far more valuable; however, sponsoring relationships usually developed from existing mentoring relationships.
- Three ways of acquiring mentors were identified: self-appointed, where the mentor identifies ability; former bosses through an extension of the relationship; and finally by the formal request for support by the mentee.
29. Plan around your family

- The two greatest contributors to women leaving the workforce or failing to progress relate to a lack of childcare and/or a lack of workplace flexibility.

- Where a woman’s career plan includes having children, the plan needs to take into account the degree of reliance she will place upon external childcare providers, her partner, her extended family and her organisation, as well as the financial capacity she has to back her choices.

- The most difficult choices will relate to how much time a woman wishes to spend with her children versus how much time she wishes to dedicate to her career. A supportive partner and a flexible work environment are keys to optimising quality time with children while maintaining a full-time role.

30. Bring men into the conversation.

- Many men are unaware of the issues facing women or the unconscious biases they may possess and be acting upon. Women should take the opportunity to invite a male colleague or their manager to women in leadership or gender related functions. Many male champions of change have emerged from such exposure.

- Support senior male champions from within the organisation to address gender related meetings and gatherings, and have them sponsor reports back to senior executive and board meetings, based upon the issues discussed.

31. Take on the obligation of bringing another woman through.

- Many female interviewees reported the lack of female mentors and role models as they were progressing through their careers.

- Female role models are a critical resource for women aspiring to senior management.
Introduction and overview

Why was this project needed for Perth and Western Australia?

‘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 performance. In looking at the future of Perth, a key issue behind the continued success of businesses will be the continued development of corporate practices and attitudes that enhance the representation and participation of women in middle and senior levels of management and leadership.

While women in Australia comprise 45.9% of the full-time labor force (ABS, 2014), only 3.5% of CEOs of ASX500 companies are women (WGEA, 2014a). This is not a pipeline problem. For instance, women have been graduating from universities at higher rates than men since 1985, a period of time significantly more than a generation ago. The proportion of female graduates has been gradually increasing since 1985 and has comprised over 55% of all graduates since 2000 (ABS, 2012).

Additionally, these ratios are consistent across critical disciplines, such as business and law, where female graduates comprised 50% and 60%, respectively in 2011. However, the same cannot be said of the science, technology, engineering and the mathematics (STEM) fields, where engineering in particular has only 15% female graduates (McDonald, Loch & Cater-Steel, 2010). On the basis of this evidence alone, many more women should be competitive candidates for entry-level positions. In turn, they already represent a large pool of female candidates who should be progressing through to executive leadership roles in far greater numbers than at present.

“We cannot change what we are unaware of, and once we are aware, we cannot help but change”

- Sheryl Sandberg, Facebook COO
Innovative features of the study

‘Filling the Pool’ is a unique and valuable project with its focus entirely on Western Australian businesses and their issues. All of the views reported come from people doing business in the State, including chairpersons, CEOs, HR managers, senior and executive women, recent graduates, senior executive women who have left the corporate world, and executive recruiters.

The project examined external perspectives by interviewing executive recruiters who work outside organisations, senior female managers who have opted out of a corporate career and young female graduates who have only recently joined their organisations, so moving from being outsiders to insiders. The make up of participants in the study is detailed in Appendix 1 under the heading of ‘Sample’.

The research is innovative in its approach. The study investigated the attitudes of over 170 people through in-depth interviews and attempted, where possible, to link these views to evidence from current statistical data and contemporary literature.

There is a critical point of difference between this study and previous studies. The vast majority of past studies have relied upon survey or quantitative data. These reports are valuable in focusing on what are the key problems and the quantum or size of the gap, in a score or a perception. However, ‘Filling the Pool’ is a qualitative study that attends more to asking why and how. Such approaches provide a richness of detail by allowing participants to tell their own story rather than answering from a predetermined set of responses. Qualitative methods are particularly suited to addressing complex human issues. Through the analysis of the narratives of people, it is possible to detail the complexity of the real world, including how individuals see issues and the relationships between issues that influence their everyday behaviour. Details surrounding how the study was conducted are set out in Appendix 1- ‘Methods, sample and procedure.’

‘Filling the Pool’ sought to address a set of complex issues around gender and organisations by speaking to those who often devise and implement the key policies and make major decisions that influence the progression of women in organisations. These individuals are well placed to help answer the question of why most organisations have made little or no progress in the area of gender equality. Although over 60% of organisations undertake a range of diversity actions, Bain and Co (2012) report that these actions seem to be insufficient to increase the number of women executives.

Examining why these issues exist and how these issues can be addressed was a key feature of the project. ‘Filling the Pool’ extends previous research by examining multiple and potentially conflicting perspectives of the gender diversity issue by speaking separately to decision making groups, such as boards and CEOs, and decision implementing groups, such as middle and executive managers to uncover differences in priorities and pressures.

Wherever possible throughout the report, we have allowed the voices of the interviewees to be heard in relation to each issue. This is done by using a series of exemplary quotes. A characteristic of qualitative research is that the data comprise literally hundreds of quotes that can be used to explore the why and the how of each problem or issue being discussed. We have endeavoured to select those quotes that best exemplify a point made by a majority of interviewees.

As a State-based project, the report provides a summary of how this wide range of interviewees understand the corporate landscape of Perth and Western Australia. Through the attitudes expressed by those interviewed, the report also compares and contrasts Perth and Western Australia with other Australian capital cities and States in the areas of business culture, gender, leadership, pay equity issues and related issues in the private sector.

Finally, the report makes many recommendations to assist the retention and advancement of professional women in the private sector in Perth and in the State. It is hoped that these ideas and strategies will be taken up by businesses in this State and elsewhere.
The business case for greater gender equity

Gender inequality in workforce participation, industry participation and progression into leadership roles results in the forfeiture of a 20% increase in GDP for every year that the problem goes unresolved (Goldman Sachs, 2009). This figure represents an annual loss of around $300 billion to the Australian economy (ABS, 2014a). Gender inequality is also a significant social issue in Australia, resulting in increased rates of poverty and insufficient retirement funds for women (ACOSS, 2012).

While the business case for diversity is well acknowledged, to date, interventions by organisations have had limited impact on the numbers of women employed in traditional male roles (CEDA, 2013; WGEA, 2014e). These roles include senior and executive leadership and participation in key Western Australian industries such as mining, energy and construction. According to KPMG (2013), organisations have been slow to adopt measurable diversity targets, with most organisations introducing a diversity policy alone. Australia’s Gender Equality Scorecard, produced by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency, underscores this disparity between policy and implementable strategy by highlighting, for example, that while 47.7% of organisations have a flexible working policy only 13.6% of organisations have a strategy in place to deliver flexible work practices (WGEA, 2014a:13). KPMG (2013) propose that organisations have difficulty implementing a tailored set of measurable objectives, calling into question the ‘traction’ that gender diversity is receiving in organisations compared to society more widely.

Alternatively, even where organisations genuinely want to address gender inequality in the workplace, they often do not understand how to proceed (McKinsey, 2013). One reason is that little research to date has reported upon why one intervention by a business in the area of gender equality may work, while others do not (Nishii, 2013; Putnam, Myers & Gailliard, 2014; van den Brink & Benschop, 2012). Even organisations which have achieved some degree of success in progressing gender equality have noticed that their efforts have plateaued and they are still seeking answers (Kaiser et al., 2013).

Understanding the importance of context

Western Australia is the largest State in Australia by landmass (2,529,875km2), making it roughly ten times the size of New Zealand (Government of Western Australia, 2014a). However, it is relatively sparsely populated with 78% of its two million inhabitants concentrated in the Greater Perth area (ABS, 2014b). While Perth is the most isolated continental capital city in the world, it is also the closest State capital city to Australia’s major export partner, China, and the emerging markets of South East Asia and India, making it an attractive business hub for exporters (Government of Western Australia, 2014a).

The Western Australian economy is export-oriented, specialising in the export of minerals and energy, accounting for more than half of Australia’s merchandise exports (Government of Western Australia, 2014a). While only representing 11% of Australia’s total population, Western Australians contribute 17% of Australia’s GDP. This equates to a 53% above average per capita contribution to the national economy (Government of Western Australia, 2014a).

In terms of overall contribution to Gross State Product (GSP), the mining sector is the greatest contributor, at 30%, closely followed by the services sector at 28% and construction at 12%. Manufacturing, agriculture and forestry only contribute a combined 6% to Western Australia’s GSP, with a relatively small government sector contributing a further 10% to GSP.
In terms of employment, the mining sector only employs 8.7% of Western Australians and construction employs 9.9% (Government of Western Australia, 2014c:5). These numbers are misleading however, since the effect of these two sectors on the largest employer in Western Australia, the services sector which employs around 47% of all Western Australians, is profound (see Figure 1.). The Department of Treasury (Government of Western Australia, 2014c:30) notes that the strong growth in the services sector, particularly in the professional, scientific and technical services areas, which is now the largest sector of the services industry, as well as the transport and warehousing areas are ‘consistent with the growth of services to support the mining and petroleum industry’. The ‘Structure of the Western Australian Economy’ report concludes that ‘over the past decade, from 2003-2013, the State’s abundance of natural resources, which along with close proximity to Asia, has led to an increased dominance of the mining and petroleum industries in the economy’ (Government of Western Australia, 2014c:1).

The effect of the mining and energy sector’s growth over the decade is also responsible for providing a disproportional lift to the construction sector, ‘particularly engineering construction’ with this sector recording the largest annual growth output between 2003 and 2013 (Government of Western Australia, 2014c:8).

Figure 1. Mining and petroleum as a proportion of the economy, 2012-13

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, cat. no. 5220.0.
A decade long resources boom has seen Perth become an important operating base for some of the world’s largest diversified corporations, with 78 of the world’s largest 500 companies operating from the Perth region. The Department of State Development (Government of Western Australia, 2014a) reports that over 400 international organisations have a strong presence in Perth. They note that these organisations either have their own projects, which they service from Perth, or they supply exclusively to the mining, energy and exploration companies in Western Australia. Additionally, Perth headquarters 35% of the ASX listed public companies in Australia, comparing with Sydney at 31% and Melbourne at 27% (ASX, 2014a). The great majority of these listed WA organisations operate in the mining and energy sector (ASX, 2014a).

The effects of the mining and petroleum industry boom of the past decade have been positive on the State’s own source revenues. However, the ‘Structure of the Western Australian Economy’ report identifies that ‘the strong rate of economic growth and a corresponding acceleration in the State’s population growth, mainly through immigration during the period, increased the demand for social and economic infrastructure and core services such as health and education.’ (Government of Western Australia, 2014c:2).

The recent overall decline in commodity prices, especially for iron ore, which represents 61% of WA’s overall exports (Government of Western Australia, 2014b), coupled with the slowdown in growth in WA’s largest export partner China, has seen investment in mining drop from 9% to 7% in 2014. It is expected to decline to 4% over the next few years (Einhorn, 2014). Some of the larger organisations operating out of Western Australia have begun to downsize on some projects and to diversify operations into other sectors of the WA economy (Einhorn, 2014). Nonetheless, the Chinese economy shows few signs of slowing further and expectations are that China’s average growth of 7% year on year will continue into the foreseeable future (Einhorn, 2014).

BIS Shrapnel (2014) reports that despite the decline in investment, the mining sector is still expected to grow by approximately 33% in the next five years, with the value of mining production in Western Australia overtaking the combined contribution of Australian manufacturing in 2015-2016. As such, there are few indicators that the dominance of the mining, energy and construction sectors in the WA economy will change in the near future. Western Australia will continue to be an ‘export economy specialising in mining and petroleum’ (Western Australian Government, 2014a).

**Progressing gender disparity in Australia**

Some progress is being made by some organisations across Australia in addressing the issue of gender disparity in senior leadership roles (WGEA, 2014b). Additionally, there has been a significant increase in the number of women on boards in the past few years, largely due to the work of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD, 2014) and the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX, 2014b). However, despite such progress, the corporate sector overall seems remarkably resistant to change. Western Australia in particular fares worse than any other State in terms of female representation in leadership roles, with half the national average of female directors, less than half the number of female CEOs and less than one third the number of female board chairs (Dun & Bradstreet, 2014).

Analysis of databases - such as those maintained by the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX, 2014b) and Dun & Bradstreet (Dun & Bradstreet, 2014) - show that the number of female executives and CEOs are showing little sign of upward movement. In fact, given the current rate of progress, as published in the last five ‘Australian Census of Women in Leadership’ reports (WGEA, 2014b), Australia will not reach gender parity in CEO roles until the year 2343. Also disturbing is Australia’s continued and rapid decline in the Global Gender Gap Index from 15th in 2006 to 24th in 2013 (World Economic Forum, 2013).
Guidance from the existing literature: What is known about the factors behind gender inequality?

The causes of gender disparity in leadership roles are well established in the academic literature (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Ibarra & Hansen, 2010). The reasons for the persistence of this phenomenon are also reasonably well understood (England, 2010; Fitzsimmons, Callan & Paulsen, 2014; Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Lyness & Thompson, 2000). These factors are considered in more detail below, where 13 separate factors are considered with reference to the Australian workforce, where previous studies have been made.

Factor 1: Early life experiences

An increasingly influential field of research in understanding gender differences is biological research. Recent advances in brain scanning reveal that the human brain is gendered (Hines, 2004). Male and female brains produce different types and quantities of hormones and structure functionality in subtly different ways (Grant-Steen, 2007). While there is a strong argument that at least some aspects of our behaviours are innate (Connellan, Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, Batki & Ahluwalia, 2000; Lutchmaya, Baron-Cohen & Raggart, 2002), these differences are subtle and produce few significant behavioural differences (Eliot, 2013; Wood & Eagly, 2002).

Ridley (2003) argues that it is ‘genes that allow the human mind to learn, to remember, to imprint, to absorb culture and to express common instincts’. This is borne out by the discovery of the universality of facial expression of basic emotions (Ekman, 1982), as much as by the discovery of the first gene identified as being directly responsible for aspects of personality (Srijan, Nesse, Stoltenberg, Gleiberman, Chakravarti, Weber & Burmeister, 2002). However, as most researchers in the ‘nature/nurture’ debate agree, the discovery that social influences are more readily translated into physical brain characteristics than previously thought makes the social environment a key factor in the development of behaviour (Doidge, 2007; Grant-Steen, 2007). In summary, explanations of gender disparity in social structures must go beyond biological reasons (Ceci, Williams & Barnett, 2009; Jackson & Parry, 2008; Wood & Eagly, 2002).

The search for causes of psychological differences between genders extends well beyond birth to encompass the differential experiences of men and women throughout their lives (Hines, 2004; Lippa, 2005). The social environment is a strong influence on the path of brain development after birth. Biological sex determines the likely cultural responses the child will receive, and gendered brain functioning mediates the interpretation and response to these cultural arbitraries, generating ‘gender’ from biological sex (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Lippa, 2005). While biology is the primary determinant of sex, it only mediates the signals that generate gender. However, it is incorrect to say that the impact of these experiences on the generation of behaviour is equal throughout a lifetime. In particular, early childhood and adolescence are peak times for the development of gendered behaviour (Blaine, 2007; Carlson, Martin & Busket, 2004; Lippa, 2005; Sherman & Zurbriggen, 2014).

Each sex develops behavioural tendencies appropriate to these gendered roles (Wood & Eagly, 2002). Importantly, early life experiences of parental division of labour are determinants of role occupancy in later life (Avolio, Rotundo & Walumbwa, 2009; Owen-Blakemore & Hill, 2008). Additionally, where this division accommodates a working career for a mother, children are likely to grow up with more gender-egalitarian attitudes and beliefs (Riggio & Desrochers, 2006; Wetlesen, 2013). Critically, Evans and Diekman (2009:235) argue that assignment of gender roles in childhood ‘lead[s] people to endorse gender-stereotypic goals, which then lead to interest in occupations that afford the pursuit of these goals.’ For example, in recent studies, despite low numbers of girls undertaking math, science or engineering subjects, it has been consistently shown that girls have no less aptitude for these subjects. Rather they form attitudes towards their suitability to undertake such subjects, or careers related to these subjects, based upon input from parents and teachers (Buday, Stake & Peterson, 2012; Butler, Clarke & Simon, 2014; Else-Quest, Mineo & Higgins, 2013).
Additionally, men are more likely than women to overestimate their ability to fulfil roles with which they are unfamiliar (Steinmayr & Spinath, 2009). Some events in childhood around the ability to take risks, and to be successful, promote self-confidence in males around risk in later life (Hoffman, 1972). Differential treatment of boys and girls in traditional Western society regarding the ability to take risks in childhood play, promotes less self-confidence and self-esteem for women in work contexts (Pallier, 2003; Sahlstein & Allen, 2002; White, Cox & Cooper, 1992). Additionally, a recent study has shown that shyness is more socially acceptable for females, reinforcing this behaviour at the expense of self-confidence or assertive behaviours (Doey, Coplan & Kingsbury, 2014).

Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg (2013) has attributed the stall in female career progression to a reluctance of women to ‘lean in’ or in other words to take risks or opportunities as they arise. Gendered personality traits established in childhood may be acting to produce disadvantages for women in judgments of their ability to accept or apply for promotion opportunities in the workplace (Guay, Marsh & Boivin, 2003).

Nonetheless, despite the gendered structural differences which have been discovered to date, most measures indicate that there are few appreciable differences between men and women (Hyde, 2014). As Eagly, Beall and Sternberg (2004:22) note:

‘…while there are some moderate differences in some specific cognitive abilities… most verbal, spatial and mathematical tests, including measures of vocabulary, reading, comprehension, general verbal ability, computational ability and understanding of mathematical concepts show negligible to small differences.’

Therefore, assuming that there is a reasonably high degree of overlap between these cognitive skills and those required by an executive (Wackerle, 2001), such findings indicate that men and women are equally equipped to undertake such roles.

**Factor 2: Social expectations and gender congeniality**

Categorisations of male versus female, provide people with the strongest basis for classifying others (Blaine, 2007). Gender, being primarily socially constructed, evokes mental associations or expectations which are also learned. These stereotypic expectations are informed by the social roles others regularly occupy. They include beliefs which shape behaviours toward each gender group (Blaine, 2007). For example, one persistent stereotype associates management with being male (Berthoin-Antal & Izreali, 1993; Kark, Waisal-Manor & Shamir, 2012; Askehave & Korning-Zethsen, 2014).

To the extent that ‘leadership’ connotes ‘male’, virtually all social interactions around leadership are influenced by gendered expectations and associations (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Stereotypically, males are expected to act agentically with aggression and competitiveness, whereas females are expected to act communally with interpersonal sensitivity (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; Phelan, Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2008). Also, conforming to a stereotype, such as being interpersonally sensitive, may deter females from assertively claiming leadership or actively seeking promotion (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Phelan et al., 2008; Rudman, 1998).

People generally associate women with the domestic role which involves child rearing and maintaining the family unit (Hoobler, Wayne & Lemmon, 2009). These responsibilities are associated with nurturance, sensitivity and compassion (Eagly, Wood & Diekman, 2000). Therefore, people expect women to have superior social skills and to be involved in occupations congenial to these attributes (Wood & Eagly, 2002). Men are stereotypically associated with employment roles and especially roles that require the use of authority and assertive or self-confident behaviours (Eagly, 1987).
People become used to seeing these status differences and they are often transformed into widely shared beliefs that come to form the cultural status quo (Cejka & Eagly, 1999). Women receive societal approval when they act stereotypically and this in turn bolsters their traditional obligations, which traditionally have not included corporate leadership roles. Conversely, awareness of a stereotype and concern about fulfilling it can interfere with a person’s ability to perform tasks that are contrary to the stereotype’s views and therefore add further barriers to career progression (Jackman, 1994; Schmader & Johns, 2005). Further, a recent study by Desai, Chugh and Brief (2014:330) has shown that married men who have wives who stay at home, ‘disfavor women in the workplace and are more likely than the average of all married men to make decisions that prevent the advancement of qualified women’.

The higher the leadership office, the more it is described in masculine terms (Eagly & Karau, 1991, 2002; Rosenwasser & Dean, 1989; Schien, 2001). Cultural stereotypes give men a double advantage in being recruited to leadership positions. Men are categorised as male, thereby activating masculine associations that are similar to beliefs about leadership (Schein, 2001). This process increases the odds that a male will be regarded as a leader. Once viewed as a leader, the stereotypes about leadership are further ascribed to them (Eagly & Carli, 2007). No such bolstering occurs for women. In fact, a woman who acts agentically is generally viewed more negatively than an equivalent male (Carli, 2001; Phelan et al., 2008; Rosette & Tost, 2010). However, the stereotype runs both ways, with men seeing work and promotion as embodying masculinity making the negative impact of losing work or failing to gain promotion greater in men than women (Michniewicz, Vandello & Bosson, 2014).

In summary, stereotypes about leadership can slow women’s progress by enhancing people’s doubts about women’s ability to lead by way of a two-fold effect. In short:

- Stereotypes can generate anxiety surrounding the need to overcome people’s doubts.
- Stereotypes create a concern to avoid or minimise the negative evaluations women may receive when they have to act in ways that disconfirm these stereotypes (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Phelan et al., 2008; Rosette & Tost, 2010). The reverse of this effect has been coined as the ‘glass slipper’ where the nature of an occupation itself is tied to positive social attitudes which ‘reward’ the appropriate gender when they occupy a gender congenial role (Ashcraft, 2013). The role itself comes to be seen as ‘naturally’ possessed of features which suit one gender or another. Female nurses and male firefighters are gender matched roles that fit the ‘glass slipper’ analogy.

Factor 3: The double bind

Effective leadership is often defined in terms of one’s ability to influence a group of people towards a common goal (Cohen, 2000). However, a ‘double bind’ exists which severely limits women’s abilities to engage in a full range of influencing behaviours (Carli, 2001; Heilman, 2012). Put simply, women are evaluated negatively if they are too ‘feminine’ in their leadership style, as well as if they are too ‘masculine’.

Research consistently demonstrates that women are negatively evaluated by followers when they engage in assertive behaviour, whereas men are not (Bowles, Babcock & Lai, 2007; Phelan, Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2008). The negative affect of women acting agentically has also been demonstrated to be heightened in more senior leadership roles (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan & Nauts, 2012).

Ironically, men are more able to positively influence through displays of decisiveness and distance as much as they can through warmth and selflessness than can women (Douglas, 2012; Heilman & Chen, 2005). Men can communicate in either a warm or a domineering manner with little consequence to their ability to influence followers positively, whereas again women cannot (Carli, 1999; Holgersson, 2002). Importantly, studies have shown that women are evaluated negatively when they self-promote, whereas men are perceived as more competent when they engage in these behaviours (Carli, 2004;
Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010). Additionally, studies show that there is a greater likelihood that a woman’s ideas will be overlooked in a group setting than will a male’s ideas (Propp, 1995; Thomas-Hunt & Phillips, 2004). Research suggests that not only are stereotypical assumptions in play in such meetings but that also bearing and voice can play a role in being both seen and heard (Haynes, 2012).

The effects noted above are heightened for women in gender non-congenial occupations such as mining or construction, especially where women are in a significant minority or the sole woman in the group (Heilman, 2001; Yoder, 2002). This situation has possibly resulted in the need for women to hold higher experiential and educational qualifications to be considered equal to their male peers (Bowles, 2012; Heilman, 2001; Yoder & Schleicher, 1996). Further there is some evidence to suggest that men on average disapprove of women possessing high levels of competence relative to equivalent males and will resist the influence of such females more than they will equivalent males (Carl, 2004). The double bind also extends to dress and general appearance, with women being forced to tread a fine line between dressing ‘professionally’ while not breaching stereotypical norms around dressing femininely, if they wish to avoid negative perceptions by others (Haynes, 2012).

Factor 4: Male resistance

A further problem for women can arise from the forms taken by male resistance. One form of resistance is sexual harassment (O’Leary-Kelly, Bowes-Sperry, Bates & Lean, 2009). Gutek (2001) argues that this experience is just as prevalent against senior women as it is against women entering the workforce. Again, in a form of double bind, assertive objections to harassment often worsen a woman’s conditions in her existing role and reduce opportunities for future promotion (Stockdale, 1998). Hook (2002) also asserts that women are doubly disadvantaged by sexual harassment, since senior males view one solution to the problem as being not to hire women in the first place. Similarly, it might be inferred that potential issues surrounding sexual discrimination or sexual innuendo may cause some senior males to reconsider engaging in mentoring activities with female subordinates.

Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1993) argued that the because women are tokenised in senior positions in male dominated organisations and stand out as being different they are often forced into what she described as ‘role traps’. The double bind is a stereotype trap which often affords little room to manoeuvre behaviourally without negative consequences (Baxter, 2012). Nonetheless, research is showing that women need to be aware of the extent of the double bind and use stereotypes to navigate their position (Baxter et al., 2013; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Walker, 2012).

Additionally, research is showing that it is better to forgo the temptation to act agentically, as males do, and navigate the double bind. This can be done by acting in a stereotypically communal fashion when confronted with strong institutional views about the ways in which women should behave (Bowles, 2012; Heilman & Okimoto, 2007; Smith et al., 2013). Interestingly, because stereotypes are learned and held by both sexes, even in organisations that are not male dominated the double bind only diminishes, it does not disappear (Collins, Burrus & Meyer, 2014; Cook & Glass, 2014a).

Factor 5: The glass cliff

The reverse side of gender stereotyping and the double bind is the ‘glass cliff’ phenomenon (Ryan & Haslam, 2005; Ryan, Haslam & Postems, 2007) where women obtain promotion into senior roles because of stereotypical perceptions around leadership attributes they bring to a role. These positions are often more risky leadership positions as they often involve crisis leadership or ‘healing’ roles in traumatised divisions or organisations. Here women are perceived to be better equipped to handle these situations because of the nurturing stereotype (Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Ryan, et al., 2007).
An alternative view is that organisations which are struggling or stagnating may see women as a means of introducing cultural change by introducing a more open and inclusive leadership style than traditional stereotypical male models of leadership (Furst & Reeves, 2008; Bruckmuller, Ryan, Rink & Haslam, 2014). In either case, these positions, by their nature are more prone to failure and may represent opportunities that males choose to avoid, whereas they are often viewed by women as opening the way to occupy a general manager or CEO role (Cook & Glass, 2014b; Ellemers, Rink, Derks & Ryan, 2012). However, it has also been argued that often these positions have less power and more restraints to effect change (Mulcahy & Linehan, 2014) and may in fact ‘harm future career opportunities of women, be it as individuals or as a group’ (Ellemers et al., 2012:163).

Factor 6: Direct and indirect discrimination

Prejudice is the ‘unjustified negative judgment of an individual based upon their social group identity’ (Blaine, 2007:61). While some consider outright gender prejudice to be largely an historical artefact or at least presently overstated (Browne, 2002), there is ample evidence to suggest that direct discrimination still exists (Blau & Kahn, 2007; Holland & Cortina, 2013; Judge & Livingston, 2008; Lips & Lawson, 2009). As a consequence, it is perhaps too early to dismiss the potential effects of direct discrimination in assessing causes for gender disparity in reaching executive positions, particularly in some traditionally male dominated industries such as construction and mining (Paap, 2008).

Many researchers are suggesting that, because of the greater levels of legislative intervention and policing of overt and direct forms of sex based discrimination, discrimination has instead become more subtle, indirect and ambiguous (Basford, Offermann & Behrend, 2014; Dipboye & Colella, 2005; Jetten, Iyer, Branscombe & Zhang, 2013). One consequence of this shift is in the inability of organisations and individuals to identify discrimination when it is occurring and for young women to assume that discrimination is a problem of previous generations and not recognise it for what it is (Kelan, 2014; Jetten et al., 2013). A further consequence is the difficulty of women in arguing that they have been subject to discrimination without outside support (Kelan, 2014; Leskinen & Cortina, 2013).

Outcomes include risking negative consequences for raising the issue, such as ostracism, disengagement, burnout, lower work satisfaction, decreased effectiveness and lower health and well-being (Cunningham, Bergman & Miner, 2014; London, Downey, Romero-Canyas, Rattan & Tyson, 2012). Further, women who continue to voice their concerns are more likely to experience greater levels of harassment and negative outcomes, often leading women in such organisations to engage in self-silencing or ultimately opting out of the workforce altogether (Holland & Cortina, 2013; London et al., 2012).

As noted earlier, there is a tendency for married males in traditional relationships to deny qualified female employees opportunities for promotion (Desai et al., 2014). There is also a traditional tendency for males in general to act ‘chivalrously’. This often takes the form of ‘Benevolent Sexism’ or ‘Protective Paternalism’ (King et al., 2012; Sarlet, Dumont, Dellacollette & Dardenne, 2012). In essence, traditional stereotyped beliefs that women need to be protected by men may lead to assignments which are deemed to be risky or unsafe being withheld (Hoobler, Lemmon & Wayne, 2014; King et al., 2012). Where this protective paternalism extends to the withholding of career enhancing assignments, challenging work and training and development opportunities that the equivalent male would ordinarily receive, the effect is to retard female career capital development and slow her progression (Hoobler et al., 2014; King et al., 2012). In summary, gender prejudice acts to devalue women or to limit the development of the skills possessed by women.
Factor 7: Selection and promotion bias

Women have to wait longer for promotions at all stages of their careers, with some evidence suggesting that the gap in this waiting time between men and women increases at senior levels (Cohen, Broschak & Haveman, 1998; Maume, 2004; Tharenou, 1999). Remarkably this phenomenon persists even in female dominated industries where token men rise faster and further than their female equivalents, giving rise to the term ‘glass escalator’ (Hultin, 2003; Williams, 1992).

Evidence of gender bias in promotion is supported by a meta-analysis of experimental studies involving hiring intentions (for example see Davison & Burke, 2000; Ryan & Haslam, 2007). Eagly and Carli (2007) argue that these experiments may highlight the existence of attitudinal bias or prejudice rather than direct discrimination. However, recent meta-analysis of performance versus promotion scores has shown that even though females generally score slightly higher than males on job performance, ratings of promotion potential are higher for males (Roth, Purvis & Bobko, 2012).

Informal performance review and promotion practices negatively impact upon female career progress. In particular, this occurs when assessment of candidates is not strictly based upon objective criteria, the role being assessed is in a gender stereotypical male industry or position and when decision panels are comprised entirely of senior males (Goodwin & Fiske, 2001; Heilman, 2012; Keltner, Gruenfeld & Anderson, 2003). The same is true of recruitment and selection panels for screening of job applicants (Heilman & Eagly, 2008; Koch, Konigorski & Sieverding, 2014). As is the case with other gender stereotype effects, the reverse situation produces similar effects for males. For example, a male working for a female in a male stereotypical industry or position is also accorded less status and less pay (Brescoll, Uhlmann, Moss-Racusin & Sarnell, 2012).

Women’s career progression is inhibited when organisations exclusively adopt promotion by application processes, as opposed to a combination of application and nomination of recognised talent in competing for promotions (Goodman, Fields & Blum, 2003; Martell, Emrich & Robison-Cox, 2012). Importantly, female access to a mentor, and that mentor’s guidance and support in obtaining promotions, are identified as a critical positive factor in female career progression (Huffman & Torres, 2002; Ramaswami, Dreher, Bretz & Weithoff, 2010; Rosser, 2005).

