Aims:
"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."
Stress testing the recommendations

10 workshops

350 people
Greater retention & progression of women in Western Australia
THE 4 PILLARS FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE

1. Spouse Support
2. Family Support
3. External Childcare Providers
4. Flexible Employment
What can women do?
What women can do

Each of the 100 senior 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.
- Start with the end goal in mind
- Be strategically opportunistic
- Work on self-confidence
- Acquire mentors, sponsors and role models
- Be true to yourself
- Understand effective self-promotion and networking
- Plan around your family
- Bring men into the conversation
- Take on the obligation of bringing another woman through
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.
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.
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.
Understand effective self-presentation 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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
What can women do?

From women to women
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

What Organisations can do

- Embrace the economic argument R5
- Change must be driven from the top R6
- "Targets with teeth" should be adopted as a change mechanism R9
- Accountability for targets to flow to managers R10
- Succession plans should be linked to greater diversity & commence at graduate intake level R16

What Women can do

- Bring men into the conversation R30
- Plan around the family R29
- Be true to yourself R27
- Build self-confidence R35

Greater retention & progression of women in Western Australia

- 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
- Acquire sponsors & mentors R23
- Take on mentoring or sponsoring another woman R31

- Be strategically opportunistic R24
- Understand effective self promotion & networking R26
- Start with the end goal in mind R21
- Acquire sponsorship & mentors R20
- Take on mentoring or sponsoring another woman R31

- Understand effective self promotion & networking R26