

21 March 2019

## Women in Rail Lunch – Melbourne



Over 400 rail industry employees heard a number of highly qualified speakers discuss the value of a gender balanced workforce at the ARA's 5<sup>th</sup> Women in Rail lunch.

We would like to extend thanks to our sponsors Metro Trains Melbourne and Transdev, as well as the event team at the RACV city club.

The event chair, Bradley Giddins of the Level Crossings Removal Project, opened the event, highlighting the importance of rail striving to be to become an "industry of choice" rather than relying on each individual organisation to act as an "employer of choice".

Keynote speaker, Professor Rae Cooper, Associate Dean of Programs at the University of Sydney Business School, outlined key findings of her research into women and work: That being treated with respect and job security were paramount issues for women; even more important than salary, variety and flexibility. Factors influencing future success at work included having the right skills and qualifications, access to flexibility, paid family leave and access to support and mentoring.

Professor Cooper also described a study of women working in hyper-masculine occupations, (investment managers, pilots and the auto trades) that found that women had strong technical abilities and were impactful at work; that there were workplaces with good managers and strong cultures supporting women, and that women actively sought them. However, there was also evidence of peers and managers undermining women's technical capabilities making them feel like 'outsiders', and unfriendly cultures and management in relation to parenting and flexibility at work. These workplaces need to break norms and become more flexible to attract and maintain more diverse workers

Dr Bridie O'Donnell, Director of the Office of Women in Sport and Recreation in Victoria shared the significant challenges to achieving gender equity in sport. Dr O'Donnell urged the audience to embrace 'becoming students again' in order to grow and learn, despite recognising that "women get a lot of [unneeded] advice on how to do things better". She also highlighted the importance of challenging both the current systems and processes to bring about change. The rail industry can learn much from the "change our game" campaign that her office is currently undertaking.

Metro Trains CEO Raymond O'Flaherty provided perspective of initiatives occurring from within the rail industry. He outlined MTM's initiatives to increase female participation in all aspects of their business, to achieve the target of 40% of all positions being filled by women within 8 years.

Diversity champions, Paul Birch of Transdev and Natalie Kobica of V/Line, answered insightful questions from the chair around their experiences with diverse workplaces. Natalie highlighted the importance of having strong mentors support

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her. Paul drew on his experience around the globe to show that rail needs to “stop trying to recruit from the same pool” and look for a new diverse workforce in order to continue growing. Transdev are leading by example in this regard and have recently been named as one of the top 50 graduate employers nationwide.

ARA CEO Danny Broad updated participants on the establishment of the ARA’s Young Leaders Advisory Board and the work of the Women in Rail Advisory Committee which is implementing the ARA’s Women in Rail Strategy. The Strategy has four key focus areas which are being addressed through a number of initiatives:

1. National Benchmarking - two studies over 12 months to see how the industry is tracking with progress.
2. Attraction & Promotion – ‘you can’t be what you can’t see’, to this end, the ARA are showcasing diversity champions via a number of communication channels over the coming months.
3. Improved Networks - through events such as this Women in Rail lunch.
4. Retention - which focuses on Mentoring & Leadership.

Danny Broad and Raquel Rubalcaba, Chair of ARA’s Women in Rail Advisory Committee then launched the Women in Rail Mentoring Program. This will be a 6-month pilot program for up to 30 women across Australia and New Zealand. The program will facilitate professional and personal development and support career progression, and provide industry insights, practical career advice and cross-fertilisation of ideas throughout industry. Applications will be taken from late April. Expressions of interest can be lodged at [programs@ara.net.au](mailto:programs@ara.net.au).



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