When no formal process of selection exists, people fall back upon stereotypes, social networks and personal biases in decision making, which often results in homo-social reproduction (Ding, Murray & Stuart, 2013; Elliott & Smith, 2004; Holgersson, 2013; Kanter, 1977). Given that men dominate senior levels of management as well as boards of directors, there is a tendency for these men to select males similar to themselves, thereby biasing against the selection of women (Reskin & McBrier, 2000; Tharenou, 1999).

Similarly, Holgersson (2002) describes the selection of senior leaders in terms of co-option, whereby certain informal criteria must be present for the candidate to be accepted into the group. Holgersson (2002) noted that these informal criteria usually comprise similar social characteristics to those making the executive appointment decision, resulting in the exclusion of those whose social capital is deficient. Hence, co-option processes are more likely to disadvantage female candidates because their social experiences are more likely to differ from those of a senior male board member than will the experiences of a male candidate and their achievements devalued relative to equivalent males (Heilman, 2012). By providing rigor, clarity and prescription around the factors being used to assess suitability for promotions, as well as exposing assessors to counter-stereotypic gender role models, such as a highly successful female engineer, the effects of co-option and bias can be mitigated (Beeson & Valerio, 2012; Leicht, Randsley de Moura & Crisp, 2014).

Due to the above effects, women are often forced to provide greater evidence of competency relative to equivalent males before being considered for the same promotion, job opportunity or project/venture lead (Bigelow, Lundmark, McLean-Parks & Wuebker, 2014; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eddleston, Lodge, Mitteness & Balachandra, 2014).
Factor 8: Leadership styles

A great deal of research has been conducted regarding gender differences in leadership style (Carli & Eagly, 2007; Barnett, 2007; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007). Broadly, the research concludes that while there are some consistent differences, on the whole men and women do not differ greatly in their leadership style. However, some feminists argue that even the suggestion that women and men differ in leadership styles itself promotes existing stereotypes and contributes to the problems that women face (Kimball, 1995). Accepting that both sexes have identical leadership styles may in fact mask some of the reasons behind gender disparity in leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Until the 1990s, most research suggested that there was no difference in the leadership styles of men and women (Bass, 1981; Powell, 1990). Many studies of ‘task’ versus ‘interpersonal orientation’ towards managerial tasks supported this position (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). These findings were further supported by arguments suggesting that any apparent differences in leadership style were the result of the typically different roles that men and women occupied within organisations, such as line versus support roles (Nieva & Gutek, 1981). It was acknowledged that women were under significant pressure to carry out tasks in the same way male colleagues did (Kanter, 1977). However, it has since been argued that these studies and the measures they used confused conceptions of ‘management’ with ‘leadership’, which are widely accepted today as being different although overlapping domains of activity that require different skills and behaviours (Burns, 1978; Jackson & Parry, 2008; Kets de Vries, 2001).

When measures of leadership are taken instead of measures of management competencies, a different picture emerges. There are significant differences between men and women (Eagly & Carli, 2007). For example, meta-analyses of 1990s research regarding democratic versus autocratic leadership styles conducted by Van Engen and Willemsen (2004) showed that women tend to adopt a more democratic or participative style than men. Interestingly, however, where women are in a significant minority, they are more likely to adopt the dominant style of their male peers (Wajcman, 1996; 1998). On measures of transformational and contingent reward transactional leadership behaviours, behaviours known to increase leader effectiveness, women consistently outscore men (Bass, Avolio & Atwater, 1996; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & Van Engen, 2003; Parry, 2000).

However, some transformational leadership characteristics are valued by senior management above others when considering promotion to senior positions. Eagly and her colleagues (2003) note that, while women score highest on individualised consideration, the dimension is not regarded as highly by directors and CEOs in recruiting executives. The score of most interest to these groups are around inspirational motivation, where male and female scores are closest (Vinkenburg, van Engen, Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2011). Of the five transformational leadership behaviours, women consistently score lowest on inspirational motivation (Eagly et al., 2003; Vinkenburg et al., 2011).

On the other hand, these differences in overall transformational leadership scores may reflect the current situation that women in organisations have to possess even greater leadership skills to reach the same managerial positions (Foschi, 1996; Shackelford, Wood & Worchel, 1996). It does not, however, account for why male leaders benefit more than female leaders from the use of transformational leadership behaviours when subordinates are assessing their leaders effectiveness (Douglas, 2012).

Utilising the ‘Big Five’ personality traits model developed by McCrae and Costa (1990), Judge, Bono, Ilies and Gerhardt (2002) examined the personality traits that were most likely to be associated with the emergence and effectiveness of leaders. They found that extraversion was the most consistent correlate of leadership emergence and effectiveness. This was closely followed by conscientiousness and openness to experience. When Costa, Terracciano and McCrae (2001) compared these traits by gender, they found a small difference between men and women in the traits and abilities that are most relevant to leadership. The greatest differences where men exceed women occur in the ‘excitement seeking’ component of ‘extraversion’ and the ‘ideas’ component of ‘openness to experience’.
Applying Barrick and Mount’s (1991) interpretations of the trait subcomponents of the Big Five model’s ‘excitement seeking’ and ‘ideas’, men are more likely to actively seek excitement and challenge. Men are piqued or curious regarding potential new experiences, such as promotion opportunities. It is accepted that a part of successful business leadership is the undertaking of new challenges and thoughtful risks (Kuratko & Hodgettts, 2007). Research on risk taking behaviour has identified men as more likely to undertake risks than women (Byrnes, Miller & Schafer, 1999), though the size of the difference seems to be diminishing over time, and results vary by type of risk (Levin, Snyder & Chapman, 1988; Schubert, Brown, Gysler & Brachinger, 1999).

We know that specific contexts mediate follower preferences for certain leadership styles (Haslam & Ryan, 2008; Parry, 2001). There appears to be a link between people’s increased fears and anxieties created by uncertain conditions, and their need for stereotypically male authoritative styles of leadership (Lawless, 2004). On the other hand, as noted above with the ‘glass cliff’ phenomenon, there is evidence to suggest that after organisational trauma, stereotypically female nurturing styles of leadership are preferred in healing the group or organisation (Ryan et al, 2007).

However, other reasons for the existence of the ‘glass cliff’ phenomenon are not so positive. They include men’s willingness to sacrifice women’s careers rather than those of male peers, the lack of female leadership support networks to provide earlier warnings regarding the risks of undertaking such positions, and the inability of women to access safer leadership positions, leaving these positions as the last resort to attaining senior leadership responsibility (Ryan et al, 2007).

**Factor 9: Division of domestic labour**

While significant inroads have been made into the traditional domestic division of labour, there is far from a balance in the sharing of domestic responsibilities between men and women (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014; Neale, 2001). Women still do just under twice as much housework as men (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer & Robinson, 2000) and spend more than twice the amount of time providing childcare (Bianchi, Robinson & Milkie, 2006).

Parenting pressures are most intense among women having the most career potential. They are most likely to be exposed to norms requiring extra working hours, as well as being the most self-critical of their own parenting (Bianchi et al., 2006; Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014; Maume & Houston, 2001). Due to the inequitable sharing of childcare and household responsibilities, women with children suffer the most workplace disadvantage and have greater difficulty advancing to higher positions (Corrigal & Konrad, 2006; Hoobler, et al., 2009; Pinnington & Sandberg, 2013). Additionally, women are far more likely to suffer physical and emotional exhaustion and burnout (Reichl, Leiter & Spinath, 2014).

Evidence supporting these assertions can be found in statistics relating to taking breaks from employment among degree qualified people. Where 43% of women with children took time away from careers, only 24% of men took time away (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). The primary reason for women to take time off work was for family, while for men it was to change careers (Hewlett & Luce, 2005). This phenomenon is true of most countries. Men rarely if ever have to make a choice between career and family, whereas women with children nearly always report that family responsibilities are such that they often feel they have to make a choice between having a career and having a family (Kokot, 2014; van Veldhoven & Beijer, 2012; Nemoto, 2013).

Significantly, many studies have identified discrepancies between the percentages of male and female graduates and postgraduates remaining in the workplace a decade or more after graduation. Women are six times less likely to be in the workforce (Baker, 2002; Hewlett & Luce, 2005). The effects of taking time out are significant and include skill diminishment, loss of social networks and loss of career momentum (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Evers & Sieverding, 2014). Even women who come back to work immediately, albeit at reduced hours, are often ‘sidelined to lower-status roles for which they are underpaid and undervalued in relation to their previous seniority’ (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014:57).
People who opt-out of the workplace for years will not only always be behind their peers, but are likely to earn only one third as much as those that did not opt-out over the course of their careers (Anderson, Binder & Krause, 2003; Jacobsen & Levine, 1995). The effect of career disruptions and reduced hours are neither linear nor simple, since the effect of each increment of time taken away from the workforce has been found to compound. The sum of these effects has been termed the ‘motherhood penalty’ (Eagly & Carli, 2007:57-58). Perhaps ironically, another well documented phenomenon is that while motherhood depresses attitudes towards women, both in terms of status and expectations around their capacity to work and the pay they receive, fatherhood actually elevates a male’s chances of promotion and increased pay (Hodges & Budig, 2010).

Even when women do not opt-out, the imbalance of domestic responsibilities causes women to seek more flexible working conditions, which in turn can still cause career damage where they are the primary carer (Gupta, Oaxaca & Smith, 2006). Being the primary carer of children results in higher numbers of days off, taken as sick days or leaves of absence, both of which can inhibit career progression (Castro, 2012; Corrigal & Konrad, 2006; Mastekaasa, 2000).

Immediate family, as well as society in general, bring pressures to bear upon women to have children and to be a ‘good mum’ to fulfil the ‘natural order’ (Bianchi, et al., 2006; McQuillan, Greil, Shreffler & Tichenor, 2008). Part of the traditional view of the woman’s familial role is seen as the relational glue holding the social fabric of the family unit together by maintaining connections between family members and the extended family, friends and neighbours (Di Leonardo, 1992; Wheatley, 2013). Pressures to fulfill these roles result in women making decisions regarding career choices even before entering the workforce (Evans & Diekman, 2009).

Perceptions regarding the likelihood of being able to manage ‘traditional responsibilities’ and career direct women away from roles or even industries that they perceive as potentially creating unacceptable role conflict (Evans & Diekman, 2009; Hosoi & Canetto, 2009). Pressure to opt-out will remain, so long as these perceptions are reinforced by the reality of how organisations discriminate in the management of the careers of women with children (Hoobler, et al., 2009, van Veldhoven & Beijer, 2012).

What men and women seek in employment has been extensively researched (Kellerman, 2003; Eagly & Carli, 2007). Men and women in similar positions in well-established managerial careers report similar ambitions to rise to senior positions (Cassirer & Reskin, 2000). Additionally, the drive for advancement is no less in women with families than in those of men or women without families (Elliot & Smith, 2004; Powell, 2013). Further, when comparing men and women with similar family conditions, women were found to expend greater effort per hour on the job (Bielby & Bielby, 1989). Hence, opting-out does not appear to be due to either a lack of desire to progress or a willingness to expend effort to succeed (Eagly & Carli, 2007), but rather relates to the cost benefit trade-off around competing priorities in the domestic sphere.

In dual career families, the ability of families to access a network of dependable, affordable childcare support options has been identified as the greatest enabler of female progression (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014; Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014). A supportive and available partner, available extended family, paid childcare options and family friendly workplaces have all been identified as mitigating the effects of work-family conflict (Eagly & Carli, 2014; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014; Heikkinen, Lamsa & Hiillos, 2014; Parsons, 2014).
Factor 10: Organisational norms about the value of work and work roles

Organisational culture describes the internal environment of an organisation that encompasses the assumptions, beliefs and values that members both create and replicate to guide their functioning (Eisenberg & Riley, 2000; Gordon, 2002; Stone, 2014). These values and beliefs are an historical compilation that is held in place by their repeated implementation (Eisenberg & Riley, 2000). Notions of leadership in any given organisation also embody these values (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Parry, 2001). Organisations will have an implicit concept of the ideal member who can rise to become a leader (Pinnington & Sandberg, 2013; Williams, 2000). In Western organisations, the ideal member has traditionally been seen as someone who works long hours, contributes above and beyond their peers, is highly competent and is willing to relocate to new and often remote locations to further their experience (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014; Williams, 2000).

In these processes, it is easy to observe the individual who makes obvious personal sacrifices on behalf of the organisation (Williams, 2000). The person best placed to become this ideal is someone without competing life roles. When considering traditional Western family roles and the division of domestic responsibilities, men often best fit the criteria (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Neale, 2001). Cultural norms permit men to delegate most of their domestic role to their partner, even when they are not the primary contributor to domestic revenues (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000; Neale, 2001).

Stone and Lovejoy (2004) noted, in a study of high-level managerial and professional women, that 86% of respondents cited long and inflexible work hours as significant factors in their decision to quit their organisations. However, even where a woman fits the criteria, she will still suffer from the impression that she has competing roles or may acquire them in the future (Lips & Lawson, 2009; Naff, 1994). Additionally, role pressures and perceptions regarding the ability to meet them are greater at higher job levels such as senior managerial and executive roles (Rapoport, Bailyn, Fletcher & Pruitt, 2002). Importantly, role conflict is at its most intense for women in the key years when progressing from middle to executive management positions, since this period usually coincides with the decision to have children (Williams & Cohen-Cooper, 2004).

The division of domestic labour, discussed above, has consequences for the acquisition of human and social capital. Social capital is described as ‘the relationships between people and the feelings of mutual obligation that these relationships create’ (Brass, 2001). The networking that is required to acquire social capital often requires longer working hours. It is usually acquired in situations that are not necessarily task related and usually in circumstances that are not considered as ‘productive time’ (Seibert, Kraimer & Liden, 2001). Importantly, social capital can often be exchanged for cultural capital such as the inside track on why people do or do not get promoted in particular organisations (Seibert et al., 2001). Given that task completion must take priority over socialising, those who cannot put in extra hours have far fewer opportunities to build social capital (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

In line with evidence that social capital can be more essential to career advancement than skillful performance of traditional managerial tasks (Seibert et al., 2001; Tharenou, 1999), women who have an unequal share of domestic duties will be disadvantaged. Further, even where they have no role conflicts, they may still be hampered in the acquisition of social capital through exclusion from male networks (Davies-Netzley, 1998). Alternately, where they are not excluded, their participation is often inhibited by being required to participate in stereotypically masculine social activities such as certain types of sports (Sjostrand & Tyrstrup, 2001) or in having to comprehend and engage in masculine discourse during these social activities (Alvesson & Billing, 1992).
The acquisition of human capital can be similarly limited where women are assigned to career paths that are considered more congenial to their stereotypical attributes such as support functions (Evans & Diekman, 2009; Hoobler et al., 2014; Ohlott, Ruderman & McCauley, 1994). Lack of access to developmentally relevant line role experiences can seriously slow female career progress by limiting the acquisition of valuable human capital (Smith, Smith & Verner, 2013; Ohlott et al., 1994; de Pater & Van Vianen, 2006). Access to and success in line role assignments are considered to be essential prerequisites in advancement to senior management positions (McCall, Lombardo & Morrison, 1988; Galli & Muller-Stewens, 2012; Smith et al, 2013).

Line role positions give the incumbent control over both the revenue and cost functions of a particular business unit in producing goods or services. Hence, line roles provide experience in deriving profit for an organisation as well as providing evidence of leadership and strategic ability (Bowles, 2012; Cole, 2001). Managing the profitability of an organisation is one of, if not the, key function of executive and certainly CEO roles (Carey & Ogden, 2000). Not only are women significantly under-represented in line roles but several studies indicate that women are offered relatively fewer international assignments and relocation experiences, which are considered developmentally valuable in eligibility for future promotions (Bowles, 2012; Casinowsky, 2013; Eagly and Carli, 2007). Even where these opportunities are offered, women are more likely to decline for domestic or relationship reasons (Lyness & Thompson, 2000; Nelson & Bridges, 1999).

EOWA (2012:7) data show that only 9.2% of women hold executive positions and only one in five women holding an executive position does so in a line role capacity. When organisations adhere to stereotypical norms about which gender best suits various types of management, men are more often channeled into experiences that provide them with greater opportunities to ascend into senior positions (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). These opportunities arise as a result of the very high emphasis placed upon line role experiences when considering candidates for promotion into executive roles and the traditional view of males being better placed to meet their requirements (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014; Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Factor 11: Access to mentoring

While there is still no commonly accepted definition of mentoring, Ehrich (2008) suggests that Kram’s (1985) foundational work on mentoring still represents the dominant view. Kram (1985) held that mentoring consisted of two distinct functions; career development functions and psychosocial functions. Ehrich (2008:470) summarises these functions by stating that mentors perform both roles, where career functions include sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure, visibility and the provision of challenging career assignments. The psychosocial functions include encouragement, friendship, advice and feedback, as well as helping individuals develop a sense of competence, confidence and effectiveness. The mentee may also learn through observation of the mentor in action, thereby making the mentor a role model for the mentee (Bandura, 1977).

A distinction should be made between formal and informal mentoring. Informal mentoring occurs by choice, with either the mentor or mentee approaching the other informally and ‘can evolve where two people working in a similar or related field find they have mutual interests and decide to establish a developmental alliance’ (Clutterbuck, 2004). Usually, the mentor identifies the protégé because they have observed some potential or talent in their particular field (Ehrich, 2008). Formal mentoring is a more recent phenomenon and can be distinguished from informal mentoring in two main ways: Firstly, formal mentoring is usually instituted by an organisation with mentor/mentee dyads being determined by an organisational coordinator; and secondly they are more often characterised by set goals, structured relationships and specified timeframes for goal accomplishment (Ehrich, 2008).
Guay and his colleagues (2003) propose that significantly more women self-select out of promotion opportunities than men. Tharenou (2005) also reported that women benefit far more from career support provided by mentors than equivalent males. There is a strong body of evidence supporting the positive effect mentoring has upon protégée outcomes including promotion decisions, increased pay and career mobility (Hunt & Michael, 1983; O’Brien, Biga, Kessler & Allen, 2008; Scandura, 1992). There is also strong support for the assertion that mentoring is significantly more important for the progression of female managers (Ragins & McFarlin, 1990; Ragins & Scandura, 1994; Tharenou, 2005).

Interestingly, Ramaswami, Dreher, Bretz & Wiethoff (2010) report that the importance of mentors for female managers is amplified in male gender congenial industries and contexts. Given that most listed public companies in Australia operate in the manufacturing and resources sectors (ASX, 2014a), which are traditionally male dominated, such a finding makes it critical for women to find organisations that pay attention to the successes of their upcoming people. In addition, they need to have the patronage of a person able to provide meaningful advice, inspiration and opportunity (Dworkin, Maurer & Schipani, 2012; Levesque, O’Neill, Nelson & Dumas, 2005).

While mentors can provide significant advantages, male mentors cannot take the place of female role models in providing more credible exemplars of leadership behaviours that other females can learn from (Latu, Mast, Lammers & Bonbari, 2013). Additionally, female role models make manifest the potential for success for other women (Lockwood, 2006). As such, having strong female role models may be as important as obtaining a mentor in furthering career progression for women.

It should be acknowledged that mentoring does not always produce positive results. Scandura (1998) notes that dysfunctional mentoring encompassing power struggles, sabotage, deception or a lack of expertise, can do more harm than good. However, organisations that wish to maximise the benefits of mentoring for women should establish mentoring relationships early in women’s careers. This action can ensure that relationships are overseen and unsuccessful mentoring relationships allowed to end without negative consequences or implications. Related strategies can include providing training for both the mentor and the mentee about maximising the relationship, and high potential women should be placed with someone who is powerful within the organisation (Dworkin et al., 2012).

Ironically, in industries that are highly male dominated, senior males may be reticent to mentor younger females due to innuendo regarding their motives from colleagues and partners. Ragins and McFarlin (1990) found that male mentors are more reluctant to engage with a female protégée outside of the formal work environment due to the potential for sexual innuendo, thereby limiting the benefits female protégées receive from mentoring. Dworkin and her colleagues (2012) suggest that formal processes and the allocation of face to face time in work time and in work spaces may help to mitigate this issue. Nonetheless, while having a male mentor has been shown by several studies to be a critical factor for women in progressing to a CEO role (Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz & Lima, 2004; Rosser, 2005), women face additional barriers in accessing them.

Factor 12: Levels of flexibility in the workplace

Flexibility in the workplace is a relatively new concept. It is now talked about as ‘flexible work arrangements’ and was initially limited to ‘flexi-time’. Employees were able to decide how they would achieve their ‘core working hours’ with flexibility in regard to start and finish times only (Golembiewski & Proehl, 1978). Today, flexibility encompasses a broad range of options with the only consistency being that they all vary the traditional five day, fixed hours work regime (Christensen & Staines, 1990; McGuire, Kenney & Brasheer, 2010; Stone, 2014). Flexibility can involve:

1. Flexi-time, time in lieu, leave without pay
2. Quantity of hours worked
3. Timing of when hours are worked
4. Sharing of work
5. Where the hours are worked
6. Control/autonomy over the hours worked
Autonomy over the hours worked usually involves monitoring of the employee through output performance measures and has been demonstrated through multiple studies, to be a key determinant in the effectiveness of flexibility (Behson, 2005; Crowley & Kolenikov, 2014; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). When properly implemented, flexible work arrangements have been reported as resulting in lower absenteeism, reduced tardiness, reduced staff turnover, higher work commitment, greater job satisfaction, higher performance and enhanced brand image as an organisation (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000; Stone, 2014).

Just under half of Australian organisations have flexible work policies, but only 13.6% have strategies in place for their implementation (WGEA, 2014). This is somewhat surprising given that in Australia, through the Fair Work Act 2009 (Part 2-2, Div 4, s65) and the Fair Work Amendment Act 2013 (Part 3), an employer cannot refuse, except on reasonable business grounds, a request by an entitled employee for flexible work arrangements (Australian Government, 2009; 2013). It has been argued that a wide gap exists between policy documents and their implementation in practice (Wise & Bond, 2003; Whitehouse & Zetlin, 1999). Konrad and Yang (2012) argue that it is largely because of this gap that flexible work policies have failed to deliver results for both employees and organisations.

For flexible work arrangements to be effective, they have to be undertaken in good faith by organisations and employees alike. Both parties need to be thoroughly familiar with organisational policy and intent and the arrangement itself must be understood as requiring ongoing negotiation, experimentation and adjustment (Hornung, Rousseau & Glaser, 2008; Lee, MacDermid, Williams, Buck & Leiba-O’Sullivan, 2002; Paustian-Underdahl & Halbesleben, 2014; Rousseau, Ho & Greenberg, 2006). Additionally, both parties need to recognise and account for the flow-on effects on employee workplace peers (Teasdale, 2013). Superior organisational policies recognise that each employee’s circumstances will be unique and therefore enable employees to negotiate widely around the six forms of flexibility outlined above (Behson, 2002; Putnam, Myers & Gailliard, 2014).

Organisational culture and managerial discretion have been identified as the two greatest obstacles to maximising flexible working outcomes (Behson, 2005; Brescoll, Glass & Sedlovskaya, 2013). To a degree, workplace culture influences manager decision making in negotiating workplace flexibility agreements. Culture is a key factor explaining why there are large gaps between organisational policies around flexibility and their implementation (Blair-Loy & Wharton, 2002; McDonald, Brown & Bradley, 2005; Faustian-Underdahl & Halbesleben, 2014).

A range of workplace cultural barriers have been identified as inhibiting policy implementation and include: expectations to be physically seen at work over extended periods of time (Perlow, 1995; Thompson, Beauvais & Lyness, 1999); prioritising work above all other responsibilities (Perlow, 1995); human resource administrator commitment and teamwork management (Kim, 2001); level of ‘social support’ (Thompson, Jahn, Kopelman & Protas, 2004) and transition support (Sherer & Coakley, 1999) available to assist employees using flexible work arrangements; peer support (Kossek, 1999; Teasdale, 2013; Whitehouse & Zetlin, 1999); gender of supervisors (Brescoll, Glass & Sedlovskaya) and gender and status of employee requesting flexible work arrangements (Brescoll, Glass & Sedlovskaya, 2013; Haas & Hwang, 1995); formal and informal communication of work-family policies (Kirby & Krone, 2002); overall family-supportive organisational perceptions (Allen, 2001); and career consequences (Conway & Sturges, 2013; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2014).

As noted above, direct managers of employees, where they have discretion over the implementation of flexible work policies have been identified as potentially causing organisational policy-practice gap (Brescoll, Glass & Sedlovskaya, 2013; Maxwell, 2005). Managers are a critical element in the provision of flexibility, since it is usual practice for managers to be given discretion in approving requests for flexible work (Hornung, Rousseau & Glaser, 2008; Milliken, Martins & Morgan, 1998). Managers act as the voice of the organisation in interpreting policy for their team (Kossek, Barber & Winters, 1999.34).
They assess the success of any arrangements in terms of ongoing performance, career progression and remuneration (Leslie et al, 2012; Stone, 2014) with employees usually reliant upon their managers level of understanding of policies and their ability to provide support for the flexibility arrangement (McArthy, Darcy & Grady, 2010; McDonald, Pini & Bradley, 2007; Timms, et al., 2014:14).

In essence, the employee is almost completely reliant upon the manager to exercise their discretion for the greater good of the organisation, balancing the needs of the employee, the team, themselves and the organisation while being unaffected by personal bias and institutional norms (McCarthy, Darcy & Grady, 2010). The degree to which managers can achieve this outcome is related to the level of support they receive from the organisation, either through its human resource management function or executive support through advice and/or training (Scandura & Lankau, 1997; Stone, 2014).

In Australia, the majority of employees using flexible work arrangements are women (WGEA, 2013). This is because the primary carer of children in the majority of dual career families is a woman (Brescoll, Glass & Sedlovskaya, 2013; Pocock, 2005; Rafnsdottir & Heijstra, 2013). As already discussed, career absences have a negative effect upon career progression (Eagly & Carli, 2007). However, there is also a growing body of evidence that suggests that people who utilise flexible working arrangements also suffer a career penalty disproportionate to the time they actually work under the arrangement. This is because they are often sidelined to less career enhancing projects and roles, overlooked for promotion and excluded from critical meetings and development activities (Almer, Cohen & Single, 2004; Cahuasac & Kanji, 2014, Conway & Sturges, 2013; Crowley & Kolenikov, 2014; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2014).

These penalties do not just apply to women, however, a series of studies has identified that men are reluctant to make use of flexible working arrangements because they fear contravening the accepted male ‘breadwinner’ stereotype and being labelled as different (Burnett, Gatrell, Cooper & Sparrow, 2013:632). Some studies show that when men do take up flexible work they can often be more penalised than women (Allen & Russell, 1999; Gatrell, Burnett, Cooper & Sparrow, 2014; Schneer & Reitman, 2006).

As noted by Williams (2000), the idealised worker is one who prioritises work above personal and family concerns and will sacrifice non-work activities to devote more time to their work. As Walsh (2012) notes, it is accepted in the professions that you have to work excessive hours over many years to achieve promotion. This is the norm in many industries. The use of flexible work arrangements in such a culture is often taken as a signal of a lack of desire to progress and often prohibits an employee from being considered for progression to executive roles (Coronel, Moreno & Carrasco, 2010; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014; Lovejoy & Stone, 2012).

This perception held by organisations sets up a conflict between the need to commit to excessive hours at work and the desire to spend time with family for primary carers and has been identified as the primary cause of women opting-out of their careers (Cahuasac & Kanji, 2014; Fitzsimmons, 2011; Lovejoy & Stone, 2012; Tischler, 2004). Yet it is well documented that companies which deal with the role-conflict demands of primary caregivers through the provision of flexible working arrangements, including a mix of ‘flexitime, job sharing, telecommuting, elder care, adoption benefits, and dependent childcare options’, have the highest percentages of women in executive roles (Dreher, 2003:556).

**Factor 13: The gender pay gap**

A wage gap between men and women has been notable since the beginning of the industrial revolution (Barrett, 1988). Even when controlling for skills, education, experience and other factors, women receive on average 20% less for the same work in most Western countries (Eagly & Carli, 2007). There is ongoing debate as to what degree gender discrimination, as quantified by this wage gap, is declining over time (Jarrell & Stanley, 2004). However, there is clear evidence that occupations that require stereotypically female attributes, such as nurturing and caring, receive lower wages (Kilbourne, England, Farkas, Beron & Weir, 1994).
Variables which predict the greatest wage differences between men and women are marriage and parenthood. Men who are married or have children receive significantly more than an equivalent woman (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Lips & Lawson, 2009). Even as little as 20 years ago, U.S. Congressional investigations reported that women were likely to be discriminated against in employment opportunities based upon their likelihood of having a family (Federal Glass Ceiling Commission, 1995).

The wage gap between men and women is greatest in highly paid occupations such as management, with male-dominated occupations and industries generally being more highly paid than female-dominated occupations (Fox, 2013; Huffman, 2004; O'Neill, 2003; Pfeifer, 2013). In addition to gender stereotyping and discrimination as discussed above, additional explanations offered for the persistence of the pay gap phenomenon include women's acceptance of existing pay levels due to comparing their salaries to other women rather than comparing them to industry averages or to equivalent men (Bowles, Babcock & McGinn, 2005; Hogue, DuBois & Fox-Cardamone, 2010); women's self-imposed silence around arguing for greater pay (Amanatullah & Morris, 2010; Judge, Livingstone & Hurst, 2012) and negative judgments by superiors caused by acting against gender stereotypical passive norms of behaviour when pressing for pay rises (Bowles & Babcock, 2013; Kulik & Olekalns, 2012).

Whatever the causes, the national pay gap is currently on the rise going from 14.9% in 2004 to 18.2% in 2014 (WGEA, 2014d). Western Australia’s gender pay gap marginally decreased from 26.6% to 25.3% at the same time, but still remains the largest gap in Australia. The decline in the gap in Western Australia has been attributed to the recent downturn in the mining sector given the dominance of the mining, energy and construction sectors which have traditionally paid higher wages and are significantly male dominated (WGEA, 2014h).

However, the gender pay gap data presents a far more complex picture. For example, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2014a:11) reports that of the 19 industry sectors measured in terms of gender pay gap, mining sits exactly in the middle, ranking tenth in terms of its pay gap at 15.3% (see Figure 2). Finance and insurance services, which is a female dominated industry has the highest gap at 28.4% followed by professional services at 24%.

Graduate Careers Australia (2014:1) report that the gap is even present in graduate salaries upon entering the workforce where career breaks or glass ceiling effects have no role to play. They note that female graduates receive 9.4% less in remuneration on average than men and even after accounting for graduate educational, personal, enrolment and occupational characteristics women still received 4.4% less than men. Interestingly, where there is no discretion in pay setting, such as in the case of Award wages, there is no gender pay gap (WGEA, 2014a). Where there is discretion in pay setting, such as collective agreements (16.9% gender pay gap) or individual agreements (20.6% gender pay gap), stereotypes, bias, discrimination and the undervaluing of women's skills can all play a role in women receiving less than an equivalent male (Dawson, 2014).

The individual contributing factors for the gender pay gap are complex, act reciprocally upon one another and some factors are more easily addressed than others (Christophides, Polycarpou & Vrachimis, 2013): The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2013b) reports six factors that are primarily responsible for the gender pay gap in Australia:

1. Gender discrimination
2. Career breaks
3. Industrial segregation
4. Occupational segregation
5. Undervaluing of women's skills
6. Pay setting methods
Christofides and his colleagues (2013:94-100) argue that national policies with regard to maternity leave, unionism and work/life in general also play a role in increasing or decreasing the gap.

