

Local Government Management Challenge 2010

PRE-CHALLENGE TASK OUTCOMES SUMMARY



Australian Government

**Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

Office for Women



'Gender has nothing to do

This Outcomes Summary is an initiative of Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA), conducted with the support of the Commonwealth Office for Women.

The summary represents a collation of key issues, challenges, recommendations and potential pathways forward as identified by 123 Council teams participating in the 2010 LGMA Pre-Challenge Task.

This activity was sponsored by the Australian Government Office for Women in the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.



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“Young women's aspiration is in danger of giving way to frustration. Many of them are now excelling at school and are achieving great things in higher education. And they are keen to balance a family with a rewarding career. But workplaces forged in an era of 'stay at home mums' and 'breadwinner dads' are putting too many barriers in the way - resulting in an avoidable loss of talent at the top.”¹

Nicola Brewer, the Chief Executive of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (United Kingdom). An extract from the 2010 Tweed Shire Council submission.

¹ QLD Tweed Shire Council Submission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Women in Australia form 50% of the population yet represent 46% of the work force. The work force percentage is lower for Local Government at 43%².

In Local Government, only 20% of women are represented in senior management roles, only 5% of chief executives or general managers are women, with less than 30% of elected representatives being women³.

This result does not differ greatly from that of New Zealand where 29% of Councillors are women; 24% of second tier Council managers are women, and only 5% of Council CEOs are women⁴.

Accounting for these statistical outcomes is indeed a challenge and the task of Councils engaged in the 2010 Local Government Management Challenge.

A review of the 123 submissions generated by Challenge teams in 2010 has found six (6) topics or themes which generally represent the foundation issues for women in Local Government, across Australia and New Zealand:

1. Corporate culture and attitudes
2. Limited communication and low equity awareness levels
3. Minimal performance accounting and measurement
4. Strong and often negative self perceptions of women
5. Complexities of people management and leadership; and
6. Scope, scale and diversity of family flexibility options and approaches.

A detailed summation of issues, challenges, current practice, recommendations and next practice [extracted from Challenge team submissions]; for each of the six key themes is contained in this summary report.

² SA Adelaide City Council Submission

³ www.algwa.net.au

⁴ www.communityoutcomes.govt.nz

Submissions generally indicate that there is a block at the top (women not reaching general manager or CEO levels) and a gap in the middle (often accounted for by maternity or extended leave; the difficulties of re-engaging at a professional level post an extended period of leave; and the responsibilities of balancing family and work commitments).

The opportunity for women however is possibly best summed in the results of the 'Sustainability of Sutherland Shire Council's Future Workforce' study undertaken in 2007. This study found that 34% this council's workforce is aged 50 or older and eligible for retirement over the next 10 to 15 years. Council currently operates an annual staff turnover of roughly 14%. So potentially, council is faced with having to replace more than 50% of its workforce over the next 10 to 15 years⁵.

With the majority of director and senior manager positions held by long serving male staff, it would seem from the submissions that the opportunity for females to fill these roles has been extremely limited.

Perhaps the next ten years would have demonstrated a continual slow moving generational shift despite the best intentions of gender equity programs⁶.

The potential is there for gender distribution at the senior level to change dramatically as positions are filled from a greater diversity of applicants. As the majority of these positions are currently filled by males, the incoming successors will almost certainly be a more balanced male/female grouping. The shift in attitude towards gender equity between the 'Baby Boomers' and 'Generations X & Y' is also thought to support this change⁷.

The issue of work-life balance was common throughout the submissions although not exclusively the domain of female employees. The research conducted by the participating teams also showed concern for the next generation of job seekers and

⁵ NSW Sutherland Shire Council Submission

⁶ NSW Sutherland Shire Council Submission

⁷ NSW Sutherland Shire Council Submission

their expectations. The concept though was found to be at odds with actual practice, and corporate expectations.

With no consensus view on voluntary targets or thinking around meaningful performance measures or mechanisms to address barriers and challenges, responses in submissions tend to fall into two categories.

The organic approach – why not leave it to nature. But as noted by Lockyer Valley Regional Council a “laissez faire” approach to achieving greater numbers of women in senior management positions may simply result in women facing the same barriers and challenges they have in the past, especially as far as family commitments interrupting the progression of a career are concerned”⁸.

Perhaps key clues for Local Government will come from the private sector, where the focus is on outcomes and outputs, systems and processes to enhance business bottom line, rather than counting days/hours worked⁹.

This thinking is supported by the findings of the Global Gender Gap Report which suggests that “talent and human capital are fundamental to economic growth—ensuring that barriers to women’s entry to the workforce are removed and that equal opportunities are provided for rising to positions of leadership within companies are among the key factors for business leaders and policy-makers to consider to ensure that all existing resources are used in the most efficient manner and to send the right signals to ensure the optimal flow of future talent”¹⁰.

Local Government by its very nature is the closest and only form of government that many communities know and to adequately serve the community there is a need to fully understand the issues and concerns it holds which impact on that community. By not doing so, Local Government is failing in its duty to the community in not recognising a seismic shift in attitudes and expectations towards the world of

⁸ QLD Lockyer Valley Regional Council Submission

⁹ NSW Sutherland City Council Submission

¹⁰ The Global Gender Gap Report 2009, Ricardo Hausmann, Laura D. Tyson and Saadia Zahidi. NZ Manawatu – Rangitikei District Councils Submission

employment. It's no longer a case of what you can do for your employer but what your employer can do for you¹¹.

The next generation is looking at portfolio careers and continuous up-skilling to maintain their employability. Loyalty is driven by intrinsic values and not by a particular employer. A job for life or a linear career do not inspire or motivate the next generation – and in reality, most women experience numerous title changes throughout their working life as they accommodate the needs and requirements of family commitments ahead of their own professional ambition. To adequately address this paradigm shift in work practice, Local Government will need to analyse what women and the next generation are looking for from the workplace and provide appropriate career options on a short and long-term basis¹².

There's a lot of work to be done.

¹¹ www.alga.asn.au

¹² Career Guidance for Professional Women Seeking Meaningful Work, Nina Ham.
www.successfromtheinsideout.com/e_letters/portrait.html

1. INTRODUCTION

“A snail could crawl the entire length of the Great Wall of China in 212 years, just slightly longer than the 200 years it will take for women to be equally represented in Parliament”¹³ was the summation of the Equality and Human Rights Commission's annual report (United Kingdom) which looks at women in top positions of power and influence across the public and private sectors, and suggests a worrying trend of reversal or stalled progress.

Similarly, Australia has performed little better. Analysis of the 2006 Census on women in the Local Government workforce found that¹⁴:

- women earn on average less than men but the gap is smaller in Local Government than other spheres
- women in Local Government are better qualified than men; and
- women are in the majority amongst Local Government professionals but not managers, with a much higher proportion of women than men working part-time.

WHAT THE NUMBERS SAY

Women in Australia form 50% of the population yet represent 46% of the work force. The work force percentage is lower for Local Government at 43%¹⁵.

In Local Government, only 20% of women are represented in senior management roles, only 5% of chief executives or general managers are women, with less than 30% of elected representatives being women¹⁶.

This does not differ too much from the New Zealand result where 29% of Councillors are women; 24% of second tier Council managers are women; and only 5% of Council CEOs are women¹⁷.

¹³ NSW Tweed Shire Council Submission

¹⁴ NSW Tweed Shire Council Submission

¹⁵ SA Adelaide City Council Submission

¹⁶ www.algwa.net.au

Surveys by the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) in 2006 and 2009 found the main issues for female staff were a need for:

- family-friendly policies, including child-care and home-based work (75%)
- decision-making styles (65%)
- feeling undervalued (55%)
- a male-dominated culture (50%)
- lack of career structure (40%)
- job selection processes (40%); and
- managing conflict (40%).

Compared to 2006 there was a steep increase in concerns about job selection and need for more family-friendly policies but significant reductions were recorded in concerns for training, confidence building and an overall male-dominated culture¹⁸.

The issue of career progression and promotion of women into senior management is however not limited to Local Government. Research undertaken by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA), show a decrease in the number of women in top executive roles in the corporate sector generally declining from 10% in 2006 to 8% in 2008¹⁹.

“Since 2006 at Manukau City Council, the ratio of women to men across the organisation has risen. But that's good isn't it? Not if the ratio of women in management has reduced in the same period”²⁰.

¹⁷ www.communityoutcomes.govt.nz

¹⁸ NSW Tweed Shire Council Submission; Department of Local Government, NSW 2010

¹⁹ www.lgma.org.au

²⁰ NZ Manukau City Council Submission

ABOUT THE CHALLENGE

The Local Government Managers Australia (LGMA) – Management Challenge provides an opportunity for Council teams from both Australia and New Zealand to meet for one day each year to compete and demonstrate their ability to address a wide range of management issues, in scenarios not too distant from reality.

