



The Panel Pledge

Gender balance in every forum



The visibility and contribution of women leaders in public and professional forums needs to increase

Where are all the women?

Many high-profile conferences, events, taskforces and media outlets lack gender balance, despite there often being no shortage of qualified women to contribute. The '2019 Women for Media Report' snapshot found that only 18% of voices represented in major newspapers' business pages were those of women; and it is estimated that only 30% of event speakers in Australia are women. The impact of imbalances such as these has consequences for women in leadership, gender equality, organisations and our community.



Consequences of (in)visibility

A lack or absence of women leaders in public and professional forums is a consequence of an entrenched system of inequality.

When speakers or contributors are usually male, audiences may be provided a narrow perspective on the issues being canvassed.

This lack of diversity limits the quality and range of a conversation, and the potential outcomes or actions that might arise from it.

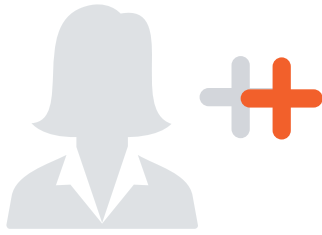
When visible role models and spokespeople are predominantly male, the absence of women in leadership becomes normalised. Fewer women choose to speak. People also have limited access to knowledgeable women leaders they can learn from.

Without the opportunity for women to be recognised as thought leaders, women miss out on profile-building opportunities - an important contributor to both experience and recognition of their expertise. The community also misses out on the perspectives drawn from the insights and experiences of women in the community.

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Debates and discussions provide a platform to share experiences and perspectives. When you limit the range of perspectives, you limit the quality of the conversation.

– Simon Rothery, CEO Goldman Sachs Australia



We invite leaders to join us in taking the Panel Pledge

As business and community leaders, Chief Executive Women, Women's Leadership Institute Australia and Male Champions of Change, have united to achieve radical improvements in women's representation in public and professional forums. This includes being prepared to call out imbalances when they see them.

This is our Pledge

We pledge to increase the visibility and contribution of women leaders in public and professional forums.



We will make our commitment known



We will honour the Panel Pledge when invited to speak



We will encourage others to take-up the Panel Pledge



We will raise the issue of gender balance when the opportunity arises



We will actively encourage women's voices



We will not accept the excuses

The Panel Pledge is a simple, practical example of actions CEOs can take to influence system-wide change on gender equality and advancing women in leadership.

How to implement the Panel Pledge



Make your commitment known

1. Let key members of your team, such as your EA and Communications team, know about your commitment to the pledge
2. Share your commitment with your organisation via internal communications, such as via the intranet, staff messages and forums
3. Ensure external stakeholders are aware of your Panel Pledge via your website and online request forums for speaking engagements
4. Be vigilant, point out gender imbalance when you see it



Encourage others to take-up the Panel Pledge

1. Cascade the pledge to your executive team and encourage them to do the same with their direct reports
2. Include the Panel Pledge in conference sponsorship agreements
3. Build an internal culture that encourages the inclusion of diverse voices within your organisation



Honour the Panel Pledge when invited to speak

1. Ask who the other panellists/speakers are, and how gender balance will be achieved
2. As a condition of acceptance, state that you expect women will be on the panel and be able to participate in a meaningful way
3. Reserve the right to withdraw, even at the last minute, should the finalised list be all male
4. Suggest women from your network or point to resources available to identify women speakers
5. Track the gender balance of panels you participate in and/or the outcomes of communicating your commitment to the pledge

Download

- The Panel Pledge Letter, to send to event organisers, when there is gender imbalance in the panel
- Your Own Panel Pledge Tracker

95% of Male Champions of Change have committed to the Panel Pledge*

*As reported in the 2018 Male Champions of Change Impact Report. New members are invited to support the Panel Pledge as part of their induction to the strategy.



I'm thrilled to see the Panel Pledge is continuing to gain momentum in Australia, and I invite every CEO and senior executive to take part. Gender parity on panels facilitates diverse thought leadership, and yields rich and productive results for the whole population.

– Carol Schwartz AM, Chair, Women's Leadership Institute Australia

Practical examples

ANSTO

ANSTO has extended the Panel Pledge to all staff for external and internal events and conferences, and to all internal meetings.

Telstra and Qantas

Speaker Request Forms on the Telstra and Qantas websites include a message about the CEOs' commitment to the Panel Pledge. Each asks stakeholders to take this into consideration when submitting a speaking request.

