



SA Leaders for Gender Equity Key Messaging - December 2025

Who are the SA Leaders for Gender Equity

The SA Leaders for Gender Equity is a group of South Australian business leaders working together with the common aim of achieving gender equality.

The Leaders were established by the South Australian Equal Opportunity Commission in 2012. The group was initially modelled on the Male Champions of Change but then in 2017 the group expanded to include women. In 2021 the secretariat support for the group moved from the Equal Opportunity Commission to the South Australian Department for Human Services. At this time the group became The South Australian Leaders for Gender Equity (SALGE). The revised group reviewed its purpose and is committed to advancing gender equity by changing behaviour and levelling the playing field across businesses, not-for-profit and government organisations who are based in SA. SALGE's purpose is to advance gender equity because talent is gender neutral, but bias isn't. SALGE will do this by having a voice in all rooms and through their influence in the community.

SALGE members will act individually and collectively to inform and influence all levels of South Australian business and government on the importance of gender equity.

Values – What the group believes in and stands for

Openness

Knowing what we know is never enough. We listen, we voice, and we listen again.

Associations: curiosity, inclusion, just, fairness, lack of restriction, frankness, creative, imaginative, reception, seek out the new, unconventional, agreeable, diversity, adventurous.

"The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend" Henri Bergson,
Philosopher, 1859-1941.

Courage

We stand for what is right, not what is easy.

Associations: brave, patience, confidence, feeling fear but choosing to act, doing what must be done, unafraid, unflinching, following your heart, perseverance in the face of adversity, keep trying, challenge the status quo.





"You can choose courage, or you can choose comfort. You cannot have both" Brene Brown, Professor and Author, 1965 to present.

Integrity

We are accountable to what we choose to do, and for what we choose to ignore.

Associations: respect, truthful, accountable, fair, trust, doing the right thing, keeping commitments, accepting.

"The time is always right to do what is right" Martin Luther King JR, African American Baptist Minister and Activist, 1929 – 1968.

Commitment

Gender equity is our responsibility – women's rights are human rights.

Associations: dedication to a cause, duty, obligation, devoted, intent, a promise.

"Motivation is what gets you started. Commitment is what keeps you going" Jim Rohan, American entrepreneur author & motivational speaker, 1930 – 2009.

SALGE's priority focus areas are:

1. Increasing women's representation in leadership roles

Note: The use of the term "women" throughout SALGE is inclusive of both cisgender and transgender women. We also acknowledge the under-representation of non-binary people in leadership, which is also a result of gender inequality.

2. Addressing the gender pay gap.

SALGE is chaired by Jane Pickering, Chief Executive, Eldercare.

SALGE members have steering responsibilities, serve as the governing body, set the future direction of the group, and oversee the implementation of the group's agreed outcomes.

Membership

SALGE aims to develop a membership that is representative of the community by seeking women's and men's representation from within a range business sectors and government, as well as those who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTIQ+ or living with a disability.

INSERT link to photos and bios



Key Messages

Our Leadership Commitment

- We encourage all business leaders and employers to embrace and address gender for the benefit of their own business bottom line and for social equity.
- As senior business leaders in South Australia, we are working to progress sustainable change within our organisations and to increase the participation of women at the highest levels of industry. It is our duty to educate and encourage other South Australian businesses do the same.
- We believe gender equality is achievable and makes a powerful and positive difference to productivity, effectiveness and innovation, creating workplaces that are employers of choice for all.
- As the heads of organisations, we reflect on our own leadership and ensure we are sending the right signals to the rest of the business. We demonstrate our commitment to women's leadership and walk the talk.
- *The path to lasting change starts at the top.*
- By prioritising gender equity initiatives, we are showing our employees, our industry and our State that we walk the talk.

Flexible Work

- Flexible working arrangements promote gender equity by providing access to working in ways that enhance business and personal effectiveness and efficiency.
- Flexibility is not a women's issue; it is a family and community issue. It is about sharing diverse caring responsibilities and about increasing the capacity of people to participate in the workplace.
- Flexibility is equally important and relevant for men and women as it breaks the bias around gender roles outside the workplace.
- *We must challenge the notion of 'presenteeism' – work is a thing you do, not a place you go.*
- Increasing men's active involvement in caring not only increases opportunities for women to engage more fully in the workforce, it also recognises the value for men in caring for their children. This can result in businesses having access to a broader talent pool, and an overall increase in productivity.
- A range of flexible workplace arrangements can be used within a wide range of business settings. While flexibility can improve business practices, success requires leadership, accountability, innovation, dedication, long term support and accountability for results.