One component of the Challenge is the Pre-Challenge Task, the topic of the 2010 Pre-Challenge Task being “The Role of Women in Local Government”, and follows the declaration in Australia of 2010 as the ‘Year of Women in Local Government’.

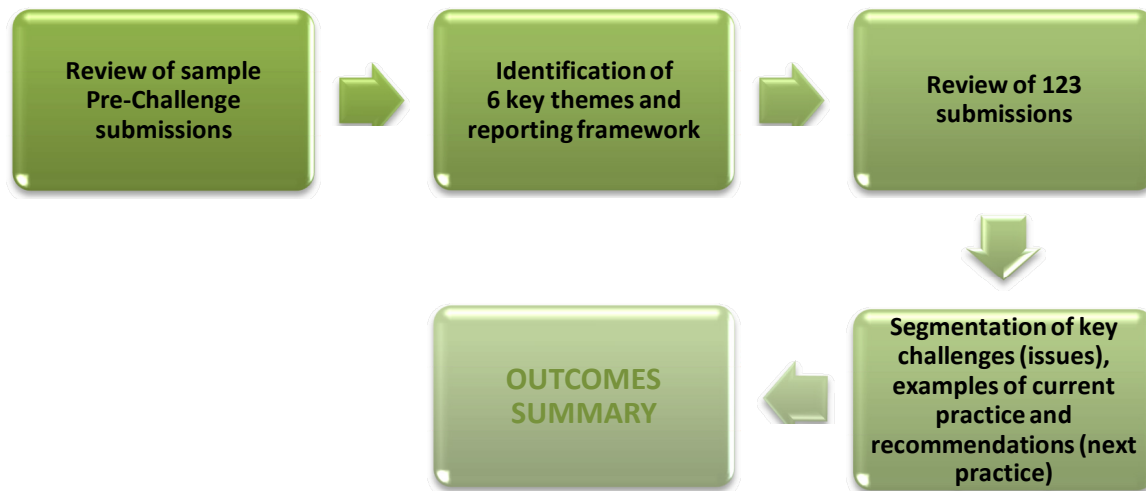
ABOUT THE OUTCOMES SUMMARY

This outcomes summary is an initiative of Local Government Managers Australia, conducted with the support of the Commonwealth Office for Women.

The summary represents a collation of key issues, challenges, recommendations and potential pathways forward as identified by 123 Council teams participating in the 2010 LGMA Pre-Challenge Task.

The issues and recommendations contained in this summary are those most commonly found in submissions. No order, ranking or priority has been applied.

The process utilised to distil information and compile this important summation of thinking, reflections and insight is as follows.



ABOUT THE CHALLENGE COUNCILS

The following data sets offer an insight into the size and gender profiles of participating Councils. This data is supplied here to provide a contextual framework for the reader:

Councils participating in the Challenge are reported by:

1. size of council and average percentage of female employees; and
2. state, size of council and average percentage of female employees.

Total Number of Staff	Number of Submissions	% of Female Employees
< 500	51	48%
500 – 1000	27	52%
>1000	35	50%

* total number of submissions will not add to 123. Not all councils provided staffing/employment data.

State	Avg % Female Staff Councils <500	Avg % Female Staff Councils 500 – 1000	Avg % Female Staff Councils >1000
NSW	44%	36%	50%
NZ	51%	57%	55%
QLD	39%	39%	39%
SA	46%	42%	45%
TAS	54%	37%	-
VIC	57%	65%	67%
WAS	54%	55%	37%

2. CULTURE AND ATTITUDES

No longer is it about balancing the numbers.... the vision is for complete gender equity [not balance] that utilises the strengths of diversity, reflecting that which is found in the community it supports and represents²¹.

The Challenge process has highlighted truly vast differences in awareness, interpretation and understanding of equity concepts across the workplace.

Additionally the issue was found to be much larger than Council itself, with some teams indicating that the cultural and demographic structures of their respective communities had a significant impact on the development of corporate values and corporate attitudes.

The submissions were extremely varied in their views of the National Framework for Women in Local Government as delivered by the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA) in March 2002. At one end of the scale some councils were completely unaware of this document, others were aware but not using the framework as a strategic tool and one (or at least one) commented that they thought that the content of the Framework was itself detrimental to the advancement of women. Certainly participation in the LGMA Pre-Challenge Task has raised the profile and awareness of this important document.

While formal processes (such as policies) are in place in many Councils surrounding gender equity, generally, these are not considered to be effective due to minimal staff and management awareness, lack of on-ground practices and no mechanisms for measurement.

In general, submissions suggest that key decision makers do not fully recognise the issue nor the need for change. The position of some senior staff is reflected in this

²¹ NSW Manly, Mossman, Pittwater and Warringah Council Submission

statement - "There is nothing that prohibits males or females from applying for positions. It is the person who is best for the position, regardless"²².

Limited leadership from senior management has staff challenging the notion that change, real change, of the type required here is possible in the current environment. "Until we have leadership at the higher levels of management, the "industrial" approach to managing people in a "knowledge" worker environment will continue to undermine progress and change. We cannot have transformational change without people leadership"²³.

The term women's issues, appears frequently in team submissions, and seems to be a label that is growing in currency as a catch all phrase – and perhaps a negative for moving the ideals of equity forward over the coming years.

It is also apparent that the culture of many Councils is to be risk-averse and to have significant inertia when it comes to change initiatives; hence the rate of progress is frustrating slow for many participating in the Challenge.

The confusion, conflict, risk aversion and lack of understanding of the need for both clarity and change within Local Government corporate cultures is perhaps best summed up by Hasting District Council (NZ) where in-house research concluded:

"To all of the male respondents, gender equity essentially means there should be no distinction between genders, with everyone treated as equals. Half of the women also considered gender equity to mean no distinction between genders and everyone treated as equals. The other half however, saw gender equity to mean an actual acknowledgement of gender differences and the provision and encouragement of opportunities for women. This latter group interestingly was made up entirely of women with young children. The distinction is therefore whether an organisation with a good gender equity ethos should either (a) treat everyone as

²² QLD Regional City Council Submission

²³ QLD Regional City Council Submission

equal and not draw attention to the differences; or (b) recognise and acknowledge gender differences and provide opportunities to succeed²⁴.

Finally, many Generation Y and X workers are not interested in traditional full-time work and career progression and use flexible work options to develop their sporting skills or other outside interests²⁵.

It would seem from the submissions that it is these employees that Local Government needs to attract and by necessity will need to change policies, cultures and attitudes to be considered an 'Employer for Choice' for this group. In other words the game has changed – it is not clear from the submissions that anyone has told Councils.

One of the many solutions, recommendations or potential next practice for Local Government offered on the theme of corporate culture are initiatives focused on developing the emotional intelligence of the organisation²⁶.

KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

World Views

1. Preconceptions about women appear to be so entrenched they are unintentional
2. Differences in world perceptions between men and women and the subsequent impact on processes
3. Women are having to fight to change the status quo - again
4. The roles and expectations of women and men differ
5. The world [not just council] seems to be struggling with the issue of integrating women equitably into the workforce
6. A "boy's club" [or a perception of one]

²⁴ NZ Hastings District Council Submission

²⁵ Generational Differences in Work Values: Leisure and Extrinsic Values Increasing, Social and Intrinsic Values Decreasing, San Diego State University – Professor Jean Twenge, Kennesaw State University – Professor Stacy M. Campbell and University of Georgia – Professors Brian. J. Hoffman and Charles E. Lance

²⁶ NSW City of Ryde Submission; NZ Western Bay of Plenty District Council Submission; QLD Logan City Council Submission

-
7. Many people are not even aware of gender equity issues in the workplace
 8. A cultural change is required throughout Australia to make it more acceptable for males to take on the role of primary carer for children and not be stereotyped as the bread winner
 9. Barriers for women lie not just with the culture and systems of the organisation, but are also intrinsic and tribal to the gender group

Organisation Policy

10. Cultural issues around gender equity are not explicitly addressed in Council policy and programs
11. Current management practices do not support gender inclusiveness
12. Cultural and demographic profile of the broader LGA impacts on some corporate cultures and values
13. Minimal awareness of the National Framework for Women in Local Government
14. Indirect discrimination – its what's not in the policies that creates the barriers

Change Management

15. Lack of awareness of the need for change and the possibilities and opportunities that would flow
16. Different attitudes of younger generations from the previous, means hope for an increase in equality in the future
17. Strong generational difference in attitudes
18. A noted absence of process for the continual gender sensitisation both inside Local Government and with municipal partners and the private sector

Champions

19. Lack of Champions, those with political will and commitment at the senior level in Local Government

Regional Partnerships

20. Lack of a strategic and proactive partnering with the National Framework by both elected and staff members

Organisation Operations

21. Whether expected by the organisation, or self-imposed, a culture of long hours can have a negative impact on gender equity and is not always able to be self-regulated
 22. The culture of the organisation is, to some degree, at odds with the intention
-

that staff work reasonable hours

Budget

23. The organisation has no dedicated resources and funding to address women in leadership issues

Leadership

24. The role that Council members have in achieving gender equity cannot be underestimated

25. Attitudes and opinions of the CEO influence the culture of the organisation. The CEO effectively has the final say in policy decisions, strategy and leadership regarding women's participation in the workforce

26. Council members are predominantly male and of an older generation, who at times struggle to acknowledge women as equals. The influence that this body can have on the culture of the organisation has been noted

27. Councillors came across the same barriers believing that the organisational structure is exclusive and inflexible

Community is Silent

28. Lack of ground swell from the community on the gender issue

Whilst not a requirement of the Pre-Challenge Task, a number of Councils nominated initiatives that are currently in place or, are about to be launched within their respective organisations. These are listed in each section as a reference only for the reader.

