

SPEECH

OnBoard WA Launch

Delivered on Wednesday, 20 September 2017

Topic: Filling the Pool

- Thank you for inviting me to provide the keynote address on Filling the Pool, the Committee for Perth's gender equality report.
- Filling the Pool was a 2 year effort costing about half a million dollars.
 - It was an arduous undertaking to understand why Perth's women were not getting ahead.
 - It was ground breaking.
 - A) because far as we are aware, there is no report of its kind anywhere in the world; and
 - B) it is a report on local conditions – undertaken by Perth for Perth
- The detailed report with its roadmap of 31 interlocking recommendations, has been widely acclaimed for being evidenced based and solutions focused. It outlines a way forward in which government, organisations and their predominately male leaders along with women all have a role to play to increase the number of women participating and progressing in the workforce.
- The video demonstrates that the issues are complex and the remedies both structural and societal.
- I don't want anyone to leave today thinking that the issues will be fixed when 'dinosaurs' stop roaming the earth. This is because the most competitive time in a career journey is between the ages of 35-45, the point at which the funnel narrows as people seek to move from middle to senior management. The early part of this timeframe coincides with many couples choosing to start a family and in Australia 97% of women take on the primary care giving role. Many take a step back in their careers and lose ground to their male counterparts.
- A number of women in our study were the meat in the sandwich. Having cared for young children and finally got their careers back on track only to face elder care issues. These issues are being faced by working women across the country.
- For a woman with caring responsibilities to successfully return to work she needs a support structure. What we called the 4 Pillars in Filling the Pool.
 - She needs a supportive partner, family support, flexible work options and child care.
 - Unfortunately for Perth all of these are eroded.
 - In terms of support from a partner – WA has the highest FIFO workforce in the country + informal FIFO for corporates.

- During the boom WA imported a large proportion of 25-40 year olds who mostly moved without their extended family network so if they started a family were without that essential support.
- 50% of companies in our study offered flexible work policies that were often negotiated between employee and manager. Too often that manager was a white middle class male with a stay at home wife who, despite company policy, did not believe in flexible work.
- WA has the lowest rates of childcare in the country let alone patchy offerings for before and after school care and vacation care.
- Since releasing the report in June 2015, I have done 82 presentations and we have given out 19,850 reports with tens of thousands of downloads from our website.
- Over the past two years, the report as found its way into corporations, government and the not for profit sector here in WA, across the country and beyond. Feedback from overseas recognises the bravery it takes to do a piece of work that provided a warts and all expose that left people nowhere to hide given its deep dive into the issues.
- In keeping with our evidenced based approach, this year the Committee for Perth has examined gender in the Boardroom and C-Suite as part of our strategic research alliance with UWA – FACTBase. What we uncovered shows that:
 - Men account for 93.3% on WA ASX 100 boards
 - Only one fifth of ASX 200 companies with headquarters in Perth meet the 30% gender diversity target
 - Female directors on the WA ASX 100 almost exclusively hold the position of non-executive or independent director
 - 26% of women holding director roles completed their bachelor degree in WA, 44% were educated elsewhere in Australia and 30% are abroad.
- And reflecting on the C-Suite
 - Approximately 90.5% of C-Suite positions on the WA ASX 100 are held by men (9.5% by women)
 - Women only fill <3% of Chairperson, CEO & Managing Director roles (97.2% male)
 - In Senior management teams are comprised of women making up 12.3% of the roles (87.7% male)
 - The most common senior managerial roles to which women are appointed are company secretaries and joint company secretaries (30.5%), general managers and group managers (20.3%) and C-positions (Chief of HR, Chief of Operations Officer etc.) at 15.3%
 - Of those who have a Postgraduate qualification, the majority of women in the C-Suite have a Masters degree (45.2%), Postgraduate Diplomas and graduate Certificates (32.3%), followed by MBA (16.1%). Along with relevant professional qualifications.
- In closing, we've been delighted with companies that are walking the talk with a raft of policies such as flexible work options that are being used by both men and women along and return to work policies that are keeping women connected to the organisation during maternity leave so that their knowledge and networks

remain strong. There are a few standouts in this regard including Shell, FMG, Navitas and Westpac.

- Coming back to today's initiative, I recently visited Norway to understand more about the gender board quota. It is fair to say that the mandated 40% of women on boards was reached a year after it came into effect in 2008. It has created a snowball effect with other countries adopting gender quotas or targets.
- During the interviews I conducted with both social and business researchers it was reported that the downstream effects have been negligible and certainly not the avalanche that was predicted. So in effect what gets measured gets done.
- It is therefore clear that we need concerted and sustained effort at all levels and in all sectors in order to fill the pool of female talent and narrow the largest gender pay gap in the country.
- Congratulations to the Premier and Minister for their commitment to addressing the issue through this important initiative – OnBoard WA.