

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **LEADERS CALL FOR BOLD ACTION TO ACHIEVE A GENDER EQUAL FUTURE**

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Without intentional and bold action Australia could ‘sleepwalk’ into the future of work - replicating and exacerbating gender inequality, according to a discussion paper released today by the Male Champions of Change (MCC).

[“A Gender Equal Future of Work”](#) describes how leaders are challenging and transforming structures that perpetuate gender inequality as they plan for and manage rapid advances in technology, social and demographic shifts, and increasing consumer, citizen and stakeholder expectations.

The paper also identifies gender equality opportunities and risks that must be addressed if Australia is to compete internationally, according to non-executive director, Glen Boreham AM:

“We are a relatively small country on the world stage. Now is the time to ensure we have in place strategies, systems and structures that are finely tuned to get the very best out of all of our 25 million people.”

Speaking at a forum of 250+ leaders in Sydney, Male Champions of Change founder Elizabeth Broderick AO said leaders can intervene now to re-imagine systems that have previously served to entrench gender inequality.

“Massive social and technological shifts are changing what we do, how and where we work, and the way we learn. We have an unprecedented opportunity to make changes that will ensure future generations of Australians enjoy equal pay, equal access to leadership positions and jobs in high-growth and highly-paid sectors,” according to Elizabeth.

Developed by the MCC Founding and STEM groups, “A Gender Equal Future of Work” urges leaders to prioritise gender equality in their business strategies for now and the future. It also highlights the risks associated with inaction, with women’s representation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) a specific focus.

In a tech-driven era, there is an increasing demand for STEM skills in our workforce. Yet, women comprise as little as 13% of undergraduates in STEM fields such as IT and engineering. This imbalance has the potential to cast a long shadow over future STEM job and leadership opportunities for women.

Chairman of Carnival Australia and MCC STEM Convener, Ann Sherry AO said innovative approaches are required in response to these trends.

“We need to create inclusive environments where women and girls can thrive in STEM right through our education system and into our workforces. We also need to challenge narrow ideas about what a STEM career is to open up a wider pool of potential talent.

“There are creative ways to build a gender-balanced STEM pipeline, for example by working collaboratively across the business and education sectors to retrain and reskill our existing talent pool,” said Ann.

Valuing equality and diversity as drivers of innovation is essential, according to CSIRO CEO, Larry Marshall:

“In a future dominated by Artificial Intelligence, people and culture will determine our direction more than technology. At CSIRO, we’re actively focused on removing barriers to including diverse perspectives in shaping technology, because diversity is the compass to guide us through the ambiguity of innovation.”

As new technologies are developed and come online, we must take care to ensure that existing inequalities are not perpetuated, nor new ones created.

“Training of Artificial Intelligence is sometimes based on data sets and training procedures that reflect a historical male bias. By shifting the way we do things – who we employ, how we think about design, how we train AI - we can mitigate against these in-built biases reflecting a narrow or inequitable world-view,” according to Australia’s Chief Scientist, Alan Finkel.

The paper offers detailed case studies on how organisations such as Qantas, Telstra, MYOB, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Aurecon, Accenture and Australian Nuclear Science Technology Organisation are integrating gender equality into the centre of their business strategies.

Creative responses are required according to Bob Easton, Chairman and Senior Managing Director Accenture Australia and New Zealand:

“We realised the current pipeline of women in STEM at universities would not meet our demand for 50/50 recruitment targets, so we are taking women with diverse qualifications and training them in core technology skills and applications. It’s opening up a lot of new opportunities for our graduates.”

More broadly, the paper calls for strategies to achieve gender-balance in all sectors. This includes specifically attracting both women and men into careers in traditionally-gendered industries.

All leaders are invited to consider bold new experiments - taking advantage of the disruption happening today – to advance their business results and achieve gender equality for future generations.

### **About Male Champions of Change**

The Male Champions of Change is a coalition of CEOs, Secretaries of government departments, Non-Executive Directors and Community Leaders. The Male Champions of Change believe gender equality is one of the most significant societal and economic issues.

Established in 2010, by then Australian Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, our mission is to step up beside women to help achieve a significant and sustainable increase in the representation of women in leadership. The coalition includes over 208 leaders across business and government in Australia and Internationally. In Australia our leaders employ some 732,000 people, representing 6 percent of the Australian workforce.

The Male Champions of Change in STEM is supported by the Australian Government’s National Innovation and Science Agenda.

### **Read the paper**

<http://malechampionsofchange.com/take-practical-action/a-gender-equal-future-of-work/>

### **For more information or to arrange an interview with:**

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