WHAT COUNCILS ARE CURRENTLY DOING

- Diversity Focus Group - to assist Council with the implementation of EEO action plan (Blue Mountains City Council)
- Staff culture survey is conducted every 2 years (Blue Mountains City Council)
- Culture Change Program (Strathfield Council)
- Positive Working Relationships Policy (Wollongong City Council)
- iCare Values Strategy, inclusive of incentives for demonstrating and instilling the iCare values across the organisation (Randwick City Council)
- Climate Survey – inclusive of topics relating to work/life balance (Auckland City Council)
- Women in Council Forum (Brisbane City Council)
- Your Voice employee survey (Brisbane City Council)
- Introduction of a Gender Matters Panel (City of Charles Sturt)

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT PRACTICE

Policy

1. Adopt the Framework for Women in Local Government and support with 4 year action or implementation plan

Organisational Strategy

2. Develop a Workforce Culture Change Strategy
3. Each Council develops own Local Management Plan for Women to identify strategies to address any gender imbalances
4. Rather than a mission statement about equity, the focus in future recruitment and selection process needs to incorporate an emotional intelligence approach
5. Redefining traditional management roles and sharing the load across more staff
6. Invite inspiring guest speakers to endorse cultural change in the work place

Operational Inclusiveness

7. Mentoring – establishing a link between less senior staff and management, a sharing of ideas and perceptions
8. Rather than just exit interviews, broaden the range of staff within council who are regularly asked for feedback on issues relating to employment retention, and make it an ongoing process
9. Provide learning opportunities for the development of leadership skills which focus on cultural change
10. Tailored recruitment and selection training for staff
11. Expand induction programs to specifically address gender equity as part of EEO, with regular 'refreshment' courses [every two years]

Generation Optimisation

12. Create a culture that can flex to appeal to Generation Y, where their talent is managed and retained in the organisation
13. Involve staff at all levels (including part time) through networking opportunities and inclusion in key decision making processes as part of cultural and generational change processes

Regional Partnerships

14. Facilitate a "Women in SHOROC Forum" with representatives from the four Councils to discuss the current gender balance and develop strategies to address areas of concern

15. Shared regional mentoring programme [between neighbouring councils]

Champions and Advocacy

16. Invite two Directors to become male champions of improving gender equality and equity within their Council

17. Advocate for cultural and attitudinal change to remove barriers to the advancement of women

18. Investigate and advocate for Local Government structural reform

Research

19. Investigate the organisational impact of generational diversity (BB,X,Y) on career opportunities and workplace satisfaction

Imagery and Messaging

20. Include appropriate and positive images of women and families on Council websites [in the positions vacant section]

Community Engagement

21. Encourage a culture shift by promoting work/life balance. This will contribute to decrease of pressure on women in society in general

3. COMMUNICATION AND AWARENESS

No-one talks about it [gender equity]; would be a fair description of submission findings. In response, Pre-Task Challenge teams have identified a suite of remedies that range from social media to lunch box personal development for all staff. The goal being to develop an awareness of gender equity issues; or to at least get the conversation started.

The submissions highlighted a need for Local Government to enhance its communications on equity issues and perhaps embrace a different style of language in doing so.

Communication appears in almost every action plan as an appropriate mechanism to assist Councils increase awareness and understanding of equity issues for both women and men. Hence it could be concluded that communication is seen as the fundamental building block and potential driver of change.

Not an easy task when the “organisational culture is masculine, technocratic and subject to inertia says one NZ City Council submission”²⁷.

There is a significant need for clarity around a myriad of flexible working policies that are already in place but up-take [for fear of ‘career death’] and understanding is extremely variable²⁸ [see chapter 7 where this issue is explored in detail].

The lack of, or perceived lack of transparency in flexible leave processes is thought to be best addressed by clear and frequent communication to all staff²⁹. This is also considered a positive step in assisting to remove some of the stigma or negative perceptions of staff applying for special leave³⁰ and other options [in some

²⁷ NZ City Council Submission

²⁸ NSW Blacktown City Council Submission Team 2

²⁹ QLD Redland City Council Submission Team 2; Southern Downs Regional Council Submission

³⁰ QLD City Council Submission

submissions there remains a clear focus on 'time at the desk' rather than outcomes]³¹.

Communication was also seen as a key mechanism for normalising the work/life balancing conundrum³² for all staff, this included opportunities to promote wellbeing, acknowledgment of the differing needs and expectations of genders in the work place³³ and engaging the community on equity issues³⁴.

Universally there is a call to refresh the terminology currently utilised in Council recruitment advertising³⁵, the inclusion of flexible work arrangements in advertising as a potential attractor for women³⁶ and the application of a more considered approach to the placement of advertisements to achieve the best possible pool of candidates³⁷. The building of partnerships with universities³⁸ and other training and education organisations³⁹ was also identified as a means of closing the gender gap in traditionally male dominated areas of Council, in particular engineering, city infrastructure and related technical disciplines.

Collectively Councils are encouraged to enhance web site content⁴⁰, utilise social media⁴¹ and positive imagery as marketing tools, along with promoting gender inclusiveness⁴², role models, celebrating successes, sharing learning's⁴³, empowering staff, reinforcing the significance of work / life balance and family friendly corporate strategies⁴⁴ to potential new employees, current staff and the broader community as part of targeted communications strategy.

³¹ QLD City Council Submission

³² SA Alexandrina Council Submission

³³ QLD Gladstone Regional Council Submission Team 1

³⁴ QLD Redlands City Council Submission Team 2; SA Adelaide City Council Submission; NSW Fairfield City Council Submission

³⁵ QLD Gladstone Regional Council Submission Team 2; QLD Ipswich City Council Submission

³⁶ QLD Scenic Rim Regional Council Submission

³⁷ NZ Manawatu District Council and Rangitikei District Council Submission

³⁸ QLD Toowoomba Regional Council Submission

³⁹ QLD Mackay Regional Council Submission Team 1 and Team 2

⁴⁰ NSW Ku-ring-gai Council Submission

⁴¹ QLD Isaac Regional Council Submission

⁴² NSW Fairfield City Council Submission

⁴³ NSW Lake Macquarie City Council Submission

⁴⁴ NSW Blue Mountains City Council Submission

Challenge teams are urging corporate communication, human resource and information sections of Councils to step up to the plate, re-think induction programs, re-package and decode incentives and support programs, review corporate language, engage with staff on extended leave; and take a more proactive approach to the presentation of equity issues to council's internal clients (the staff and councillors) and external clients (the community, agencies and other groups)⁴⁵.

Many agreeing there is a great deal to be done before Councils can be promoted as an employer of choice.

Off course the notion of communication as a solution is made more complex by the views of some who do not see the equity challenge facing women or the need for change – “When questioned as to whether being female was an advantage, women responded in the majority as ‘no’, whereas men overwhelmingly responded ‘yes’. Again, this difference in perception indicates the clear barriers that women perceive in the workplace, and again potentially indicate that men do not see the barriers that women are facing”⁴⁶.

What is clear is that Councils will need to enhance the quality, scope and content of communications to find new ways of doing business and to assist build an “environment where people are encouraged to extend themselves in both a personal and professional capacity, and create opportunities for life balance”⁴⁷.

KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Communication Gaps

1. Communication void, no clear understanding of flexible work options
2. Lack of information on - opportunities, access to training programs, mentoring programs, networking and development opportunities, union assistance and anti-bullying measures
3. Need for access to clear information on family and leave policies and the

⁴⁵ QLD Toowoomba Regional Council Submission

⁴⁶ SA City of Burnside Submission

⁴⁷ SA City of Unley Submission

process for application

4. Many people are not even aware of gender equity issues in the workplace – no communication on the issue
5. Lack of internal communication about new policies, policy reviews, events leading to staff being uninformed of changes and progress within the organisation

Community Engagement

6. Lack of engagement with the local youth to capture their interest in Local Government as a possible career path
7. Limited community perception of a woman's role in Local Government

Strategic Marketing

8. Lack of visible examples of successful senior women in Local Government leading balanced lifestyles
-

WHAT COUNCILS ARE CURRENTLY DOING

- Established Women's Committee to develop and deliver an annual event and activities program (Blacktown City Council)
-

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT PRACTICE

Pre-Task Challenge

1. Presentation of the Pre-Challenge Task to Senior Management and HR and to Council and Leadership Meetings at Council
2. Develop 'Mind the Gap' (continuation of pre challenge task) program to promote and develop awareness of gender equity benefits and issues

Marketing

3. Promote and educate for a staff healthy workplace that highlights the importance of a balanced work day
4. Develop "highlights package" for promotion to all sections within Council to demonstrate the benefits that have been obtained by those sections utilising flexible arrangements
5. Implement a "Parent brings in new bub morning tea' or other strategies that

ensure those staff that are on leave continue to feel valued

6. Promote achievements of female staff through events such as International Women's Week

7. A marketing strategy to target a larger pool of skilled workers (use Tourism QLD's 'the Best Job in the World' as inspiration)

8. Launch a campaign to promote career opportunities within Council to female students – get women into Local Government

9. Promote 'non-traditional gender' roles to educational institutions to change perceptions and increase future presence of women Create scholarship opportunities for women in 'male dominated' areas (e.g. engineering) in Council and vice versa

10. Offer crèche and café support for Council meetings as a part of a communication strategy

11. Introduce career days in conjunction with TAFE, schools and universities

Web and Social Media

12. Develop Women in Local Government Intranet page

13. Publish stories of positive outcomes from flexible work arrangements for employees and the organisation. Publish monthly on the council website

14. Championing successful role models in Local Government to young people via You Tube

15. Executive case studies i.e. Blog/Tweet ' a day in the life of a flexi exec'

16. Create a student Facebook and Twitter forum for young people wanting to learn more about council and councillors

Communication

17. Need for greater transparency and promotion of flexible working arrangements Put case studies in the recruitment area of our website i.e. examples of where Council has offered work from home arrangements for working mothers

18. Ensure regular communication with that are on extended leave

19. Develop and communicate an organisational definition of gender equity

20. Provide pre and post election support information for Councillors

Recruitment

21. Develop a new style / language for job advertisements

22. Redevelop advertising and the way we promote ourselves so that we are

seen as employer of choice

23. Promote Council as employer of choice for women

Personal Development

24. Hold Lunchbox sessions on work/life balance and financial management topics

25. Educate the workforce on the different communication styles utilised by the different genders

26. Promote health and well being programs within the organisation i.e. Lighten Up, 10 000 Step Challenges

27. National sessions for men only that raise awareness amongst leaders and executives of the need and benefit of women in Local Government decision making roles

Organisational Strategy

28. Senior level managers need to model positive behaviour and provide leadership. Identifying strategies to bring Council into a knowledge-based leadership organization should be considered

Community Engagement

29. Provide community education programs regarding the role of Council to illicit increased participation of women in council elections, as research has shown that this will impact the number of women in management positions

Branding

30. Logo's could be introduced endorsing the Council as a 'WFW' (Women friendly workplace) or 'FFW' (Family friendly workplace)

4. PERFORMANCE

When the conversation starts with “there is an apparent lack of awareness as to what actually constitutes gender equity and the value of achieving it across the Organisation”⁴⁸ you get the feeling that performance targets are a long way off.

In a sea of uncertainty one thing is clear, within the submissions there is no agreement on performance measures, nor what indicators would represent an appropriate measure.

Additionally there is no consensus view on the concept of targets (voluntary of otherwise).

The no target opinion - “Direct intervention to increase the employment of women through the recruitment process may lead to discrimination against men. Recruitment should always be merit-based, which should lead to a 50/50 gender representation across the organisation”⁴⁹. Or that a 50/50 target wrongly “assumes that all positions in an organisation are equally appealing to men and women”⁵⁰.

The target opinion - “The issue of setting targets for the employment of women to senior roles is a vexed one. This report recommends having a target for the number of women applicants for Band 8 roles and above of 40%, rather than a target for the appointment of women. The key risk with this approach is that it may be perceived as not strong enough or in line with early moves from the Federal Government to investigate introducing a 40% target for employment of women for organisations over 15 people. Should Council’s Executive Management Team consider it desirable to initiate a target for the appointment of women in senior roles, the recommended percentage is from 35% to 40% for Band 8 and above”⁵¹.

⁴⁸ SA City Submission

⁴⁹ VIC City Submission

⁵⁰ NSW Blacktown City Council Submission Team 2

⁵¹ QLD City Council Submission

Other commentary included interesting debate and comparison between the work practices in Local Government and that of private enterprise. Sutherland City Council cast a spotlight on this issue and found that “.....private enterprise places greater emphasis on productivity and outputs or outcomes rather than on timeframes or days worked. Perhaps is a key message for Councils in evolving its philosophies and management practices to meet the demands of a new world economy”⁵².

Many Councils have in place, and indeed listed a suite of EEO policies in submissions. “It is likely that many staff assume they are effective. However, policies are often not practiced”⁵³.

And there in-lies the performance sticking point. The challenge for future measures of performance will be in what is measured and against what benchmark. A complex issue when “women will always face a choice that men do not... whether to have a family and, if so, how to factor this choice back into their career”⁵⁴.

KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Reporting Limitations

1. Reporting of labour-force gender and occupational segmentation is very limited
2. Predominance of men in some disciplines across the broader workforce including science engineering and trades may bias gender balancing efforts and recruitment within Local Government
3. EEO Plans lack effective measurement, review and public reporting processes
4. Lack of gender sensitive indicators and targets to allow monitoring of gender in-balances within Council
5. No statistics on how many of employees work part-time because they are mothers or fathers, or other have other carer responsibilities.

Commitment

6. A lack of commitment by municipalities and government to collect and

⁵² NSW Sutherland City Council Submission

⁵³ QLD City Council Submission

⁵⁴ NZ Manawatu–Rangitikei District Councils Submission

analyse data

Budget

7. Council has no executive sponsorship or performance measurements to address this issue

8. Small Council with limited budgets

Targets

9. Lack of enthusiasm to embrace quota system

WHAT COUNCILS ARE CURRENTLY DOING

- Welling Being Check List utilised in the development and scope of Council projects (Western Bay of Plenty District Council)
 - Monthly management reporting statistics on Human Resources e.g. employee numbers by gender, age, length of service
 - The Department of Local Government Integrated Planning Reporting will require mandatory Workforce Planning/Succession Planning linked to Community Engagement
 - Department of Local Government Census on employee figures
 - Diversity Framework Program (City of Melbourne)
-

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT PRACTICE

Benchmarks

1. Establish common reporting and performance measures for women in Local Government
2. Establish a data collection, analysis and reporting framework
3. The Integrated Planning Reporting should be used as a tool for benchmarking across councils and analyse numbers of women employed and at what seniority level. Annual comparison to determine trends

Scorecards

4. Develop a diversity scorecard to track Council's progress on diversity and report in Annual Reports

Research

5. Develop and implement a process to monitor and evaluate existing home-
-

based work opportunities

6. Gender trend analysis

7. Review employee statistics to compare male and women representation in senior management levels on a biannual basis

8. Reviewing training and mentor program participation levels to attend new or existing senior management training programs on an annual basis

9. Undertaking an independent assessment of the organisation processes, policies, funding and performance on gender equity

Evaluation

10. Set up regular reporting to evaluate the success of different efforts which council has already made to get and retain females in Local Government

Whole of Community Monitoring

11. Establish targets that can be monitored jointly by Council and the community

Cost Analysis

12. Review cost savings or loss associated with the retention of women aspiring to be leaders in the organisation

Staff Survey

13. Incorporating questions into existing employee surveys (e.g. Your Voice) to gain an understanding of changes in gender perceptions

14. Develop a staff satisfaction survey to measure (amongst other items) the effectiveness of Gender Equity measures to be conducted regularly

No Target Option

15. Preferred strategy is to attract more women into the recruitment process rather than a fixed target at the end of the process

16. Set % target specific to the number of people applying NOT a target for the number of appointments to roles. This approach better aligns with merit-based selection approaches.

17. Assist Managers/Team Leaders to identify talented individuals who possess skills that are transferable across the organisation and who have the ability to develop their leadership capability

Target Option

18. Generate different targets in different areas of operations

19. Establish gender participation targets for staff and Councillors

20. Desirable target for the appointment of women in senior roles, the recommended percentage is from 35% to 40% for Band 8 and above.

5. PERCEPTIONS OF SELF

“...given necessary support and the right environment, they [women] are quite capable of smashing through the glass ceiling and becoming an active part of the solution”⁵⁵.