- Research has shown that the persistent myth that women seeking flexible options are less ambitious is far from true. In fact, women who work flexibly are equally if not more serious and committed to reaching their full career potential and are willing to take different routes to achieve their career aspirations.
- “The aging population means employees are staying in the workplace longer, often in a more flexible capacity. And the current generation of new recruits, known as millennials, has very different work expectations than their baby boomer parents. Survey after survey has shown what millennials want most is to work flexibly”.⁴³

Unconscious Bias

- Traditional ideas around how women and men should engage with the workplace must change if we are to meet the social and economic challenges in the decades ahead.
- By recognising and reducing our biases, we can identify the best candidate for a particular role, and by taking advantage of diverse thinking, perspectives, and experiences, we expand business opportunities.
- We need to find ways to eliminate entrenched bias in our recruitment processes and leadership decisions - not just because it's fair, but also because it means greater innovation and problem-solving capacity, better productivity, reduced turnover and happier employees.
- As business leaders, we know that what gets measured is more likely to be prioritised. Setting gender equity goals is a key step to achieving gender equality.
- Gender diversity needs to move from the 'aspirational list' to become a business priority. This means setting targets that are documented, measured, and reported on.
- *Addressing gender equality within organisations will not happen accidentally, and like any other business issue, a strategic and systematic approach is required.*
- We need more leaders to see gender equity as a key business driver, not a buzz word. Getting more women into senior leadership positions where they can participate in the decision-making process is important from both a commercial and human rights point of view.
- We encourage all business leaders and employers to embrace and address gender equity for the benefit of their own business bottom line and because it is the right thing to do.
- Unconscious biases can have a serious impact on workplace culture – they affect who gets hired, who gets promoted, and how we measure performance. Workplace policies and procedures need to be in place to reduce the impact of these biases on gender equity and diversity more generally.





- Unconscious bias happens automatically, is not under our control and is triggered by our unconscious mind making quick judgments and assessments of people and situations. These are influenced by our genetic make-up, background, past and present cultural environments, and personal experiences.
- When talking about gender equality, particularly around women's leadership, the issue of merit is inevitably raised. The best person for the job should always be appointed, regardless of race, gender, or background. However, what we traditionally call 'merit' needs to be challenged along with unconscious bias. As the Male Champions of Change have stated "if we continue to define 'merit' as people 'like us' who have done what we did, we will get more of the same."⁴⁷

Equal Pay

- The gender pay gap is real. Men earn more than women in every country and in every industry.
- *Employers do not generally set out to pay women and men unequally, but unconscious gender biases can affect performance ratings, promotions and pay decisions.*
- Businesses play a crucial role in addressing the gender pay gap and change must come from the top.
- Employer policies that embrace salary transparency can help eliminate hard-to-justify gender pay gaps and can play an important role in helping achieve equal pay.
- We firmly believe in the principle of equal pay for equal work and are making the systemic changes needed to make this a reality.
- As senior business leaders, it is also our role to raise awareness of the gender pay gap. Apart from being an issue of fairness, it makes perfect business sense to ensure the economic security of women and prevent lost opportunity in human capital investment and potential.





Gender Equity in Australia – Key Statistics

About gender equality in Australia

- Women and girls make up just over half (50.7%) of the Australian population.¹
- While women make up 51.2% of all employees in Australian companies of 100 or more employees,² they take home on average \$242.30 less than men each week (full-time adult ordinary earnings).³
- As of November 2025, *the national gender pay gap is 21.1%.*⁴
- Australian women account for 68.5% of primary carers for older people and people with disability.⁵
- In 2017, 95% of primary parental leave (outside of the public-sector) was taken by women and women spent almost three times as much time taking care of children each day, compared to men.⁶
- In 2025, Australia was ranked 13th on a global index measuring gender equality, increasing by 11 rankings from 2024. While Australia scores very highly in educational attainment, there is still a lot of progress to be made in the areas of economic participation, and opportunity and political empowerment.⁷

Barriers to gender equality

- The Australian workforce is highly segregated by gender and female-dominated industries have been historically undervalued – such as aged care, child care and health and community services.⁸ Australian women are over-represented as part-time workers in low-paid industries and in insecure work and continue to be underrepresented in leadership roles in the private and public sectors.⁹
- *More than half of women aged 18 or older have experienced sexual harassment in their lifetime.*¹⁰
- On average, women do 32 hours of unpaid work and care a week,¹¹ nine hours more than men.¹²
- In 2023, the average Australian woman was reaching retirement with an average of 25% less superannuation than the average male.¹³ As a result, women are more likely to experience poverty in their retirement years and be far more reliant on the Age Pension.¹⁴
- More than 22% of Australian women have experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15 and one in two experiences sexual harassment.¹⁵
- In 2015-16, it was estimated that violence against women and their children cost the Australian economy \$22 billion in 2015-16.¹⁶





