

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Time for a sharper focus on gender equality in corporate giving: Champions of Change and AIIW

5 October 2021



Corporate giving could become a powerful lever for accelerating gender equality according to the recommendations in a new resource released today by Champions of Change Coalition and Australians Investing In Women.

*Sharpening Our Focus on Corporate Giving: Keeping Gender Equality in the Frame* sets out a framework to assess corporate giving and community partnership programs to better understand the beneficiaries of the money, time, product and in-kind investment given to the not-for-profit sector to assist and solve some of the most challenging social issues in our communities.

“We need to pull every lever to achieve gender equality. Philanthropic dollars are limited – being more intentional about bringing women and girls into focus brings the greatest opportunity for social change,” **Sam Mostyn AO, Chair, Australians Investing In Women.**

“When people want money there is a great opportunity to drive cultural change. There is a vital responsibility and unique opportunity to shape the program you are supporting for the power of good. If an organisation is provided with funding there should be gender strings attached,” says **Professor Doug Hilton AO, Director WEHI.**

The Australian not for profit sector includes almost 60,000 registered charities, employing 1.38 million people (11 % of the workforce) and engaging 3.6million volunteers<sup>1</sup>. The sector is regulated by the Regulated by the Australian Charities and Not For Profit Commission (ACNC).

Corporate giving in Australia is estimated to range between \$4.5billion<sup>2</sup> to \$17.5 billion<sup>3</sup>, depending on what is measured and included. Independent studies show the top 50 Australia Corporate givers donated a total of \$1.1billion in 2020<sup>4</sup>.

Although many organisations are reporting their giving activity in sustainability reports, companies are not required to report donations in a consistent way that allows direct comparison or gender analysis.

### Testing the equity in corporate giving

Over the past year, Champions of Change Coalition Members and Australians Investing In Women have worked in consultation with leaders in the not-for-profit sector, to identify the potential opportunities for corporate giving programs to accelerate gender equality.

Corporate giving practices and processes were reviewed to understand the extent corporate giving is benefitting women and girls\* equitably compared to men and boys, and also to determine if well-meaning ‘gender neutral’ giving programs were underserving women and girls unintentionally.

Working closely with not-for-profits including OzHarvest, STREAT, Foundation for Young Australians, Foundation for Regional & Rural Renewal, Stars Foundation, Community Council for Australia and large corporate foundations, Members of the Champions of Change Coalition and AIIW considered: how organisations address gender equality in their giving strategies; the importance of data to understand the impact and outcome of corporate giving across all programs; and the potential for giving processes to be adapted to build in an intentional focus on women and girls.

The review found that many organisations prioritise gender equality in their own business but do not take an intentional approach to gender equality in their corporate giving strategy or the programs they support.

“Oz Harvest is run like any large business we are data driven and have hundreds of corporate partners. Gender equality has never featured in the questions from our funders about who their giving benefits. I see there is a huge opportunity to collaborate and be more intentional about giving as a lever for gender equality,” said **Ronni Kahn Founder and CEO OzHarvest**.

## Gender equality is a strategic priority but not one that is consistently and intentionally supported through corporate giving

In many organisations, in spite of a strategic commitment to gender equality, there is a surprising lack of understanding in leadership teams of how the causes they are funding impact or are benefitting women and girls.

“We must acknowledge that many of us really haven’t applied a gender lens on our corporate giving – it has been a blind spot,” **Graham Ashton AM APM**

Programs that support women and girls specifically, such as education or supporting people experiencing domestic and family violence, feature in many organisation social impact activities, however the value or proportion of these programs is rarely measured or reported with any degree of certainty.

“At STREAT we are really passionate about evidence-based practice, as are many non-profits. I am often really surprised at how little funders ask us for a bigger data set including gender. I would really encourage funders to ask the projects that they fund for more data so they can get that bigger picture as well,” said **Rebecca Scott CEO and Co-Founder STREAT**.

‘Gender neutral’ best describes the approach of most corporate giving strategies, driven by an effort to be as inclusive as possible. This approach assumes that gender doesn’t come into play, in issues such as environment or animal welfare, or that women and girls make up a large or equal proportion of the impacted population, such as First Nations or homeless people, so by default they benefit equally. But this is rarely tested.

“When we focus on the theme of gender equity - giving for women and girls - we actually meet so many needs, unify so many different motivations. Why not use this in your tool-box as the reason for giving?” says **Tim Costello AO, Chair Community Council for Australia**.

“In our experience as a beneficiary of funding, where giving is done with a gender lens, we’ve been challenged to think more boldly, not just about the way we ensure female scientists flourish, but also to ensure the research we do doesn’t have any unintended consequences in perpetuating gender inequity in the workplace,” **Professor Doug Hilton AO, Director WEHI**.

## Keeping gender equality in the frame

*Sharpening Our Focus on Corporate Giving: Keeping Gender Equality in the Frame* addresses the potential of considering women and girls in every social issue and demonstrates how intentional corporate giving with a gender lens:

- ◆ supports both priority issues and gender equality
- ◆ understands how issues specifically affect women and girls
- ◆ safeguards against women and girls being overlooked at critical times
- ◆ invests in solving the problems for the long term

“It’s not about only giving to women and girls, or giving more, it’s about being intentionally equitable in our giving to every cause,” says **Elizabeth Broderick AO, Founder Champions of Change**.

“Equitable giving starts with the question how will your giving benefit women and girls,” says **Julie Reilly OAM, CEO Australians Investing In Women**.

“Gender equality can’t be left to chance or be the responsibility of one individual – gender equality must be built into our systems and processes including corporate giving,” says **Tony Frencham Senior Group Director Worley**.

The framework also includes a staged approach and practical actions for organisations and not-for-profits to work together to ensure corporate giving becomes a powerful lever to accelerate gender equality in society.

“It’s more important than ever that business takes a leading role in helping to address the big issues in our society like gender inequality. Collaboration with not-for profit partners is fundamental. Working together we have more impact on complex social problems than when we are working alone,” says **Tom Seymour CEO PwC Australia**.

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## Champions of Change Coalition

The Champions of Change Coalition includes CEOs, secretaries of government departments, non-executive directors and community leaders who believe gender equality is a major business, economic, societal and human rights issue. Established in 2010 by Elizabeth Broderick AO, our mission is to step up beside women to help achieve gender equality and a significant and sustainable increase in the representation of women in leadership.

[championsofchangecoalition.org](http://championsofchangecoalition.org)

## Australians Investing In Women

Australians Investing In Women is a leading national not for profit organisation that advocates for gender wise philanthropy. AIW encourages all Australians – particularly philanthropic corporate and community leaders – to apply a gender lens to their giving and increase investment in women and girls, to help create a fairer and more inclusive society.

[aiiw.org.au](http://aiiw.org.au)

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Charities and Not-for-Profit Commission (ACNC) 2021. *Australian Charities Report*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition

<sup>2</sup> McLeod, J 2018. The Support report – The changing shape of giving and the significant implications for recipients, JBWere.

<sup>3</sup> Burns, W, Wang, S and Arias, D 2017. Business Giving and volunteering. Giving Australia 2016, report series commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Social Services. Sydney NSW: Centre for Corporate Public Affairs, The Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies, Queensland University of Technology, and the Centre for Social Impact Swinburne, Swinburne University of Technology.

<sup>4</sup> Miles, J 2020. Giving Large Report 2020, Strive Philanthropy.

\* The terms ‘women and girls’ includes all cisgender, transgender, non-binary and intersex people who identify as women.