The submissions identified a myriad of reasons as to why women are not applying for management roles in the first place. Many of these reasons have nothing to do with Local Government or in fact any employing organisation – they are to do with culture. If women are not encouraged from an early age within the family to believe in themselves and their abilities it is hard to replace this confidence in the workplace. Women need to know that their contribution matters, that their experiences of being a voluntary worker or running a home are invaluable and to be considered as ‘transferable skills’ and not to be belittled.

Cardinia Shire Council⁵⁶ endorsed the view that it is critical that women are represented in all areas of council because they bring a different perspective to issues to that of their male counterparts, in particular, due to them having more experiences with child-care, kindergartens, schooling, maternal health and out of hours school care, as generally speaking these roles have predominantly been organised by the female member of the household and therefore bring a different perspective to these matters. The stereotypical thinking that only men can do certain duties such as manage staff in predominantly male dominated areas needs to stop.

A comment from Hobart City Council⁵⁷ states that what others may see as an expectation in a role should not restrict the individual’s expectation of how they would perform the role. Women are not recognising that their contribution to a role is approached differently to men. The City of Unley⁵⁸ expressed a strong emphasis on having the right individual for the role along with identifying the skills and experience

⁵⁵ Local Government Managers Australia

⁵⁶ VIC Cardinia Shire Council Submission

⁵⁷ TAS Hobart City Council Submission

⁵⁸ SA The City of Unley Submission

women can give to a role including emotional intelligence – not just based on academic achievements, but life experience. Women need to be confident in themselves generally and that both men and women need to work together in supporting each other regardless of gender was a personal observation/opinion when queried about the gender equity issue. Providing an environment where people are encouraged to extend themselves in both a personal and professional capacity, whilst creating opportunities for life balance was also discussed and deemed important in today’s working climate.⁵⁹

The District Council of Mount Remarkable listed the following as skills that they felt women should have in leadership roles – public speaking, confidence and the ability to make decisions. Along with people skills, continuous improvement approach and an understanding of key issues including legislation, governance and finances⁶⁰.

Findings from the LGMA Pre-Challenge task have identified other ‘invisible barriers’. The Shire of Mundaring⁶¹ found that working mothers in particular may feel a certain stigma that they are taking neither work nor family seriously and suffer from guilt that work takes them away from their family. Part-time workers may feel that there is a lack of respect, or even resentment, among fellow workers who have not accepted the concept of more flexible work arrangements. Other barriers cited including differing management styles, the boys club, traditional biases, women undermining other women and work-life imbalance.⁶²

Manukau District Council⁶³ was one of many Councils that identified a lack of confidence as an additional barrier. Hobart City Council⁶⁴ states, “Women need to be their own best advocates. They need to promote their own skills and achievements, take credit where it is due and market their abilities without compromising their integrity”. As Australia matures and gender distinctions within education and the workplace diminish together with increased expectations of

⁵⁹ SA City of Unley Submission

⁶⁰ SA District Council of Mount Remarkable Submission

⁶¹ WA Shire of Mundaring Submission

⁶² NZ Council Submission

⁶³ NZ Manukau District Council Submission

⁶⁴ TAS Hobart City Council Submission

Generation X and Y one would expect to see women's confidence rise and the number of women in management positions increase. One interviewee from Moreland City Council⁶⁵ felt that the generational perceptions towards women's participation were changing (from Baby Boomers through to Gen X) and that attitudinal changes to issues such as gender equity may evolve as result of generational retirements. Research on the different levels of confidence between men and women is evidenced from men only needing a 50-70% level of confidence before applying for a role versus 110% level of confidence for women.

These 'invisible barriers' could be a contributing factor in the research commissioned by Local Government Management Association and undertaken by McArthur as to why women are simply not applying in the first place⁶⁶. This is endorsed by The United Nations Development Fund for Women who surveyed 500 women regarding equal opportunity. "Of the 500 women polled, 41% flagged domestic commitments, lack of support in the home and the resulting inability to work longer hours and promote themselves professionally, as the major stumbling blocks to gender equality in Australia. Further, more than half reported feeling pressure to conform to traditional female roles within the home". However, career progression of anyone in Local Government can be slowed [halted] when there are no opportunities available at higher levels. This situation does not occur in the private sector where there is generally more flexibility to create positions based on merit. There is a school of thought that suggests low turnover levels of senior staff could be partly attributable to them being on the Defined Benefits Superannuation Scheme which has a knock on effect for career progression for other staff.⁶⁷

To re-enforce the attitude of 'You can do it', women need to be offered an array of support mechanisms such as specific job training, opportunities to trial and act up in alternative roles, self development in terms of presentation, management styles, confidence and assertiveness. Knox City Council⁶⁸ found that to even consider applying for a senior role, discussions had to be held and agreement sought from the

⁶⁵ VIC Moreland City Council Submission

⁶⁶ NSW SHOROC Submission

⁶⁷ VIC City of Melbourne Submission

⁶⁸ VIC Knox City Council Submission

family unit as it was reasonable to expect that the role would impede on the home life.

Certainly, networking either within female dominated groups or cross gender has been to shown to be helpful in addition to formal and informal mentoring. Mornington Peninsula Shire⁶⁹ set up a network group for women to offer networking opportunities, host guest speakers and provide opportunities to raise and discuss issues or concerns such as management pathways, lack of confidence, bullying and harassment. Females in senior positions being champions for this network group for women. Female CEOs were asked what aspects in their working lives had they found the most helpful, they unanimously agreed that having a breadth of experience helped them get senior positions as well as having a 'career champion' throughout their career to act as a mentor. Female role models are very important in encouraging and inspiring other women 'to have a go'. For many, it has been an interesting journey full of challenges to be overcome but their desire to 'make a difference' was a key driver. The benefits of career champions and networking was emphasised by one female CEO as there can be a feeling of isolation at the top. Women need a sense of purpose, a personal vision, ambition, self-belief, personal achievement and happiness.⁷⁰

Other methods to support development opportunities include external secondments in private and public organisations within Australia and overseas.⁷¹

The City of Prospect⁷² found that a conscious decision/desire needs to be made to progress to more senior roles but that there is a perception that the personal cost maybe too high through the lifestyle change that would have to be made to perform at that higher level. The City of Victor Harbor⁷³ noted that women are generally less competitive than men and are generally less likely to expose themselves to the competition present when obtaining management positions.

⁶⁹ VIC Mornington Peninsula Shire Submission

⁷⁰ SA City of Tea Tree Gully Submission

⁷¹ VIC City of Melbourne Submission

⁷² SA The City of Prospect Submission

⁷³ SA City Submission

KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Self Belief

1. Affirming women's rights to be at the table
2. Director noted that self-confidence is the biggest challenge along with a lack of understanding of what is involved in a management role
3. Perceptions that women have about themselves being the main carer of the family and feelings of associated guilt when work-time overlaps family-time
4. Women tend to be more reticent and self critical before actually applying for a job, whereas men tend to submit their application even if all selection criteria are not met
5. Many women sell themselves short and can underestimate their significant experience in fields outside their workplace
6. Some women may feel that they lack the required experience to take on leadership roles, as their current position in Local Government is not in a supervisory capacity. These same women can possess strong organisational and leadership skills developed through family life, volunteer organisations and study/employment, amounting to demonstrated capacity to take on more senior roles
7. Women often have to work harder to prove themselves which can lead to skewed perceptions, making them feel as though they are not worthy of senior roles and as a result may not aspire to them
8. Women shouldn't be threatened by other successful women

Opportunities

9. Lack of opportunity (including access to mentoring, support and networking)
10. Individual's lack of ambition, qualifications or experience
11. Limited number of women in senior management positions as role models
12. The main challenge or issue is opportunity, opportunity for promotion of any staff, not just women, the opportunities simply do not present themselves

Attitudinal Factors

13. Attitudes of others to women in Local Government, as well as women's own attitudes, including a lack of confidence
 14. There is a lack of available research about what role attributes women
-

actually seeking from senior roles

15. Some respondents also noted the high expectations that women place on themselves

16. There seems to be a perception that to be successful at higher levels of leadership women should assume behaviours such as competitiveness and aggressiveness. Very few women interviewed expressed a desire to pursue Executive level positions due to the impact that this would have on their lives, and they were unsure of their ability to effectively manage this

17. Women tended not to promote themselves, avoided conflict, and sought the approval of a group. This made women less likely to be considered for leadership roles, and less comfortable with them, unless encouraged

18. Many women choose part-time or casual work as a balance between family and economic necessity - although personal identity and fulfilment can also be factors

19. There is usually a greater need for women to establish credibility. Women must work hard to afford the same level of respect as their male colleagues

Informal or Formal Support

20. Support received at home was noted in the survey results to also be a key barrier to women achieving higher level management positions