Property Male Champions of Change (PMCC)

CBRE, Charter Hall, Colliers International, Cushman & Wakefield, Investa, Lendlease and Stockland have included the Panel Pledge in their conference sponsorship agreements.

All PMCC members track speaking engagements and review results as a group annually. Of some 90 panels which PMCC spoke at or sponsored in 2018, 94% of the panels were gender-balanced or mixed gender (up from 88% in 2016-17).

University of Sydney

The University of Sydney invited staff to sign a Panel Pledge, available on the staff intranet. Over 230 professional and academic staff have since committed to the Panel Pledge.

Crown Resorts

Crown created a Gender Fitness app to promote gender balance at internal meetings. 2300 leaders at Crown use the App and are rated on gender balance of attendance (linked to calendar invites). All participants use a star rating to share the degree to which they felt able to contribute in the meeting (meeting effectiveness).

95%
of the Property Male
Champions of Change have
engaged their top teams to
support the Panel Pledge



Making choices about the composition of our teams is part of leadership. By signing up to the Panel Pledge you are taking a stand about the voices and diverse opinions you value.

– Sue Morphet, President Chief Executive Women
















Raise the issue of gender balance when the opportunity arises

1. Point out gender imbalances when you see them
2. Encourage conference organisers to take ownership of achieving gender balance in speakers and attendees
3. Consult available databases for relevant women thought leaders and speakers such as the Women for Media Database run by the Women's Leadership Institute Australia

Actively encourage women's voices

1. Use your network to recommend women for speaking opportunities
2. Encourage and enable women in your organisation and network to accept speaking opportunities
3. Set a goal for the spokespeople put forward by your corporate affairs team, to make the public face of your organisation more gender balanced
4. Call out and address any instances of gender based derogatory comments
5. Offer professional development, support and training in public speaking to encourage participation, on public and professional panels and forums

Don't accept the excuses

 <p>There aren't enough qualified female speakers</p>	 <p>It's a male dominated field</p>	 <p>Women are shy</p>	 <p>Women just aren't interested in this field</p>	 <p>Guys sell tickets</p>
 <p>The organisers just wanted to get the best speakers they could find</p>	 <p>The women we called were booked</p>	 <p>We're only responding to demand</p>	 <p>Fine. YOU tell me who they should have invited</p>	 <p>The women we booked bailed at the last minute</p>
 <p>You can't kick out a male speaker just to fit a woman in there</p>	 <p>Female speakers are always burnt out from speaking so much</p>	 <p>We need 'big name' speakers and few of those are women</p>	 <p>Trying to get more female speakers is sexist</p>	 <p>Attendees want to hear from people like themselves</p>



One of the things I've learnt is that if you don't intentionally include women, you unintentionally exclude women.

– Elizabeth Broderick AO, Founder of Male Champions of Change

Practical examples

BASF

CEO David Hawkins was asked to speak at a CEDA lunch discussing Innovation Hubs, he declined and suggested Samantha Read, CEO Chemistry Australia be given the opportunity instead.

Vicinity Centres

In 2017, Vicinity Centres launched #sheimagines, a diversity program to profile women and their careers at Vicinity, creating opportunities for women to share and inspire others.

Frasers Property Australia

CEO Rod Fehring actively nominates senior female leaders to take his place in speaking engagements.

Konica Minolta

When CEO David Cooke was asked to accept Konica Minolta's WGEA citation and The Australian Human Rights Commission award, he was in attendance, however insisted that Suzie Brett, Director People & IT, accepted both awards on behalf of the organisation.

Victorian Court of Appeal (Supreme Court)

When the Victorian Court of Appeal began recording appearances by the gender of counsel, it became apparent that women barristers rarely have speaking roles in appeals. This was particularly the case in civil appeals. The statistics showed that while a number of female counsel appeared in appeals, they often were in the role of junior counsel, and did not present any of the oral argument.

The Court responded by adopting a practice note which encourages senior counsel to allocate part of the oral presentation to junior counsel.

The practice note has had an immediate effect, with a number of junior counsel having speaking roles in both civil and criminal matters.

Wesfarmers

Wesfarmers provide their speakers with the option of working with a specialist communications coach before key speaking events. This is an effective way to counter the fears some people have of speaking and helps to make the experience more positive. By equipping them with the necessary skills, they then have the confidence and the capability to have the impact on the audience that they want to have.