Positive developments

- The proportion of female directorships on the Boards of ASX-listed companies is at 37.4% as of June 2024, compared to 21.7% in 2015.¹⁷
- Companies with more women on boards in the US, Europe and Asia-Pacific (excluding Japan) draw higher annual returns, between 2-5%, compared to peers with less gender diverse boardrooms since 2018.¹⁸
- Research conducted in 2005 showed that 90% of Australian men and women overwhelmingly believed that men should be as involved in parenting as women.¹⁹ However, while a significant number of fathers, and in particular young fathers, would like to be able to access better workplace flexibility arrangements, men are much more likely than women to have such requests denied, facing barriers like persistent gendered gender norms positioning men as breadwinners and women as caregivers.²⁰
- In 2023, the Australian government introduced legislation providing 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave for all employees, which marked a significant step forward in supporting workers affected by domestic violence.²¹

Workforce participation

- Women comprise 48.2% of all employed persons in Australia, 27.9% of all employed persons working full-time and 20.3% working part-time.²²
- Women constitute 39.8% of all full-time employees and 67.8% of all part-time employees.²³
- The workforce participation rate* is 62.1% for women²⁴ and 70.4% for men.²⁵
- The workforce participation rate among those aged 15-64 years is 76.2% for women and 83.2% for men.²⁶

** The workforce participation rate relates to active population, all people aged 15 years and over who are working or looking for work (i.e. employed or unemployed).*

Flexible work

- In Australia, 45% of organisations say that flexible working arrangements have had a positive effect on productivity levels.⁴⁴
- After returning to work from parental leave, 44% received negative comments about working part-time or needing flexible work hours.⁵⁶



Economic security

- The full-time average weekly ordinary earnings for women are \$242.30 less than men each week.²⁷
- Among non-public sector organisations with 100 or more employees, the base salary gender pay gap for all employees is 11.5%²⁸ and 21.1% for total remuneration.²⁹
- The gender pay gap for adult average hourly ordinary time cash earnings for full-time non-managerial employees is 10.3% in favour of men.³⁰
- Female graduates continued to earn less than their male counterparts at all levels in 2024, with the most pronounced among those with postgraduate coursework qualifications, with a gap of \$12,000 or 10.9%.³¹
- In 2023, the average Australian woman was reaching retirement with an average of 25% less superannuation than the average male.³²
- *46% of people receiving the aged pension are women.*³³

Educational attainment

- Of all women aged 20-24, 91% have attained year 12 qualifications or above, compared to 82% of men in the same age bracket.³⁴ Of all women aged 25-34, 53.3% have achieved a bachelor's degree or above, compared to 40% of similarly aged men.³⁵
- Women represent 52% of domestic students enrolled in universities or other institutions. This has dropped from 59.9% in 2020.³⁶

Paid parental leave

Of all organisations in the Workplace Gender Equality Agency's 2024-2025 dataset:

- 67% provide primary carer leave in addition to the Federal Government's paid parental leave scheme.
- 48.2% provide secondary carer leave in addition to the Federal Government's paid parental leave scheme.

Women in leadership

- Women hold 21% of chair positions and represent 39% of key management personnel and 43% of manager positions.³⁷
- Since 2020, there has been an increase in women's representation across all manager categories, but progress is slow and, in some places, stagnant year-on-year. For example, the proportion of women CEOs has remained at 22%.³⁸
- *In 2025, 40 boards have zero- or just one woman as a director.*³⁹ *In contrast, there are 11 boards with no male directors.*⁴⁰





Statistics from the Australian Institute of Company Directors reveal:

- 38.1% of directors in the ASX 200 are women, as of June 2025. While more women are joining boards, their representation in leadership roles remains disproportionately low, particularly as chairs and in executive positions.⁴¹

Insights from the 2025 report by Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) and the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA):

- Boards are edging closer to gender parity, yet only one in four employers have gender-balanced leadership teams.⁵¹
- Companies with gender balance in leadership have fewer staff resigning and more staff staying, have stronger market value, profitability and shareholder returns fewer than one in three organisations (27.3%) have achieved a gender-balanced workforce.⁵²

Unconscious bias

- Senior Australian men in business are twice as likely to rank other men over women as effective problem solvers, despite believing that women were as capable as men in delivering outcomes.⁴⁶
- By closing the gender pay gap, the global GDP could increase by a staggering \$12 trillion.⁴⁷
- Gender discrimination remains the leading driver of the pay gap, contributing 36% of the \$2.56 hourly pay gap.⁴⁸ Closing the pay gap could provide \$898M per week in national earnings, across three key driver categories: gender discrimination, gender segregation in job type and care, family responsibilities and workforce participation.⁴⁹

Impact on businesses/Australian economy

- Gender-balanced leadership can boost company value by close to \$93 million for a \$1 billion ASX-listed business.⁵⁰
- Achieving gender equality could add \$128 billion to Australia's GDP.⁵³
- Having a female CEO is associated with a 5% increase in market value; on average, this is worth \$79.6 million.⁵⁴
- Companies with gender-diverse executive teams are 21% more likely to experience above-average profitability.⁵⁵





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