A review by Chang, Connell, Burgess and Travaglione (2014) of the gender pay gap in Australia reports that there is a high degree of variance in the reported contribution of the above six factors to the overall gender wage gap. However, there is widespread agreement that 50% or more of the difference relates to being a woman (Cassells, 2010, Eagly & Carli, 2007:68-71; National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, 2009; Workplace Research Centre, 2010).

**Figure 2. Gender Pay Gaps by Industry - 2014**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Base Remuneration</th>
<th>Total Remuneration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation and Food Services</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative and Support Services</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>23.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Recreation Services</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, Gas, Water and Waste Services</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial and Insurance Services</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>28.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Care and Social Assistance</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Media and Telecommunications</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional, Scientific and Technical Services</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Administration and Safety</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rental, Hiring and Real Estate Services</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail Trade</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Postal and Warehousing</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale Trade</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Industries</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Workplace Gender Equality Agency – Australia’s Gender Equality Scorecard
Female representation in leadership roles and the gender pay gap are significant economic issues for Australia. Both issues can be linked to international competitiveness, while at the organisation level, attracting, retaining and promoting the best and brightest male and female talent is critical to sustained performance (WGEA, 2014e). At a national level, various reports highlight why closing the gender gap in workforce participation rates is also critical for the Australia’s growth and prosperity (Goldman Sachs, 2009; OECD, 2012). Nonetheless, the WGEA (2014a:12) reports that less than a quarter of Australian organisations have undertaken a gender pay gap audit to identify if they have a gender pay problem. Only 18.1% of organisations have pay equity objectives included as part of their remuneration strategy. Of the organisations which did undertake gender pay audits, 29.4% took no action and only 10.5% created an action plan to address the causes.

Concluding comments

As this brief review of previous studies reveals, there are numerous factors which can be applied to explaining why fewer women, in Western Australia and elsewhere, are in senior manager and senior leadership roles in the private sector. In the case of some of these factors, Australian statistics have been used as exemplars where they have been available.

What follows is a detailed investigation into the role of these factors as reported by a wide range of people living and working in the State. These findings are then considered with reference to the existing literature and a range of recommendations are made. The Appendices contain details regarding the framework for the study, the nature of the sample, the procedures followed to gain the confidential views of participants as well as the questions posed to them.

Key findings

The findings are considered in five sections which report upon the five dominant themes to emerge from the interviews:

- The first section considers the findings related to the participation of women in corporate Perth and understandings of Perth’s corporate culture.
- The second section reports upon views surrounding gender differences, with four strong sub-themes of self-confidence, leadership styles, work/life priorities and stereotypes emergent in the interviews.
- The third section reports upon respondent views surrounding the gender pay gap in Western Australia.
- The fourth section considers reports of the ‘pipeline effect’.
- The final and largest section reports upon the factors influencing women to stay or leave the private sector in Western Australia with four dominant sub-themes surrounding childcare, discrimination, role conflict and selection/promotion bias emerging from the interviews.

A significant aspect of the findings is that themes and categories reflect clustering around issues known and reported in the literature. However, the quantum of some of the reported effects appear to be unique to Western Australia. The findings for each section reflect the dominant view of the respondent group identified unless specified otherwise. Proportions of interviewees are noted throughout the findings. Some exceptions are present where the use of words such as ‘many’ or ‘some’ denotes significant contributions to the findings but were reported by fewer than twenty percent of respondents.
Across all of the people interviewed for the ‘Filling the Pool’ study, there was unanimous agreement that the reasons behind gender inequality in the workplace were complex. One interviewee summed this up when they said:

“I mean it’s a really layered piece, it’s incredibly complex. I don’t think you could pick a topic that picks up so many different layers. You have the values, overlying cultural norms, overlying structural issues, so these cultural issues impact these social issues that take place in organisations – and then there’s just a whole bunch of everything else on top and people have pretty strong views...”

Gender and Perth’s corporate culture

There has been a heavy reliance upon ASX listed organisations as a major source of data in analysing gender balance in board, CEO and executive roles. Given the dominance of small capitalised mineral exploration and mining organisations in Western Australia, compared to the rest of Australia, the Dun & Bradstreet database (2014), which includes all private sector organisations, was used to construct a list of the top organisations in Australia.

Organisations having a turnover exceeding $10 million and employing 500 or more personnel were identified. This produced a list of 1,330 organisations across Australia. Data on all board members and board positions held for these organisations were collated as were data on CEOs and key management personnel for the Western Australian organisations in this list. In this way trends in numbers and positions held by gender for board members, board chairs, CEOs and executives in Western Australia were able to be compared to the rest of Australia.

For purposes of comparison, the most recent Equal Opportunity in the Workplace Agency Top 500 ASX data (EOWA, 2012) were included with the Dun and Bradstreet top 500.

Table 1 reveals that listed companies have far fewer females in every category than listed and unlisted companies combined. There are several reasons why this may be the case. These factors include the possibility that family owned companies, foreign owned subsidiaries and non-listed companies may be more inclined to have female representation at senior levels. However, examination of these issues is beyond the scope of this report and should be the subject of future research.

Table 1. Comparison of key roles by gender*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>EOWA ASX500 % Female</th>
<th>Dun &amp; Bradstreet D&amp;B Top 500 % Female</th>
<th>D&amp;B Top 1330 Australian Organisations % Female</th>
<th>D&amp;B WA Organisations in top 1330 (80 Organisations) % Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chairs</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEOs</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executives*</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>**</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The same definitional criteria of ‘executive’ used in the EOWA data have not been able to be applied to the Dun and Bradstreet data set. It is difficult to determine whether or not an individual directly reports to the CEO and has full executive power in their role from information contained on the Dun and Bradstreet Database, corporate websites and publically available information.

** Data relating to executive team composition was only collected for the top 80 organisations in Western Australia.

The data indicates that Western Australia has less than half the number of female directors, less than one third the number of board chairs and less than half the number of female CEO’s than the Australian average, even when corrected for the skew created by small-cap mining organisations in the ASX data. The data for executives also indicates that Western Australia is significantly behind in this statistic, with only a handful of executive women in Western Australia holding executive positions in operational roles. Most female executives held general council or human resource roles.
**Table 2. Employment data by greater capital city, gender, managerial/professional categories***


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greater Capital City</th>
<th>Managerial / professional workforce – males</th>
<th>Managerial / professional workforce – females</th>
<th>Managerial / professional workforce – total</th>
<th>Women as % of total managerial/professional workforce</th>
<th>Total workers in all occupations</th>
<th>Female workers in all occupations</th>
<th>Managerial / professional females as % of total workforce</th>
<th>Managerial / professional females as % of total female workforce</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Sydney</td>
<td>428,795</td>
<td>367,870</td>
<td>796,665</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>2,022,859</td>
<td>943,029</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Melbourne</td>
<td>375,146</td>
<td>325,604</td>
<td>700,750</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1,883,737</td>
<td>879,345</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Brisbane</td>
<td>177,222</td>
<td>160,883</td>
<td>338,105</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>992,274</td>
<td>470,311</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Adelaide</td>
<td>96,745</td>
<td>89,376</td>
<td>186,121</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>567,423</td>
<td>270,533</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Perth</td>
<td>152,972</td>
<td>128,709</td>
<td>281,681</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>845,271</td>
<td>389,993</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This significant difference between Western Australia and the national average, using all organisations rather than just listed organisations, raises a major concern. That is, explanations that link the number of small ASX listed mining organisations to more gender inequality in corporate roles in Western Australia are inadequate. Nonetheless, an examination of the 80 State headquartered organisations present in the top 1,330 organisations in Australia shows that two-thirds of these are either engaged in mining and energy or directly supply these sectors as their dominant activity. This aligns to Department of State Development (Government of Western Australia, 2014b) and Department of Treasury (Government of Western Australia, 2014c) reports.

As the data in Table 2 shows, the number of women participating in junior and middle management roles as a proportion of the total workforce is also less than any other state in Australia. Additionally, across all employers in Western Australia, fewer women are choosing managerial professions than any other State of Australia.
Interviewee views about the corporate culture of Western Australia

Almost all interviewees had either travelled extensively on business to the east coast or overseas or had lived on the east coast or overseas. They used these experiences to compare and contrast Western Australia’s corporate culture to that of the rest of Australia.

There were similar views across all groups about the perceived cultural differences between Western Australia and the east coast. However, attitudes about the size of the cultural differences between the west and east coasts were dependent upon the industry of the person interviewed. Mining, energy, construction and property were identified as industries that had greater differences to east coast organisations, compared to the banking, finance and professional services sectors, for example.

There was a strongly held view that the mining and energy sectors dominate the corporate landscape of Western Australia. It was argued that males have traditionally dominated this sector and this sector dominated the economy. There was a clear view that the corporate culture of the State was ‘blokey’ and dominated by highly masculine views that valued traditional male attributes and ways of working.

It was noted that females were virtually absent from executive leadership in corporate Western Australia. While women were now present on mining and oil/gas sites, there were still relatively few. Factors relating to the potential pipeline of women into this field were also widely discussed and these issues are reported below under the heading ‘The pipeline issue.’

There was a clear view that operational experience in the dominant sectors of the economy was required to reach senior levels in most Perth organisations.

Perth culture was widely described by all groups as more informal, relaxed, ‘can do oriented’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ compared to the east coast. Perth was labelled as ‘blokey’ and ‘traditional’. The majority of females interviewed reported that elements of this culture impacted negatively upon their ability to progress within their respective organisations. The ‘blokey’ and informal aspects of doing business, client networking, social functions and a ‘drinking culture’ were mentioned by a significant majority of the female participants.

The effect that this informality, the ‘blokey’ culture and related social activities has had upon female interviewees and their career progression is also reported below under the heading ‘Issues of selection and promotion’. The majority of the females interviewed reported that access to internal and external client networks was difficult since activities were often held at times when they had family responsibilities, they comprised of male activities or they were simply not invited. They reported that not attending these functions limited their ability to connect with male colleagues and clients. As one female respondent noted:

“I think women suffer terribly in this town with networking. I really think it’s a major, major issue. It is very much a male club around events, networking, going to lunches, going to drinks and no females would be asked. Men aren’t comfortable with that, and I think the clients are uncomfortable too.”

This was noted as being especially problematic since informal decisions were often being made, or clients being won at such events.

Perth was reported by all groups of interviewees as far more tightly networked than any other Australian city. Female interviewees, as well as the human resource managers, referred to this network as the ‘boys club’. The term ‘boys club’ was the strongest and most consistent reference to a cultural norm across all of the interviews, with this term being used by all but a few of the female interviewees. The term appeared in various forms over 300 times across all interviews with female respondents.
In particular, it was widely reported by female interviewees that access to the ‘in-groups’ and senior networks was extremely limited. There was a widely shared sense of frustration that while this network was slowly widening, it still severely limits the ability of women to progress into senior leadership roles and board appointments in Perth.

Many senior female interviewees, recruiters and human resources professionals expressed frustration with the limited potential to network, and therefore progress, in Perth. Several termed the phenomenon as the ‘Perth Ceiling’.

One reason offered by a significant number of female interviewees for the continued existence of the ‘boys club’ was the limited number of exclusive private boys schools in the State. In addition, they cited that many of Perth’s most influential males had completed university degree courses in engineering and mining from a very narrow range of tertiary institutions. These experiences provided opportunities for males to form tight, long-term relationships which supported their business careers. As one respondent noted:

“I think that Western Australia is exactly like the mining industry, it’s a boys’ club. It’s the familiarity, it’s all about local connections; it’s a lot about school tie connections. People come from the right school it doesn’t matter whether that was 30 years ago.”

A majority of interviewees viewed Perth as a relatively small town. At the same time, the majority also held the view that this attitude had begun to change during the past 5-10 years. Of particular note was the number of interviewees who reported the physical changes to the landscape of the Perth CBD which, in turn, was beginning to reshape the cultural life of Perth. The idea of Perth being a small town was noted by many as helping to create higher visibility for some individuals, magnifying the impact of tightly held personal and business networks and promoting the careers of those who are ‘best known’ to a greater extent than others.

Despite the recent changes to the cityscape of Perth, and the increased migration from the east coast and overseas into Western Australia, it was also widely reported that Perth was still very parochial and somewhat resistant to change.

It was reported by a majority of female executives, managers and human resource professionals in national and international organisations that many initiatives that east coast and overseas parent organisations had tried to implement were often resisted or given only ‘lip service’. One respondent summed up this view when they noted:

“We don’t like being told how it should be done from the Eastern States. So the minute someone says that, everyone gets their back up. We’ve always had this very nice relaxed approach to life in everything that we do and I think it’s just become the norm and no one’s really challenged that.”

In short, it was reported that local organisations argued that the parent business ‘had no understanding of how different Western Australia was.’ Many of the same interviewees reflected that many gender equality initiatives promoted out of the parent organisations had also failed for similar reasons. The effect of these attitudes especially upon initiatives around promoting greater workplace flexibility are specifically addressed below under the heading ‘Flexible Work Practices’.

Nearly all of the female interviewees reported that there were significant differences in attitudes towards women generally between Western Australia, and the east coast and many western countries. Many women noted that attitudes of Perth society towards women working were still reflective of some of the attitudes prevalent in the 1950’s, 60’s and 70’s. There was a prevailing attitude reported by at least a third of the women interviewed, that if a woman was married and did not need to work, she should not, regardless of whether or not she had children.
This attitude was reported as being most prevalent among the social groups of Perth-born women. The social stigma and pressure associated with these attitudes were also widely reported by female interviewees (these are reported further below under the heading of ‘Gender congeniality and role conflict’). In addition, the majority of those women who had lived and worked either on the east coast or overseas reported significantly higher incidences of direct and indirect discrimination. One female interviewee summed up this majority view when she noted:

“My director had a conversation with me and she said, ‘The male discrimination here is bad, I’ve never been in an office that’s been as bad as this anywhere I’ve worked in the world.’ And she said, ‘I could be in a meeting with a male partner and they’re nervous. I never felt that in London but I certainly feel it here.’ So, maybe it is a Perth thing. I think it is an issue here. I think it is a problem.”

Specific findings regarding discrimination are reported upon further below under the heading ‘Direct and indirect discrimination’.

Many interviewees reported that a factor at work in attitudes towards working women in Western Australia might be the traditionally high male wages which had reduced the financial pressure for females to work. However, this situation was seen by many women to be under pressure with an overheated housing market requiring two incomes to meet rising mortgages.

The strong pattern of responses in relation to culture reveals that Western Australia is seen by respondents to have a different corporate culture and that culture has a direct impact upon the advancement of gender equality in the workplace. In summary, the majority of the respondents reported that corporate culture negatively impacts upon: attitudes about women working outside the home; attitudes about workplace flexibility; and expectations about appropriate roles for women and mothers.

How does the corporate sector define ‘gender equality’?

While there was an almost unanimous view among those interviewed that gender inequality was an important problem for Western Australia, relatively few chairpersons and executive recruiters reported it as being a strategic imperative for organisations. For these two groups, gender equality was seen primarily as a diversity issue and/or a social issue. It was rarely framed by this group as a direct economic one.

A majority of chairpersons reported that they felt women would bring diverse thinking to a board, which they also believed would produce better board decision making processes. However, the majority of chairpersons had few, if any, women on the for-profit boards upon which they sat. Their experiences with gender diversity were based primarily on their experiences of not-for-profit or government boards.

On the issue of what gender equality would look like in the future, there was a remarkable divergence of views and definitions offered. These were relatively evenly distributed across the interview groups, so that no single group held a dominant view or definition. However, all interviewees fell into one of the following three categories:
1. Gender equality as a proportional issue
2. Gender equality as equal opportunity and participation
3. Gender equality as a recognition and accommodation of differences

The group of respondents who perceived gender equality as a proportional issue reported that gender equality would be attained when a certain proportion of the leadership cohort of all organisation’s boards and executives was reached. Most interviewees in this category felt that the proportion should match the general population and therefore was seen as 50/50. A significant number of other interviewees also reported a proportional view, but argued that it should be based upon the gender proportion of the graduate intake or the gendered make-up of the working population of an industry.
Gender equality was seen by a second group as comprising equal opportunity to progress in the workforce as well as the equal participation of men in activities presently dominated by women, particularly around the care of children. Equal opportunity was reported as embracing equal pay for equal skill and equal output, equal opportunity to enter any career path and progress and equal opportunity to reach executive leadership and board roles. A sub-group of interviewees also linked equal opportunity to the notion of equal participation. Equal participation encompassed work and home as needing to be considered together. In this view, gender equality can only be obtained when there is equal participation in the domestic sphere of life, as well as equal opportunity to participate and progress in the work sphere.

The third view put forward is that there are some innate differences between men and women and/or the situations that they face in life. These individuals believed that treating everyone the same way is at odds with obtaining gender equality. In this view, the differences between men and women should not only be accepted and/or accommodated, but also valued for the diversity of views that they create.

While it was possible to demonstrate three separate ways interviewees reported their views regarding what gender equality meant to them, there is also an obvious degree of overlap between them. For virtually all of the interviewees there was a view that the status quo is unacceptable and a shift is required to move towards gender equality in Western Australia.

Views surrounding gender differences

Self-confidence and self-promotion

Every person interviewed made some comment about the existence of gender differences in the workplace. The greatest point of difference reported between men and women was self-confidence. Every executive recruiter and every human resources professional, and virtually every female respondent, noted significant differences between men and women around self-confidence and self-promotion. As one female respondent noted:

“I would argue that women don’t self-promote. This has been my personal experience as well as what I’ve seen with other women. Women generally wait to be told that they’re ready to do the next role or to be asked to do the next role or they would rather promote the success of their team as opposed to themselves. And most women, in my experience, are very uncomfortable with promoting themselves. Whereas, most men that I’ve come across, are happy to self-promote and I most definitely find that they are the ones that will boast the most or ask for a pay increase. Whereas, women, rarely, if ever do.”

Females were reported as being more likely not to apply for positions or to opt-out of selection processes due to a lack of self-confidence relative to men. More than 90% of women reported that men ‘naturally’ possess a greater sense of entitlement for promotion and career progression, while women struggled with self-doubt. Most of the female respondents reported struggling with issues of self-confidence over their whole career.

Most female interviewees reported that, while being technically proficient was a key criterion for success it was insufficient. An individual had to seek out key assignments and compete to confirm their ability to take on more senior appointments. A majority of female interviewees reported that they expected to be recognised and rewarded by their organisations as a matter of course for completing their assignments. Moreover, they reported that they should not need to ‘boast’ or ‘draw attention’ to these achievements in the manner that males were reported as doing. Almost every female interviewed expressed discomfort in promoting themselves and their personal achievements to others, especially where they believed that their success was linked to the efforts of their team. One executive recruiter exemplified this point by noting that:
“Women don’t go for roles that are outside their comfort zones to the same extent that men do. Women have to tick all the boxes before they’ll apply for the job, whereas men, so long as they can spell ‘engineer’ they will say ‘Why can’t I do that?’ It’s not quite as stark as that but it’s just a difference I’ve noticed. Women are a bit more reluctant to push themselves forward whereas men aren’t.”

More than 75% of the female executive interviewees reported that they had a mentor and that nearly all of these mentors were male and played a key role in providing them with confidence in their abilities. However, slightly less than half of the female senior manager and female manager opt-out group interviewees had mentors. The lowest representation of mentors being reported was in the graduate female group where only a few reported that they had a mentor. Many of the female executive and senior managers made the distinction between sponsors and mentors. Sponsors were reported as being far more valuable and as having created significant opportunities for career progression as compared to mentors. Mentors were reported as being valuable in navigating career decisions and providing input into difficult workplace decisions.

Virtually all of the executive recruiters and human resource professionals mentioned that women were significantly more reluctant to apply for promotions or new jobs relative to their male colleagues. Almost all females interviewed reported the same reluctance. Most female respondents attributed their reluctance to a lack of confidence to fulfil all of the advertised role requirements. Many of the female interviewees reported the analogy of men confidently applying for positions where they had perhaps only half the qualifications required, while women with almost all of the required qualifications would not apply as they often felt they needed to meet 100% of the selection criteria.

Most executive recruiters and human resource professionals reported that men were more willing to take greater risks to progress their careers, displaying a greater willingness to learn on the job or ‘fake it until they made it.’ Many female interviewees labelled this behaviour as disingenuous. Interestingly, most female interviewees and especially executive recruiters and human resources professionals reported that women regularly underestimated their capabilities relative to the job roles being advertised.

**Leadership styles**

More than 90% of respondents across all groups reported that on average women displayed more communal behaviours and collaborative leadership styles than males. Males were represented as tending to present more agentic behaviours and directive styles of leadership. It was noted, however, by most respondents that both men and women were capable of displaying the opposite styles.

Women were described by most respondents broadly as being more empathic, communicative, collegiate, nurturing and inclusive. It was emphasised by most of the female interviewees that at some stage during their careers it had been expected that they would and should lead in this way by their colleagues and particularly by their superiors.

Male leadership behaviours were described by most female interviewees as being more task oriented, impersonal, abrupt, distant and assertive. Most female interviewees expressed discomfort with these leadership styles and noted that their own style was often criticised as being weak or soft, despite achieving similar outcomes to male colleagues. Most female interviewees noted that since these male behaviours were the accepted style, it was more difficult for them to operate in their organisations using more participative and consultative styles.

For example, a number of female executives noted that males in their organisations would discuss sensitive issues or come to important decisions outside of meetings. They were reported as using group meetings to announce the solution. Many female respondents noted that they were ‘shut down’ if they attempted to open these issues up for further debate at these meetings.
Work/life priorities

Nearly half of interviewees from every group reflected upon the different work/life priorities of male and female executives and senior managers. The majority reported that males viewed success more narrowly than did women. Men were reported as viewing career success, either in terms of salary or title, as being the dominant criteria for determining their own personal success and identity.

Many interviewees noted that the traditional male role as the ‘breadwinner’ continues and pressures on males to succeed in the breadwinner role were not applied to women. Additionally, many women reported instances where their career ambitions were frustrated around progression and the receipt of an appropriate salary since they were not seen by their superiors to be the main breadwinner and were therefore relegated behind other men with families regarding decisions of pay and promotions, especially in times of economic downturn. This is explored in greater detail below under the heading ‘Direct and indirect discrimination’.

Most female interviewees perceived success as being more holistic. It included a paid career as well as other aspects around their roles in families, with friends and their involvement in non-work, charity and school organisations. Most interviewees in all categories reported that women have differing priorities because of biological factors around bearing and nurturing children. Most female respondents also reported societal traditions around the accepted division of domestic labour created additional pressures for them.

While a few male interviewees believed that women were less ambitious in terms of career progression, most reported that women were just as ambitious, but compared to males, they had competing priorities that influenced their career decisions and career progression. As one female respondent noted:

“I think the things that women find meaningful are fundamentally different to the things that men find meaningful and I think that that plays out in a work environment in terms of priorities. How many hours do you want to put in and at what cost to things external to work should that come at? That is a very broad statement but there are a lot of men who really do value relationships but I think to a very different level to women.”

Stereotypes

Another striking feature among all groups interviewed was the awareness not only of the power of gender stereotypes but also the dangers of generalising. Most interviewees questioned the degree to which the differences they reported were innate or socially constructed, real or perceived. Nonetheless, most of the female interviewees reported that their organisations had ingrained informal and formal systems and processes that accepted male norms as being ‘the right way to do things’. For example, most female interviewees reported behaviours such as assertiveness as being highly valued in males but a negative for females.

Most female interviewees reported the ‘double bind’ of being considered to be either ‘too soft’ when using collaborative behaviours or ‘too hard’ when being assertive or imitating male behaviours. The lack of an identifiable middle ground of effective behaviour was reported by many women and was reported as resulting in the undermining of their confidence and ability to lead and/or be effective in their teams.

A significant number of interviewees across all groups noted differences in how boys and girls are raised by families as an explanation of why gender differences might arise. Many reflected that the experiences young children still receive in school today might explain many gender differences in self-confidence, in preferences around leadership behaviours and styles and the willingness to self-promote. This point was exemplified by one woman when she reported that:
"Women tend not to show off, it’s a big contradiction to the way we’re supposed to behave, the way we were taught to behave, and I remember my mum telling me not to show off and I think that we’d get told not to show off or not to be over-confident. So we’re always self-doubting and we’re always highly downplaying our achievements and we’re very hard on ourselves."

Reasons for the gender pay gap

Most chairpersons expressed surprise, disbelief and even offence at the idea of a gender pay gap in Western Australia, and particularly in their organisations. Most chairpersons attributed the gap to more males in the higher paying mining and construction sectors, and male dominance in higher paying operational versus support roles. They also cited the dominance of men in senior roles in their respective industries. Many chairpersons also reported that whereas men will generally always negotiate for higher pay, women tended not to and this could be another factor explaining pay disparity.

All chairpersons and human resource managers who were in organisations which had undertaken gender pay audits reported that they had uncovered pay disparity by gender. Most human resources professionals reported that without the required rigour and processes for matching role competencies against assessments of employee performance, there will always be biases in the assessments by some managers and these will create pay inequities for women. All of the respondents from organisations which had carried out gender pay audits noted that without the use of comprehensive statistical analyses and very regular reviews of existing pay and performance cultures, they would not have identified these pay gaps.

Many of the above chairpersons and human resource professionals also reported that the undertaking of analyses and the uncovering of data showing pay gaps did promote discussions about bias and often resulted in the introduction of strategies to remove gender pay gaps. As one male respondent noted:

"Some stats were put on the table and then there was lots of skepticism. But not only was it right, because we found those females were lesser paid than those blokes who are in the same role, but we also found that nearly everyone was too generous to the male performance reviews and men were actually being promoted to a title higher than they should be and then all of the excuses came out and I think in hindsight, with the stats in front of us, the talk was, ‘look some of that bias is probably true’."  

A key set of actions raised by many chairpersons and human resource managers was the need to introduce checks around line manager’s discretion in making pay decisions, and the need for the promotion of company-wide remuneration systems and associated internal checks to seek out any emerging evidence of systemic bias.

Over 75% of female senior managers and executives reported that women did not negotiate their salaries whereas men almost always did. Most females expressed the opinion that their respective organisations should be more responsible for ensuring pay equity for the same role. Again, more than 75% of female interviewees reported that they were uncomfortable about raising issues of salary, both in terms of the negotiation of commencing salary and at performance reviews. The majority of women reported a preference not to discuss their pay at all. When women were asked whether they were paid the same amount as an equivalent male, over 80% responded that they believed that they were paid less. Only 20% responded by saying that they knew they were paid less. The reason offered for this discrepancy between ‘thinking’ and ‘knowing’ often surrounded the secrecy surrounding pay, a lack of willingness to press or investigate the issue and also the subtle differences in job roles that made direct comparison more difficult.
A wide range of reasons were put forward about why women were reluctant to negotiate pay. Most respondents reported the primary reasons as relating either to a lack of self-confidence in their right to the increase and/or a desire to avoid conflict. A significant minority of women reported two further reasons. The first factor was that they were not ‘the primary breadwinner’ and did not have the financial pressures to argue for a greater increase. The second factor was the difference in attitudes about work, with many seeing work as a ‘privilege’ that allowed them to access interesting, intrinsically rewarding roles and good friendships and salary was simply not a driver for them.

In summary, the views reported by the interviewees about the gender pay gap clustered around four major factors:

1. Male dominance in higher paid industries
2. Male dominance in higher paid operations roles
3. Male dominance in senior roles
4. Systemic bias in pay for females

Many chairpersons reported that some factors were beyond the control of their business. These factors included average industry rates of pay, rates of pay for operational roles and the gendered composition of certain industries and their feeder pools. Organisations which had undertaken gender equity reviews had found systemic bias in their pay, and most, but not all, had acted on resolving any gender pay gap identified. Other issues surrounding the seniority effect of the gender pay gap were also reported, however these are explored in greater detail below under the heading of ‘Selection and promotion issues’.

The pipeline effect

Over 90% of the chairpersons, executive recruiters and human resources professionals reported frustration over what many described as the ‘pipeline issue’. The pipeline of appropriately educated and experienced females was seen by the respondents to be a primary source of Western Australia’s relatively poor performance in terms of the number of women in executive and board positions.

Most chairpersons and executive recruiters reported that, to be eligible for CEO and board roles, candidates must have experience in senior operational positions within their industry. It was acknowledged by most of these interviewees that these criteria perpetuated having fewer women executives and board members. Despite this, they reported persisting with the application of this criterion in searches for new board members because it was an accepted industry norm. Furthermore, it was reported by a majority of chairpersons that if this norm was maintained, the feeder pools from the mining, energy and construction industries were too shallow for any significant change in the gender composition of boards or CEOs to occur into the foreseeable future.

Most chairpersons reported the importance of having women on boards in general, and having more women on their own boards. The majority listed one or both of the following two reasons supporting this view: Firstly, female board members brought much needed diversity in terms of their personalities, life and work experiences, views and talents; and secondly their perceived skills in changing the climate and styles of board deliberations. However, most chairpersons and executive recruiters reported that despite wanting a greater diversity, most of the women they have appointed have come from narrow backgrounds with expertise in finance, accounting or law. Few chairpersons or executive recruiters reported appointing women with industry operational experiences, which was their express preference, to their boards or the boards of their clients because there were ‘simply too few with appropriate experience’ in Western Australia. One chairperson summarised why these experiences were critical to boards as follows:
“How can you create value for shareholders if you’ve never made any money for anybody, and if you’ve never managed a large complicated organisation? It’s very hard to assess is this the right person to do the job? And, certainly, these are the business models and strategies that the shareholders respond to. So, I have a natural bias towards those sorts of operations people.”

Two pipeline issues were identified from the interviews. Firstly, the majority of interviewees reported a significant contraction in the female employee pipeline at the age when women choose to have children. This was reported as generally being between the ages of 30 to 35 years old. It was reported that most young women did not return to the workforce after having children or if they did, they returned in part-time roles. This was consistently reported across all industry sectors. Secondly, most of the chairpersons and human resources professionals outside of the mining, energy and construction sectors reported that they were achieving or were close to achieving gender parity in graduate recruitment. With one notable exception in the energy sector, which was achieving gender parity in graduate recruitment, chairpersons and human resource professionals in sectors that required engineering or similar technical qualifications reported female graduate intakes of between 10-20%.

Most chairpersons in the mining, energy and construction sectors, and most of the executive recruiters, believed that the number of women in executive and board roles would only marginally improve in the future. The lack of women in middle level operational roles was reported as being the primary issue.

A majority of chairpersons reported that their boards did engage in succession planning, but noted the inability of most boards in larger organisations to focus their attention below the executive management layer. Only a few of the chairpersons reported that their organisations were actively combining diversity agendas with their succession planning. This particular finding is discussed further under the heading ‘Issues of selection and promotion’.

It was reported by many women in the senior manager and executive groups and by nearly all of the interviewees in the female graduate group, that there were negative attitudes by parents, teachers and friends about the nature of the work in industries related to science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM), but particularly engineering. These attitudes and pressures from parents, teachers and friends influenced decisions, particularly in the senior and executive female group, not to take STEM subjects in high school and therefore restricted entry to STEM related university courses and careers.

