Leaders jump in to Fill the Pool  By Saskia Pickles - Published: 17 August 2015

Leaders from more than a dozen businesses in Western Australia have come together with a “great sense of urgency” to address issues of female inequality in the workplace, according to Diane Smith-Gander.

Committee for Perth board member Diane Smith Gander told Business News that executives from 16 local businesses had been catalysed to act after attending a forum in Perth today.

The National Association of Women in Operations forum aimed to draw attention to a recent Committee for Perth report ‘Filling the Pool’, which revealed Perth’s “blokey” culture, the unique challenges facing WA’s working women, as well as roadmap forward with suggestions for government, businesses and employees.

“(They) looked into the mirror of women’s inequality and realised it is worse here than anywhere else,” Ms Gander-Smith said.

"Then they engaged as the quality of the ideas became clear. There were no clashes of opinion (but) a great sense of urgency."

National Association of Women in Operations WA committee chair Anna Dartnell told Business News the event had uncovered early stage plans by organisations that looked at innovative solutions.

Ms Dartnell, a Business News 40under40 winner, said while the forum’s Chatham House rules precluded her from naming organisations, she could reveal they discussed developing practical strategies.

She said these included plans to increase childcare opportunities at work, particularly during school holidays by setting aside meeting rooms and hiring child care workers.

Other shared plans included auditing budgets to ensure any identified gender pay gaps could be addressed within the following financial year.

“Today was about building a community of exchange and learning,” Ms Dartnell said.

Ms Gander-Smith, who is also the president of Chief Executive Women, said while tackling gender inequality was complex and took real planning, a genuine push from company leaders could get results.

“There is recognition in (this) senior group that the corporate intent is not always mirrored in the actions down the organisation and that it is their role to fix that,” she said.