WHAT COUNCILS ARE CURRENTLY DOING

- Scholarships for women (Yarra Ranges Council)
- Scholarships or educational assistance for employees to allow them to further their careers. (City of Melbourne)
- Annual awards gala dinner to celebrate and recognise significant staff contribution and aspiring emerging leaders. (City of Melbourne)
- Mentoring/coaching programs (Hobart City Council)
- Participation in the Tasmanian "Women Can" program for elected representatives (Hobart City Council)
- Emerging Leaders Program to develop leadership skills and behaviours for people who will lead at all levels of Local Government (Hobart City Council)
- Investigating other learning and development initiatives to attract young employees (Hobart City Council)
- Increased participation of women in leadership roles and management roles through initiatives to raise awareness (City of Playford)
- Higher duties opportunities (Council of Mount Barker & Bass Coast Shire Council)
- Workplace Champions
- Teaching people to know themselves, work style, leadership style
- Hobart City Council is a Silver partner sponsor supporting the 2010 Year of

women in Local Government and is committed to: Recognising and celebrating the outstanding achievements of women and provide opportunities for growth and development for all women regardless of age, position and circumstance

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT PRACTICE

Training

1. Introduce business coaching for high performing women
2. Encourage Executive to allocate a training budget to assist women to undertake the “Springboard” program
3. Assertiveness training and negotiation skills development
4. Developmental training, supported by job rotation to encourage higher levels of self confidence and opportunities for advancement
5. Training on gender issues, especially things like sexual harassment and bullying
6. Identify a woman with leadership potential in the organisation to undertake the *Graduate Diploma in Local Government Management (UTS)* each year
7. Coaching women to tackle problems professionally not personally or emotionally
8. Need to prepare for change and plan to accept and prepare for future challenges
9. Addressing confidence barrier of lower level female employees through training

Regional Partnerships

10. Explore partnerships with a range of local organisations which will support gender diversity within the community
11. Establish public and private work exchange programmes

Organisational Strategy

12. Elevator – The Women’s Leadership Incubator – empowering women to fly (delivering advocacy, mentoring, career mapping, fast tracking, training and support services)
13. Support women in break through into non traditional career paths within Local Government
14. Encourage participation in cross – functional projects or secondments to raise confidence levels

Champions and advocacy

15. There is a lack of available research about what role attributes women actually seeking from senior roles
16. Relationship building - individual relationships with team leaders and managers play a significant role in how women are able to seek out and

identify opportunities of growth and development

Imagery and Messaging

17. Include appropriate and positive images of women and families on Council websites and in the local media

18. Work in partnership with local educational establishments to encourage young women to consider a career in Local government

6. PEOPLE MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

In order to encourage and foster leadership amongst women, we must give them permission to seek different pathways and acknowledge that their journey to the top may not replicate that of a male counterpart. In doing this, women should not feel that they have to apologise for requiring different or female specific development opportunities.⁷⁴

The above is a simple statement that belies the raft of beliefs, values, policies and procedures that would need to be put into place to make this a reality. Councils need to review their own values and behaviours, which are generally dependent on the values and behaviours of the leaders irrespective of gender together with a revision of the strategies, policies and practices that are in place within their workforce.⁷⁵ Many practices can be put in place to attract, recruit, retain and encourage women to take up the gauntlet of senior management posts and attain the status of 'Employer of Choice for Women'. However, no matter how well a policy or procedure has been written, if the CEO, senior management team and elected representatives do not believe and actively endorse the idea of 'inclusivity' then nothing will change.

Local Government needs to demonstrate that leaders no longer achieve their position through time served rather than ability. In the past this has led to some leaders being very good in the technical aspects of their role and the management of their areas but lacking in people management experience and knowledge. A perceived lack of opportunities offered by the organisation surrounding professional growth and development has been identified as a significant challenge.⁷⁶

To attract women, Councils can actively promote the positive benefits of becoming employed in Local Government through external sectors and agencies and encourage women in Senior Management roles to share their success and career

⁷⁴ SA City of Charles Sturt Submission

⁷⁵ SA City of Salisbury Submission

⁷⁶ SA City of Charles Sturt Submission

tips through information/discussion sessions with interested staff.⁷⁷ Introduce a 'Women's Portfolio' to the elected members and encourage local media to support flexible working practices to facilitate women in taking up leadership positions.

Other practices include a review of job descriptions to eliminate indirect or direct discrimination statements, review job advertisements, using every opportunity to promote Council as a 'family-friendly' employer. The City of Victor Harbour⁷⁸ endorses that the 'best person gets the job' utilising a selection process based on skills and experience and actively encouraging internal candidates.

Mixed gender interview panels, part-time employment and family carers leave evidence a 'family friendly' attitude toward employees and in particular, women in Local Government.⁷⁹ It was perceived that recruiting more women will encourage other women to apply for positions as they become available, "We often replicate what we can see – if there aren't any women leaders that there is nothing to look up to or to aspire to be"⁸⁰.

In order to retain women, Hobart City Council⁸¹ considers that sideways movements can be important in widening skill sets and increasing the amount of experience women have, all of which will make them more employable in senior positions. Development within the role is just as vital as moving up the corporate ladder.⁸² Another option is to improve flexible working hours practices; i.e. are they really 'best practice'? Understanding the quality of life decisions made by people in the workforce that are not based on remuneration, better use of communication technologies to allow offsite work where other considerations identified in submissions. Potential benefits of more flexible work arrangements are more contented staff, greater staff retention, ability to access skill sets that otherwise may

⁷⁷ SA City of Tea Tree Gully Submission

⁷⁸ SA City Submission

⁷⁹ SA City Submission

⁸⁰ WA Submission

⁸¹ TAS Hobart City Council Submission

⁸² WA City of Gosnells Submission

not be used, creating a culture within the community of being an 'Employer of Choice'.⁸³

Initiatives such as providing software and work email systems from home help alleviate stress and balance the needs of the organisation with the needs of the employee. It means that specialised roles in council do not necessarily require potentially costly contract replacement. These initiatives also inspire confidence in the organisation from the employee as they feel that are a valued resource that the Council wants to retain.

The Pre-Challenge task submissions also recommended establishing a formal secondment programme within and outside the organisation including other Councils, State Government and other organisations to encourage sharing of information and ideas as well as offering development opportunities.⁸⁴ Job rotation at Director level and providing opportunities for Team Leaders to work alongside/shadowing Managers to learn skills and gain experiences.⁸⁵

In response to the The ALGWA 50:50 Vision report⁸⁶ April 2009 findings that on average women earn less than men, Councils will need to review and evaluate current remuneration packages and consider introducing a Job Evaluation system. This is anticipated to result in more females realising their value within the organisation and returning to work. Wages should be paid relevant to the position, qualifications and experience rather than gender. Gender should not be a factor in the equation when creating salary packages. The City of Greater Bendigo⁸⁷ is intending to introduce a more transparent process around classification and banding with a more open process around higher duties, secondments and training opportunities. The City of South Perth⁸⁸ suggests developing clear and transparent succession planning for all positions in the organisation.

⁸³ TAS Council Submission

⁸⁴ VIC Nillumbik Shire Council Submission

⁸⁵ VIC Mornington Peninsula Shire Submission

⁸⁶ Australian Local Government Women's Association 50:50 Vision Report – April 2009

⁸⁷ VIC The City of Greater Bendigo Submission

⁸⁸ WA City of South Perth Submission

A range of Human Resources policies covering working from home, maternity and paternity leave and pay, reduced hours, condensed hours, annualised hours, term time only working, rostered days off are but a few that can be introduced to accommodate the employees' individual needs. Encourage women to return after maternity leave by reviewing child-care arrangements – can Council provide an on-site facility, can partnerships with local providers be negotiated? Promote any benefits that can be salary sacrificed. A case study demonstrated that when Westpac Ltd introduced on-site child-care facilities, the number of women in management positions increased by 200%. Request that meetings be held during the core hours of 10-3pm, which would alleviate safety at night issues and increase attendance of carers⁸⁹. Equal employment opportunity and anti-discrimination are prescribed practices at the City of Victor Harbour Council through policy and procedure documentation⁹⁰.

For many individuals, there is satisfaction in remaining with an employer sympathetic to their home demands. There is little joy for an employee in leaving an organisation to join an employer lacking flexibility in work plans yet enjoying greater remuneration. These elements are what make an 'employer of choice' because staff feel valued and important contributors to the organisation⁹¹.

The bottom line is if the employer provides adequate flexibility, understanding and consistency to its employees, it receives good returns from its employees, regardless of gender, culture or any other potential barrier.

KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Organisational Strategies

1. Lack of specific processes to identify practices which discriminate by gender
2. Management does not move readily, positions do not become vacant too often – there is a block at the top
3. Most managerial positions cannot realistically be job shared by part-time

⁸⁹ VIC City of Melbourne Submission

⁹⁰ SA City Submission

⁹¹ TAS Huon Valley Council Submission

workers. These are factors that could limit individual opportunities for promotion and continue to limit the number of women to entering management positions

4. People who work part-time can occasionally miss out on opportunities for training or to act in a more senior role
5. Attitudes need to become more outcomes focussed, rather than 'time on the job', to allow for women on reduced work hours the same level of respect for performance
6. Women living in rural and remote areas may experience further hardship in this area when they are required to travel long distances to attend work and/or meetings. Coupled with the lack of an allowance for child-care, many women with young children may consider that the financial costs associated with a career in Local Government outweigh the benefits. This is likely to be an issue of heightened concern for single mothers

Policies and Practices

7. Stronger anti-bullying policies necessary
8. Disconnection between policy and actual practices
9. Many staff lose touch with council, their roles and staff when away from the workplace on extended leave
10. Annual performance reviews place the responsibility on employees to seek out opportunities that may be available to them. Many find this difficult and requiring too much confidence to actively identify development opportunities. Managers can be seen as not supportive of career development, effectively stone-walling career progression for some people

Recruitment

11. Male-dominated interview panels where candidates may not feel acceptance, or that their capabilities in the workforce are or will not be recognised
12. Understanding gender differences
13. Lack of female graduates in particular fields
14. Assumptions are made about how a job must be done (i.e. standard working week, in office, 9 to 5), need for a rethink
15. Perception that management roles are not just full-time, they are 24/7
16. Most managerial positions cannot realistically be job shared by part-time

workers. These are factors that could limit individual opportunities for promotion and continue to limit the number of women to entering management positions

Training

17. Access to training

18. Entry level employees (trainees, apprentices) not being provided with exposure to the Organisation and its business, which limits their career planning ability

Remuneration and Salary Packing

19. Gender pay gaps can exist, such as those recognised in a survey of the Public Service in New Zealand which are disincentives for women to seek employment here

Workforce and Succession Planning

20. Minimal investment in management potential of women

21. A Councillor has held off on pursuing new career opportunities due to Council obligations. Without elected responsibilities would be looking to look for a higher position in her chosen field – potential implications for the quality of councillor candidates

22. Most council general managers have moved around – spent time in different councils. This is often harder for women to do. If you are going into a smaller country council there will not be as many job opportunities for your partner so often it comes down to economics

23. Continuing focus on developing high-performing (almost exclusively full-time) employees should not come at the expense of developing the potential of other employees (those that are consistent achievers and those that work part-time)

24. There is little innovation in terms of actively seeking to encourage and develop leaders of either gender, and there is no specified agenda for change in that direction

25. One-dimensional pathways to leadership that do not take into consideration individual circumstances. This is particularly important for women who are more likely to work part-time

26. There is limited opportunity, other than acting positions, to gain the knowledge and experience required or women to set themselves up for

higher level positions

27. Some view that female staff are more loyal to their workplace and less willing to move to take on career advancement. This is an issue as there are limited senior management positions within Local Government

28. Limited information or support about how to remain within the organisation and transition sideways into other areas, particularly for employees feeling pigeon-holed or limited within their existing unit

WHAT COUNCILS ARE CURRENTLY DOING

- Workforce Strategy – to maximise organisational talent and address corporate barriers (Blacktown City Council)
- Leadership Development Strategy – to assist promote and develop leaders within the organisation (Blacktown City Council)
- Learning and Development Strategy – to link the organisations needs with the professional development of staff (Blacktown City Council)
- Work/Life Balance Program (Blue Mountains City Council)
- Springboard for Women program (Sutherland Shire Council)
- Implementation of Women’s Forum Group (Shoalhaven City Council)
- Offering appropriate career support programs for women at the beginning of their careers. These programs focus on career planning and builds self esteem and motivation, as well as providing ongoing mentoring to participants (Hunters Hill Council)
- WIL (Women In Leadership) program – training and development program (Pittwater Council)
- International Women’s Day (Hobart City Council)
- Participation in the ALGWA and local LGMA women’s events (Hobart City Council)
- Women’s Network Group (Pittwater Council)
- Women’s Mentoring Program (Pittwater Council)
- Sustainability of Sutherland Shire Council’s Future Workforce Study
- A to G leadership programme (Auckland City Council)
- Accelerated Development Programme -for employees with demonstrated management capacity (Auckland City Council)
- Job rotation programme, a forthcoming initiative providing for employees to ‘swap’ roles for half a day. This programme could be built on to increase intra organisational understanding of various functions. (Upper Hutt City Council)
- Team Leader Development Forum, Future Leaders programs, Young Business Leaders program. These are not gender specific (City of Charles

Sturt)

- Recent implementation of paid parental leave (City of Charles Sturt)
- Emotional Intelligence assessment of all potential candidates in the recruitment process for any position that requires supervision of staff (City of Charles Sturt)
- An appeal process for unsuccessful internal candidates (Hobart City Council)
- Robust code of conduct to address issues of bullying and harassment
- 48/52 Annual Leave arrangements (Bass Coast Shire Council)
- 14 weeks paid maternity leave (Bass Coast Shire Council)

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT PRACTICE

Organisational Strategies

1. The emotional aspect of the organisation is underdeveloped and not enough investment in leadership training of staff. It will be essential to develop a strategic plan to address these issues before we can effectively market the organisation as an employer of choice
2. Establish a Women's Portfolio within Council and designate a senior staff member to the role
3. Raising gender equity awareness and addressing non-traditional employment areas for women
4. Opportunities to experience the role of the General Manager, attending decision making meetings with the Executive
5. Human Resources Strategy (with specific action plan for women)
6. Assessment Teams – to identify women who have management potential and provide support for their professional development
7. Ensure that all staff are provided with a career plan, including a mentor program if appropriate
8. Add a process to annual staff reviews to highlight where staff may have potential for progression, and to find trends where staff are encountering difficulties with conditions which may make them consider leaving
9. Investigate and trial full time v part-time management positions
10. Ensure awareness of the possibilities to salary sacrifice (e.g. child-care fees, etc)
11. Review of Senior Management job descriptions as each position becomes available to ensure a more open and diverse skill base is brought to these

positions

12. Gather research/evidence to support the notion that the positive qualities the female gender bring to senior management roles will lead to a greater chance of success of organisational goals

13. Look at secondments as opposed to external recruitment (encourage a mentoring process between the usual incumbent and the seconded employee)

14. Provide monetary support and organisational encouragement for women on maternity leave to undertake post graduate study

15. Analysis of annual pay/wages analysis of women against men

16. Examine correlations between employee wellbeing, satisfaction and motivation with key business results

17. "Keep in Touch" Program to facilitate continual communication

18. Develop a register to enable employees to indicate their interest in development roles (e.g. 'acting roles', vacancies) in Council

19. Talent matrix be created to assess the skills of internal employees, which could also be used to facilitate more internal promotions

20. Explore succession planning methods used by high -profile organisations/private industry

21. Acknowledge that some management roles are generalist rather than specific enabling women to apply with their management skills and not knowledge of the section giving them an opportunity to get into traditionally male dominated sectors

22. Readvertise all management, executive management and CEO positions at the end of each contract period

23. Reduce effect of maternity leave on career development

Training

24. Up skilling options and training for women returning from maternity leave

25. Redesigned Code of Conduct training

26. Research the viability of introducing a 'Women into Management' style program similar to Cambridge Council (UK) which has been running for over 15 years and offers gender specific management development

27. Develop and implement an effective gender equity and equality training program (using insight from / based on the UN Human Settlements Program

28. Support a wider network of executive training and mentoring through

secondments and other inter council relationship

29. Provide monetary support and organisational encouragement for women on maternity leave to undertake post graduate study

30. Offer Alliance scholarships to the universities

Recruitment

31. Implement Graduate Recruitment & Development Program

32. Remove confidentiality in performance management process reporting

33. Remove references to hours worked in job descriptions, unless for a valid business reason

34. By measuring achievement by *outputs and outcomes* rather than *hours worked*, the council can become an organisation that truly rewards merit

7. FAMILY FLEXIBILITY

Work-life balance is important to any staff member, but can be particularly difficult for female staff to achieve. As women are in many cases the primary care-givers for children (and increasingly for dependent parents), added family responsibilities can make it difficult for them to see themselves taking on further responsibilities at work. The competing priorities of family and work often results in increased stress levels for women. Stress management and networking initiatives can provide an outlet for expression of frustrations and the opportunity to share personal coping mechanisms whilst strengthening informal support networks among female employees.⁹²

Current work/life balance policies were found to be largely inadequate in terms of recognising the multi-faceted reasons as to why employees require greater flexibility to remain productive and engaged, with individuals having to provide 'legitimate' reasons and justifications for their requests. Unless addressed this will continue to significantly restrict opportunities and creative ways of retaining talented employees, especially younger women and those who have already achieved leadership positions.⁹³

At the Shire of Mundaring⁹⁴, care-giving roles include that of aging parents, as well as children, and they have found that male employees are also availing themselves of the flexible work options to meet work/life balances and care-giving responsibilities. The Shire now promotes family friendly work practices which include working from home (where possible), flexible hours, job-share, informal mentoring and “buddy” systems, with a clear expectation of managers in the shire that they support these work practices.