Most female graduate interviewees and senior women with children at high school reported that girls are currently making subject choices in Year 9 around what ‘girls are good at’ versus what ‘boys are good at’. These choices were reported as going largely unchallenged by their schools, and were seen as a significant issue in perpetuating the pipeline problem. One female respondent summed up this view when she noted the following:

“Let’s get back to my daughter and her teenage school friends. My daughter goes to a highly competitive school. It’s very academic. The top girls tend to come out of this school. When they’re choosing their subjects, the number of them that I know who are deliberately choosing subjects to study things that would enable them to easily go part-time shocks me. If you talk about “don’t leave, before you leave”, these girls have left the work force by the time they’re 15. What are the conversations at school, in the home, with each other? What are they talking about? They are certainly not talking about being at the head of corporations, or not enough of them.”
Some graduate female interviewees noted that their schools did not even offer some STEM subjects and they had to move to another school to undertake them. Female graduates also reported that negative stories filter back to undergraduates in universities from female graduates in the industry, which caused their peers to leave these fields of study to undertake other courses. Additionally, some interviewees reported that the perceived inability of mining, energy and construction industries to provide flexible work arrangements also diverts young women from those feeder degrees.

Finally, there was a significant difference reported in relation to levels of optimism about the future. While most chairpersons acknowledged the experiential issues surrounding board and executive selection as well as the diminished female pipeline, they were confident at the same time that the gender mix on boards and executive teams would ‘resolved within a generation’ or over the next 20 years. Many chairpersons cited ‘changing generational norms’ as driving this resolution of the gender equality problem. Human resource professionals and female interviewees were much less optimistic. Most could not see how these pipeline issues could be resolved in the foreseeable future, nor could they see boards and CEOs changing attitudes about selection methodologies. Most women, human resource professionals and executive recruiters reported that without a shift in current thinking, little progress in gender equality in Western Australia would occur.

Factors influencing women to stay or leave the private sector

The female senior managers who had opted-out of the corporate sector, nearly all of whom had children, overwhelmingly reported that the primary reason for their departure was the incompatibility between work and family responsibilities, with childcare issues creating the greatest pressure. A secondary reason reported was dissatisfaction with organisational culture, coupled with a lack of a compelling financial reason to stay in the workforce. An interviewee in this opt-out group exemplified these themes:

“\text{"I’m a big stickler for authenticity and honesty and integrity and all the values that we were trying to instil in the rest of the organisation. But you see inconsistencies around those values every single day and it pulled me down. It pulled me down after 15 years of loving what I do. It got to the point where I just didn’t want to deal with the negativity and the constant bias. So I was burnt out from a professional perspective and so I sat down with my husband and said, ‘Well, someone’s going to raise the children here. They need to come first and so I resigned.’\text{"}”

The majority of female interviewees described pressures to opt-out in terms of four broad issues that have and continue to influence their decision to stay or leave the private sector:

1. Factors surrounding child care
2. Direct and indirect discrimination
3. Gender congeniality and role conflict
4. Selection and promotion issues

These four factors, and how they were perceived by these female respondents, are now reported upon in more detail.
Factors surrounding childcare

Female interviewees identified four broad factors relating to the ability of women to manage childcare in order to either remain or progress in the workforce. Most of the interviewees reported issues relating to each of these factors and which appear to be heightened in Perth compared to the east coast. Each one of these four factors represents a foundation or ‘pillar’ which interviewees reported that women are almost completely reliant upon in continuing to participate and progress in their careers:

1. Paid childcare
2. Partner support
3. Extended family support
4. Organisational support

Each factor was reported by all categories of female interviewees as having the potential to impact on the ability of a woman to remain employed full-time or even part-time in the workforce. Most of the female interviewees reported that the impact of these factors was exacerbated by other factors such as corporate culture and discrimination which are discussed in other areas of this report.

Interviewees also reported that these factors usually don’t exist on their own. Rather they are interconnected and complex, influenced by other factors such as peer and family pressures, the career stage when their first child is born, their salary level, number of children, age of their children, industry occupied, the nature of their job role and responsibilities, and organisational and managerial attitudes to childcare. As one respondent reported:

“I’ve had women in my organisation compare childcare to a house of cards. The minute that you pull one out the rest of the cards start falling. It’s not easy because A: it’s not cheap and B: it’s not accessible. And I think that’s a challenging duopoly. Overlay that with the reality of work over here when you’ve got FIFO/offshore kinds of lifestyles. Unless you’ve got that extra capability or a partner that’s prepared to deal with everything else, you can’t operate, you can’t work.”

External childcare options

Of the four factors cited above, the primary focus of female interviewees was upon childcare options. Most reported that there was a lack of childcare places in Perth. Additionally, they reported that there were long waiting lists for childcare places and women were delayed in returning to work as childcare places were not available. It was also noted by many female interviewees that there are currently only two childcare centres in the Perth CBD.

Another significant issue raised by most interviewees was the cost of childcare. Many interviewees noted that women would need to question if it was financially viable for them to return to work. Another significant issue reported was the restrictive opening hours of day care centres, with a majority of interviewees reporting 7am to 6pm as standard hours. Many interviewees reported that these opening and closing times made it difficult or almost impossible to attend before and after work functions or to attend to urgent work after business hours.
Most female interviewees reported additional difficulties surrounding the care of school age children. Before and/or after school care and vacation care was reported as either being absent, not provided every school day or provided irregularly with variable hours of operation. This situation was reported as causing parents to make variable arrangements for pick-ups or drop-offs, which in turn was reported as affecting their ability to work standard business hours.

A solution reported by nearly half the women interviewed was the appointment of a nanny. These interviewees reported that nannies helped them to juggle tasks around school hours and delivery or pick up times. Many also reported that with two or more children the cost of hiring a nanny was comparable to a traditional childcare centre. Nannies and au pairs were reported as allowing sufficient flexibility to manage children of varying ages and needs, as well as allowing these working mothers to deal with travel and emergency issues in their respective workplaces.

Given the strength of this finding, the Committee for Perth commissioned The University of Western Australia under its joint venture research agreement, FACTBase to undertake research to examine whether Western Australia was any different to the rest of Australia in terms of childcare places. Table 3 below indicates that Western Australia has by far the lowest number of childcare places per capita compared to the other Australian States, as well as the lowest number of places available for before and after school care. These findings support the views expressed by the interviewees in relation to access to formal day care.
Table 3. Childcare centres, out of school hour care data, per capita place by greater capital city

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greater Capital City</th>
<th>Childcare and out of school and vacation care: total institutions</th>
<th>Childcare centres</th>
<th>Childcare places</th>
<th>Out of school hours care/ vacation care number of centres</th>
<th>Out of school hours care/ vacation care number of places</th>
<th>Child care places per capita (by women in professional and managerial occupations)</th>
<th>Child care places per capita (by women workers in all occupations)</th>
<th>Out of school and vacation care places (by women in professional and managerial occupations)</th>
<th>Out of school and vacation care places per capita (by women workers in all occupations)</th>
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<tr>
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<td>127,349</td>
<td>2,076</td>
<td>90,428</td>
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<td>944</td>
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Source: ACECQA accessed October 2014 and ABS data extracted from Table Builder – 2011 Census – Employment, Income and Unpaid Work Classifications
Partner support

Most female executive and senior managerial interviewees were married. Most reported the need for their husbands’ support in progressing their careers. Many reported that either their own or their partners work roles required travel. Many reported that a lot of projects they were working on were remote to Perth or that being a regional office in a national or international organisation, they or their partner were required to travel to headquarters outside of Western Australia. This often caused a partner to be absent overnight or for weeks at a time, meaning that they were not available to assist in childcare activities. The uncertain timing of these trips was also reported as a source of stress.

Many chairpersons and human resources professionals operating in the mining and energy sectors reported that a significant proportion of the work undertaken in their operations is carried out by a fly-in fly-out workforce. Additionally, most of the interviewees working in the professional services sectors, such as engineering, architecture, construction, accounting, legal and advisory services reported that a significant proportion of their organisation’s work involves fly-in and fly-out to these locations to service their client’s needs.

Most female interviewees reported that their current partner was supportive of their career. However, just under a quarter reported that a current or previous partner was unsupportive of their career. These males were often reported as being ‘traditional’, seeing the primary place for their partner as being at home with the children. Additionally, there were several reports of male partners having difficulty reconciling their wives career success and higher earning capacity with their own. Many of the female interviewees raised the ‘male breadwinner’ cultural norm in explaining the reasons for their husbands having these difficulties. In some cases, this lack of support was reported as having led to divorce and often remarriage to a partner who accepted and more actively supported their careers.

Extended family support

Most of the female interviewees reported reliance upon family members for regular or emergency childcare. Just under half of the senior and executive females interviewed had moved to Perth and left their extended family members behind. This lack of reliable family support was reported as making childcare even more difficult, especially when these senior and executive women had to be absent from home for urgent work commitments.

Given the significance of this finding, FACTBase research was again undertaken to examine whether Western Australia is any different to the rest of Australia around migration patterns. Table 4 shows that a significantly higher proportion of Perth’s women of child bearing age, compared to Australia’s other capital cities, is comprised of either east coast or foreign immigrants. These data align with the reported views of many interviewees that extended family is often not available to assist with childcare and suggests that extended family support in childcare is less available in Western Australia compared to every other state in Australia.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</table>

Source: ABS data extracted from Table Builder – 2011 Census – Usual Address and Internal Migration

Organisational support

A wide range of views were expressed by chairpersons about the extent to which organisations should support women in terms of their childcare needs. While the majority of them agreed that childcare was a significant issue in retaining and progressing women in their workplaces, the majority of chairpersons reported that organisations should not be the providers of childcare services. Most chairpersons reported that they could not see the cost/benefit advantage in doing so. However, most chairpersons also reported that their respective organisations had initiatives which supported employees to find childcare places, a degree of flexibility in dealing with childcare emergencies and/or provided emergency care when other avenues of childcare were not available. Workplace flexibility around various employment options were also reported and these are detailed more fully below under the heading ‘Flexible work practices’.

Female interviewees also reported a wide range of views about the extent to which their respective workplaces had aided or hindered them in the provision of childcare assistance. Most reported that their organisations had been relatively slow to adopt practices which support women with children. Many noted that their organisations continued to work in ways that effectively ostracised women with children by holding important meetings and networking functions outside normal childcare hours.

Most female interviewees from the mining industry believed that having a child effectively precluded them undertaking FIFO, without a reversal of traditional family roles. The traditional male-oriented work culture was reported as exacerbating these issues. Nearly all of those female managers, executives and women in the opt-out group who had worked flexibly reported being paid less in flexible roles on an hourly basis, while most reported that their organisations were reluctant to create more flexible roles. These pressures were reported as having resulted in either being prevented from returning to work with their former employer or not being able to afford full time childcare since flexible work did not offer competitive pay. These issues are discussed more broadly below.

Flexible work practices

Workplace flexibility was reported by all groups as a complex issue, generating a wide array of responses from interviewees. However, most female interviewees and human resource professionals reported the availability of flexibility as being a key element in the retention of women in the workplace. However, most female interviewees also reported that attitudes to flexible work practices made flexible options ‘career dead ends’ in terms of career progression.
Most interviewees in all groups believed that work could be made more flexible, but there was a consensus view among all interviewees that there were some occupations or levels within the hierarchy where more flexible work practices would be significantly more difficult to implement. These were reported as senior leadership roles, line roles, site roles, client facing roles and short project roles with tight deadlines. ‘Corporate’ or administrative roles were reported as being more conducive to flexible work options.

Interviewees, predominantly in the mining and construction sectors, reported that their organisations judged the offer of more flexibility as a favour rather than a right. Across most industries, female interviewees reported a prevailing attitude that flexible work was seen to be disruptive to the organisation, not possible in the majority of circumstances and taking up this option was seen to signal a lack of commitment in wanting to progress one’s career. On the other hand, a significant majority of female respondents and human resources professionals reported that attitudes were gradually changing. Some noted in particular that more men from the younger generations were seeking a more significant role in childcare.

Also, many interviewees reported that technological changes over the preceding decade, and the almost universal access to these technologies, have enabled more flexible practices, such as working remotely, to be more effective. Nonetheless, most female interviewees reported that most managers opposed remote working because they do not believe that they can effectively manage employees that are working outside of the office.

Most human resource professionals expressed concerns about the ability and reluctance of managers to hold honest conversations with staff about flexibility and more specifically about arrangements surrounding maternity and return to work issues. One human resource professional summarised this view when they noted:

“Everyone is saying the same things. Even the companies that are doing this well are doing it quietly. I think there’s a fear about EEO, there’s a fear about opening the floodgates, but I think the downside is that a) it doesn’t change culture and b) people are leaving because they don’t know that the firm actually supports this. If the company is clear about how we deal with this, then each employee can go ‘Well that’s great and when the time comes I’ll come in and see.’ That takes the onus off the manager to have to ask ‘What are you going to do about your maternity leave?’ Which is skating on thin ice. There’s this fear in the minds of managers around having a conversation and rightly so.”

In addition, while most female interviewees reported that their organisations had broad policies to provide more flexibility, these policies were typically silent about what could practically be offered to employees. Most female interviewees reported that flexibility was often offered on an informal, ad hoc or case-by-case basis where staff had approached management. It was reported that rarely were the outcomes of these arrangements made widely known to other staff. Many female respondents and human resources professionals reported that there was also the potential for bias with more favoured employees receiving access to these flexible arrangements.

Most female respondents reported that organisations must be more up front about their flexibility policies and how they are practically implemented. Many female respondents noted that since every family’s situation was different, company policies needed to be applied often in slightly different ways to meet the needs of employees. Additionally, most female interviewees and human resource professionals reported that managers in their respective organisations were given a high degree of discretion to make decisions around flexibility and as a consequence it was reported by a majority that there was a lack of consistency in policy delivery in their organisations. Most human resource
professionals reported that better education of line managers around flexibility policies and better communication of policies to employees were required to overcome these issues.

Many interviewees reported that their greatest successes around the retention of female staff after maternity leave were around engaging with women early in an open and honest dialogue about their plans. Central to this discussion was what they wanted in the near future, as well as in the longer-term. Next, their respective organisations examined what was possible or available in terms of part-time, home-based and job share work. Also there were many examples across the interviews about how organisations had maintained contact with employees during maternity leave, both in professional matters and around social events so that these employees did not feel isolated or removed from their organisation. Flexible options were reported as requiring regular review after the employee returned from maternity leave to ensure that they were operating to the satisfaction of both parties.

It was reported by most human resources professionals and many female interviewees that flexible work arrangements were greatly facilitated by the use of outcomes-based performance measures. Most female interviewees and human resources professionals reported that for flexibility to be successful for both parties, there must be executive support for flexible work options, as well as a culture of acceptance within the organisation, particularly by middle management levels.

However, most female interviewees reported a disconnection between organisational policy intent and their manager’s implementation of the policy. Many interviewees noted that while their respective organisations were good at espousing their support for flexibility, few were reported as checking that policies were being effectively implemented across the organisation. There were few chairpersons or human resources professionals who could report how their respective organisations were measuring the success of their flexible work practices in retaining or progressing women in their workplace.

Most of the female interviewees and human resource professionals working in the mining, energy and construction sectors reported that the on-site nature of these industries and the traditional ways in which work is carried out, manifested in reduced levels of innovation from managers around how workplace flexibility might be implemented. Most interviewees from these sectors emphasised a reluctance by managers to even explore the possibility of flexible work options. There was also a view put by several of the interviewees that organisations did not have the will or expertise to review or rethink existing work practices. Several human resource professional interviewees reported a lack of support in their respective organisations when they had suggested exploring flexibility options using tools such as job analysis and job design.

Most interviewees outside the mining, energy and construction industries reported the availability of flexible work options. However, many female interviewees in the professional services sectors reported a further reason for limited implementation of more flexible work options as surrounding concerns about how clients might react. Clients of these service provision organisations were reported as paying for and requiring immediate service. Sharing client management across employees, for instance in a job share arrangement, was reported as being considered too great a risk for their organisation to allow. However, a few other interviewees reported that with some education of clients up front and the appropriate use of technology by the organisation, flexible arrangements could be implemented and managed with no detriment to the client or their relationship with the organisation.

There was a view expressed by many of the female respondents that flexibility and childcare should not be framed as female-only issues. Rather, they need to be reframed as family issues. Nevertheless, many of the human resource professionals reported a lack of enterprise support for more flexible work practices for males. Additionally, several female interviewees reported that males in their workplaces who had taken paternity leave or more flexible work options were viewed by their
peers as having derailed their careers, with key promotional opportunities being reported as being deliberately withheld by their superiors. One respondent exemplified this view when reporting the following:

“As part of diversity, we have an allowance for men to take paternity leave as well as women and I know that in my office they call it the ‘girls blouse leave’ and the men do not take it and if they do they have to come back and prove themselves for a very long time before they’re being considered for any advances in their career or promotions. The organisation at a high level absolutely supports all of these things but when it comes down to them being able to take advantage of these, the culture of this workplace comes into play.”

Over 90% of female interviewees who had undertaken flexible work options reported difficulties with flexible roles and that their career had ‘gone on hold’ while holding these roles, even when working four days per week. Several of the interviewees referred to this phenomenon as the ‘Flexiglass ceiling’. It was also reported by more than half of the interviewees that the flexible roles that were offered were significantly less well paid per hour than their previous full-time roles. It was also reported that these roles offered little if any career development opportunities, often because training and development was withheld as were opportunities to attend meetings, conferences and firm networking functions.

Over 75% of female respondents reported that they felt that part-time and flexible roles were not valued by their organisations but rather they were judged to be career dead ends. Many chairpersons, human resource professionals and executive recruiters also reported that those people who have significant periods of flexible work will find it far more difficult to obtain higher level, career positions relative to those who stay full-time in the workforce.

Chairpersons, executive recruiters and human resource professional all reported that there is a dominant and traditional way of working that values long hours and consistent service on location. There were some very clear exceptions among the interviewees listing businesses which were embracing new ways of thinking about work and employee contributions. However, these were in a small minority. Most female interviewees reported that their respective organisations did not have well-developed, practical, well-communicated, accessible or implementable flexibility policies that ensured their progression.

As the following quote demonstrates, some interviewees recognised that there was a fine line between meeting the needs of women requiring flexible work and outright exploitation.

“Some people are ready to take a pay cut, which is not necessarily morally right. I’ve got the competence of people that are high grade because I’ve been super flexible and they’re more productive than my five day a week staff. So, I know that, that’s why I go and employ them. It’s really an untapped pool of talent, because women are quite happy to compromise. Whether they should or shouldn’t is a slightly different question, right?”

Very few female interviewees who worked flexibly reported that they believed they had been taken advantage of by their organisations. Taken as a whole however, the interviews paint a picture of a workplace culture where flexibility is primarily seen as a female issue and where women see flexibility as a favour granted by organisations. The interviews also reflect the position that senior female managers and executives are expected to take a significant ‘discount’ in either their position or pay or alternatively have to work longer and harder to earn this opportunity to be considered for more flexible work and at the same time cease to progress while they undertake it.

**Direct and indirect discrimination**

Over 90% of interviewees reported that they believed direct workplace discrimination had declined and continues to decline in Western Australia. Most female executives and senior managers reported that incidents of direct discrimination still existed, but had noticeably declined over the past decade. Taking interviews by industry, there was a very clear pattern in the number and degree of incidents of
discrimination reported. While discrimination was reported in every sector, more direct and indirect forms of discrimination were reported by interviewees in the mining, energy and construction sectors.

Chairpersons, executive recruiters and human resource professionals reported a range of views with regard to the existence and effects of discrimination in their respective organisations. The majority reported the view that they had eliminated direct discrimination in their workplaces. This group also reported that discrimination generally was declining or had declined to the extent that it was no longer a major inhibitor to female progression. However, many also acknowledged that their view did not match the current statistics for female participation in board or executive roles. Most chairpersons acknowledged that women in the past would have been disadvantaged by discrimination, but they reported that the new generation of women coming through their organisations would not have similar experiences. Most chairpersons reported that it was only a matter of a generation before these statistics changed significantly.

These findings are at odds with interviews held with female executives and managers. Approximately half of the females interviewed reported that they had been directly discriminated against during their careers. Many of these women reported recent incidents. Additionally, over 90% of female executive and senior manager interviewees reported that differing forms of indirect discrimination had, and were still, affecting them to some degree.

As noted in the ‘Sample and context’ section of the report, the discrepancy between the views of chairpersons and the views of women regarding discrimination led the steering committee of the ‘Filling the Pool’ project to extend the scope of the interviews to include a female graduate cohort. With the exception of three of the twenty two female graduates, this group reported the same types, but a higher degree of direct and indirect discrimination than did more senior female colleagues. The majority of the most serious kinds of direct discrimination, in the form of sexual harassment, were also reported by the graduate cohort.

Many forms of direct discrimination were reported across the female interviewees. Examples of sexual harassment were the least reported form of direct discrimination, with a dozen or so incidents in this category. Direct discrimination in terms of pay and promotion were the next most reported. Six interviewees reported that they were aware of pay rises being withheld due to their marital status and ‘of not being the primary breadwinner’ and a further fifteen reported that projects and appointments had not been offered specifically because of their gender. Of the latter group, the interviewees reported that their organisations had rationalised the decision by referring to safety issues or ‘known’ issues about site behaviour. Additionally, more women reported having experienced managers who simply presumed that they were not available to undertake assignments involving travel and had failed to even ask them.

Female interviewees reported that deliberate exclusionary practices and the receipt of demeaning and derogatory comments were the most prevalent forms of direct discrimination. Approximately half of the female interviewees reported these last two forms of direct discrimination. Most exclusionary practices were described by interviewees as involving senior male groups not allowing female colleagues to participate in work related functions, predominantly outside of normal business hours. While the reasons for their exclusion were not usually given, several female interviewees reported that occasionally a colleague had shared the view that females disrupted the dynamics of the group, including men’s ability to make sexual jokes, to comment upon women in their workplaces and concerns that their behaviours were more likely to be reported back to the workplace if women were present.

Derogatory and demeaning comments were reported by slightly less than half of the female interviewees and primarily fell into the following categories: the ‘double bind’, sexual innuendo and ‘tokenism’. The most reported comments related to the ‘double bind’ and involved many of the
female interviewees being told, usually in a performance review context by their managers, that they were ‘bossy’, ‘bitchy’ or ‘aggressive’ for displaying behaviours which interviewees described as being identical to the males in their organisations, who were often held up as leadership exemplars. One female graduate exemplified this view by noting:

“So I think for a female to self-promote you’re seen as a bossy bitch. So, you’re bossy or you’re pushy. That same behaviour in a guy and he’s a hero. You see that all the time. If a female has done well in a certain industry you’ll hear ‘they’re a ball breaker’ and all the different things about her being stubborn etc. Where if it’s a guy, you hear, ‘He’s amazing, he has done a great job, he’s on top of this’ and it’s exactly the same behaviour, so for a guy it is considered great. But for girls, it’s not.”

A significant number of female interviewees reported incidents where bosses believed it was appropriate to comment on their appearance, more than a dozen women reported recent incidents where clients or contractors had made sexual approaches and/or remarks about their appearance.

It is worth noting that, even though many interviewees either reported these incidents or they were known by the organisation to have occurred, not a single interviewee reported that their respective organisations had taken any action in response to these comments from clients. Additionally, several female interviewees from the professional services sectors reported that they had recently been taken off assignment because clients had reported to the organisation that they were not comfortable in working with a senior female manager or executive and preferred to work with men. In none of the cases had the organisation refused the clients request.

A significant number of female interviewees and most of the female graduates reported that on one or more occasions male colleagues had inferred that their current position in the organisation was entirely due to their organisation’s affirmative action programs rather than merit. In each instance interviewees reported that it was made clear to them that they were not as respected or taken as seriously for this reason.

Indirect discrimination was reported as being extremely pervasive in most of the female interviewee’s organisations. However, some exceptions were reported outside of the mining and construction sectors. In these cases interviewees described how their respective organisations had taken deliberate steps, such as unconscious bias training, to attempt to eliminate indirect forms of discrimination.

The primary form of indirect discrimination reported was in the form of indirect exclusionary practices. Most female interviewees reported either feeling unwelcome or awkward at work or social events. Most social events were reported as being linked to predominantly male pastimes such as sporting events or pubs. Female interviewees reported feeling disadvantaged in meetings with male clients at such networking events. Several interviewees cited other examples of exclusionary practices such as critical meetings being held at times when working mothers could not be present.

While some senior female interviewees reported pushing back against overt discrimination, they reported the need to be careful about choosing when and how to go about doing so. Over 90% of female interviewees reported that while they were aware of discrimination, it was usually not worth worrying about it. Many reported that they had learned to simply ignore it. In many of the interviews, women reported not seeing such incidences as ‘gender discrimination’ until they had reflected upon whether men experienced similar issues. In the case of the more serious incidences of direct discrimination reported in the interviews, only a small number of the interviewees had reported them because of the personal fear of damaging their career in the organisation.
Gender congeniality and role conflict

Every female respondent with children reported some degree of guilt regarding the division of their time between paid work and spending time with their children. There was a very wide range of views expressed with regard to the effect such guilt had on their career progress. Reported impacts included pressures to cease work altogether. Embedded within virtually all of the interviews was the assumption that role pressure or role conflict was predominantly a female issue.

For example, many interviewees used terminology such as ‘working mums’ or ‘working mothers’ whereas no one referred to men as ‘working fathers’. Most female interviewees referred to the cultural norms surrounding childcare, which gave rise to additional pressures upon women. However, one female interviewee took this one step further making the point that parenting and work are very far from gender neutral ideas in Perth society:

“...The dialogue is still women and child care. There's nothing about shared parenting. Anyway, I picked up a flyer the other day. It says women won't succeed unless there's better access to childcare. What about women won't succeed until men and women share parenting? It isn't about women needing childcare, women needing flexible, part-time work. Everyone needs it. Let's shift the dialogue to men and women needing this. Men who are single parents need flexible work practices. I mean it's for everybody, this shift. I think simply, that women are more aligned to the discussion and open to the possibility of part-time and full-time, and flexible work ways. Unfortunately, men are culturally, generally not. I think that's much of the problem.”

Female interviewees reported three pressures that make career progression more difficult relative to men: role conflict; visibility; and authenticity.

Role conflict

Female interviewees with children identified role conflict as being the greatest pressure of the three dominant pressures reported. Female interviewees experienced two distinct pressures in this area: a 'moral' pressure from family and community, and secondly what were variously reported as physical pressures.

In terms of the moral pressure, most female interviewees with children reported having a strong sense of guilt in spending time at work rather than spending time with their children. Most female respondents reported that their mothers had not worked and that they benefited personally from their stay at home mums. This guilt was often reported as being exacerbated by their husband’s parents or relatives overtly or subtly expressing their disapproval of them going back to work on ‘moral’ grounds. Many respondents reported relatives remarking that the interviewee’s children would be disadvantaged by their mother’s absence.

Most female interviewees working full-time also reported that non-working mothers and schools contributed to this sense of guilt. They reported that schools often scheduled parents’ activities in working hours making it difficult to attend. They also reported that non-working mothers would either overtly comment on choosing work over family or more often would engage in exclusionary behaviour or subtle ‘looks of disapproval’. Some female interviewees did report, however, that they were unsure whether their own sense of guilt exaggerated these perceptions. Many females also reported the difficulties that men face in undertaking the primary carer role, reporting that males are often ostracised and judged by non-working mothers in school environments and at school activities.

In terms of the physical pressures, most female interviewees with children reported that traditional ways of working often conflicted with the amount of time that they would like to spend with their children. They reported the impossibility of not being able to be physically in two places at once. Nearly all female respondents, without nannies or au pairs, described the ‘constant battle’ between needing to complete work on time and picking up children from childcare. These women also
frequently reported comments from employers around their non-attendance at meetings and work functions at night, as well as absences caused by children’s illnesses or being late from drop-offs. The other physical demands reported were around the primary domestic role. Where a partner was reported by the interviewee as being a ‘traditional male’, more physical pressure was reported around the need to do domestic duties into the evenings and weekends. Many women reported that the accumulation of these moral and physical pressures were directly attributable to their considering leaving the workforce and had led to female peers leaving the workforce altogether.

Visibility
Most female interviewees in senior executive roles and women in industries dominated by men reported effects from being in a minority or a minority of one. Most also reported that they often felt highly conspicuous through their gender making them a ‘focus’, a ‘spotlight’ or just ‘highly visible’. The reported effect was to create a level of discomfort and an inability to ‘blend in’. However, some women also reported that they did not always judge this situation to be a disadvantage, particularly when they wanted to draw attention to a particular issue.

Many female interviewees reported upon an ‘unwelcome visibility’ that targets or quotas would bring upon women in organisations that applied affirmative action. The majority of interviewees across the study viewed mechanisms to enhance the number of women in senior positions positively. Nevertheless, most women were also very concerned that true affirmative action would put into question the degree to which their promotion was based upon ‘merit’.

Authenticity
Another perceived pressure reported by many female interviewees was about their ‘authenticity’ and ‘femininity’. Most interviewees reported that their organisations valued stereotypical male traits around ‘assertiveness’ and ‘independence’. Many noted that some senior women that they had observed had compromised their femininity to replicate male ways of working and leading and they reported feeling that such women did more to harm female progression than to help it.

Most chairpersons, executive recruiters and human resource professionals reported that when women acted against stereotypes around being collaborative or relational, these behaviours were evaluated negatively. Most female interviewees reported that ‘assertiveness’ was very often labelled as ‘aggressiveness’ in females, with these women reported as being viewed negatively by those around them. As one chairperson noted:

“Unfortunately for many of the women to survive in our industry, they have had to become much tougher and then it makes it even more difficult to get accepted on the board, if you lose your femininity along the way then there is a barrier that goes up. You think about how you choose, what female you would invite on to your boards and you would still want someone who is a female and who behaves in that way and encourages that behaviour from the blokes around you too.”

Issues of selection and promotion
All interviewees were asked to describe their experiences with selection and promotion. Chairpersons, executive recruiters and human resource professionals were asked what qualities they were looking for in recruiting or promoting senior people, including as board members. Other interviewees were asked questions about their experiences and what they believed were necessary attributes to progress to more senior roles within their respective organisations. There was a very strong correlation between the responses of the two groups.
The key criterion reported by nearly all chairpersons and executive recruiters was breadth and depth of industry experience. Executives, in particular, were reported as being expected to have had a broad range of experiences within the one industry sector. Additionally, a critical element was holding a significant operational role and having had leadership of line roles at a project, site or unit level. A track record of success was seen by chairpersons and executive recruiters as ‘proof’ of the ability to manage assets, budgets and people in order to deliver effectively in more senior roles.

Two specific traits that were reported by all chairpersons and executive recruiters as being required in executive and board hires were leadership and strategic ability. However, integrity, financial acumen, resilience and intellect were also consistently reported by most. All chairpersons and executive recruiters used a candidate’s track record as a means of evidencing these traits.

