

8 March 2017

Women in Rail - Melbourne

Individuals and organisations from across the Australasian rail industry met in Melbourne on 8 March 2017 to mark International Women's Day and to discuss increasing the representation of women in the rail industry. Panel Facilitator Deborah Spring, Chair of Rail Safety and Standards Board (RISSB) explained that women represent 17% in the Australian rail workforce and that this forum provided an opportunity to share ideas in how we can collectively improve the gender balance.

Key points by Guest Speakers:

Victorian Minister for Transport and Minister for Major Projects, the Hon Jacinta Allan MP

- Consider the factors blocking women's participation in the Australian rail workforce, including the impact of family violence victims participation in the workplace
- The Victorian Government has encouraged a gender diverse workforce via their Gender Equality Strategy and Gender Equality Procurement Guidelines.

Howard Collins, CEO, Sydney Trains

- Unbiased gender recruitment
- Commitment to recruiting more female senior managers
- Recruitment agencies need to better support the industry's commitment to increase female participation
- Leadership has to come from the top.

Michelle Doolan, Civil and Environmental Engineer Rail Infrastructure Unit, Aurecon

- Challenge stereotypes to influence the public perception of rail industry jobs
- Rail needs innovation to keep pace of change and diversity supports this
- Consider gender blind recruitment models
- Personal experience of a supportive industry with appropriate mentoring.

David Irwin, CEO, Pacific National

- Celebrate the women currently in the rail industry
- Highlight the benefits of a gender balanced workforce
- Establish a clear intent to make a difference – be more deliberate; think more holistically.

Key points by attendees:

Following the panel session, delegates identified organisational aspects to address and strategies that they would commit to, to ensure gender diversity in the rail workforce. These actions are grouped in the six key themes below:

1. Mentoring

- Identify a 'sponsor': Senior leaders within their organisation to identify 'up & comer' women to coach and mentor and/or incorporate into a mentoring/coaching program
- Cadet program
- Women succession planning for all roles
- Inclusive leadership training.

2. Recruitment

- Blind recruitment process to ensure best fit for the job

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COMMUNIQUE

- Recognise biases and rectify
- Better advertise job opportunities
- 50/50 gender equality on recruitment shortlists
- Pay equality
- Actively changing the representation of senior management teams to 50/50 gender balance
- Flexible work policies to be advertised (and delivered) for both male and female employees.

3. Branding and promotion

- Increase visibility and recognition of women in the industry
- Community education and engagement
- Celebrate organisational successes and share stories and case studies
- Industry ambassadors and campaigns
- Promotion of rail opportunities to women's networks/forums – engage with broader stakeholders to increase awareness
- Establish a local chapter of WTS International an organisation that supports the advancement of women in transport
- Promote the benefits of diversity.

4. Organisational culture & support

- Need to change the traditional industry mindset/culture
- Incorporate incentive programs to target females (childcare, gym memberships, sports competitions, etc)
- Gender mainstreaming – gender considered in all aspects of the business
- Flexible working conditions and flexible (rostering or office) hours: utilise technology; remote working; regional connection; trust is key
- Incorporate 'diversity' training at all levels
- Need to lose the 'clock on, clock off' mentality
- Unconscious bias awareness training
- Increase automation and reduce manual handlings
- Better support and respond to victims of domestic violence
- Reframe the question – not why so few women but why so many males.

5. Advocacy in schools/unis

- Provide work experience
- Engage early - in schools/high schools
- Support university development program with technology innovation projects in labs and provide female engineers to coach and mentor undergraduates
- More apprenticeships and other pathways into rail organisations
- Career pathways for university students and non-university students
- Joint government and industry sponsored cadetships supported by government/business
- Scholarship programs to promote women
- Career pathway planning.

6. Accountability

- Procurement policy change – 30% diversity target to win future projects
- Measure and set KPIs (or recruitment and retention).

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