MEDIA RELEASE

Clear system shifts required to solve gender pay gaps

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The first year-on-year employer gender pay gap data released by the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) should shift attention from headline figures to the systems producing them, according to Champions of Change Coalition. One of those systems is Australia's entrenched workforce gender segregation.

Champions of Change Coalition welcomes WGEA's latest data release, which gives a clear view of improvements made and where systems are still holding back progress.

Founder Elizabeth Broderick AO said gender pay gaps reveal specific patterns that can help employers and sectors better target their action.

"Gender pay gaps reflect how work is organised, who works where, who progresses, who holds the highest-value roles and how caring responsibilities interact with and impact opportunities for remuneration and reward," Ms Broderick said.

"We are now at a point where if we want to achieve better results, we must redesign the systems that produce them."

Champions of Change Coalition Member data reveals three persistent structural drivers of gender pay gaps:

- Entrenched occupational gender segregation across industries and roles
- Concentration of men in high-value, revenue-driving and CEO-feeder positions
- The ongoing economic impact of unequal unpaid caring responsibilities on women's career progression, remuneration and economic security.

Australia remains one of the most gender-segregated labour markets in the OECD. According to Jobs and Skills Australia, only around 21 per cent of Australians work in a gender-balanced occupation, and nearly 70 per cent of occupations have remained at the same level of segregation for more than 15 years. Skills shortages intensify as segregation deepens, with the most acute shortages occurring in highly male-dominated occupations.

Chief Executive Officer Julie Bissinella said Champions of Change Members are focusing on these gender equality 'tough spots' that cannot be solved by working in isolation.

"Across our Members and the economy, workforce gender segregation remains one of the core drivers of pay gaps. It shapes who enters which roles, who progresses, and who gains the experience that leads to Executive and CEO positions. Redesigning these pathways is critical to solving skills shortages, building women's economic security and closing gender pay gaps."

In response to these structural dynamics, Champions of Change is sharing a national intervention model to help disrupt stagnation in the labour market and solve gender segregation at work. It is practical, evidence-based and designed for adoption.

Developed through the Champions of Change STEM and Health Group and about to be piloted in engineering, this whole-of-system approach can be scaled across other gender segregated sectors at the heart of our economy including energy, construction, technology and care.

Chief Executive Officer of Engineers Australia Romilly Madew said addressing gender segregation in engineering is essential to closing gender pay gaps and meeting future workforce demand.

"Engineering is fundamental to Australia's economic strength and future prosperity. Engineers are central to delivering the energy transition, critical infrastructure, advanced manufacturing, digital capability and innovation across health and industry. Yet engineering remains one of the most gender segregated professions in Australia, limiting workforce capacity at a time of acute and escalating skills shortages.

"While other traditionally male-dominated sectors have shown that accelerated progress is possible, the trajectory of change will remain glacial in engineering without a national and systemic intervention. It requires collaborative action across industry, government and academia focused on systemic and sustainable change," according to Romilly.

Chair of Champions of Change Coalition Andrew Stevens said this is an economic issue that all Boards should be interrogating.

"If you care about productivity, capital allocation and leadership depth, you should care about what is driving your gender pay gaps. Instead of an annual number to review, Boards must treat gender pay gaps as a governance issue. They can signal succession risk, labour supply risk and capital allocation risk."

To accelerate change, the Champions of Change is supporting organisations and sectors with practical strategies and tools, including:

- The *Organisational Gender Equality Dashboard*
- Solving gender segregation at work national intervention model
- Securing diverse and inclusive CEO pipelines
- Building workplace systems that recognise and support shared caring responsibilities.

Champions of Change Coalition's updated *2025 Impact Report*, including Member gender pay gap data, will be published soon.

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About Champions of Change Coalition:

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 Australia's then Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick AO, the Coalition is today globally recognised as a leadership strategy that drives progress on gender balance, respectful workplaces, and inclusive gender equality in decisions and design processes. Last year marked 15 years of Champions of Change Coalition, a milestone that reflects our shared commitment to bold leadership and sustained action on gender equality across workplaces, sectors and society. Together, the Coalition's Members represent almost a million employees across every major sector. Our goal is to achieve inclusive gender equality across workplaces by 2030. Learn more: https://championsofchangecoalition.org/