

31 May 2018

## Women in Rail - Perth

Individuals and organisations from across the Rail sector in the West met to recognise the importance and value of gender equality in the Australasian rail workforce and to acknowledge the challenges that as an industry we need to overcome to foster a culture of appropriately championing women in rail.

The Hon Rita Saffioti MLA, Minister for Transport; Planning; Lands, provided the keynote address to delegates. The Minister championed for more women to be represented in rail, particularly in operational areas, and noted the positive impact diversity has on business improvement. The Minister encouraged organisations to have family friendly workplaces flexible enough to meet the increasing expectations placed on parents and carers.

Anna Dartnell, Customer Experience Group Manager of Bis Industries and National Association of Women in Operators Board member, facilitated the panel discussion with representatives from across the industry on a variety of topics.

Rebecca Penglase, Superintendent for Planning and Reliability at Rio Tinto indicated that the Australian Rail Industry needs to improve perceptions to showcase the diversity of roles that exists and change stereotypes that you need to be a male to undertake specific roles in the industry. Rebecca also noted that the industry would benefit from improving return to work arrangements and providing more flexible workplaces for parents and care givers.

Cathryn Hornby, Customer Account Principle at Arc Infrastructure shared that resentment can exist towards quotas and women specific initiatives when the benefits of gender equality are not recognised or believed to be at the expense of men.

Richard Wales, GM Networks and Infrastructure at Western Australia's Public Transport Authority, recognised that men are often naïve about the challenges women face and need to be more proactive and supportive in ensuring a non-discriminative workplace.

Melinda McDonald, Continuous Improvement Lead and Chairperson WAIO Inclusion & Diversity Council at BHP encouraged organisations to promote positive gender inclusion stories and highlighted the benefits of supporting women via mentoring, sponsorship and/or shadowing

Following the panel session, delegates identified organisational aspects to address and strategies that they would commit to undertaking to ensure a gender balanced rail workforce. These commitments included:

- Provide easier access to flexible work arrangements or job-sharing arrangements, recognise individuals' circumstances and tailor arrangements accordingly.
- Create environments that encourage and support women.
- Provide opportunities for women to try new roles or take on new challenges.
- Provide mentoring or shadowing opportunities.
- Review remuneration policy to encourage equal pay for equal roles.
- Provide parental (incl. carer of family or adoption) paid leave for males and females.
- Review recruitment practices to ensure non-bias.
- Ensure no bias in identifying personnel for upskilling, and encourage training and development opportunities.
- Establish forums for more open discussion on gender diversity and encourage male leaders/workers to improve their awareness of diversity and inclusion issues.
- Provide an interactive career day where potential applicants can try specific roles.
- Challenge the mindsets of supervisors with influence of current teams that include females doing track work and promote equal leadership opportunities.

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