It was reported by most chairpersons and executive recruiters that experience did not just relate to the types of past roles held. The number of years spent in roles and in the industry was also reported as being a critical factor. Many chairpersons reported that longer tenure brought greater connections and opportunities so that ten years of continuous service produced more experience and valuable connections in the industry than ten years of discontinuous service. Additionally, chairpersons and particularly executive recruiters reported that experience was easily lost in fast moving industries during long absences, which required the individual to start over again to some degree.

Another key criterion that was reported was ‘cultural fit’. Most chairpersons and executive recruiters reported that not only should the individual have the appropriate technical and experiential background, but also they should fit with the culture of the organisation in terms of organisational values and leadership style. While all human resources professionals and executive recruiters reported a high degree of formality in checking the technical criteria of candidates, many reported that testing for cultural fit was a very informal process. Most reported that often this criterion was left to the ‘gut feel’ of managing directors and chairpersons making the appointment, often resulting in what they described as the invalid exclusion of appropriate candidates.

Most interviewees who had worked in larger organisations reported that mobility was a key to progression. It was reported that there was an expectation that in multi-national organisations, completing international assignments in various countries was required to fulfil the industry experience criterion. For respondents working in large, national organisations the expectation was reported as being around accepting job opportunities over time and most often in Sydney or Melbourne.

Taken as a whole, the interviews revealed that the degree to which selection and promotion was formalised was largely dependent on the size of the organisation. Respondents in larger organisations reported more rigorous and formal processes of assessment than those from medium and smaller organisations. Additionally, the more senior the position, the more it was reported that informal processes played a key role in appointment outcomes. Most chairpersons reported reliance upon informal networks of trusted others to validate the credentials of potential board members and executives. Assessments of cultural fit were reported by most chairpersons as being based upon informal meetings and the opinions of trusted colleagues.
In terms of internal promotions, and the assignment of major opportunities, nearly all interviewees reported that decisions were heavily weighted in terms of the ‘visibility’ of the achievements of the candidate. However, nearly all interviewees also reported that technical ability was by no means ignored. Most chairpersons reported that they were actively engaged in internal succession planning in their respective organisations. However they also reported that succession planning rarely looked deeper than two layers below the CEO. Only a few chairpersons or human resources professionals reported that their succession and diversity plans were linked.

A striking feature of the interviews in the mining and construction industries was the need for on-site roles and ‘cultural fit’ in those industries. The following two quotes exemplify the kinds of responses that were given:

“I don’t particularly pick men over women, but it also could depend on the location that they’re going into, because if it is a mine site related area, it’s traditionally a very male oriented location. So it might depend on the role and we will say it might be better to have a male in that situation, because we know that the workforce is quite rough depending on the location. But it’s really around skills for the job.”

“We don’t have any specific targets on whether we have males or females but we might need to look to get some more females in the organisation but it will be around the right person for the job, because you might get a female who’s very strong and can put up with that environment but making sure that in those particular selections we’re very careful on what and who we recruit for.”

No interviewee reporting on these decisions questioned whether the environment was at issue. Rather, the interviewee reported that the individuals had to adjust to an environment and show a disposition to work in the new environment. Other than the obvious ‘getting your hands dirty’, most interviewees did not elaborate on what ‘rough’ or ‘that environment’ actually meant. Nonetheless, in other parts of the interviews, many interviewees described operating environments in construction and mining as strictly hierarchical and overtly aggressive with disagreements resulting in the use of ‘strong language’, ‘chest beating’ and ‘shouting’.

Mine site camps were described as ‘spartan’ in terms of personal hygiene and facilities. Most interviewees who had worked on-site reported that there was still a strong, daily after hours drinking culture, although with strict testing and protocols, violence and overt alcoholism had diminished in recent years. Drugs were still reported as a feature of some environments. It was reported by many interviewees that FIFO sites also produced heightened levels of emotional strain that often manifested on-site, as depression or outbursts of anger.
Gender equality is not a women’s issue, it’s a human issue. It affects all of us.

Discussion and recommendations

The discussion and recommendations are divided into three parts:

1. The first section discusses ‘meta’ issues surrounding gender equality that represent either broad society based cultural issues or structural issues which are the purview of Government.

2. The second section examines issues in which businesses can play a role and makes recommendations as to how these issues can be addressed.

3. The final section considers the views of over 100 women who participated in the study and discusses their ideas about what women can do to address their individual situations and makes recommendations regarding how to do so.
**Government initiatives to drive greater gender equality**

Most interviewees identified and reported the existence of strong cultural norms that were driving gender inequality in their respective organisations. Most female interviewees reported that relative to the eastern states, Western Australian organisations had heightened levels of gender stereotyping, direct and indirect discrimination and role pressure.

Interviewees also noted three issues that were occurring outside of their organisations at a broader societal level in Western Australia that differed from the eastern States:

1. The cultural landscape
2. Issues surrounding childcare
3. The pipeline of women into key industries

**Cultural landscape**

A key link to past studies in examining this issue is the work by Christofides and his colleagues (2013) who reported upon gender issues in 26 European countries. They concluded that country level policies, institutions and the cultural norms which give rise to them have a direct relationship to gender outcomes.

While Western Australia is not a separate country nor is it a separate jurisdiction in terms of Federal legislation, it is separated by vast distances from the remainder of the country. The State has a distinctive history and economy which have in turn driven a distinctive culture (Earls-Davis, 2012). It has a history of male dominated industries (Government of Western Australia, 2014c; WGEA, 2014h) and an almost exclusively male dominated corporate sector in terms of board chairs and CEO gender representation (Dun & Bradstreet, 2014).

Also, networks of board chairs and CEOs were consistently reported as being strong and tight. These factors have been widely reported in the literature in other countries as giving rise to cultural constraints in the emergence of women as leaders (Durante, Griskevicius, Simpson, Cantu & Tybur, 2012; Eagly & Carli, 2007:131; Toh & Leonardelli, 2012).

Additionally, many of the pressures which were reported as confronting women were as a result of traditional societal values and stereotypes about women’s roles. Many of these stereotypes surround the conflict between the mother role and the career role, and the gendered expectations of friends, family and managers (see Goldberg et al., 2012; Pas et al., 2014). These put disproportional pressures on women and create narrowing pipelines of women able to navigate through them. An outcome is that women move into support rather than operational roles and/or undertake careers in occupations considered congenial to women (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Kuperberg & Stone, 2008; Wood & Eagly, 2002).

Again these issues are not unique to Western Australia. A recent survey of 1,400 global executives by McKinsey (Devillard, Sancier-Sultan & Werner, 2014) found that only 19% of men strongly believe that it is harder for women to progress into senior roles relative to men. Additionally, the findings surrounding the lack of agreement on what gender equality looks like are shared nationally, with a lack of agreement on definitions of diversity at organisation, industry and government levels alike (Stone, 2014:708).

Nonetheless, as the data in Table 2 shows, the number of women participating in junior and middle management roles as a proportion of the total workforce in Western Australia is lower than any other state in Australia. Fewer women are choosing to enter managerial professions. This may point to significant underlying cultural factors, which are most likely an artefact of the traditional dominance of mining, energy and construction sectors in Western Australia and their direct and indirect influence on all organisations across the entire economy of the State (Waddell, Creed, Cummings & Worley, 2014:414).
Until these cultural norms are adequately addressed at a societal level, business will face significant inertia in effectively tackling gender inequality (Reichl et al., 2014; Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014). However, as noted earlier, the loss is far greater than that faced by individual corporations. Goldman Sachs (2009) determined that the cost to our country’s economy due to gender inequality represents as much as 20% of GDP. Given that Western Australia contributes proportionately more to the Australian economy (Government of Western Australia. 2014c:3), it is a major issue holding back Western Australian GSP and therefore State Government revenues.

As with all major change initiatives, cultural change can only be addressed through a strategic and holistic approach (Graetz, Smith, Rimmer & Lawrence, 2011; Waddell et al, 2014). The Government of Western Australia, with oversight and input into every area of Western Australian society, represents the appropriate custodian and steward for cultural change.

It is recommended that: The Western Australian Government needs to develop a long-term campaign to raise awareness of the cultural norms which are hindering the progress of women. This should address intergenerational inequity through a series of demographic case studies.

Childcare

All female interviewees reported the critical need for reliable childcare support in order to enable them to work full-time. Nearly all married dual income interviewees with children reported themselves as the primary carer of their children. They undertake the majority of domestic duties in their households. The inequitable division of domestic labour reported by female interviewees is well known in other countries and studies, and is a significant issue in perpetuating gender inequality across all Western countries (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kokot, 2014; van Veldhoven & Beijer, 2012). Four support mechanisms for women with primary childcare responsibilities have been identified as enabling them to mitigate the effects of the uneven primary carer and domestic roles (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014; Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014). These are:

1. Partner support
2. Extended family support
3. External childcare providers
4. Workplace organisational support.

As the findings revealed, each of these support factors have significant issues attached to them in Western Australia.

In terms of partner support, extended travel by partners either in reporting to remote headquarters or flying to remotes sites was reported as causing issues for many interviewees. Partner travel has been reported as creating greater pressures upon women in dual income families, regardless of the gender of the partner travelling (Casinowsky, 2013). In 2013, the House Standing Committee reporting upon FIFO and DIDO noted that there is currently no definitive national data relating to the exact numbers of workers engaged in FIFO (Australian Parliament House, 2013:28). However, data in one report issuing from this standing committee suggest that Western Australia has the highest number of FIFO workers in Australia, along with Queensland (Australian Parliament House, 2013). However, taken as a proportion of the working population of each State, Western Australia has proportionally more workers engaged in FIFO.

Additionally, Beach, Brereton and Cliff (2003) report that the mining sector has the greatest proportion of mobile workers of any industry sector in Australia. Many partners are absent from home for longer periods, and possibly absent more often than other states in Australia. These absences reflect the remoteness of Perth, the need for longer travel times, and the dominance by a mining sector that employs a significant number of FIFO workers. Taken as a whole, these reports suggest that Western Australian male partners are less available to assist with childcare responsibilities than in any other Australian State.
The findings also revealed that there is a lack of flexibility offered by organisations, with generally poor implementation of flexible workplace policies and negative attitudes toward those who assume more flexible hours. Without flexibility, women with children often face pressures which reduce their effectiveness in the workplace and/or force them to leave (Perry-Smith & Blum, 2000; Stone, 2014). The findings revealed that many female interviewees were immigrants to Western Australia and had arrived with their husbands and had left extended family behind. The findings revealed that Western Australia has a significantly higher proportion of women of childbearing age who have immigrated to Western Australia, indicating that this reported finding is an issue shared in the wider population. Therefore, fewer females in Western Australia, compared with other States, have access to extended family to assist in childcare.

The final pillar which women rely upon is external paid childcare. Female interviewees reported upon the lack of availability of childcare places, as well as the absence or unreliability of before and after school and vacation care. The findings showed that Western Australia is behind every other State, both in terms of the number of childcare places per capita and in the location of childcare facilities in the CBD. Many women also reported that childcare was prohibitively expensive.

A review of average childcare costs shows that the average cost of childcare for two children exceeds the weekly after tax earnings of the average female wage earner in Western Australia (ABS, 2014b; Care for Kids, 2014). While some of the costs are eventually offset somewhat by Federal Government rebates, the reality is that for many women, on average or lower than average earnings, it is not financially viable for them to return to work.

In total, the findings show that there is a ‘perfect storm’ at play in Western Australia with regard to the undermining of the four pillars upon which women rely in enabling them to return to work and in remaining in the workplace.

The Government of Western Australia has a key role to play in regulation and approval of childcare facilities and in the regulation of before and after school care and vacation care.

It is recommended that: As part of the Red Tape Reduction Campaign, the Western Australian Government needs to investigate and remedy the relative lack of childcare places in the Perth and Peel regions as well as investigating means of reducing costs and extending hours.

It is also recommended that: In order to allow for greater participation in the workforce by women, the Western Australian Government needs to facilitate a greater range of before and after school care and vacation care offerings.

The pipeline

Most chairpersons and executive recruiters reported very low numbers of women entering operational roles in their industry. This was especially the case in reports by interviewees in the mining, energy and construction sectors. It was also reported by most chairpersons and executive recruiters that operational experience was a major prerequisite for most senior appointments and CEO and board appointments in particular.

The numbers of women completing science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) degrees that match the requirements of the State’s key industries are extremely low. Engineering is a specific concern at around 14% (Engineers Australia, 2012). Given the dominance of the mining, energy and construction sectors in Western Australia (Government of Western Australia, 2014c) this is a major issue. Moreover, even if it were completely addressed today, this fact would still result in a 20 year wait before women would be seen in comparable numbers to men in senior operational roles.
Industry can play a very significant role in addressing this issue through role modelling of successful women to children in schools, through presentations by organisations about STEM careers and by tackling gender stereotyping in their own organisations (Butler, Clarke & Simon, 2014; Hatmaker, 2013; Herman, Lewis & Laure-Humbert, 2013; Young, Rudman, Buettner & McLean, 2013). However, the root causes of low numbers of women entering engineering relate to influences in childhood. For instance, we know from many studies in other countries that through parents and teachers, stereotypes are reinforced regarding ‘what boys are good at’ and ‘what girls are good at’ and so directing girls away from non-gender congenial occupations (Buday, Stake & Peteron, 2012; Shapiro & Williams, 2013). Addressing gender stereotypes in primary and secondary schools is critical (Cheryan, 2012; Else-Quest et al., 2013), as well as addressing the re-enforcement of these stereotypes in university (Jagacinski, 2013; McDonald, Loch & Cater-Steel, 2010).

The Government of Western Australia has a key role to play in regulation and approval of curriculum for Western Australian schools.

It is recommended that: The Western Australian Government needs to lead an integrated initiative to increase the number of girls undertaking STEM subjects at high school in order to grow the pool of women qualified to work in the mining, energy, technology and construction sectors. Industry is required to support this initiative through programs similar to that of ‘work inspirations.’

Organisational actions to promote gender equality

The overwhelming majority of female interviewees, executive recruiters and human resources professionals reported that stereotyping, gender role congeniality and discrimination were major factors inhibiting female career progression. Also, these factors are often the cause of women leaving the workforce altogether. Additionally, there was virtually unanimous agreement by all interviewees surrounding perceived gender differences in confidence, leadership style and priorities. Most female interviewees and human resources professionals reported the above issues as manifesting in gender pay gaps, bias in recruitment and selection and inadequate flexible working practices.

These issues are well known and researched in world literature (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Heilman, 2012; Meyerson & Fletcher, 2000). Additionally, as shown in many countries worldwide, each of these issues can be successfully addressed through targeted organisational interventions (Stone, 2014). The discussion and recommendations outlined below are aimed at improving the retention of female employees and improving their long-term engagement, promotion and contribution to the organisation. The recommendations are applicable to large firms and SMEs alike. It is recognised that large firms are often better resourced in implementing large scale change, however SME’s have the advantage of being more nimble and able to engage with their entire workforce, often all in one place and at the same time.

Embracing the economic argument

Gender equality in the workplace is advanced as a social, diversity and inclusion issue (Stone, 2014). While the statistics provided by the WGEA (2014h) demonstrate that this is obviously the case, these arguments have done little to advance the participation and progression of women in the workplace in the last two generations (Eagly & Carli, 2007). It is possible that the majority of academic research demonstrating the causality between greater numbers of women in leadership roles and firm profitability has largely gone unnoticed by the business community due to its relative inaccessibility in the academic literature. However, over the last decade, an array of studies and statistics have been generated and published by lead organisations such as the OECD (2012), Goldman Sachs (2009), McKinsey and Company (2013) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2014e). These reports evidence that the economic argument for gender equality is firmly established, clear and compelling.
Despite this, even the economic argument has failed to gain traction in many boardrooms. Currently, only 8.8% of boards have set a target to lift the number of women at their board table and only 7.1% of employers have a standalone gender equality strategy (WGEA, 2014:3). The reasons for this are varied. They relate in large part to previous generations of management dismissing it as a ‘women’s issue’, a ‘human resources issue’, a ‘non-core’ issue or a ‘soft’ issue (Eagly & Carli, 2007; see also Stone, 2014:730). However, these sentiments stand in stark contrast to statements which emerged from last year’s G20 Summit. At the Summit the world’s top leaders stated that one of the most significant impediments to economic progress related to the relative lack of female participation in the workforce (G20, 2014:2).

Gender equality generates strategic competitive advantage in organisations by providing them with an edge in the war for talent, driving enhanced decision making, more innovative idea generation, and improved bottom lines (see such numerous reports as Dezso & Gaddis-Ross, 2012; Gregory, Jeanes, Tharyan & Tonks, 2013; Groysberg, 2013; Stone, 2014:712). Studies continue to demonstrate that companies with more women on their boards outperform those with less (AICD, 2013; Catalyst, 2014). The Workforce Gender Equality Agency (2014e) also establishes a strong business case for pursuing gender equality in the workplace and lists the following advantages:

- Helps to attract the best employees
- Reduces staff turnover and the cost of staff turnover
- Enhances organisational performance
- Improves access to target markets
- Minimises legal risks
- Enhances market reputation
- Engages men with families

It is recommended that: **Boards need to understand and embrace the economic rationale for gender equality as a strategic competitive advantage which will provide the imperative for the need to change.**

Ownership of the issue

Most interviewees reported that their respective organisations had diversity policies and flexibility policies. However, only a few reported that these policies had resulted in significant change in participation or progression of women within their organisations. There were a few notable exceptions. In each of these cases, these organisations had instituted comprehensive policies which were backed by an integrated gender equality strategy. Significantly, their CEO was directly leading the strategic initiative and was providing regular oversight over its implementation.

Significant change initiatives, particularly those involving cultural change, must be led from the top (Graetz, et al, 2011; Waddell et al., 2014). There is a growing body of evidence surrounding the critical role executive leadership plays in effecting transformational change (Burnes & By, 2012; Stoughton & Ludema, 2012). Waddell and his colleagues (2014:310; see also Tushman, Newman and Nadler,1988) assign three key roles to the CEO in transformational change:

1. **Envisioning:** The CEO must articulate a clear and credible vision of the new strategic orientation.
2. **Energising:** The CEO must demonstrate a personal excitement for the changes and model the behaviours expected by others.
3. **Enabling:** The CEO must provide the resources and oversight necessary for undertaking significant change and use rewards to reinforce new behaviours.
Given that senior and middle managers will already have a large set of often competing priorities, where a board or CEO does not take ownership of the issue, this signals that the initiative is not a priority. Studies link these signals to the likely result of a failure of the initiative (Lofton, 2007; Nutt & Backoff, 1997). Boards and CEOs need to clearly demonstrate intolerance for old attitudes and be prepared to act decisively against those who do not buy into the process (Graetz, 2011; Stone, 2014).

It is recommended that: The CEO needs to be made accountable for championing and driving the issue of gender equality in the workplace. The responsibility for implementing and driving the change process should not be delegated.

**Gender metrics**

Most chairpersons and human resources professionals from larger organisations reported that their organisations captured basic gender metrics. They did this in order to satisfy minimum reporting requirements either of the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX, 2014b), where their organisation was a listed entity, and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA, 2014) where their organisation employed greater than one hundred people. Few reported that they had gender strategies in place or had what could be described as sophisticated measures surrounding gender equality.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency (2014h) highlight in Australia’s Gender Equality Scorecard that few organisations do more than the minimum required for reporting. For example, whereas 47.7% of organisations have a flexibility policy, only 13.6% (8% of organisations in the mining and energy sectors) have strategies in place for their implementation.

Without appropriate and detailed measures relating to gender equality, a baseline for existing performance cannot be established. In turn, meaningful strategic and operational plans cannot be constructed, and performance indicators cannot be established. One outcome is that the return on investment in gender equality will remain unclear (Stone, 2014; WGEA, 2014). In other words, gender equality, like any other strategic business objective, must be accompanied by appropriate metrics in order to succeed (see international studies by Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Porter, 1998; Viljoen, & Dann, 2003). The WGEA (2014j:2) lists the advantages of a strategic approach as:

- Facilitating concerted action
- Targeting of investment
- Economies of scale through reduction in duplication across the organisation
- Consistency of approach
- Providing a basis for communication of intent and engagement of stakeholders
- A platform for measuring success

The following statistical data should form a baseline of information required to determine the size, extent and location of issues requiring attention; to establish base levels for KPI’s and provide a quantitative assessment against which targets can be set; accountabilities allocated; and performance assessed (WGEA, 2014j:48; Stone, 2014):

- Overall head count by gender
- Representation by gender in different units, departments, projects, positions, sites or other silos
- Representation by gender in each layer of seniority – graduates to executive and board
- Rates of promotion and progression by gender
- Gender of external hires and short list candidates, by level, occupation and department/unit
- Annual performance review grading by gender, role and seniority
- Gender pay and benefits equity across all positions through gender pay audit tools
• Entry and exit of the organisation by gender, role and level
• Employee engagement by gender
• Achievement against gender targets at business, unit and individual KPI levels
• Utilisation of flexibility options by gender, proportion of flexibility requests denied and parental leave return rates
• Trend data on all of the above metrics
• Comparative industry/national data on the above metrics, where available

As noted in the findings, approximately 4 in 5 of the female interviewees reported that they believed that they were being paid less than equivalent males in their respective organisations, 1 in 5 knew they were. Additionally, where chairperson or human resource professional interviewees were aware of gender pay audits having been conducted within their respective organisations, they all reported that significant gender pay gaps had been revealed.

The gender pay gap in Australia is currently rising (Chang et al., 2014; Wilson, 2014). However, less than a quarter of Australian organisations have undertaken a gender pay gap analysis. Of those who did, 22.1% identified the causes and only 10.5% created an action plan to address them. (WGEA, 2014a:12). Gender pay gap calculators are readily available. One can be found through the Workplace Gender Equality Agency website (WGEA, 2014k).

The above data types are a starting position and often provide indicative information only. The reasons behind the statistics obtained, and their trends, will require further, deeper analysis. There is a need for a broader engagement with all levels of the organisation to uncover potential causes and in order to review existing strategies plans and policies to address them (Stone, 2014; WGEA, 2014j). The outcome of these processes is to identify which areas are of the greatest concern to the organisation’s bottom line; what achievable targets can and should be set to maximise return; and in what realistic timeframe can they be achieved.

It is recommended that: Organisations need to undertake a pay equity audit, such as that provided by WGEA, by June 2016 and then annually thereafter. They must then report to staff on the findings.

It is also recommended that: Organisations need to ensure that they have the appropriate gender metrics in place in order to understand and measure current areas of gender inequality. Once established they need to regularly engage with the rest of the organisation to determine the causes behind them and find solutions to the inequalities uncovered.

‘Targets with teeth’ and the policies to support them

Very few interviewees from any of the interview groups were in favour of quotas. Quotas were reported as being linked to issues of ‘merit’. Chairpersons reported their concerns about the impact of government intervention and the possibility of putting less capable people onto their boards. However, several chairpersons reported that they were aware that Norway and its organisations were not reporting any adverse financial consequences after instituting board quotas. Female respondents were concerned that quotas at board level or executive level would create doubts in their own minds and in the minds of others about their true abilities.

Nearly all chairpersons reported that it was extremely difficult to find appropriately qualified women for their respective boards. Some chairpersons questioned the need for all board members to have had operational and/or line role leadership experience. However, the majority saw this as a necessity. The majority of chairpersons held aspirations around greater gender parity in their boards, but many could not see how parity could be reached using the available pool in the present market.
Some chairpersons reported a view that boards should break with traditional norms and look to women in senior management (as opposed to executive teams) with a depth of experience and train them. As these comments imply, chairpersons are considering more flexible requirements to accommodate more women on boards, but attitudes are changing slowly.

Most interviewees reported that their respective organisations did have a diversity policy. Most also reported that their organisations either had separate gender equality policies or that these policies were contained within their organisations diversity policies. Additionally, most interviewees reported that their organisations had flexibility, discrimination, performance management and recruitment and selection policies. However, most female employees also reported that these policies were often not operationalised in line with the intent of the policy (see Chang et al., 2014).

In terms of the existence of workplace policies, the interviewees in our sample do not reflect the status-quo reported by the WGEA (2014a), given that more than 50% of Australian organisations do not have policies in these areas. However, the interviewee’s reports of policy implementation are reflective of the operationalisation issue, with only 13% of organisations having strategies in place to operationalise policies (WGEA, 2014a). The mining and energy sectors are noted as industries that are least likely to have strategies in place with only 8% of the industry having policy strategies (WGEA, 2014a:13).

Two factors in particular can undermine gender equality efforts using an affirmative action methodology; employee backlash against perceived inequity (Gu, McFerran, Aquino & Kim, 2014; Kaiser et al., 2013); and the undermining of the confidence of beneficiaries of the policy through the questioning of their merit for the position (Autin, Branscombe & Croizet, 2014; Roberson & Alsua, 2002). These two issues underscore the main opposition to mandated quotas for women on boards and are most likely to ‘produce negative reactions in areas where there are the fewest women’ (Whelan and Wood, 2013:37). Nonetheless, policy alone has proven ineffective to produce transformational change (Chang et al, 2014; van den Brink & Benschop, 2012).

While few chairpersons and human resource professionals reported upward movement in the number and progression of women in their respective organisations, those that did report significant improvements had adopted a strategy of ‘targets with teeth’, quotas for new hires and had policies and strategies that supported their targets. However, in the worldwide literature there is considerable ongoing debate regarding the effectiveness of quotas, especially where organisations are simply playing the numbers game (Fitzsimmons, 2012; Leslie, Mayer & Kravitz, 2014).

Whelan and Wood (2013:39) have suggested ‘targets with teeth’ as being a viable alternative to quotas ‘provided certain conditions are met’. They describe these conditions as follows:

- Targets must be specific
- Targets must be challenging
- Targets must be accompanied by accountability and reward
- Targets must be aligned with an overarching diversity strategy
- Targets must be assigned at the same levels as targets for budgets and performance

Additionally Whelan and Wood (2013) note that targets are more likely to be accepted than quotas for four reasons:

1. Specific, challenging goals are highly effective in motivating change
2. Targets can be adapted to local conditions and are therefore less likely to provoke resistance
3. Managers are used to targets and goals in other areas of their work
4. Where targets are set and accepted by managers they represent a voluntary commitment to gender diversity
For the strategy of ‘targets with teeth’ to succeed, managers must be supported through the development of, and training in the use of, specific policies aligned to the strategy. Policy areas which need to be considered include recruitment, selection, flexibility, training and development, performance management and remuneration (Stone, 2014). These policy areas are discussed below in greater detail. However, all policies must be sufficiently detailed with regard to overall strategic intent as well as specifying how each is to be operationalised (Stone, 2014). Also, policies need to be seen as living documents. Where they are found not to work or there are better ways of implementing them, they need to be regularly addressed, included and communicated (Stone, 2014).

Most female interviewees reported that in their respective organisations, no-one was directly held accountable for delivering gender equality results. However, interviewees who had reported success in using ‘targets with teeth’ reported that it was essential that accountability for achieving targets flowed down through the organisation. Most reported that their respective organisations had attached rewards based KPIs as part of their overall performance management and reward regime, providing feedback on positive and negative performance as well as rewards for success.

KPIs have been demonstrated to be a highly effective tool in aligning manager’s behaviours towards organisational strategic outcomes (De Cieiri et al., 2008; Viljoen & Dann, 2003). Whelan and Wood (2013) also reported that accountability and feedback are ‘of the utmost importance to manager’s acceptance and commitment to gender diversity targets’.

It is recommended that: Based upon the rigorous measurement and investigation of gender inequalities, adopt ‘targets with teeth’ and a suite of policies developed and implemented to deliver on them.

It is also recommended that: Accountability for the delivery of targets needs to be embedded in the organisation through the use of valid and reliable KPIs attached to real consequences for success or failure.

Maintaining contact on maternity leave and plans upon return

The findings detail in several places, reports by female interviewees of organisational practices that are causing working women to consider not returning to work or leaving to find a more family friendly work environment. Losing valuable female employees after they have left to have children is a well-documented phenomenon in most Western countries (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Lovejoy & Stone, 2012). However, several chairpersons and human resources professionals reported that their organisations had adopted policies/practices which had been successful in increasing their retention rates of women who have taken time off work to have children. These policies were reported as being in addition to paid maternity leave, which was provided for varying lengths of time and in varying forms, from full pay to some percentage of full pay. Paid maternity leave was reported by these interviewees as demonstrating a commitment to employees and to enhance their likelihood of returning to work.

Successful practices involved a meeting/s between the manager and the employee where the employee discussed a range of issues relating to their impending maternity leave and return to work expectations. These conversations were reported as occurring around the legal provisions relating to return to work after maternity leave and the possibility of returning to work using some form of flexible working. Organisational commitment to women departing on maternity leave, as voiced through managers supportive of organisational gender equality policies, has been demonstrated to increase women’s intentions to return to work. In addition, the policy produces more committed employees upon their return and reduces work/life stress in the longer-term (Houle, Chiocchio, Favreau & Villeneuve, 2012; Paustian-Underdahl & Halbesleben, 2014; Thompson et al., 2004).
Some interviewees reported the successful use of a ‘buddy’ system, usually someone who regularly worked with the employee. Their role was to maintain contact with the employee at intervals previously agreed on. The arrangement kept them in the loop about what their former colleagues were working on, developments in the organisation and the industry and any events that the employee could come to in terms of educational, training or social events. Coupled with the above, regular newsletters and general communications would continue to be sent to the employees work email address or an address nominated by the employee.

Additionally, depending upon the length of absence and wherever possible, extension numbers, passwords, laptops, mobile phones, and desks were maintained in anticipation of a return. Interviewees reported that this demonstrated that the organisation was not disengaging with the employee. Some larger organisations had dedicated websites and social media platforms designed for employees on extended absences to access. In some cases these were extended to employees who had decided to leave. All of these practices demonstrate a level of commitment and ongoing engagement with the employee both of which enhance the likelihood of the employee returning to work when coupled with transparent and supportive gender equality policies (Kelan, 2014; Konrad & Yang, 2012).

Interviewees whose organisations were engaged in these practices reported that upon return to work, further ongoing discussions were held with the employee regarding their needs around flexibility, their work environment and to ensure that the employee was coping with the volume and timing of their work. Motherhood is acknowledged as creating great change in the work/life balance of female employees. The practices reported by these interviewees have been shown to reduce employee stress and burnout while increasing employee commitment and performance (also see studies by Herman et al., 2013; Reichl et al., 2014; Teasdale, 2013).

It is recommended that: As a retention strategy, organisations should adopt mechanisms for engaging in honest conversations with employees regarding policies and expectations surrounding the timing, benefits and shape of returning to work prior to their parental leave departure and develop means of maintaining contact during their absence.

Reducing unnecessary travel and supporting travel needs

As reported by most female interviewees, extensive travel created greater pressures on working women with families. Some interviewees reported that their respective organisations had already resolved to reduce their carbon footprint by examining what was ‘necessary’ versus ‘unnecessary’ travel and by using the latest advances in audio/visual equipment to replace some face-to-face meetings. Reducing unnecessary travel will increase the availability of partners for childcare (Casinowsky, 2013). It may also reduce a significant disincentive for some women in accepting promotion to senior roles (Nelson & Bridges, 1999).

It is recommended that: In recognition that not all staff are able to work away, organisations should rethink the reasons for travel and encourage and promote virtual connections where possible.

