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MEDIA RELEASE



Nearly two thirds of women say Australia is dragging the chain on gender diversity - survey

- *65 per cent of women believe Australia's failure to introduce executive gender targets or mandatory board quotas has pushed us behind other countries*
- *Equal pay policies, targets for gender representation and flexible working hours are the leading considerations for women in the upcoming Federal election*
- *Joe Hockey MP to discuss opposition's plan to advance senior leadership and board opportunities for professional women throughout Australia*

Nearly two thirds (65%) of women believe Australia has fallen behind globally in the push to improve workplace gender diversity, a new survey from Executive Women Australia (EWA) has found.

The findings from the online survey of 500 members comes on the eve of EWA's annual leadership symposium, which will host The Hon. Joe Hockey MP, Shadow Treasurer, to discuss the opposition's leadership plans to advance women in executive roles.

The survey also revealed the factors that will sway women this election, with 57 per cent of women saying equal pay policies in the workplace is one of the most important considerations politicians should be addressing in the upcoming federal election.

A further one in two women (51%) labeled targets for gender representation at senior levels of government and corporations an important consideration, while a similar number identified flexible working hours for men and women (50%).

EWA executive director, Tara Cheesman, said the results reflect a feeling of frustration amongst women, who want to see talk transformed into action.

"What we found was a large proportion of women who no longer feel Australia is at the forefront of gender diversity legislation. Many believe we are now a considerable distance behind a range of European countries that are seeing quality results through deliberate top-tier gender initiatives, many of which include mandatory board quotas."

One in five women believe politicians no longer consider gender diversity a priority.

Ms. Cheesman said now is the time for real leadership that can finally overcome a decade of little progress.

"We need a more proactive approach to motivate cultural change, and get to a position where all appointments are based on merit and experience, not gender," she said.

“We need to build toward a future where government, business and women’s groups work together to solve the gender diversity issue in the workplace.”

Ms. Cheesman said that whilst the issues that shape today’s executive gender divide are complicated, that is cultural, social and personal; the solution involves the implementation of specific action areas.

“Beyond the Government’s policies to tackle workplace diversity, it is the broader steps like unbiased recruitment selection processes, setting internal targets, ensuring flexible working hours, improving the parental paid leave scheme and meeting the growing cost of childcare that will level the playing field, and allow women to pursue career opportunities,” she said.

The survey revealed that 50 per cent of woman would be more likely to apply for an executive role with a company if they knew they set high gender diversity standards.

Ms. Cheesman said she was looking forward to hearing the Opposition’s plans to advance career opportunities for executive women on the 30th April, in particular the actions they will take to make change a reality.

For more information about EWA’s annual leadership symposium or future events see <http://www.executivewomenaustralia.com.au/private-events>

What are the most important consideration for women that politicians should be addressing in the upcoming September Federal election?	
Growing cost of childcare/tax deductions for non-registered childcare	39%
Targets for greater gender representation in senior levels of government and corporations	51%
Flexible working hours for men and women	49%
Equal pay policies	57%
Improvement to parental paid leave scheme	14%
Incentives for companies with substantive gender representation	18%
Bridging the superannuation gap for women	44%
Workplace diversity legislation	17%

In recent times some of Australia’s largest companies have set high gender diversity standards. For example NAB has set a target of 30 per cent female board membership by 2015. Would you be more likely to apply for an executive role with a company if you knew they set high gender diversity standards?	
Yes, I would be confident my gender would not be a barrier	16%
Yes, but it would not alleviate all my concerns	23%
Yes, I want to work for a company that is willing to promote women to senior ranks	32%
No, board diversity does not guarantee diversity standards across all executive roles	20
No, the recruitment process would still be dominated by men who prefer male candidates	4%
Other	5%

In the past senior politicians have considered punitive measures to increase board diversity: do you think ‘naming and shaming’ businesses that have poor gender diversity records is a step in the right direction?	
Yes	49.%
No	51%

Seven European countries (Norway, France, Belgium, Iceland, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain) have introduced mandatory board quotas for women and are seeing positive results, with this in mind do you think Australia has fallen behind globally in relation to gender diversity legislation?

Yes, we are no means at the forefront of gender diversity	43%
Yes, and politicians don't consider it a priority	22%
No, larger nations, such as the US, have been lax in implementing such quotas	2%
No, mandatory quotas are not the solution.	33%

The data supplied above reflects preferential responses. Please note question 2 had one point eight per cent lower participation than the other questions.

For more information or to organise an interview with Executive Women Australia please contact Max Hewett or Marnie Sironen on **9256 9700**

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Executive Women Australia (EWA) is a private member based organisation committed to increasing C-level career opportunities for executive women and improving their managerial and societal influence. EWA's program and suite of events tackle two of the major barriers currently contributing to workplace inequity for women: poor C-level representation and a lack of decision-maker connections.

EWA engages like-minded professionals and organisations in an effort to advance Australia's workplace gender diversity up-take and best practice, and to address the current rate of decline of senior female appointments. EWA offers a quality collection of private member and public events, seminars, mentoring programs and social media forums.

Founded in mid-2010, EWA has quickly gained 10,000 online professional participants and is fast becoming one of the nation's leading action-oriented business networks. EWA works with its membership to provide collaborative input to governments, corporations, SME's, non-profits, education and community groups to assist in the development of Australia's workplace diversity solutions.

www.executivewomenaustralia.com.au