



The Case for a Champions of Change Coalition Rail Group

1. The time is right to try something new

- ◆ There is a strong business case for advancing gender equality and inclusion in the rail sector:
 - Building a larger pipeline will help overcome talent shortages.
 - Organisations with diverse workforces perform better.
 - New legislation has created enhanced requirements on organisations to take proactive measures to advance gender equality (e.g. positive duty to prevent sexual harassment; pay gap data transparency).
 - Stakeholder expectations have shifted over the past decades with heightened scrutiny by customers, communities and shareholders on organisations' efforts/outcomes on cultural factors.
- ◆ Existing efforts haven't delivered to date:
 - Progress has been slow. Women currently represent 24% on average across the various sectors of the Australian and New Zealand industry. At the current rate of change, we will not see gender parity in our industry for another 20 years.
 - Promising initiatives are underway, led by ARA, but these require a "doubling down/turbo-charge" if we are to shift the dial.
- ◆ There is significant interest/appetite among organisations and CEOs that is ripe for capitalising.

2. The Champions of Change Coalition has the credentials to deliver, as a nationally and globally recognised strategy for accelerating progress on inclusive gender equality

- ◆ The strategy has stood the test of time. It has been in operation for 14 years and has grown from 8 Members to over 260 Members across 14 Groups.
- ◆ The strategy includes a prominent/high profile Member base: 27 top 300 ASX-listed Members and prominent brands including (Telstra, CBA, Unilever, AFL, Tennis Australia, Amazon, Rio Tinto, AGL.)
- ◆ The strategy includes a diverse Member base: Over 30 industries, and organisations of all sizes from SMEs to large listed and multinational companies.
- ◆ Rail will join other sectors that have partnered the Champions of Change Coalition to accelerate the pace of change (Property, Insurance, Energy, Sport, Architecture, Engineering consulting, Health, STEM and Fire and Emergency sectors). For example, most recently the Energy sector has partnered with the Champions of Change to help 'build in' gender equality to the transition to net zero and has increased Group participation from the industry by a further 27% within its first year.
- ◆ The strategy has proven results:
 - The Coalition's annually reported progress demonstrates improved gender equality metrics across Member organisations in their Annual Impact Report.
 - Members of the Champions of Change take more action and subsequently attract and retain more women across their organisations (outperforming WGEA national benchmarks for action). Moreover, Impact Report



results have shown the Coalition increasing gender balance in leadership across every classification - from increased number of female CEOs, to non-managers and overall employees.

- 90% of reporting Members achieved or moved closer to gender balance in 2023.
- When Members from a sector work together, they outperform those who are not participating in the strategy. The Coalition’s Property Members have an average of 7.3% greater representation of women in leadership roles than the rest of their industry.
- The Coalition’s Founding Group has seen the number of women CEO’s rise to 35% in 2024, up from 8% in 2019.
- The Coalition has led the development of a suite of leading edge approaches, considered global best practice standards (see disruptive actions on page 10 and 11 of the Champions of Change [Overview document.](#))
- ◆ The strategy has received national and international recognition:
 - The Coalition was profiled by the UN Secretary General’s Panel on Women’s Economic Empowerment as a high-impact strategy for global scaling.
 - The Coalition builds and maintains close partnerships with national institutions, for example: the Federal Minister for Women; PM&C Office for Women; Chief Executive Women; Diversity Council of Australia; and Women’s sector civil society organisation (including Our Watch, community legal centres and national women’s alliances).
 - The Coalition builds and maintains close partnerships with international institutions, for example: UN Women; UN Global Compact; World Economic Forum.

3. The Champions of Change Coalition offers a unique value proposition that differentiates from other “D&I” initiatives

- ◆ Personal leadership development opportunity:
 - Intimate, CEO-only forum to learn about complex challenges in a “safe” and confidential peer-environment. This is an unreplicable safe, peer-to-peer participating space without competitive boundaries to share insights, strategies, and successes, igniting motivation to drive sustainable change within their businesses.
 - Access to peer accountability and sharing (e.g. transparent sharing of challenges/lessons learned) within the Group but also across the Coalition Membership.
 - Curated expert presentations to support CEO insights (e.g. past speakers include Professor Amy Edmonson on psychological safety; nobel-prize nominated human rights advocates; senior-most Australian business and government leaders).
 - Personal coaching/advice from Group Chair, Program Director and broader Champions of Change team.
- ◆ Innovation hub to identify and support effective action:
 - Access to 14 years of Champions of Change Coalition insights/IP on what works and what doesn’t.
 - Access to programs/policies/practices from across the Membership base.
 - Facilitated working groups on cutting edge strategies.
 - A “pick your journey” approach, whereby Members can focus on initiatives with Champions of Change that align with their existing priorities (vs new/onerous or duplicative efforts).
 - Access to hundreds of thousands of pro-bono support from top-tier consulting firms who are Members (McKinsey, Bain, KPMG, EY, PwC, Deloitte).