Flexible work practices

The majority of female interviewees in the mining, energy and construction sectors reported a lack of willingness by managers to explore flexible work options. Several reasons were reported by this cohort as being given by their managers in refusing to consider requests for flexible work roles:

1. The nature of the work precluded it from being carried out in any way other than full-time
2. Work could not be supervised outside of the office
3. Flexible work was disruptive on staff and difficult on managers
4. Clients expected immediate access to their organisation and would not accept part-time managers in charge of their files
Additionally, where flexible roles were available, most female interviewees reported that those roles were not valued by their respective organisations either in terms of pay or progression. Many female interviewees reported that their organisation held the attitude that occupants of flexible or part-time roles showed a lack of dedication, should not partake in training and development opportunities or unit or departmental meetings. Many female interviewees also reported that attitudes towards men undertaking flexible roles were magnified, relative to women. It was reported that occupants of flexible roles often out-produced their full-time peers and were paid less at the same time.

There is a broad international literature surrounding the gendering and devaluation of flexible roles in organisations. Despite the nature of the family unit changing dramatically over the last two decades, the stereotype of the ‘male breadwinner’ persists and men who go against this stereotype are often penalised (Gatrell et al., 2014; Rudman & Mescher, 2013). Pas and his colleagues (2014) argue that flexible work practices may be failing because they are primarily seen as a ‘motherhood’ issue by organisations and managers. Therefore, individuals suffer from the stereotype biases and conflicts between the ‘mother’ role and the ‘career’ role. There is widespread support for this argument since flexible roles are relatively underpaid and suffer from a relative lack of career progression opportunities (Bourne & Calas, 2013; Conway & Sturges, 2013; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2014; Rafnsdottir & Heijstra, 2013). While notions of motherhood still dominate flexibility research, the ageing population is also creating greater pressures on carers requiring additional flexibility to help them in looking after ageing parents.

Putnam and her associates (2014:413) argue that the issues surrounding flexible arrangements fall into four categories:

1. Variable versus fixed arrangements – Flexible arrangements are often constrained by task demands such as fixed deadlines and site decision requirements.
2. Supportive versus unsupportive environments – Managers can send mixed messages that simultaneously encourage and discourage using flexible policies and co-workers often chastise those who use them.
3. Equitable versus inequitable implementation of policies – Some employers only see flexible arrangements as appropriate for particular demographics such as mothers.
4. Autonomy versus organisational control – Employees who have high autonomy often intensify their work practices and work harder or for longer periods than do employees with fixed hours.

Recent research into flexibility (Brescoll, et al., 2013; Clerc & Kels, 2013; Putnam et al., 2014) suggests that these problems can largely be overcome by:

- Having clear flexibility policies that are accessible to all employees
- Clear performance accountabilities for outcomes on both sides
- Reduced managerial discretion through increasing the rigour surrounding the decision process of whether work is capable of being done flexibly

One suggested mechanism for considering requests for flexible work options is through a thorough job design and analysis review (Stone, 2014). These functions are ordinarily carried out by human resources professionals. Job analysis (which examines job content, job requirements and job context) and job design (which specifies the content of the job and considers the ways in which work can be done) recognises that there is no single ‘best’ way to construct a job. Invariably, the construction of a job will involve trade-offs between specialisation and simplification, vertical and horizontal loading, supervision and autonomy (Stone, 2014:186-193). Job analysis and design is a more sophisticated way of examining flexible role requests. It tests the ways in which tasks are broken up, allocated, interact with other roles and are resourced.
Interviewees from organisations which reported having adopted this policy have found that it produces several benefits:

• It provides solid ground for refusing the request should it be found that the work cannot be undertaken in another way
• It provides managers and employees with an opportunity to look at the way in which work is currently being undertaken and the potential to uncover efficiencies or inefficiencies
• It demonstrates a level of engagement with the employee
• It can result in a flexible option or an enhanced flexible option being available to the employee, increasing the likelihood that they will stay

Supporting these findings is a recent study by James (2014) which examined 150 organisations in the United Kingdom that had adopted organisation wide flexibility options identified by workers. It was found that of the 150 organisations, 147 had achieved higher revenue growth, worker productivity, workforce diversity, workforce innovation and creativity and reduced workforce turnover. Evidence of the contribution to the bottom line by flexible role occupants, suggests that it would be counterproductive to pay them less than their relative contribution to the organisation; exclude them from training and development opportunities; or exclude them from activities and meetings that an equivalent full-time employee would be entitled to attend (Beeson & Valerio, 2012; Stone, 2014).

Any flexibility policy must contain an array of clearly defined mechanisms for accommodating the employee’s individual flexibility needs within the bounds of the organisation’s needs. Good policy will provide a degree of managerial discretion, but also contain provisions for the oversight of their decisions (Putnam et al., 2014).

It is recommended that: As a flexibility initiative, organisations should conduct independent job analyses involving both the HR function and line management to determine if flexible work options are available for employees both in the workplace and remotely.

Education and awareness

A striking feature in the findings was the nearly universal reporting by interviewees of significant gender differences in leadership styles, work/life priorities and confidence or assertiveness. There was an acknowledgement by nearly all interviewees that these were generalisations and conformed to stereotypes which could be dangerous if acted upon. However, over 90% of female interviewees also reported having recently experienced discrimination, which indicates that these stereotypes may be being regularly acted upon by men.

Instinctively, humans subconsciously categorise others by sex, age and distinctiveness before they have had a conscious thought about the individual (Blaine, 2007). Of these categorisations, sex is the strongest basis for classifying others (Blaine, 2007). One’s sex determines the ways in which people socially interact with an individual in childhood, which in turn eventually generates behavioural tendencies appropriate to a society’s views of adult gender roles (Wood & Eagly, 2002).

Therefore gender, being primarily socially constructed, evokes mental associations or expectations which are also learned. These include beliefs which shape people’s behaviours toward each gender group (Eagly, 1987; Koenig & Eagly, 2014). For example, one persistent stereotype associates management with being male (Berthoin-Antal & Izreali, 1993; Kark, Waisal-Manor & Shamir, 2012; Askehave & Korming-Zethsen, 2014). To the extent that ‘leadership’ connotes ‘male’, virtually all social interactions around leadership are influenced by gendered expectations and associations (Eagly & Carli, 2007).
The strength of gendered stereotypes held by an individual, the perceived degree to which someone else acts against those stereotypes, and the extent to which the individual acts upon the disconfirmation of their beliefs, can lead to anything from subtle bias through to outright direct discrimination (Cunningham et al., 2014; Jetten et al., 2013; Leskinen & Cortina, 2014). While forms of direct discrimination were reported by over half the female interviewees, the great majority reported that this form of discrimination was on the decline. However, over 90% of female interviewees reported recent forms of indirect discrimination.

These observations by interviewees are reflected in the literature, with recent research confirming that discrimination has become more subtle and indirect and can impact upon recruitment, selection, promotion and assignment decisions (Basford et al., 2014; Ibarra, Ely & Kolb, 2013). Heilman and her colleagues (2001; 2007; 2008; 2014) work on the double bind in the assessment of women’s leadership is one significant example of a phenomenon which was widely reported by female interviewees.

Many interviewees reported that their respective organisations had undertaken extensive awareness and unconscious bias training which was reported as having been responsible for significant positive changes in attitude and behaviour. Ibarra and her colleagues (2013:63) suggest that raising awareness and making unconscious biases conscious, can positively impact individual and organisational behaviour in regard to gender bias. While there is little research surrounding the measurement and or detection of unconscious bias or the effectiveness of unconscious bias training (Tetlock, Mitchell & Anastapoulos, 2013), there is little doubt regarding the existence of unconscious biases (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Morley (2014) suggests that unconscious bias training can be effective where the following are imparted:

- Understanding what unconscious bias is and how it works
- Becoming aware of the unconscious biases we hold
- Recognising that unconscious beliefs may be quite different from our espoused beliefs
- Ensuring a context in which bias can be controlled through conscious and considered decision tools
- Increasing the transparency of decision processes and outcomes
- Changing the automatic gender associations we have by practicing gender disconfirming associations

Structured education and training are a key to effective change programs and are critical where changes in culture are being attempted (see 2003; Stone, 2014; Viljoen & Dann; Waddell, et al, 2014). Training will be required in all areas affected by the implementation of a gender equality strategy including recruitment, selection, performance management, promotion, progression, remuneration, training and development (Stone, 2014). Stone (2014) recommends training to develop an understanding of the benefits of gender diversity, the overall strategic intent of the gender equality initiative in the organisation, as well as how to apply new policies which have been developed to implement the strategy.

It is recommended that: As part of an organisation wide communication strategy, the adoption of a gender equality strategy needs to be accompanied by a program of targeted training and development activities aimed at explaining the rationale for the overall strategy and the specific policies for overcoming gender inequality.
Most female executive respondents reported the critical role that sponsors had played in their career progression, reporting a clear distinction between mentoring and sponsorship. Nonetheless, both were reported as critical for the executive female group in terms of progression. Mentors were reported as having a primary role in being a sounding board for discussing decisions, a source of knowledge concerning career progression, aspects of their role, their organisation or their industry.

Sponsors and mentors were reported as offering advice and insights based upon their own experiences with the respondent’s organisation or their industry. However, less than 50% of female interviewees in the other respondent groups reported having a mentor. Mentors have been demonstrated to be more important to female career progression than for males and critical to career progression of people generally (Dworkin, Maurer & Schipani, 2012; Ehrich, 2008; Tharenou, 2005).

Many interviewees reported the importance of role models for female employees. Female role models were often asked to speak to audiences of younger female employees and share their experiences and advice. Interviewees were very particular, however, in reporting that role models are only valuable if other women can identify with them. It was reported that the more the female exemplar being held up diverged from the average woman hearing her story, the less likely she will be seen as an inspiration. Most interviewees who reported having female role models described them as providing guidance on how to ‘lead as a woman’, something that male mentors could not provide insight into. Female role models play a critical role in female progression in two ways: they evidence the possibility of obtaining senior roles (Lockwood, 2013) and they provide clues about navigating the nuances of leading as a woman (Latu et al., 2013).

Many interviewees reported that their organisations had moved or were moving towards sponsorship of women by senior organisational members. While a sponsor may or may not act as a mentor, their primary role was to understand the achievements and advocate on behalf of their protégé in terms of appropriate projects and progression in general. Despite an array of policies being reported in relation to mentors and sponsors, ultimately mentoring and sponsorship programs were reported as being designed with the specific intention of building self-confidence and progressing women into more career enhancing activities and promotion opportunities. Many interviewees reported that their respective organisations had seen significant improvements in female progression through the institution of these programs.

DeCieiri and her associates (208:465) suggest that the characteristics of a successful formal mentoring program are as follows:

- Mentor and protégé participation is voluntary. The relationship can be ended at any time without fear of punishment
- The process of mentor-protégé matching does not limit the development of informal relationships. For example a mentor pool can be established to allow protégés to choose from a variety of qualified mentors
- Mentors are chosen on the basis of their past record in developing employees; their willingness to serve as a mentor and evidence of positive coaching, communication and listening skills
- The purpose of the program is clearly understood. Projects and activities that the mentor and protégé are expected to complete are specified
- The length of the program is specified. Mentor and protégé are encouraged to pursue the relationship beyond the formal time period
- A minimum level of contact between the mentor and protégé is specified
- Protégés are encouraged to contact one another to discuss problems and share successes
The mentor program is evaluated. Interviews with mentors and protégés are used to obtain immediate feedback regarding specific areas of dissatisfaction. Surveys are used to gather more detailed information regarding benefits received from participation in the program.

Employee development is rewarded, which signals to managers that mentoring and other development activities are worth their time and effort.

It is recommended that: *Organisations should instigate sponsorship, mentoring and advocacy programs both formal and informal.*

Linking succession, diversity and pathways for progression

Many chairpersons reported that their succession planning rarely extended deeper than two layers below the CEO into the organisation and that women were rarely present in these layers. Most interviewees reported that their succession and diversity planning were not linked. However, a few chairpersons reported that where their respective organisations included diversity measures and policy consideration with in-depth succession planning from top to bottom, they had achieved greater success in improving gender equality. Integration of rigorous gender equitable recruitment and promotion practices, with succession planning which starts at the graduate entry level, can be a key contributor to success in getting more women into senior positions within the organisation (Bruckmuller et al., 2014; Stone, 2014:717; Virick & Greer, 2012).

Most female interviewees reported that there was little accessible detail regarding existing roles, pathways to these roles, how roles were connected, what roles were available or might become available and the experiences required to fill them. With no clear pathway for progression and/or no formal understanding of experiences required to fill roles, informal networks and personal relationships were reported by most female interviewees as the dominant mechanism for understanding progression.

Without a clear understanding of progression pathways or the specific skill requirements of more senior positions along these pathways, career development can be severely restricted (DeCieiri et al., 2008; Hartel, Fujimoto, Strybosch & Fitzpatrick, 2007). Furthermore, without a clear understanding of skill requirements for more senior roles, developmental opportunities cannot be identified when they arise and will be foregone as a result (Beeson & Valerio, 2012; Hoobler et al., 2014). Additionally, given research relating to the exclusion of women from informal networks in organisations (Eagly & Carli, 2007:187; Groysberg & Bell, 2013:93) these sources of information regarding career progression and development opportunities may be relatively inaccessible to female employees.

It is recommended that: *As a progression strategy, organisations should link their diversity initiatives with their succession planning and extend succession plans from the CEO down to graduate level.*

It is also recommended that: *Organisations need to ensure that they have transparent and documented pathways for progression.*

Recruitment, pay and progression practices

Most chairpersons and executive recruiters reported a very narrow range of specific qualifications, attributes and experiences that qualified candidates for executive and board roles. Most of these interviewees acknowledged that these criteria excluded the majority of women. Most executive recruiters and human resources professionals questioned some of the assumptions about certain experiences or lengths of tenure as being valid criteria to perform in certain roles. Role descriptions and specifications are the building blocks upon which successful recruitment, selection, performance management, progression and reward systems are based (Hartel et al., 2007:275; Stone, 2014:164).
If criteria are not objective, systematic exclusion of women from long and short lists of candidates can result, as well as chances of positive performance evaluations and promotion being diminished (Beeson & Valerio, 2012; Bruchmuller et al., 2014). Successful policies in this area ensure the validity of selection criteria against the role being recruited for through rigorous job analysis and design (DeCieiri et al., 2008; Stone, 2014).

Many interviewees working for larger organisations reported that they were successfully increasing the number of women in senior positions through mandatory policies requiring recruiters and/or managers to include women in short lists and adopting a reporting position of ‘if not, why not’ if a male is appointed or promoted to the role in question. This practice was reported as a key strategy particularly in increasing the number of women in operational roles. Additionally, most human resources professionals reported that their respective organisations had a policy of gender parity upon selection panels. Strategies such as these are reported in the literature as mechanisms designed to overcome leadership gender stereotype effects (Askehave & Zethsen, 2014; Hoyt, 2012; Stone, 2014), salience of gender role, (Leicht et al., 2014; Martell et al., 2012) and gender of interviewer effects (Cook & Glass, 2014; Holgersson, 2013; Zhu & Westphal, 2014). Training of managers in the correct conduct of interviews, appropriate behaviours and questioning techniques has also been shown to have a positive effect upon reducing gender bias in selection (Koch et al., 2014).

Another key practice reported by respondents as being adopted by their respective organisations was in recognising the need to get gender parity in feeder pools for their business. As noted in the findings, the feeder pools in fields such as engineering are quite narrow. Nonetheless, some organisations reported policies surrounding mandatory gender equality in the make-up of graduate hires in operational areas. Additionally, some organisations had adopted policies of taking graduates from related disciplines and training them in the specific needs of the organisation to ensure that parity in graduate hires was achievable.

It was reported by human resources professionals and executive recruiters that often large gender pay gaps were created through remuneration levels which were set at entry and often as a result of managerial discretion. These interviewees reported that large gaps were often difficult to amend through normal wage review practices and were often protected through pay secrecy. Policies around the degree of managerial discretion on setting pay on entry, as well as gender pay audits, transparency of pay levels and reference to published market rates of pay were reported as being successful mechanisms for reducing the gender pay gap caused at entry and are in line with equitable remuneration strategies reported in the remuneration literature (DeCieiri et al., 498; Stone, 2014:479-485).

Human resource managers who reported their organisations as having rigorous and transparent review and assessment policies for progression of employees reported greater success in bringing women through their organisations. In particular, differences in ratings by gender and rates of progress and promotion by gender were examined, with managers being held accountable for differences (See Roth et al., 2012 for support of this practice). Assessment and promotion practices are critical at more junior levels in ensuring equal opportunity is afforded to women to work on career enhancing projects, clients and assignments (Beeson & Valerio, 2012; King et al., 2012; Hoobler et al., 2014) and particularly operational or line roles which are seen as critical in obtaining future executive and board roles (Bowles, 2012; Lyness & Heilman, 2006; Smith et al., 2013). Metrics around performance scores by gender, as well as gendered rates of progression, are considered to be essential to ensure equity in progression and progression opportunities (Bruckmuller et al., 2014; Roth et al., 2012).
It is recommended that: Organisations need to review their existing recruitment, pay, opportunity and progression systems and question assumptions around the validity of role and pay criteria. They should also adopt a policy of ‘if not, why not’ in recruitment in areas where there is not already gender parity.

It is also recommended that: Organisations should create a ‘fair’ process of recruitment in which every shortlist of candidates must contain a female candidate and if this is not achievable there must be an explanation as to why.

It is also recommended that: Recruitment selection panels should endeavour to always contain a female panellist and if this is not achievable there must be an explanation as to why.

Networking

Exclusion from informal and formal networks was reported as a key area of concern by most female interviewees. Bowles (2012:191) notes that ‘the social structure of the business world reflects sex segregation of occupations in which women congregate in the lower levels of the hierarchy’. Eagly and Carli (2007:145) report that while women do not necessarily have fewer relationships than men, networks are largely sex segregated with women preferring to be with women and men with men. Given that men occupy the higher levels of the hierarchy, men are informationally advantaged in social interactions and therefore in the accumulation of valuable social capital and visibility to those who make key promotion and progression decisions (Clerc & Kels, 2013; Doldor, Anderson & Vinnicombe, 2013). There are very clear links between higher levels of social capital and career progression (Ding et al., 2013; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014).

Some interviewees reported that their organisations, as a matter of policy, have moved away from male dominated sports venues or sports activities such as golf, adventure or rigorous outdoor activities for client networking functions. They had begun to move towards cultural events, seminars or dinners. Even where events are not deliberately gender exclusive, the kinds of activities that form the focus of the event can still act to exclude women from participating or feeling comfortable with participating (Groysberg & Bell, 2013). Organisations need to ensure that work related networking activities are both inclusive and comprise of functions or venues that both genders are comfortable with (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Kellerman & Rhode, 2007).

It is recommended that: Organisations need to ensure an inclusive environment for women at internal and external networking functions.

Provision of on-site childcare and childcare assistance

Interviewees belonging to organisations that provided access to on-site childcare or nearby childcare were reported as being at a tremendous advantage in retaining women in their workplace. However, only a few organisations were identified as providing this benefit. These were very large organisations and were reported as having the ‘economies of scale’ to be able to afford this. However, the findings also identified that organisations which played an active role in the facilitation of childcare, had earlier returns to work by women from maternity leave and increased rates of retention.

Childcare is identified as being one of the greatest issues responsible for causing women to exit the workforce and retard career progress (Eagly & Carli, 2007). The findings in this report identify it as one of the single greatest factors affecting female participation, retention and progression in Western Australia. The degree to which the pressures associated with childcare can be alleviated for women in the workplace the greater will be the impact on gender equality.
On-site childcare facilities were reported as having the greatest impact. On-site childcare facilities were reported as enabling employees to arrive at work earlier and leave later. It was also reported that employees had greater opportunities to attend out of hours meetings and networking functions. It was further reported that access to these facilities reduced the role pressures on women by allowing them to check in with their children during break times. One human resource professional reported that the return on investment in these facilities was considerable in terms of the increased performance of employees and retention rates. Stone (2014:517) lists the benefits of providing on-site childcare as follows:

- Aids recruitment
- Reduces absenteeism
- Increases employee loyalty
- Improves employee productivity
- Reduces employee turnover
- Improves organisational image as an employer of choice
- Enhances employee morale
- Exempt from Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) (provided the facility is on the employers’ premises)

Other initiatives reported by interviewees which facilitated retention rates of women included:

- Subsidised childcare
- Salary sacrificing or packaging of childcare fees
- Securing a fixed number of places for the organisation with external childcare providers
- Provision of emergency childcare services
- Partnering with other nearby organisations for the provision of a childcare facility
- Arranging bulk discounts with providers for organisation employees
- Vacation care programs provided by organisations

It is recommended that: Large corporates and developers should consider the provision of on-site childcare, where sufficient economies of scale are present, as a means of providing certainty and reliability of childcare for their employees.

What women can do for themselves to increase chances of career progression

The recommendations in this section are based upon the contributions of over one hundred executive and senior women and the female chairs, executive recruiters and human resources professionals in Perth who took part in the research. Each of the 100 women interviewed was asked this question “What advice would you offer a woman at the start of her career if she were aiming at one day obtaining an executive position?”

The recommendations are based upon the current context of the corporate environment of Western Australia as revealed in the findings and discussion sections above. The recommendations have then been tested against the gender equality literature in order to validate them.
Start with the end goal in mind

One executive female interviewee summed up the nature of female careers when she said:

“There’s just not one perfect decision where everything then cascades down beautifully through life, because life is not like that. As a woman you have choices. You make peace with your choices.”

As reported above, executives and board members are predominantly appointed based upon the depth and breadth of their industry experience (see also Fitzsimmons, 2011). As a starting point, women need to be strategic about planning their careers, which are well documented in past studies as differing from those of most men (Parker, Khapova & Arthur, 2009; Sabelis & Schilling, 2013). Understanding the requirements of senior executive and board roles in an industry allows an individual to plot a course towards meeting them (DeCieiri et al., 2008; Hartel, Fujimoto, Strybosch & Fitzpatrick, 2007). Answers to the following fundamental questions will need to be found:

• What comprises a ‘breadth’ of experiences in my industry?
• What qualifications are required to gain entry to them?
• When should I get them?
• Where do I get them?
• How do I get them?
• How long does it take to get a ‘depth’ of experience?
• Are these experiences linear or are they more of a matrix?
• Who is best placed to help me to answer these questions and facilitate my progress?

Knowing what the end goal looks like is important. However, for women there are many issues to navigate that do not arise for men (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Ridgeway, 2011). One obvious difference between men and women is that for most women part of the journey involves the decision to have children. How children are accommodated as part of the end goal is also a critical decision that women need to make and plan for (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2012).

Knowing what the end goal looks like helps with planning the journey, by mapping out goals and timeframes and by anticipating when and where pressures are likely to be at their greatest (Stone, 2014). Having definite goals, strategies and timeframes for acquiring the necessary breadth of experience helps the most when pressures, are greatest, they also help to maintain perspective and focus (Bowles, 2012; Sandberg, 2013). For example, the timing of the acquisition of critical experiences which require a heavy investment in being in the field or in travelling and/or relocation should be timed for a part of life when other pressures are likely to be at their least (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014; Groysberg & Bell, 2013).

Additionally, knowing which organisations in an industry are superior in providing the breadth and depth of these experiences and how they go about providing them is critical. It needs to be borne in mind that today it is more likely that people need to move around between organisations and locations to maximise their experience (Stone, 2014). Women need to check which organisations have strong reputations with regard to professional development opportunities, and the degree to which they support families to alleviate personal pressures if or when the time comes to have children. Related, is how well organisations accommodate women’s continued progression if they choose to work flexibly for a period of time (WGEA, 2014g). The Workforce Gender Equality Agency (WGEA, 2014i) maintains lists of ‘Employers of Choice for Gender Equality’. As reported by chairpersons and executive recruiters, the ‘depth’ of experience criterion is usually only met by a significant investment in time. The more time an individual takes away from the workforce, the more difficult it will be to progress relative to peers who do not take time out (Araoz, 2007; Evers & Sieverding, 2014; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014; Lovejoy & Stone, 2012).
Be strategically opportunistic

Modern careers are rarely linear (Parker et al, 2009). A large part of having a well-developed career plan is being able to recognise career relevant opportunities as they come along. Women need to be strategically opportunistic (Bowles, 2012; Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014; Furst & Reeves, 2008). This means recognising and seizing career relevant opportunities as they arise.

Special projects, assignments and presentations are all ways of expanding an individual’s experience base. Also they are kinds of work that will increase visibility inside and outside of the organisation. Women need to be prepared to take on the difficult assignments, ones that will present a stretch. By their very nature, these kinds of projects will require abilities that have not yet been tested or the individual may not believe they have (Stone, 2014). Getting these kinds of assignments is facilitated by the fact that many people are reluctant to take them on, making it easier to get them on the one hand but they also represent a risk on the other (Bruckmuller et al., 2014). However, this is true for anyone else undertaking them. The stories of successful executive careers of both men and women usually always contain a pivotal breakthrough assignment, the kind that does not come along every day (Bowles, 2012; Fitzsimmons et al, 2014, White, Cox & Cooper, 1996).

Opportunities are also usually not a matter of luck. Visibility comes not just from an effective social network, but is usually always backed by having worked hard and smart to ‘earn your stripes’ (see studies by Clerc & Kels, 2013; Ding et al., 2013; Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014). More opportunities come to those who are seen to be working hard and achieving what is expected of them (Williams, 2000). Additionally, many of these early career opportunities involve the need to be mobile and also to be prepared to move on short notice, (Stone, 2014) to take up the more important opportunities. Given that men are three times more likely to have international experience on their CV, this represents a valuable form of career capital for women (Groysberg & Bell, 2013). As many interviewees reported, most large organisations require their high potential employees to take up roles either on the east coast or overseas to gain international experience.

If a woman misses out on an opportunity, for whatever reason, no matter how big or small, she needs to ask the decision maker why that happened and what could be done next time to be in line for such an opportunity (King et al, 2012). This is important since it may be required to challenge incorrect assumptions about a woman’s suitability for such assignments, if she feels these assumptions are untrue, and to work on the areas disclosed by the manager if they are found to be true (see Smith et al., 2013; Heilman and Okimoto, 2007 for avoiding gender pitfalls in challenging managers).

The same is particularly true of promotion and pay. Where an individual knows they have the required experience and qualifications to progress or to be paid more, they need to be prepared to challenge those decisions (Bowles & Babcock, 2013; Judge et al., 2011; Kulik & Olekalns, 2012). Ultimately, if this fails to produce a result, and there is no resolution, the individual should seriously consider moving organisations to continue their progression (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). Importantly, women need to make it very clear to those around them that they have an appetite for undertaking these kinds of assignments or projects. Sometimes managers won’t know unless they are told (Hoobler et al., 2013; Sarlet et al., 2012).

Self-confidence

A lack of self-confidence was identified by almost every female interviewed as being a restraining factor at some point in their careers. This phenomenon is well documented in contemporary literature (Kay & Shipman, 2014; Sturm, Taylor, Atwater & Braddy, 2014). The strategies to overcome a lack of self-confidence, where it exists, are therefore an essential part in advancing career progression, since positive attitudes toward abilities are known to predict successful use of them (Ehrlinger & Dunning, 2003; Else-Quest et al, 2013).
A good starting point is the fact that hundreds of scientific studies have shown men and women to be equally intelligent, gifted, ambitious and driven (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eliot, 2013; Shibley-Hyde, 2014). Self-confidence is therefore a state of mind that is both learned and can be trained (Doey et al., 2014).

Firstly, in order to improve their self-confidence an individual needs to know themselves (Day, 2000). Good organisations have leadership training and development activities which should include self-awareness and self-understanding tools (Stone, 2014). Training and development activities should also present a suite of leadership behaviours that help in framing communication and choosing appropriate ways of interacting with peers, team members and superiors (see Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Bolman & Deal, 2008 for examples). If an organisation does not have such programs or an individual lacks access to them, it is a wise personal career investment to make. MBA programs, in particular, are designed to impart this kind of knowledge.

Secondly, knowing what is required in an individual’s role, project or assignment and the level of competence and experience expected, as well as having a reasonably good idea about the level of competence and experience of those people around the individual is critical. When an individual has an understanding of these two things they have a barometer or standard external to themselves that they can more or less objectively measure (Day, 2000). The task of the individual is then to ‘know their stuff’, to develop their skillset to the degree that they can objectively say ‘I know as much about this as anyone’ or even better, go the extra distance and read more widely, attend conferences and presentations, acquire further qualifications, question more experienced people and gain a degree of expertise in those areas.

In this way, individuals may even be able to create a niche for themselves and become known as the ‘go to person’ on those kinds of issues. This cannot hurt in attracting clients or internal referrals and in turn creating additional opportunities. However, to do so often requires taking risks, being prepared to try and to fail. There is a limit to what academic or vicarious learning can teach, some things can only be learned through personal experience (Day, 2000; DeCieiri et al., 2008; Stone, 2014).

However, knowing something is often not enough in terms of self-confidence and self-belief (Estes & Felker, 2012). People need to test their knowledge against others to confirm their belief. Speaking with mentors is one way of testing and confirming knowledge and this aspect of mentoring has been reported as being far more important for women relative to men (Ehrich, 2008).

Having a solid knowledge or understanding of an area makes it a lot easier for an individual to be confident and to take more informed risks (Kay & Shipman, 2014). It also evidences the distance between what is known now and what is required to be known at the end of an assignment or project, allowing the individual to be more confident in putting up their hand to undertake the activity. A side benefit of the above process is that it makes it easier to contribute in structured, meaningful and useful ways at meetings (Heath, Flynn & Holt, 2014).

Finally, the degree to which people view an individual as being self-confident is based upon how they convey or contribute their knowledge. Women have been reported as more often expressing themselves in ways that undermine confidence by others in what they are saying (Heath et al., 2014; Kay & Shipman, 2014). Women should try not to preface their input with self-deprecating comments such as “I’m no expert but...” or “I am not sure but...” or even “Do you mind if I offer my opinion?” These things undermine an individual before they even start. It is always best to deliver your view without hesitation. This clearly shows that you are backing yourself to others and they are far less likely to question your view (See Heath et al., 2014 for further guidance on this point).
Self-promotion and networking

Self-promotion was an area which most of the female interviewees expressed great difficulty. However, as noted throughout the report, inter-personal relationships and visibility had a significant influence over promotion and progression decisions. Self-promotion is known to be a critical factor in career progression. However, women are also known to be very reluctant, relative to men, to engage in self-promotion (Doldor et al., 2013; Moss-Racusin & Rudman, 2010). Work does not speak for itself; someone has to speak for it. Unless a manager or another sponsor recognises and promotes the work of an individual to those who have the power to further people’s careers, then that task falls back to the individual (Beeson & Valerio, 2012; Virick & Greer, 2012).

Effective self-promotion is about ensuring that achievements and capabilities are understood by those people that can provide an individual with career relevant opportunities (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Bowles, 2012). It also means that individuals have to become familiar with who these people are and the relationship structures within the organisation, as well as externally in terms of client networks and other organisations in the industry (Clerc & Kels, 2013; Doldor et al., 2013). For this reason, self-promotion and networking should be considered together.

