

Recommendation Paper

Leadership Styles and Gender Imbalance

ISSUE

Gender imbalance in Australian executive leadership impedes economic wellbeing for women and men. Gender balanced leadership leads to improved financial and operational performance, specifically around innovation, productivity and safety. Robust policy actions from the Federal and State and Territory governments are pivotal in guiding the market forces in achieving gender balance in Australian executive leadership representations across the public and private sectors.

RECOMMENDATION

Implement economic incentives for organisations that invest in the education and development of their executive leadership's adaptive capacity. The recommendation is to expand the current initiatives by the Office for Women, to fund industries and research institutions to collaborate and focus on building adaptive capacity in executive leaders, both women and men. The 100% Project – a leading Australian gender equality Not-for-Profit organisation and partners would be the driver of the education and development opportunities for women into senior leadership position in Australia.

RATIONALE

Support dedicated to women is essential, it is equally important to create forums and development opportunities where women and men can hear directly from their counterparts about the issues and challenges in implementing gender equality initiatives at Australian workplaces. The adaptive leadership framework sets clear behavioural guidelines for building adaptive capacity, such as raising issues without prejudice, independent judgement, critical reflection and continuous learning. It also creates an organisational culture that is psychologically safe - where people feel they can be vulnerable, empathetic and raise issues in an open, transparent manner without fear of judgement and negative implications to their career. These behaviours cultivate respect and trust and encourages the promotion of women into senior leadership positions which has been proven to promote higher levels of societal, economic and organisational growth.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Federal government fund projects and initiatives that focus on the education and development of Australian executive leadership's adaptive capacity across private and public sectors as noted above. In order to cultivate an economic ecosystem that promotes gender balance in executive leadership, as a first step, investments in industry research is paramount, and it drives efficiency and builds evidence base for future initiatives and investments.

CONCLUSION

Gender imbalance in Australian executive leadership cannot be addressed by market forces and private sectors alone, it requires policy interventions from the Federal and State and Territory governments. Achieving gender balance in Australian executive leadership will expedite effort in related areas such as the gender pay gap and economic security and wellbeing for women.