- A strong and tight-knit community/network for Member organisations’ Implementation Leaders to leverage for practical support and/or professional development.
- ◆ Opportunity for amplified impact through collaboration:
 - Groups working together on joint initiatives to lift industries as a whole. For example: coordinated pipeline projects; development of industry standards of practice; coordinated efforts to articulate the industry’s value proposition to potential employees. For further detail see our [Annual Impact Reports](#).
 - Coalition-wide initiatives to deliver national impact.

4. The Champions of Change offers a unique methodology/operating model that differentiates from other “D&I” initiatives

- ◆ CEO commitment:
 - Without CEO commitment, gender equality initiatives will fail. There is no other initiative (in Australia or internationally) that engages at the CEO-level to drive practical change (vs advocacy).
 - The CEO’s commitment isn’t just a symbolic gesture - by actively participating in the strategy. CEOs become the driving force that propels tangible progress, rolling up their sleeves to address challenges head-on.
- ◆ Transparency and Accountability:
 - By measuring impact yearly, the strategy holds CEOs, organisations, and the Rail sector accountable to advancing gender equality, ensuring that progress is not only sustained but accelerated.
 - This also helps build the ‘social licence to lead’ on the issue.
- ◆ Listen, learn and lead methodology:
 - Compared to other strategies and initiatives which are advisory and advocacy based, the Coalition’s listen, learn and lead methodology fosters a deep connection between the head and heart, ensuring that actions taken are not only authentic but also lasting.
- ◆ Holistic work plan, covering all key pillars of D&I efforts:
 - Representation and pipeline (attraction, recruitment, retention).
 - Organisations can ensure they attract, recruit, and retain diverse talent from all backgrounds, fostering innovation and creativity while reflecting the diversity of your customer base and community.
 - Cultures of safety respect inclusion and belonging (everyday respect, sexual harassment prevention and response, supporting carers).
 - These are cultures that go beyond mere compliance; they create environments where every employee feels valued, respected, and empowered to bring their whole selves to work, ultimately enhancing morale, productivity, and employee retention.
 - Organisation footprint (impact on customers, communities and stakeholders).
 - Designed for its impact on customers, communities, and stakeholders, organisations demonstrate commitment to corporate social responsibility and ethical leadership, strengthening trust and loyalty among stakeholders and enhancing their brand reputation.

5. The Rail Group will have a robust, Member driven, action-oriented work plan with tangible deliverables



- ◆ Each year, working with Members, the Coalition develops an annual work plan for the Group (3-5 initiatives). The work plan is informed by Member priorities and aligned to the Champions of Change high-level strategy (See page 7 of [2023 Impact Report](#)).

6. Snapshot: What to expect in the first year of Membership:

- Launch:** Communications support for announcing internally and externally each leader's commitment to action on gender equality. Includes pre written messages for leaders, public media release for the sector, communications toolkit.
- Work Plan development based on:**
 - **CEO led insights:** Each Member will be guided to complete a Leadership Shadow within their organisation to garner an intimate understanding of issues, opportunities and organisational alignment on their workforce and impact on their organisation. If similar recent efforts have been underway, these can be leveraged as an alternative (the work plan is not about duplicating efforts or adding burdens)
 - **Organisation-specific data:** Representation statistics, priorities and efforts to date to inform 'where to from here'
 - **Industry-specific data:** Representation statistics, priorities and efforts to date to inform 'where to from here'
 - **Coalition insights/knowledge and research:** Consideration of year one priorities, based on 14 years of operations from other Groups
- Work Plan delivery:**
 - **Group Collaboration:** Members will meet as a Group four times per annum, to: discuss priorities and challenges, brainstorm on solutions, digest the current state of gender equality landscape, consider upcoming legislation, and commit to practical actions.
 - **Implementation and Action:** Each Member will assign an Implementation Leader from within their organisation who will participate in quarterly meetings with their Group peers and will work with their Group's dedicated Program Director across the year. Responsible for the implementation of the Coalition's strategies and action plans, the Implementation Leader has year-round access to our team for guidance, coaching and development of bespoke pieces of work required by your organisation.
 - **Alignment of industry and key stakeholders:** The Coalition will work with the ARA and the founding Members to identify and build a network of industry Ambassadors to the strategy who will also participate in or alongside the Group. This will include the ARA as the peak industry body but could also include Federal and State Secretaries for Industry, cross-collaboration with other Coalition Members including but not limited to our STEM Group,
 - **Personal Mentorship:** Each Member receives coaching and mentoring from the Convenor/s, providing a safe and confidential space to discuss their personal leadership journey and safely
- Integration with rest of the Coalition**
 - Invitation to events and Coalition-wide briefings on topics of national interest

The Champions of Change Strategy