Self-promotion, if not delivered appropriately, can actually be counter-productive. There is a delicate balance required in neither under or over promoting and this is especially the case for over-promotion for women (Heilman, 2012; Smith et al., 2013). For self-promotion to be effective, it should never be seen as arrogant, boastful or self-serving or done as means unto itself. Rather it should be included in scheduled reporting to management upon individual or team based milestones or, where something outstanding has been achieved, through formal presentations of work (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). The most obvious occasion for self-promotion is during performance reviews, where it is expected that you will discuss your accomplishments (Stone, 2014). More often, however, it will come through ‘corridor conversations’ or at work and work related functions, where people have an opportunity to discuss what they are currently or have been recently working on. These are occasions where individuals need to be prepared to relate their individual accomplishments (Ding et al., 2013).

Self-promotion can also be achieved externally. An indirect means of self-promotion that was often reported by female interviewees was to undertake presentations at industry bodies either delivering on behalf of the organisation or in an individual capacity on an area of personal professional or academic interest.

There was a tendency reported by nearly all executive recruiters for women to use language that distances their achievements from themselves, both in terms of self-promotion and in interviews for jobs, progression and promotion. For example, executive recruiters reported that men tend to use ‘I’ whereas women would use ‘we’ in terms of describing their achievements. A good leader will certainly assign credit where credit is due (Bennis, 2003; Cohen, 2000; Kouzes and Posner, 2002), but it needs to be very clear to the listener that it was the individual’s efforts which brought about the result.

Women are known to be reluctant to take personal credit for team outcomes (Eagly & Carli, 2007). However, ultimately it is up to the individual to voice their relevance to the organisation. By communicating that others are responsible for success undermines that relevance (Heath et al., 2014; Sturm et al., 2014). The more an individual’s achievements are visible the more opportunities related to their accomplishments will attract further opportunities (Clerc & Kels, 2013; Doldor et al., 2013). This is where self-promotion and networking overlap.

Networking was reported by female interviewees as having several connotations; however the most important was defined in terms of relationships. Professional networks are only valuable to the extent to which an individual is seen as credible, trustworthy and capable to those in the network (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Obviously, the greater the number of influential people who value an individual and their work, the greater will be the number of opportunities which will flow from that network.
Fitzsimmons and his colleagues (2014) found that women are significantly more likely to obtain a career enhancing opportunity from their direct network contacts than equivalent males (see also Ding et al., 2013:1460). Therefore, the relationships which tend to produce opportunities are not superficial ones. Rather, they are ones in which the individual has invested significant time and emotional energy (Ehrich, 2008). It is for this reason that women need to be purposeful in how they devote their time and energy in growing and maintaining their network.

Executive female interviewees reported that their most valuable networks comprised the following, in descending order:

- Colleagues in other offices or siloes
- Previous colleagues, especially those with whom they had shared success
- Industry associations upon which they had served
- Community, school or not-for-profit boards or executives upon which they had served
- University or school alumni

Research into the career trajectories of Australian female CEOs supports these findings (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014).

Be true to yourself

Many executive female interviewees reported that there is often a temptation to adopt behaviours or an appearance that aligns to the dominant norms in certain organisations or industries. The temptation was reported to exist because often only a certain persona type was seen as being taken seriously or listened to. As reported above, on balance it is more likely that a woman’s credibility and (gender moderated) forms of communication will result in their being listened to, rather than their appearance or gender alone (Heilman, 2012; Rudman et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2013). These strategies may sometimes prove less successful, dependent upon the culture of the organisation/industry women occupy (Nishii, 2013; Virick & Greer, 2012).

Female senior managers and particularly female executive interviewees reported that the consequences of acting against gender stereotypes of leadership and communication are very significant. Chairpersons also reported that they viewed women who enacted male traits of leadership and communication negatively. Chairpersons and executive recruiters reported that they were searching for diversity on their boards and executive teams and valued gender stereotypical female leadership and communication styles as bringing that diversity. Further, a pitfall in displaying leadership behaviours which are not truly intrinsic or genuine is that they are likely to be judged more harshly regardless of gender (Bennis, 2003; Cohen, 2000; Goleman, 1995). One interviewee summed up the mistake of women trying to act like men as ‘you are more than likely to just become a weak version of a male as opposed to a strong female.’

The vast majority of female respondents reported that it was better to negotiate the stereotypes and to remain true to themselves and to never compromise their femininity or personal values in order to pretend (see Walker, 2012).

There is an extensive literature surrounding the existence and effects of the ‘double bind’ in women’s leadership and career progression (see Heilman, 2012 for detailed review). The greatest difficulty reported in regard to being genuine was that of the ‘double bind’. Women were often perceived as too soft when employing genuine or stereotypical behaviours and too strong when using male stereotypical behaviours. Many executive female interviewees reported that there is a real ‘trick’ to negotiating the double bind. In essence, it is to be ‘assertive, but in softer ways’, ‘insistent, but not overtly aggressive’ and managing collegiately or collaboratively with specific purpose. However, in some instances where there are strong established ways of arriving at decisions in male dominated environments these need to be adapted to (Baxter, 2012).
As one interviewee summed up:

“I had had to learn to change my communication style. I’ve had to learn to be more contemplative, put more numbers around my thoughts. I have had to learn to do what I call ‘the bloke thing’, which is talking to everyone before the meeting to make sure that they’re on board and influencing people to get them up to speed with whatever I’m proposing. I’ve had to learn to be much more robust and to be okay with arguing about stuff, which is not really my style, but I find that men do that a lot, do the fight and then they will go and forget about it. So, I have had to learn to adapt my style to recognise that I’ve got a room full of men and they operate differently.”

The advice reported by female interviewees above is well supported in the literature. Being aware that the ‘double bind’ exists and situationally aware of when and where stereotypical behaviours will help or hinder a woman is the best way to navigate the ‘double bind’ (Baxter, 2012; Heilman, 2012; Rudman et al., 2012; Smith et al., 2013). Additionally, collaborative leadership behaviours have been demonstrated to be more effective in leading teams so adopting male stereotypical styles is counterproductive in any case (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & van Engen, 2003).

Mentors, sponsors and role models

Most female interviewees reported the critical importance of finding and having mentors. The importance of mentors and mentoring is well documented (Clutterbuck, 2004, Ehrich, 2008; Tharenou, 2005). Many female interviewees reported the important distinction between mentors and sponsors as well as formal and informal mentoring. The primary distinction between a mentor and sponsor was reported as being the sponsor’s ability to intervene and progress the career of their protégé, whereas a mentor was reported as someone with career related wisdom which the mentee could access and the mentor was willing to impart.

Formal mentors were often reported as being akin to coaches, but in either case were assigned by their organisations as part of a formal mentoring process, which was often finite in time and regulated in terms of contact times and duration. Informal mentors were reported as those who had chosen the mentee or vice versa on an informal basis and where contact was usually not as structured but was more often described as ‘connected’, ‘trusting’ or ‘personal’. Sponsors were seen as the most valuable and formal mentors as the least valuable in terms of career progression, though all were seen as making a valuable contribution. The female interviewees reports surrounding the relative contribution of sponsors and mentors and the degree of formality or informality in the relationship reflect the literature already presented above, under recommendations for business ‘Sponsorship and mentoring.’

Formal mentors were reported as playing a significant role in providing an in-depth understanding of the organisation, values and its drivers, a broad understanding of the field/industry and a context for internal decision making. However, informal mentoring relationships were more often reported as being built on mutual respect, with their mentor being able to provide a more detailed political context for decision making, introductions and access to meaningful networks, a safe sounding board for ideas and detailed discussion regarding career decisions that might take them away from their existing organisation. Where the mentor resided within the organisation they also provided critical information regarding key decision makers, their history and relationships.

Sponsors were reported as residing within the interviewee’s organisation as well as outside but were willing and able to provide their protégé with opportunities as well as advice. Sponsors were reported as being far rarer than mentors and as usually having developed from a strong existing mentoring relationship. Obtaining a mentor or mentors has been well documented as a critical factor in the progression of women relative to men (Dworkin et al., 2012; Ehrich, 2008; Tharenou, 2005).
Male mentors cannot provide the advice and behaviour modeling that female mentors or role models can provide in terms of leading as a woman (Latu et al., 2013; Lockwood, 2006). Given that the great majority of mentors discussed by the interviewees were male, most of the interviewees needed to turn to other sources for guidance on issues such as family, dealing with the ‘double bind’ and gender issues more generally. Many female interviewees reported the difference realistic female role models made in this regard. While these kinds of role models were reported as being rare, female interviewees reported gaining great benefit from hearing the stories of women who had been in similar situations to themselves and how they had negotiated the more gender salient aspects of their careers. While some interviewees reported that internal female networks had brought such women in to speak in their respective organisations, most had heard them speak at women’s networking functions or conferences and they had been able to speak with them afterwards. Finding both strong mentors and female role models is essential in enhancing female career progression (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Fitzsimmons et al., 2014).

Informal mentors and sponsors were predominantly reported by executive women as being acquired in three ways:

1. The most usual way was through the visibility of the mentees capabilities and success, attracting the attention of the mentor, with the mentor offering their wisdom to the mentee on such a regular basis that the relationship developed
2. A significant number of mentors were acquired from former bosses who the mentees maintained contact with and the relationship developed from there
3. In many other cases the mentee recognised the potential mentor’s skills, attributes or knowledge in an area and approached the individual on the basis of meeting to discuss a specific area of work and again the relationship developed from there

Female executives reported that their mentors were open to giving their time to the mentee when they required it and the wisdom, knowledge and information they imparted made significant differences to their career progression. These findings are supported by a study of Australian female CEOs and how they acquired mentors as well as the role played by their sponsors and mentors (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014).

Family

As reported by female respondents above, and which is strongly supported in the literature (Eagly & Carli, 2007), two of the greatest contributors to women leaving the workforce or failing to progress relate to uneven pressures created by the domestic role and the lack of flexibility afforded by the corporate sector. Where women desire to have children, careful career planning is required. The plan needs to take into account the degree of reliance she will be placing upon external childcare providers, her partner, her extended family and friendship network and her organisation as well as the financial capacity she has to back her choices (Fitzsimmons et al., 2014).

The most difficult choice often relates to how much time a woman wishes to spend with her children as they grow up versus how much time she wishes to dedicate to her career (see the international evidence reported also by Kokot, 2014; Pas et al., 2014; Reichl et al., 2014; van Veldhoven & Beijer, 2012). Many female interviewees reported that how they felt about those plans often changed once they had children, indicating that career plans should contain a range of contingency options (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014).

However, these options need to acknowledge that the ‘depth’ of experience criteria suffers exponentially for every year a woman is absent from the workforce or (to a lesser degree) working part-time (Araoz, 2007; Conway & Sturges, 2013; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2014). This is supported indirectly by the finding that the overwhelming majority of female interviewees who had progressed to executive or CEO roles had usually not taken any significant amount of time away from their careers or, where they had, it was usually no more than a couple of years (See also Fitzsimmons et al., 2014 where this was a key factor in female CEO careers).
Careful planning cannot create any extra time, but as reported by the majority of female executives, it can allow women to be far more efficient in its allocation. The degree to which a woman’s employer grants flexibility around the way in which work can be completed is critical in this regard (James, 2014; Nishii, 2013; Putnam et al., 2013). Where work can be undertaken at times when children are normally asleep or at school, no quality time with children is being lost at all. The degree to which a partner can undertake domestic duties also increases the amount of quality time a woman can spend with her children (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Many senior and executive women reported that through careful planning they believed they spent more quality time with their children than do many stay at home mothers who have 100% of the domestic responsibilities. Though counter-intuitive, support for this reported view can be found in the literature (Eagly & Carli, 2007). In this regard, part of a career plan must include an overt discussion about a partner’s career aspirations and expectations as well as how domestic duties, including childcare, will be shared (Groysberg & Abrahams, 2014; Heikkinen et al., 2014; Sandberg, 2013).

Where external childcare is being relied upon, given the present shortfall in childcare places as reported above, plans need to include early research and reservation of a childcare place. The same applies to researching and reserving places at schools which have consistent quality before and after school care and vacation care, where these are being considered as options. However, the great majority of executive and senior female interviewees reported that nannies and au pairs provided far greater flexibility for relatively little more cost, where families had two or more children.

Bhave, Kramer & Glomb (2013) report that family income levels are strongly related to work-life balance stresses and the ability to resolve the unfair distribution of domestic workload (see also Wheatley, 2013 for further discussion). Fitzsimmons and his colleagues (2014) identified that most of Australia’s top female CEO’s had either had their children very young, so that the time they reached critical middle management roles their children were in high school and to a degree independent. Alternatively they had waited to have children until they had the financial resources to outsource some of the domestic labour burden.

Where a woman plans to take an extended absence from work, skill diminishment needs to be countered. Strategies offered by female respondents included maintaining regular contact with their organisations and colleagues, undertaking an additional qualification such as MBA or other extended technical qualification, reading of journals and attendance at industry functions. Skill degradation and consequent undermining of confidence are known to be major factors in women choosing either not to return to the workforce or returning in a lessor capacity (Hewlett & Luce, 2005; Evers & Sieverding, 2014).

Finally, perhaps technology has progressed to an extent that additional choices are available. While observing that the following strategy may not be to everyone’s way of thinking, one female executive interviewee concluded by saying:

“I’m smiling because I kind of have an answer for this and it is to freeze your eggs! Because I think for a lot of young ladies, there is that biological clock that is after them and some women can panic about it. But if you remove that whole question mark, then there’s no longer the battle. So, in your early 20s, harvest and freeze your eggs so that when you’re in your mid to late 30s and you’re ready to start a family because you achieved what you wanted in your career and you have some flexibility, you’ve got 22-year-old eggs that are perfectly viable and therefore you’re going to have no trouble conceiving a child. It’s kind of a bit silly, but I would definitely say that to someone.”

Recently it was reported that both Facebook and Google are purported to be offering to pay up to $20,000 for female employees to freeze their reproductive eggs, in a bid to hold on to their best workers.
Bring men into the conversation

The overwhelming numbers of executive, CEO, board and chairperson roles in Western Australia are held by men. As such, high influence males can publically challenge the status-quo relating to gender, the ways in which work is done and the poor attitudes of the past. Already in Western Australia many high profile men have stood up and voiced their concern over the status-quo and have expressed a willingness to challenge it (Equal Opportunity Commission, 2014).

CEO’s and chairs of organisations can influence other organisations towards more appropriate kinds of behaviours and/or ultimately refuse to deal with them. Professional organisations can refuse to work for clients who overtly discriminate against their own female staff members. As has been highlighted throughout this report, the cultural shift that is required in Western Australia on this issue is extremely challenging and success will depend on the advocacy and support of its leaders.

Women can play a role in seeking champions within their organisations by sharing opportunities to report on the state of gender equality in their organisation/industry as well as inviting males to attend functions where these matters are discussed. As Ibarra and her colleagues report (2013), most men are unaware of the biases they hold and are as equally unaware of the causes of gender inequality.

Take on the obligation of bringing another woman through

Many female executives and senior managers reported that there was a lack of female role models and mentors in Western Australia. This aligns to the findings relating to the numbers of women in chair, CEO and executive roles identified through the Dun & Bradstreet (2014) database. As reported above, mentors are critical in female career progression (Ehrich, 2008, Latu et al., 2013). Further, the fewer female role models in an organisation or industry the greater the need for women to step up and act as mentors.

However, ironically the more those senior women perceive themselves to be gender tokens the less likely they are to support outstanding female subordinates (Ellemers et al., 2012; Ryan et al., 2012). This is unfortunate, since it has been identified that there is a multiplier effect in place. The greater the proportion of women in senior roles within an organisation, the greater the chances are that new management positions will be filled by women (Cohen & Broschak, 2013).

Where possible senior managerial and executive women should try to identify at least one high potential female within or outside their organisations and seek to sponsor or mentor her.

Altogether this report has made 31 separate recommendations based upon the input of 173 business people living and working in Perth. The recommendations have been referenced to over three hundred separate studies conducted in Australia, the United States and Europe. The findings broadly reflect the issues and barriers faced by women across the Western World. The recommendations reflect the complex and reciprocal nature of the interaction of the 13 factors identified at the front of this report upon the more than 100 women we interviewed. Critically it must be recognised that each recommendation does not stand on its own. For gender equality to be obtained, government, business and individual men and women need to change the ways in which they approach the issue and view the recommendations made in this report as an interconnected suite. These recommendations reflect the complexity and interconnectedness of society and the issues that both businesses and women face together.
“I’m no sociologist, I have no anthropological training but I’m certain of this... we live in a world where the squandering of women’s talent, the traducing of their potential, is a global disgrace”

- Australian Army Chief Lieutenant General David Morrison AO

acknowledge

Filling the Pool is an exploration of how Western Australian businesses can increase participation rates of females
Future Research

As reported in Table 1, listed companies have far fewer females in every senior corporate leadership category than listed and unlisted companies combined. It is possible that family owned companies, foreign owned subsidiaries and non-listed companies may be more inclined to have female representation at senior levels. An examination of these issues would require a similar study of the experiences of women controlling for ownership status and dominant cultural/geographical inputs.

A significant number of interviewees across all groups commented upon the differences in how boys and girls are raised by families. This was raised as an explanation of why gender differences might arise in adult life. Many reflected that the experiences young children still receive in school today might explain many gender differences in self-confidence, in preferences around leadership behaviours and styles and the willingness to self-promote. A longitudinal study of boys and girls spanning their primary and secondary years in a range of schools across a range of locations which examines the development of career relevant capitals and their origins would also be a major contribution to the field. One outcome would be the provision of data for the construction of school curriculums that equally provide boys and girls with the capitals required to maximise their career potential.

Given that the number of peak female leaders is significantly greater in the government and not-for-profit sectors (WGEA, 2014), identical research studies could be conducted in each of these sectors to examine and identify the causes of this variation. A study could identify the nuances of each field compared to the private sector, and determine the degree to which the factors identified in elevating female leaders in these sectors could be applied back to the private sector. The study would be facilitated by the greater number of women leaders in these sectors.

Gender equality was a focus of this study. However it should be noted that all but a few of the 173 people interviewed as part of this project were able bodied and Anglo-Saxon. It would seem that there are other inequities at play in our senior leadership roles. The methodology applied in this report could be similarly applied to a research study aimed at examining the extent to which cultural or other differences preclude access to the acquisition of valuable capital required for attaining senior leadership roles.
Marion Fulker, CEO and Project Manager

Marion is the inaugural Chief Executive of the Committee for Perth Ltd. She has overseen the development of a number of landmark Committee for Perth research reports as part of the organisation's evidence based approach to the future of Perth. In the past decade, Marion has travelled extensively throughout the US, Europe, Australasia and the UK to examine how cities work and her opinions are regularly sought by the media. Additional to her role as the Committee’s CEO, Marion is the Chair of the Heritage Council of Western Australia, a director of RugbyWA and is an Advisory Board member of the Australian Urban Design Research Centre.

Gemma Davis, Manager Research and Strategy

Gemma is a Planning and Policy professional with 17 years of experience who has worked for the Committee as a contract researcher since 2007. During this time she has also consulted in Australia and New Zealand to public and private organisations, undertaking research and strategic planning projects. She holds an Honours Degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Curtin University and has undertaken studies in Arts and Psychology at The University of Western Australia and Aboriginal Studies at Curtin University.

Georgia Harford-Mills, Research Officer and Project Coordinator

Georgia is a Research Officer with the Committee for Perth, joining the organisation in 2014. She holds a degree in Geography from The University of Western Australia and is currently working towards completion of Honours in Urban and Regional Planning.
Project Steering Committee

Michael Schoch, Chair
Michael was born and raised in WA and studied Economics at Murdoch University. He joined Shell in 1986 and in the ensuing years has undertaken a variety of commercial and operational roles in Australia, Central & Eastern Europe, and China. Michael returned to Perth in 2000, joining Shell’s Australian upstream business. He is now the General Manager of the Shell operated Crux gas/liquids project whilst also leading Shell’s move of their Australian headquarters to Kings Square. Michael serves as Chair of Shell’s Local Content Roundtable with Government and is Chief of Staff for Shell Australia’s Crisis Management Team. Michael is married to Karen and Dad to three teenage children.

Helen Reid, Deputy Chair
Helen has more than 20 years experience as a Human Resources, Organisational Effectiveness, and Executive Coaching professional. She is now Human Resources Manager for Shell’s Australia and New Zealand upstream businesses, and has worked across Australia and globally, in Europe, Asia and the Americas. As an independent Perth-based Organisational Effectiveness and Executive Coaching consultant for part of her career, she worked with leaders at all organisational levels. Helen holds a Master of Commerce from the University of NSW and a Bachelor of Business from Curtin University. She was raised in Perth and is Mum to two teenage daughters and partner to Roger.

Suzanne Ardagh
Suzanne manages the International Division of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, a not-for-profit membership organisation providing leadership on director and governance issues. Her career portfolio has spanned international diplomacy, marketing and educational roles. She has an MBA from RMIT University and is also a graduate of the University of Western Australia. She is also on the Board of the Perth International Arts Festival, WA Cancer Council and the Advisory Board of the Asian Business Centre of the Curtin Business School.

Liz Ritchie
Liz was appointed State Director for CEDA Western Australia in November 2011, rejuvenating CEDA WA to its current unprecedented levels. Liz is a passionate spokesperson on gender issues and their impacts on society, and regularly contributes as a conference speaker. Liz has a Master of Applied Science (Organisational Dynamics) from RMIT, and her research on social construction and gender equity adaptation was featured in CEDA’s national research entitled Understanding the Gender Gap, launched in June 2013. Liz also co-authored research for CEDA’s first Women in Leadership report, entitled Looking Under the Surface. Liz is a recent 2015 40 Under 40 Winner, recognised for her contribution to business and the community.

Susan Gallacher
Susan earned her PhD in Sustainability and Technology Policy from Murdoch University in 2009. Her research specialties are in the areas of feminist and environmental philosophy and the philosophy of technology. She currently works at the Department of Local Government and Communities as Director, Executive Services. Previously, she led the Women’s Interests portfolio at the Department, delivering initiatives and programs to support women’s leadership and economic independence.
Michael Bosley-Smith
Michael has experience in mental health, disability and community development research and evaluation in both private enterprise and the public sector. Michael has been in his current role of Manager, Research and Evaluation at the Department of Local Government and Communities since 2010. This role has primary responsibility for conducting department evaluations of its programs and for initiating and supporting research activities within the department. Michael's professional interest is centered around conducting well-designed and high quality research and evaluation to better inform decision-making.

Karen Dill-Macky
Karen is a chartered accountant with over 20 years’ experience in client consulting. She was made tax partner of the Perth EY practice in 2008 and specialises in indirect taxes, including GST. Her commercial expertise is valued by clients on transactions and she is also involved in industry lobbying with the Australian Taxation Authorities. Karen has been the leader of the Women’s leadership group at EY for the last 5 years and has implemented a number of diversity and inclusiveness initiatives within the Perth office. She is also a member of the Women in Property committee for the WA Property Council.

Bradley Farrell
Bradley is a Partner at EY, and leads the Portfolio & Program Management practice in the Western Region. He works with clients to review and improve the planning and delivery of their major programs and projects. Bradley’s experience includes program management, project management, contractor assessments, incentive design and project controls improvements. Bradley’s clients include major oil and gas companies, global mining companies, Australian water and electricity utilities, as well as government departments and agencies.

Heather Murphy
Heather is a Perth born and based Human Resource professional who has worked across industry sectors in Australia, Europe and the US. She has undertaken post graduate studies in Human Resources and Industrial Relations from the University of Westminster (UK) and the University of Western Australia. With a career involving senior HR positions in London and New York, Heather has opened greenfield operational sites across Europe and was appointed to a Board position on the Westpac Pension Scheme in the UK. Currently the State Human Resources Manager for Westpac Banking Corporation in Western Australia, Heather coordinates the National Women in Leadership program for the retail and business bank. This program of work has seen Westpac achieve the target of 44% for Women in leadership roles 3 years early. The program is now striving for 50% participation for women across all leadership positions by 2017.

Jay Watson
Jay is a career banker, having worked for Westpac for over 35 years. Jay has been fortunate to have worked in every State and Territory in Australia, and has the benefit of honing his Banking skills through diverse geographies and industries. Additionally, for the past 3 years he has been involved with Chamber of Commerce WA and its Business Advisory Board. Jay holds a degree in Business Management and has an under graduate certificate in Australian Agriculture. He is involved in fundraising for various causes and an active member of Australian Institute of Company of Directors.
Belinda Campbell

Belinda is a People Leader for WorleyParsons Australia West, with 15 years of experience as a strategic Business Partner, with a focus on Organisational Development in the areas of Coaching, Leadership Development and Change Management. Having worked for both Operator and Contractor organisations in Resources and Mining, Diversity and Inclusion have been key themes for Belinda throughout her professional career. She leads the WorleyParsons Cultural Bridging Group, a sub-group of the WorleyParsons Diversity and Inclusion Council and has been an active member of the Gender Equality Group. Belinda is a wife and mother to two children under the age of 12.

Shaun Poll

Shaun is the Director of Hydrocarbons Strategy and Development for WorleyParsons Australia West, with 20 years of experience in Project Delivery and Management in Contractor Organisations both in the UK and Australia. As part of the Location Leadership team, Shaun was the Chair of the WorleyParsons Diversity and Inclusion Council in 2014 and has a passion for creating a working environment where everyone has the opportunity to reach their potential and deliver outstanding business results.

Tony Monaghan

Tony is the Manager of Corporate Communications at The Brand Agency. He has more than 26 years’ experience as a journalist, political adviser and corporate communications consultant. He worked for ABC TV, Channel 9, Channel 7 and was Head of News for the Mirror Group TV in London. While working for the State Government he was a media adviser, chief of staff and principal policy adviser for the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

About the Authors

The authors of this report are based at the University of Queensland Business School.

Dr Terrance Fitzsimmons, Lead Researcher

Terrance is a Chartered Accountant with over 30 years of experience. He is currently a Lecturer in leadership, human resource management and change management with the University of Queensland Business School and is currently engaged in researching leadership transitions at the Royal Brisbane and Women’s Hospital. His PhD in Leadership examined successful attributes of CEOs and differing pathways to CEO roles for men and women. Dr Fitzsimmons is also a management consultant who has worked with many of Australia’s largest firms and an international professional speaker engaged in the area of gender equity and inclusion. He consults to the Education Departments of QLD, NSW & Victoria in the delivery of the National History Curriculum through his company Living History Australia. He has served as national and state presidents of not for profit bodies as well as a being director on boards of Listed Public Companies in Australia and overseas.

Professor Victor Callan, Researcher

Victor is a Professor of Management at the University of Queenslan 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, organisational 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.
Appendix 1 – Methods, sample and procedure

Method: Using capital, habitus and field

The concepts of capital, habitus and field were put forward by Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1990) as a means of investigating persistent intergenerational disparities in social formations. He particularly saw these tools of academic inquiry as being useful in explaining gender inequality (Bourdieu, 2001). We adopted this approach in this project. A Bourdieusian methodology promotes a systematic focus upon the manager or executive and their context, and the relationship between the ‘capital’ valued by the corporate ‘field’ and the ‘habitus’ of the wider range of participants who generate this ‘capital’ (Lane, 2000; Reed-Danahay, 2005; Swartz, 1997).

Bourdieu maintained that the degree of convergence between the capital possessed within the habitus of managers and executives, and what is valued by the corporate field, determines the likely success of its possessor in that field (Grenfell, 2008). The epistemological tools of capital, field and habitus also provide an explanatory lens. Using this lens allowed us to determine if arguably objective structures, such as corporations and other institutions in the corporate field, can be linked to the subjective experiences of female managers and executives to explain how the intergenerational reproduction of gender disparity in senior leadership positions occurs in Western Australia (Bourdieu, 1990; Thompson, 2008).

In the Bourdieusian conception, the field is a configuration of economic, social and cultural capital. It includes social and professional contacts, personal status and anything else which translates into the ability to direct actions (Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002). As Thompson (2008) notes, differences between the habitus of agents within the field produce inequalities in the ability to access and increase certain capitals if the agents’ existing capital is not valued by dominant players such as senior managers, CEOs and board members. Those who possess capital which is valued by the dominant class, gain greater access to the field and therefore access to additional sources of capital. At the same time, this greater access also reinforces the legitimate culture of the dominant class within the field (Lawler, 2004; Reed-Danahay, 2005). What is at stake in any field is the accumulation of capitals (Svendsen & Svendsen, 2004; Thompson, 2008).

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) stated that ‘habitus is the sum of the ways in which we act, feel, think and hold ourselves out to the world’. Habitus is our socially produced self and it is how we bring our embodied history into the present to make conscious and unconscious choices to act or not to act (Lawler, 2004; Maton, 2008). The genesis of habitus is in early childhood through inculcation, in which the practical taxonomies of the habitus are imprinted and encoded in the socialisation process (Jenkins, 2002).

Accordingly, the most likely person, other than a male, to occupy a position in a male dominated field is therefore a woman who shares the same or similar habitus (Bourdieu, 2001; Jenkins, 2002; Reay, 2004). Given that cultural capital is primarily transmitted through the family, and elaborated and expanded upon by schooling and career (Jenkins, 2002; Skeggs, 2004), any study of habitus must specifically identify types of cultural capital, their formation and accumulation. Further, as Lovell (2000: 38) asserts, in examining gender disparity we need to compare the ‘capitals possessed, the composition of that capital, its trajectory over time and the control over its deployment’ by men and women if we are to understand persistent intergenerational gender disparity in leadership roles.
The present study emerged from a series of investigations examining the appointment of female CEOs conducted by Fitzsimmons (2011) and reported by Fitzsimmons, Callan and Paulsen (2014). Based upon interviews with chairpersons and executive recruiters, as well as a review of the pronouncements of regulators of the corporate field in Australia, Fitzsimmons and his colleagues (2014) concluded that certain formulations of capital were favoured by the corporate field above others in CEO appointments (see Commonwealth, 2010a, 2010b). It also became apparent that gender could impact the accumulation of these specific formulations of capital. In the present study this research is furthered by applying its findings to a Western Australian context to investigate factors which are acting to prevent women from accumulating valuable capital relative to women in other States of Australia.

**Research design**

The research design borrows heavily from the ontological tradition of symbolic interactionism from which naturalistic enquiry and grounded theory are both methodological products (Blumer 1969; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Mead, 1962). Athens (2010:94) describes naturalistic study as ‘the observation of a given area of happening in terms of its natural or actual character, as opposed to the observation of a surrogate or substitute form of that happening’ (see also Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Locke, 2001). ‘Observation’ can occur through direct observation or in-depth interviews (Athens, 2010).

The Bourdieusian Framework is also firmly grounded in this ontological tradition. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992:7-11) argue that the ‘truth’ can be revealed through a relational study of an interviewee’s subjective experiences of the world and the objectification of the objective conditions of that experience using the ‘lived experience’ of interviewee’s. Bourdieu (1990), however, was steadfast in his view that no single method should be preferred over any other in reaching that ‘truth’. The researcher needs to establish and defend the use of any particular method used (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

**Choice of qualitative methods**

The aim of the research design in this study was to induce insights into mechanisms that prevent capital accumulation for women in Western Australia through interpretations of the lived experience or habitus of the female respondents across their lifetime. The effective conditions of these experiences were accessed through interviews with chairpersons, executive recruiters and human resources professionals.

