

MEDIA RELEASE

MORE WOMEN, IMPROVED WORKPLACES ESSENTIAL FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

FRIDAY 7 DECEMBER 2018

Leaders of Fire and Emergency Services across Australia and New Zealand have for the first time released detailed data highlighting the significant under-representation of women in the sector.

The Male Champions of Change Fire and Emergency Progress Report 2017/18 shows women's representation across the workforce sits at 22% overall.

Of particular concern, women make up only 7% of management roles in frontline service delivery – these operational roles include firefighters which are on the critical pathway to many senior leadership and executive level positions in the sector. 10% of current operational executives (Key Management Personnel) in Fire and Emergency Services are women.

According to the report, concerted effort is required to attract, retain and advance more women in the Fire and Emergency Services sector. The group's Chair, Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner Kristen Hilton says that staff and volunteers have helped the Champions of Change to identify a clear path forward.

"Many of those consulted by the Champions over the past year reported facing cultures and systems not always geared to support them, while others still experience everyday sexism, discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace.

"We heard that the workforce is looking for a more inclusive style of leadership that ensures welcoming, safe and respectful environments for all. This includes supporting people to call out behaviours that are out of step with modern workplaces and in some instances harmful. It also means holding people to account.

"Flexible workplace practices consistent with current community expectations and the needs of staff and volunteers are also essential in creating fairer workplaces where women and men are able to better balance work and caring responsibilities."

"Our fire and emergency services play a vital role in keeping our community safe. This group is an important step towards recognising what needs to change and how. The sector and the community will benefit from organisations that are fairer, more diverse and great places for both men and women," says Kristen.

The Fire and Emergency Services Champions of Change include Chief Executives, Commissioners, Chief Fire Officers and Fire Managers responsible for fire, emergency and land management for 29 agencies working across metropolitan, regional and rural areas. They lead 288,000 staff and volunteers across Australia and New Zealand.

The group was established with the support of the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Council (AFAC) which represents the sector. Chief Executive Stuart Ellis AM says women are integral to the sector's future workforce requirements.

“The traditional roles of firefighter and emergency service responder are changing, particularly as the community increasingly demands an equal focus on prevention, preparedness, incident response and recovery.

“In order to meet those expectations and access the best talent, we need to debunk the prevailing stereotype that the best people for these jobs are men.”

Actions taken so far by the group include a commitment to increase women’s representation to at least 30% on major industry leadership and policy forums by the end of 2019, towards 40% by the end of 2020.

The group is also “auditing” the way it represents the services it provides to ensure they reflect and promote the range of roles available to women, including as firefighters and members of emergency response teams.

With baseline gender representation data now available, the Champions of Change will track and report year-on-year progress.

The report includes case studies of innovative programs and initiatives underway to attract, retain and advance more women to the Fire and Emergency Services.

Read the report

[Male Champions of Change Fire and Emergency Progress Report 2017-2018](#)

For more information or to arrange an interview with:

- Stuart Ellis AM, Chief Executive Officer at Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Council

Please contact:

Julie Bissinella, Communications Director
Male Champions of Change on 0478 199 791
julie@malechampionsofchange.com

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 210 leaders across business and government in Australia and Internationally. In Australia our leaders employ some 753,000 people, representing 6 percent of the Australian workforce.