Child-care is a huge issue for working parents. There is competition for child-care places and the sheer costs can be a disincentive to returning to work. As mentioned in an earlier chapter but is noteworthy of being mentioned again, a case study

⁹² WA Shire of Mundaring Submission

⁹³ SA City Submission

⁹⁴ WA Shire of Mundaring Submission

demonstrated that when Westpac Ltd introduced on-site child-care facilities, the number of women in management positions increased by 200%!

An extract from the Rural City of Wangaratta submission states the following, “Babies and Bosses: Balancing Work and Family Life: (OECD July 2008) it is recognised that “Greater access to formal child-care facilities, subsidised by public authorities can help those parents who wish to engage in paid work to do so”.⁹⁵ This report also highlighted that employers have contributed a great deal to establishing gender equity in the workplace via the introduction of flexible working conditions which allow greater access to the work force by women – particularly during the early years of their children’s lives. Initiatives such as that by the Town of Kwinana⁹⁶, which heavily subsidises the Holiday Program run through the local Recquatic Centre for Primary School age children of staff, can make a difference. Another issue for working parents but not so often highlighted is care for teenagers particularly during school vacation time. Local Government could lobby State and Federal government departments to enhance the provision of child-care subsidies and FBT allowances.

Generally Challenge teams suggest that clear supportive policies encompassing flexible working, alternative career paths and career breaks together with meaningful dialogue between employee and manager will enhance Councils reputation as a ‘Family Friendly’ employer and encourage women into the workforce and develop their careers.

Gender equality policies should aim to improve the family as a whole – not specifically female employees.

⁹⁵ VIC Rural City of Wangaratta Submission

⁹⁶ WA Town of Kwinana Submission

KEY ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Organisational Strategies

1. Maternity leave seen as a 'career killer'
2. Impact on career progression for women accessing extended or carers leave
3. Maternity and other leave may impact on women's career decision making and prevent them from taking up opportunities for advancement
4. Complexities of managing staff who do work from home perceived as difficult – not a viable option
5. There is reluctance to offer mothers home-based work because it had not been done before and because of concerns that other staff would find it unfair
6. Family friendly work practices and a little encouragement, stemming from a genuine interest in the experience and potential of female staff, will go a long way to encouraging women to aspire to higher duties. If senior staff "open the door", and are seen to be doing so, then women are more likely to take the next step
7. Flexible working needs to encompass all staff as it is not women alone who want options to meet work/life responsibilities

Human Resource Policies and Procedures

8. Transparency of flexible arrangements
 9. Flexible hours, part time work and job sharing associated with working mothers is often stigmatised
 10. Flexible working arrangements may not be positively supported by senior management
 11. Flexible working arrangements such as part time, job sharing and working from home is rarely an option for senior managers or in positions requiring staff supervision. Women leave the organisation
 12. Perception that current policies are good at helping women but not geared at the senior or management levels, nor progressing women to these levels
 13. Lack of work flexibility in senior roles. This effectively eliminates females working in part-time roles, or those with external commitments within standard working hours, from going for senior management positions
 14. Consistency with which the family friendly policies and practices were
-

implemented

15. It is important that family-friendly practices are put in place to encourage women to consider taking on higher duties, as well as support men who wish to be more involved in family life

Workforce and Succession Planning

16. Managerial positions are generally full time positions. This causes some difficulties when females make a lifestyle/family choice to work part-time or casual

17. Excessive workloads impacting on the ability of female managers to access RDOs and flexible arrangements where these are not supported by senior management

18. The impact of these factors will also vary at key transition points in women's lives, such as the beginning, or returning to paid employment, having and raising children, and retiring from paid employment

19. Staff returning from parental leave may require assistance in the form of mentoring and managerial support to facilitate a smooth transition back into the workplace

Support for Dependents

20. Cost of child-care and the impact on women and men to seek out management positions or other opportunities for career progression

21. The provision of support for primary and secondary carers in relation to maternity, paternity or aged carer's leave

22. Opportunities for child minding from 3-5pm

23. Maternity Pay

24. Access to crèche for emergencies and maybe school holidays

25. This could change in the future as more men choose to take a larger role in child-care and work part-time

26. Child-care costs can present a significant obstacle - for some, the cost of child-care fees can negate the financial benefit of remaining in the workforce. Salary-sacrificing of child-care fees is already available but limited to a few shires operated services. Alternative child-care arrangements such as shared care in workplace crèches merit consideration

WHAT COUNCILS ARE CURRENTLY DOING

- Stronger negotiation of Enterprise Agreement that provides greater leave options / packages, including increased paid maternity leave (Blacktown City Council)
- Implementation of a home-based work policy (Hunters Hill Council)
- Auckland City Council Flexible Working Policy (open to any employee for any reason, provided the business can accommodate the request)
- Flexible working arrangements and organisation is family orientated organisation (Hobart City Council)
- Increase flexibility within policy to meet needs of individual employees (Hobart City Council)

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT PRACTICE

Organisational Strategies

1. Develop a re-entering the workforce program for all staff returning from extended periods of leave
2. *Flexi-pack employment* - Employment packages that allow for job sharing, flexible hours at work, working from home, child-care provisions and crèche. Promote innovation in linking business and family needs. These packages also change as people grow in the Council, so they can take advantage of new opportunities and changing circumstances
3. Child-Care Assist Program
4. Working from Home Policy – for all genders with a clear guideline on the application and approvals process
5. Dedicated resource to manage a family friendly portfolio
6. Implement Unpaid Family Commitments Leave
7. Encourage acceptance of flexible work practices

Infrastructure Planning

8. Incorporate provision for child-care centre in redesign of Civic Precinct
9. Investigate the possibility of providing a crèche onsite for working parents
10. Arrange 'family rooms' at the work place to cater for staff in need e.g. take family members to appointments. Full work stations are provided in these

rooms, work can be done, whilst having your family in the room

11. Provide a staff canteen and support domestic assistance for working families

Organisational Inclusiveness

12. Be inclusive and invite staff on extended or maternity leave to corporate events and functions and provide opportunities for networking

13. Form a working mothers support group that encourages female staff to share how they balance their work and family life

14. Greater flexibility to work from home for men and women

15. Provide more security and incentives for fathers taking paternity leave so mothers can return to work

16. When existing staff are on leave (maternity or other type), notify them when opportunities come up that might suit them

17. Introduce Keep In touch (KIT) Days for those on extended leave to keep abreast of changes within the workplace and a chance to catch up with colleagues

Communication

18. Flexible Working Agreement Information Kit (distributed at inductions and available on staff intranet)

Child-Care Funding

19. Council is also looking at priority child-care places for staff in council child-care centres and family day care schemes

20. Provide in-house child-care as well as financial support for a flexible range of after-hours child-care arrangements for staff as well as Councillors

8. HOW THE TASK WAS TACKLED

KEY PROCESS STEPS

Group meeting (team composition strategies included both gender and demographic considerations - e.g. baby boomers to Y gen)

Engaged mentor to assist with the process

Assessment of team strengths and weaknesses

Team name developed (and logo)

Task and pathway planning

Sharing the load by allocating tasks aligned with team member strengths or areas of interest

Established materials, data and research log

Collect data, strategies, programs and policies

Environmental scan (what's going on in our organisation) and local issues scoping

Self perceptions inventory

External sources of research and internet searches

Presentations from gender equity specialists (local and state governments)

Data and research analysed for key messages and themes

Determine who to talk to (staff, supervisors, managers, GM, CEO, councillors) and what mix of genders and age groupings

Interview questions developed

Interview techniques for camera, video, blog, in person

Engagement strategies: Staff and team morning tea

Focus groups (working on the safety in numbers theory)

GM given advance copy of interview questions

Staff, councillor and management interviews

Information collated and analysed

Gaps identified

SWOT conducted

Actions and recommendations brainstormed

WAS IT ALL WORTH IT

Participating teams found the Pre-Challenge Task rewarding and stimulating in a number of ways which include:

- Providing an opportunity for a group of specialists from across Council to merge their skills in the completion of a well-focused task
- Brought to the fore the issue of women in Local Government
- Provided an opportunity to engage with senior management and general managers
- Developed a better understanding of the status and issues of women in Local Government
- Relationship building both within the team and with others engaged in the process of preparing the Task.
- Provided a space to be creative, examine issues and develop an action plan capable of affecting an improvement in gender equity within Council
- Stimulated interest and motivation to continue to champion the issue post the completion of the Challenge, some with a vision of seeking Council endorsement of action plans and budget allocations.