In-depth interviews with the female managers and executives were used to create a life narrative. This was the preferred method, since no other method could generate the richness of data required for the research object. Interpretation of the data was achieved by using methods common to both grounded theory (Locke, 2001) and naturalistic enquiry (Athens, 2010). However, the research design differs from the epistemology behind these two methods, as a Bourdieusian framework (Bourdieu, 1990; Grenfell, 2008) also requires the researcher to place the results from a study of habitus in a relational context to both the field occupied by the habitus and the capital valued in that field.

The interview protocols used were specifically designed to generate a life narrative of each female managerial and executive respondent as it related to their career and establish field and capital conditions through questioning of chairpersons, executive recruiters and human resources professionals (see Appendix 3 for interview protocols). Capital accumulation patterns and factors restraining the accumulation of capital were identified through multiple iterations between interview data and emergent theoretical constructs until a stage of theoretical saturation was reached (Athens, 2010, Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Locke, 2001; Pratt, Rockman & Kaufmann, 2006).
The use of qualitative methods was considered to be most appropriate for two reasons:

- Firstly, in the corporate field many chairpersons and CEOs continue to actively constitute and re-constitute areas of the field. Human resource professionals, executive recruiters, executives and managers react and adapt to their interpretations of the field as they work in and/or progress through it and, in turn, influence the actions of chairpersons and CEOs. Such a system constitutes a complex social setting in which causality is not obvious and the motivations of the actors are not always clear (Elsbach & Kramer, 2003; Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006).

- Secondly, as Garud, Jain and Kumaraswamy (2002:199) propose, ‘...the unfolding of these processes is better explicated by tracing the historical roots using inductive logic.’ The use of in-depth semi-structured interviews enabled the production of a life narrative for each female manager and executive. From these narratives we were able to determine not only the sequence of events for the production of characteristics that are valued in the appointment and promotion processes, but also unravel the often complex relationship of these distal events with more proximal opportunities for capital accumulation (Bourdieu, 1990; Lee, Mitchell & Sabylnski, 1999).

Sample

In line with the sampling strategy undertaken to investigate the disparity in female CEOs in Australia undertaken by Fitzsimmons (2011) and reported by Fitzsimmons and his colleagues (2014), and in order to explore the field, capital and habitus requirements of a Bourdieusian framework, several groups of respondents were targeted for sampling. These groups comprised chairpersons/CEOs, executive recruiters/human resource professionals to investigate field and capital conditions in Western Australia. Female executives, female managers and female managers and executives who have recently left the corporate sector were approached to investigate career habitus.

Additionally, female managers who had recently left the workforce were sampled to explore reasons for departing. It should be noted that over the course of the interviews of the female executives and managers it was found that more than three quarters had taken time out during their careers. As a result, they were also able to comment on the reasons why women may choose not to return to the private sector. Female executives were defined as reporting either to the CEO or equivalent, while female managers were defined as being within three levels of the executive team with significant team and budget responsibility.

In line with previous research in the area, where theoretical saturation had been reached after twenty interviews, a sample of thirty respondents was sought in each group. A final group of respondents comprising females who had graduated and entered the corporate sector in the last seven years were sought after all interviews were completed with the above groups. This group was sampled to further explore issues of habitus in early career, particularly direct and indirect discrimination and to validate preliminary findings.

Twenty-nine female executives from the top 80 Western Australian organisations were identified through the Dun and Bradstreet database (Dun & Bradstreet, 2014). Each of these 29 women were approached to participate in the study. The member organisations of the Committee for Perth were all approached for volunteers fitting the category descriptions to participate in the study. Additionally, the Western Australian offices of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and the Committee for Economic Development each circulated their respective memberships and canvassed for volunteers for the study.

Respondents were invited to participate through a mix of telephone calls, emails, mailings and referrals through Chairpersons and other CEOs. Together, these sources represent key resources for identifying women in executive and managerial roles in private sector organisations in Western
Australia. Because non-public companies are not required to disclose information to non-shareholders, the establishment of a definitive population of private sector female executives and managers is impossible to determine.

The following numbers of respondents were obtained for each respondent group:

- 34 board chairs/CEOs
- 36 female executives
- 41 female managers at middle or senior management levels
- 23 executive recruiters and/or senior internal HR professionals
- 17 female managers who have ‘opted out’ of management roles
- 22 female graduates with seven or less years out of university

Interviewees were from a wide range of industries, including the mining, education, construction, energy, banking, health, professional services and mining support sectors. The industry sectors occupied by the respondent groups are detailed in Appendix 2.

Procedure

Data was collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews conducted by two researchers over a four month period, November 2013 to February 2014, with the exception of interviews conducted with female graduates, which were conducted from April 2014 to August 2014. The face-to-face interview methodology was chosen to facilitate the development of interviewee rapport, while allowing for the observation of body language in gauging comfort with questions (Singleton & Straits, 2005).

As males, the researchers, wanted to establish an authentic and unbiased connection between themselves and the female respondents prior to commencing the interviews. Most of the female respondents found it unusual that a male was conducting research on this topic. Hence, most interviews commenced with a discussion outlining how they had come to the research object and the reasoning for the project (see Bourdieu, 1996:20-22). This discussion was required to reduce concerns of female respondents regarding the motives for the research, to ensure that anonymity was guaranteed as well as to mitigate the ‘gender of interviewer effects’, as noted by Kane and Macaulay (1993).

Additionally both interviewer’s gender and considerable experience in the corporate leadership development field permitted access to perceptions from male respondents that most likely would not have been shared with a female researcher. Some female respondents may have felt that they could not share certain information with the authors. However, the quality of the data obtained from female respondents indicates that these respondents were no less forthcoming than their male respondent counterparts and were similarly comfortable in answering questions.

Interviews for all respondents ranged from 45 minutes to one hour and 20 minutes, with an average of 59 minutes. Longer interview times generally related to female respondents who were further progressed in their careers and who had children. The explanations of how females navigated their careers while being the primary carer of their children took significantly longer during the interview process to other respondents. Additionally, see Schulkind, Schoppel and Scheiderer (2012) regarding the female propensity to take longer when discussing autobiographical narratives.
Interview protocols (See Appendix 3) were forwarded to the respondents in advance of their interview to allow reflection upon the key issues addressed in the questions. The questions put to female managers and executives explored critical events, places and people that were more likely to elicit emotional responses in the past and therefore be recounted more accurately in the present (Boyatzis et al., 2012). Additionally, many questions were framed to elicit a factual response (Schulkind, Schoppel & Scheiderer, 2012). This strategy was particularly important given that the authors were asking people to recount both recent behaviours as well as events that may have occurred up to 30 years previously (Boyatzis, 1998).

Two broad, background questions were used with female managers and executives that asked for a career narrative as well as descriptions of formative events which might relate to the respondent’s childhood, schooling and adolescent experiences. The remainder of the interview dealt with specific aspects of their career experiences and moved to broad questions designed to give the respondent free reign to relate their views on gender inequality in Western Australia.

Interviews with chairpersons/CEOs, executive recruiters and human resource professionals dealt exclusively with recruitment and selection processes, perceived gender differences, gender equality initiatives and moved to broad questions designed to give the respondent free reign to relate their views on gender inequality in Western Australia. All interviews concluded with a capstone question that asked respondents if there was anything related to the issue of gender equality that they felt was pertinent and had not been raised during the interview and was designed to give free reign to the respondent to elaborate upon or introduce ideas that were not covered in the interview protocol. During all of the interviews the authors followed up responses to the structured questions by probes to encourage further elaboration, exploration or verification of responses.

173 interviews were conducted resulting in 172 hours of recordings. The interviews were transcribed resulting in 3088 A4 pages of typed transcripts.

Data analysis

Boyatzis (1998) notes those researchers using thematic analyses tend to choose between semantic (or explicit) and latent (or interpretive) levels of analysis. By definition, a Bourdieusian framework must include both levels of analysis to accommodate the relational thinking that underpins the framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006:85). Braun and Clarke (2006:86) note that nothing in the methodology of thematic analysis precludes this analytical approach.

Analysis of the interview transcripts was strongly informed by the method employed by Pratt et al. (2006) in their work on professional identity construction, which is described in detail in Athens (2010:95-97). Stage 1 involved a manifest analysis (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006) of the transcripts in order to generate first order codes. Each transcript was read a number of times prior to coding to identify commonly used phrases and patterns of description. These data were used to create codes and to name key themes. Each text was manually coded. Statements were grouped around common conceptual meanings using first order codes and names.
Stage 2 saw the integration of the first order codes and created theoretical categories through a latent (or relational) analysis of the data (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). Coded statements were consolidated into a concept group or theoretical category through a reflexive interpretation of the data (Alvesson, 2003). The interpretation was based upon the researchers prolonged engagement with the subject and a deep understanding of the corporate field (Athens, 2010:95) and work previously carried out in corporate gender equality (Fitzsimmons et al., Callan, 2014). Bourdieusian conceptions of dimensions of valuable capital relating to the corporate field (in this case valuable executive/CEO capital) were also used as an analytical frame.

In Stage 3, the texts were considered by code to group, ungroup, refine or discard categories based upon identifiable distinctions between them (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This stage identified relationships between theoretical categories, while each category was considered in relation to possible associations with differential views between the respondent groups (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This stage compared the respondent group’s similarities and differences and tested whether any exceptions or unexplained connections in the derived categories remained in the data set (Athens, 2010).

While the presentation of the findings may infer that the above process was completely linear, such an inference would be incorrect. For example, as strong patterns emerged early during data collection, further questions were asked of later respondents after the conclusion of their interview relating to these patterns and some of the early emergent themes. This was done in order to refine and validate our early understanding of the data (Alvesson, 2003; Corley & Gioia, 2004). Further, the researchers maintained contact with some respondents after the interview process was completed, and they were able to present the preliminary findings to them in order to seek feedback on these interpretations (Sandberg, 2003).

As a final test of the findings and recommendations, a series of 10 separate ‘socialisation’ sessions were held with groups ranging in size from a dozen to 100 people. These groups represented corporations, peak industry bodies, government and women’s groups. These groups included interviewees and non-interviewees. In all, 350 people had the opportunity to hear the findings and recommendations and to provide feedback upon them. Their feedback added to the validity of the findings and recommendations.
### Appendix 2 – Composition of Interviewee groups by industry.

Chairpersons/CEO total of 34 interviewees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining &amp; Energy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Female Executives total of 36 interviewees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining &amp; Energy</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Female Managers total of 41 interviewees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining &amp; Energy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Female Managers who have opted out total of 17 interviewees:
• Services 5
• Mining & Energy 8
• Finance 2
• Education 2
• Health 0
• Construction 0
• Agriculture 0
• Other 0

Female Graduates total of 22 interviewees:
• Services 10
• Mining & Energy 7
• Finance 2
• Education 0
• Health 0
• Construction 3
• Agriculture 0
• Other 0

Human Resources Professionals accounted for 16 of the total 23 interviewees in the Executive Recruiter and Human Resource Professionals category:
• Services 7
• Mining & Energy 4
• Finance 1
• Education 0
• Health 3
• Construction 1
• Agriculture 0
• Other 0
Appendix 3 - Interview protocols

Chairpersons/Managing Directors

Recruitment & Selection Processes - Executives

1. What role (if any) do executive recruiters have in the appointment of senior executives or CEOs in the firms you chair?
2. Do you engage in succession planning for the CEO or senior executive roles? Could you briefly outline the activities involved in your succession planning?
3. What do you believe are the prime characteristics of a good CEO? A good Executive? How do these differ?
4. How would you characterise the relationship between a CEO and the Chair?
5. Does your board oversee executive appointments or is this left to the CEO? Generally what factors are considered when promoting internally to executive management ranks?
6. Can you describe the process you use to assess CEO/Executive candidate/s?
7. When assessing CEO/Executive candidates what kinds of information were you seeking from them? What characteristics do you look for in a good senior executive?
8. In your last CEO appointment, what struck you as remarkable about the candidate you finally selected? Can you recall if there was any one factor that convinced you that the present CEO was the right person for the job?
9. If you were offering advice to boards generally, what would you say are key factors that need to come out during the CEO/Executive selection process?

Recruitment & Selection Processes – Board Members

10. How do you decide what characteristics/experiences/personality types are required on the board?
11. Can you describe the processes used by the board to identify potential new board members?
12. What do you believe women (could) bring to a board?
13. In what ways can women potentially impact upon board functioning?
14. Why do you think there are so few women on boards in WA?
15. What is your position on quotas for women on boards?
Gender Effects

16. How do you define gender equality? What is your understanding of the current business debate surrounding gender equality? What kinds of issues does this debate bring to your mind? How do you think these issues will play out?

17. Are there different challenges when hiring a woman versus a man to executive/CEO/board roles?

18. Are there roles in your firm/industry which are easier or more difficult for female employees relative to equivalent males?

19. Have you noticed any differences between men and women with regard to assertiveness, ambition or self-efficacy/self-confidence?

20. What do you believe is the impact of child care upon female progression? Do you see a role for organisations in the provision of childcare for employees?

21. Why do you think it is that gender equality is not considered to be a strategic imperative in most firms?

Gender Equality Initiatives

22. Has gender equality been raised or discussed at any board meeting in the last twelve months?

23. Do you measure the number of women in leadership positions within the company?

24. Have you set any numerical objectives for achieving gender diversity?

25. What other initiatives, if any, have the board or your executive undertaken in the area of progressing gender equality? How effective have these been?

26. What difficulties have you encountered in establishing/measuring/reporting upon gender equality initiatives? What other measures do you think would assist firms in achieving gender equality?

27. Why do you think that there are so few women in executive and board roles in Western Australia?

28. What is your position on introducing CEO/Executive KPI's around percentages of women in executive and senior management positions?

Broad Questions

29. Does the typical corporate leader in WA differ from their east coast counterparts?

30. Is there anything different about WA's corporate culture compared to the East Coast that might account for fewer female executives, CEOs and board members?

31. What advice would you offer a woman at the start of her career if she were aiming at one day obtaining an executive position?

32. Is there anything else you wish to raise in relation to gender equality in Western Australia which we have not covered during this interview?
Executive Recruiters

Recruitment & Selection Processes
1. What do you feel that clients are looking for when they retain you to search for an executive?
2. What do companies say is important to them in describing the executive they wish to find?
3. To what degree do companies rely upon your input/assessment of executive candidates?
4. Who usually liaises with you with regard to executive hires?
5. Can you take me through the typical process used in the recruitment of executives by the firms who retain you?
6. What would you describe as the key selection criteria companies use when selecting the successful executive candidate?
7. What do you feel are the characteristics of the executive candidate that contribute most to their appointment as an executive?

Gender Effects
8. Are there different challenges as a recruiter when hiring a woman versus a man?
9. Have you encountered either overt or subtle discrimination in the recruiting assignments you have received in the past five years? Can you describe what happened?
10. Have you noticed any differences between men and women with regard to assertiveness, ambition or self-efficacy/self-confidence?
11. Have you observed whether men and women seem to have differing priorities surrounding how people should be lead? What are the differences you have noted? Did they affect their selection chances?
12. What do you think are the greatest inhibitors to female career progression?
13. In what ways does your firm ensure that gender biases in recruiting practices are limited?

Gender Equality Initiatives
14. How do you define gender equality?
15. Have firms who retain you noted any gender equality policies/procedures that they wish to ensure are used when searching or recruiting executives? How effective do you believe these policies were? What are their limitations?
16. What other measures do you think would assist firms in achieving gender equality?

Broad Questions
17. What do you believe is the reason that there are so few female senior executives and CEOs in WA?
18. What would you suggest companies could do to increase the number of women occupying senior executive roles?
19. Is there anything different about WA’s corporate culture compared to the east coast that might account for fewer female executives, CEOs and board members? (Stronger stereotyping?)
20. What advice would you offer a woman at the start of her career if she were aiming at one day obtaining an executive position?
21. Is there anything else you wish to raise in relation to gender equality in Western Australia which we have not covered during this interview?
Female CEOs and Senior Executives

Background (Context) Questions

1. To provide me with some context in asking the following questions, could you briefly outline your career between leaving high school until the point at which you were appointed to your first CEO/Executive role.

2. What was the most foundational event or experience that has defined who you are as a person?

Leadership & Culture

3. Have you ever felt during your career that followers, peers or superiors had expectations around how they thought you should act in a particular way as a leader?

4. Do you feel that you enact a leadership style true/authentic to your personality in your current role/previous roles? If not, why do you use the style you do?

5. Do you believe that self-promotion is useful or necessary to get ahead?
   i. In what ways have you observed men and women self-promote and what were the consequences?

6. Have you observed whether men and women have differing priorities surrounding how people should be led?
   i. If yes, what are these differences and are they valued differently by their superior/s?

7. Have you noticed any differences between men and women with regard to assertiveness, ambition or self-efficacy/self-confidence?

8. Do you feel that your opinions or involvement is accepted at the same level as male colleagues? Do you need to work harder at getting your point of view accepted? What strategies have you employed to gain respect and an equal voice at work?

Domestic Role

9. What impact, if any, has having a spouse, children, family or other domestic responsibilities had upon your career?
   i. In meeting the needs of both work and family, what differences do you/have you faced relative to your male peers?

10. How does the availability of child care impact upon female progression?

11. What role do you believe organisations should play in the facilitation of childcare for employees?

12. Have you ever faced external pressures from family, friends, colleagues, teachers or even the media regarding your choice to work?

13. Have you had any time out from your career?
   i. If so how did you re-enter the workforce.
   ii. What difficulties did you encounter, if any?
Line Roles, Networking & Mentors

14. Were strategically important career opportunities or promotions such as line or profit centre roles, overseas or domestic postings made available to you during your career?
   i. Are there equal opportunities to acquire career relevant assignments in Western Australian companies (international, line role, span of control etc)?

15. What role has networking (internally and externally) played in your career?
   i. When and where has most of the internal networking, you have observed, taken place?
   ii. What sorts of difficulties have you faced in accessing networks that could enhance your career opportunities?

16. Do you have a mentor/s or role model/s? What impact have they had upon your career progression?

Recruitment & Selection Processes

17. Can you describe the process you went through in being selected as CEO/Executive?

18. Looking back at the selection process for your appointment as CEO/Executive, what seemed to be the information that the board/selection panel was most interested in obtaining?
   i. How did you convey to the board/selection panel the qualities which you would bring to the position?

19. What made you feel that you were the right person for the job?

20. Is there a ‘typical’ or visible pathway for progression in your firm/industry?
   i. Who is most likely to succeed using this pathway?
   ii. Is this pathway equally accessible for men and women?

21. Are there roles in your firm/industry which are made easier or more difficult for you relative to equivalent males (given your domestic/personal circumstances)?

22. What has been your experience with the way in which people are considered for promotion in your firm? Other firms you have worked with in WA?

23. Generally what factors are considered when promoting internally to senior management/executive management ranks in the WA firms you have worked for?

24. Can you describe what is required in your organisation to gain promotion quickly?

25. What kinds of activities/behaviours get recognition or are rewarded most in your organisation?

Gender Effects

26. Have you ever encountered direct or indirect discrimination in the workplace? Can you describe the occasion/s?

27. Are you (do you know/believe) paid as much as similarly qualified men?

Gender Equality Initiatives

28. What policies/procedures are in place to facilitate gender equality in this company?
   i. How effective are they?
   ii. What are their limitations?

29. What other measures do you think would assist firms in achieving greater gender equality?
Broad Questions

30. Have you worked outside of WA?
   i. If yes, is there anything different about WA compared to the rest of Australia that might account for fewer female executives, CEOs and board members?

31. How would you describe the corporate culture of WA firms? Your firm in particular?

32. What advice would you offer a woman at the start of her career if she were aiming at one day obtaining an executive position?

33. Is there anything else you wish to raise in relation to gender equality in Western Australia which we have not covered during this interview?

Female Middle and Senior Managers

Background Questions

1. To provide me with some context in asking the following questions, could you briefly outline your career between leaving high school until the point at which you were appointed to your current role?

2. What was the most foundational event or experience that defined who you are as a person?

Leadership & Culture

3. Have you ever felt during your career that followers, peers or superiors had expectations around how they thought you should act in a particular way as a leader?

4. Do you feel that you enact a leadership style true/authentic to your personality in your current role/previous roles? If not, why do you use the style you do?

5. Do you believe that self-promotion is useful or necessary to get ahead? In what ways have you observed men and women self-promote and what were the consequences?

6. Have you observed whether men and women have differing priorities surrounding how people should be led? If yes, what are these differences and are they valued differently by their superior/s?

7. Have you noticed any differences between men and women with regard to assertiveness, ambition or self-efficacy/self-confidence?

8. Do you feel that your opinions or involvement is accepted at the same level as male colleagues? Do you need to work harder at getting your point of view accepted? What strategies have you employed to gain respect and an equal voice at work?

Recruitment & Selection Processes

9. What has been your experience with the way in which people are considered for promotion in your firm? Other firms you have worked with in Western Australia?

10. What kinds of activities/behaviours get recognition or are rewarded most in your organisation?

11. Do you believe that men and women are valued differently in your organisation?

12. What, if any, are the barriers to female progression in your firm?

13. What does your firm value the most in its employees?
   i. What gets rewarded and talked about when it comes to employee achievements in your firm?

14. Can you describe what is required in your organisation to gain promotion quickly?
15. Do you believe that self-promotion is useful or necessary to get ahead?
   i. In what ways have you observed men and women self-promote and what were the consequences?

16. Is there anything that stands in the way of you becoming a senior executive (in this firm)?

17. Can you describe the process you went through in being selected for the position you currently occupy?

18. Looking back at the selection process for your appointment, what seemed to be the information that the selection panel were most interested in obtaining?
   i. How did you convey to them the qualities that you would bring to the position?

19. What made you feel that you were the right person for the job?

20. Is there a ‘typical’ or visible pathway for progression in your firm/industry?
   i. Who is most likely to succeed using this pathway?
   ii. Is this pathway equally accessible for men and women?

21. Are there roles in your firm/industry which are made easier or more difficult for women relative to equivalent males (given your domestic/personal circumstances)?

**Domestic Role**

22. What impact, if any, has having a spouse, children, family or other domestic responsibilities had upon your career?

23. Do you believe that the type and availability of child care impacts upon female progression?

24. What role do you believe organisations should play in childcare provision for employees?

25. In meeting the needs of both work and family, what differences do you/have you faced relative to your male peers?

26. Have you faced external pressures from family, friends, colleagues, teachers or even the media regarding your choice to work?

27. Have you had any time out from your career? If so, how did you re-enter the workforce? What difficulties did you encounter, if any?

**Line Roles, Networking & Mentors**

28. Are there equal opportunities to acquire career relevant assignments (international, line role, span of control etc) in this firm?
   i. Have strategically important career opportunities or promotions such as line or profit centre roles, overseas or domestic postings been made available to you at key stages during your career?

29. What role has networking (both internally and externally) played in your career?
   i. When and where has most of the internal networking taken place?
   ii. Do you have regular access to these networks or the ability to attend functions/activities/gatherings that facilitate your visibility within and outside of the organisation?

30. Do you have a mentor/s or role model/s? What impact have they had upon your career?
Gender Effects
31. Do you know if you are paid as much as similarly qualified men?
32. Have you ever encountered direct or indirect discrimination in this or previous workplaces in WA? Can you describe the occasion/s?

Gender Equality Initiatives
33. What policies/procedures are in place to facilitate gender equality in this company?
   i. How effective are they?
   ii. What are their limitations?
34. What other measures do you think would assist firms in achieving gender equality?

Broad Questions
35. Have you worked outside of WA?
   i. If yes, is there anything different about WA compared to the rest of Australia that might account for fewer female executives, CEOs and board members?
36. How would you describe the corporate culture of WA firms? Your firm in particular?
37. What advice would you offer a woman at the start of her career if she were aiming at one day obtaining an executive position?
38. Is there anything you wish to add with regard to gender equality in Western Australia which we have not covered in this interview?

Senior Female Managers who have recently left the Corporate Sector

Background (Context) Questions
1. To provide me with some context in asking the following questions, could you briefly outline your career between leaving high school until you were appointed to your last role.
2. What was the most foundational event or experience that defined who you are as a person?

Leadership & Culture
3. Have you ever felt during your career that followers, peers or superiors had expectations around how they thought you should act in a particular way as a leader?
4. Do you feel that you enact a leadership style true/authentic to your personality in your current role/previous roles? If not, why do you use the style you do?
5. Do you believe that self-promotion is useful or necessary to get ahead? In what ways have you observed men and women self-promote and what were the consequences?
6. Have you observed whether men and women have differing priorities surrounding how people should be led? If yes, what are these differences and are they valued differently by their superior/s?
7. Have you noticed any differences between men and women with regard to assertiveness, ambition or self-efficacy/self-confidence?
8. Do you feel that your opinions or involvement is accepted at the same level as male colleagues? Do you need to work harder at getting your point of view accepted? What strategies have you employed to gain respect and an equal voice at work?
Domestic Role

9. What impact, if any, has having a spouse, children, family or other domestic responsibilities had upon your career?

10. Have you previously had any time out from your career?
   i. If so how did you re-enter the workforce.
   ii. What difficulties did you encounter, if any?

11. What role does the type and availability of childcare have upon female progression?

12. What role should organisations play in the facilitation of childcare for employees?

13. How did/do plans for having/caring for children sit with your plans for your future career?

14. In meeting the needs of both work and family, what differences do you/have you faced relative to your male peers?

15. Have you ever faced external pressures from family, friends, colleagues, teachers or even the media regarding your choice to work?

16. Are there roles in your previous firm/industry which were made easier or more difficult for women relative to equivalent males?

Line Roles, Networking & Mentors

17. Were strategically important career opportunities or promotions such as line or profit centre roles, overseas or domestic postings made available to you at key stages during the development of your career?

18. What role has networking (both internal and external to your organisation) played in your career? When and where has most of the internal networking, you have observed, taken place? Did you have regular access to these networks or the ability to attend career related functions/activities/gatherings outside of your previous organisation?

19. Do you have a mentor/s or role model/s? What roles have mentors, benefactors or friends played in your life? What is the most valuable piece of advice you have received from them?

Recruitment & Selection Processes

20. Can you describe the process you went through in being selected for your previous role?

21. Looking back at the selection process for your appointment, what seemed to be the information that the selection panel were most interested in obtaining? How did you convey to the selection panel the qualities which you would bring to the position?

22. What made you feel that you were the right person for the job?

23. Is there a ‘typical’ pathway for progression in your previous firm/industry? Who is most likely to succeed using this pathway?

24. Was there a clear pathway for your progression?

25. What, if anything, stood in the way of you becoming (or remaining) a senior executive in your previous firm?

26. What was your experience with the way in which people were considered for promotion in your previous firm? Other firms you have worked in in Western Australia?

27. Can you describe what is required in your organisation to gain promotion quickly?

28. What kinds of activities/behaviours received recognition or were rewarded most in your previous organisation?
Gender Effects

29. Have you ever encountered direct or indirect discrimination in the workplace? Can you describe the occasion/s?

30. Were you being paid as much as similarly qualified men in your previous firm?

Gender Equality Initiatives

31. What policies/procedures were in place to facilitate gender equality in your previous company? How effective were they? What were their limitations?

32. What other measures do you think would assist firms in achieving gender equality?

Reasons for Leaving Corporate Sector

33. Can you describe how you arrived at the decision to leave your previous position? What was the primary factor which led you to leave? Were there other significant factors?

34. How long had you been considering leaving?

Broad Questions

35. Can you describe the corporate culture of your previous firm?

36. What advice would you give to young women starting a career who may wish one day to hold an executive position?

37. Is there anything else you wish to raise in relation to gender equality in Western Australia which we have not covered during this interview?

Senior Human Resource Professionals

Recruitment & Selection Processes

1. To what degree is your department involved in the development of gender equality policy and implementation?

2. To what degree does your department/office determine recruitment and selection policy? Are your decisions reviewed or overseen by other areas of the firm?

3. Can you take me through a typical recruitment or selection process for a senior management or executive role?

4. How much do you feel that the CEO/board rely upon your input/assessment of executive candidates?

5. Who usually liaises with you with regard to executive/senior management promotions or hires?

6. What would you describe as the key selection criteria used when recruiting or promoting to executive level roles?

7. What do you feel are the characteristics of the senior management or executive candidate that contribute most to their appointment or promotion?
Gender Effects

8. Are there different challenges as a HR professional when hiring/promoting a woman versus a man?

9. Have you encountered either overt or subtle discrimination in the recruiting or promotion processes you have been involved with in the past five years? Can you describe what happened?

10. Have you noticed any differences between men and women with regard to assertiveness, ambition or self-efficacy/self-confidence?

11. Have you observed whether men and women seem to have differing priorities surrounding how people should be led? If yes, what are the differences you have noted? Can you recall how these differences were valued by their superior/s or affected their promotion/selection chances?

12. What do you think are the greatest inhibitors to female career progression?

13. In what ways does the HR team ensure that biases in hiring and promotion practices are limited?

Gender Equality Initiatives

14. How do you define gender equality?

15. Does your firm collect data regarding pay by gender for similar/identical roles in your firm? What do you think might account for WA having by far the largest gender pay gap of the Australian States, currently at 26%? Do you conduct pay equality audits?

16. What policies/procedures are in place to facilitate gender equality in this company? How effective are they? What are their limitations?

17. What other measures do you think would assist firms in achieving gender equality?

18. Do you measure the number of women in leadership positions within the company? Have you set any numerical objectives for achieving gender equality?

19. What reporting/accountability processes are in place regarding gender equality? Does the CEO show leadership in this area?

20. What difficulties have you encountered in establishing/measuring/reporting upon gender equality initiatives?

21. What do you believe is the reason that there are so few female senior executives and CEOs in Western Australia?

Broad Questions

22. What would you suggest companies could do to increase the number of women occupying senior executive roles?

23. Is there anything different about WA's corporate culture compared to the east coast that might account for fewer female executives, CEOs and board members?

24. What advice would you offer a woman at the start of her career if she were aiming at one day obtaining an executive position?

25. Is there anything else you wish to raise in relation to gender equality in Western Australia which we have not covered during this interview?
Female Graduates

1. Do you believe that gender inequality in the workplace is an issue faced by women in Western Australia in your generation?

2. What are some of the issues that come to mind when I say ‘gender inequality in the workplace’?

3. How would you describe gender equality in the workplace? Do you believe that gender equality exists in your workplace?

4. If I were to say that the year is 2030 and we have attained gender equality in the workplace, what would this look like?

5. Have considerations of having a family had any impact upon your subject choices at school and university? (self, teachers, family)

6. Have considerations of having a family had any impact upon career choices you have made? If so, what was the impact? (Self, place of employment, family)

7. Do men and women differ in how they use self-promotion at work? If yes, how do they differ?

8. Have you noticed any differences between men and women with regard to assertiveness, ambition or self-efficacy/self-confidence?

9. Have you ever encountered direct or indirect discrimination in your employment? Can you describe the occasion/s?

10. Why do you think WA has the largest gender pay gap in Australia at 26%?

11. What do you think organisations can do to bring about gender equality in the workplace?
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It’s time to advance, promote and retain women in our workforce.
Committee for Perth Membership

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