How to host a gender balanced conference

Checklist for Conference Organisers

- ✓ **Strive to achieve 40:40:20 gender balance**, that is: 40% men, 40% women and 20% any gender as speakers, panellists and attendees. Force the question – if there isn't gender balance, ask "why not?"
- ✓ **Consider all aspects of diversity for panellists and speakers.** When looking to achieve gender balance, seek opportunities to engage a diverse range of people from a variety of backgrounds, age groups, cultures and abilities.
- ✓ **Distribute topics** so that women's voices are heard on a range of issues across all aspects of the agenda. Actively break the mould by asking men to talk on topics such as soft skills and gender equality which are typically offered to women.
- ✓ **Ensure speaker criteria is not biased.** For example by setting "CEO-level" as a threshold for speakers in sectors which are male dominated, women leaders may be automatically excluded.
- ✓ **Identify and confirm all speakers early** in case you need to change your approach to ensure gender balance.
- ✓ **Don't allow a pay gap.** Often women are invited to speak 'for the opportunity' or 'the exposure', rather than as a paid speaker. Review how men and women are compensated for their time as a panellist/ speaker and pay them equally.
- ✓ **Ask around.** Women can be found, ask other panellists, industry insiders, specialist women's organisations. Look at past conferences, government boards and industry associations.

Need help finding women leaders?

Women for Media is an online database of more than 200 women leaders in business, finance, government, academic and the not-for-profit sector.

It aims to increase the visibility of women leaders in the media speaking about their professional areas of expertise to ensure diversity of thought.

Women for Media provides contacts of senior women leaders for interview or comment: info@wlia.org.au

Get in touch

For more information on Women for Media, visit womenformedia.com.au



Elevating the visibility of female scientists is critical to boosting the profile, funding and advancement of their research. Conferences and symposia that do not include all of our best minds have the potential to hold back women's careers AND delay vital medical advances. That is just unacceptable.

– Doug Hilton AO, Director, Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research

Practical examples

Property Council of Australia

The Property Council of Australia organises more than 350 industry-wide events nationally each year. Ensuring diverse perspectives are presented is now a strategic priority in the historically male-dominated sector.

A live dashboard tracks in real time the gender-balance of speakers and attendees at all events. Progress is reported at every Board and Executive Committee meeting where members have related targets as part of their performance agreements.

Gender balanced panels are now the norm in the property industry, supporting the Property Council's Panel Pledge. The campaign has also extended to promote equality in audiences at Property Council major forums.

Sport Australia

Sport Australia (formerly the Australian Sports Commission) staged the "Our Sporting Future Conference" where 54% of the speakers were women, headlining business and leadership sessions. This aimed to help break the mould where women are often only asked to speak on panels about 'women's issues'.

The Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC)

The Australasian Fire Authorities Council (AFAC) has integrated the Panel Pledge into its annual conference - a major event for the Fire & Emergency sector which runs for 4 days, attended by 2,500 emergency service managers, volunteers, researchers and industry representatives. AFAC is encouraging suppliers, who feature at the exhibition which runs in parallel with the conference, to also take on the Panel Pledge.

Feedback

Do you have feedback suggestions on the Panel Pledge?
Email: panelpledge@malechampionsofchange.com

MALE CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

About Male Champions of Change

Male Champions of Change is a coalition of CEOs, Secretaries of government departments, Non-Executive Directors and Community Leaders.

Established in 2010, by Elizabeth Broderick AO, our mission is to step up beside women to help achieve gender equality and a significant and sustainable increase in the representation of women in leadership. The coalition includes over 220 leaders across business and government in Australia and internationally. In Australia our leaders employ over 750,000 people, representing around 6 percent of the Australian workforce.

malechampionsofchange.com



Chief Executive Women

Women leaders enabling women leaders

About Chief Executive Women

Founded in 1985, Chief Executive Women (CEW) now represents more than 500 of Australia's most senior and distinguished women leaders, whose shared vision is Women Leaders Enabling Women Leaders. Through its advocacy, targeted programs and scholarships, CEW works to remove the barriers to women's progression and ensure equal opportunity for prosperity.

cew.org.au



About Women's Leadership Institute Australia

The Women's Leadership Institute Australia (WLIA) was established by Carol Schwartz AM in 2010. WLIA seeks to catalyse and inspire innovative partnerships, action and system-changing solutions to address the imbalance of women in leadership positions in Australia. It is dedicated to breaking through unconscious biases and structural barriers in business, politics, the media and society more broadly.

wlia.org.au