



## **Diversity and Flexibility e-newsletter: December 2009**

Dear Colleagues,

In this newsletter we look at **new gender and leadership initiatives**. Have you also noticed **a change in the air?**

Over the past month we have observed **renewed energy to tackle gender inequity** from a range of international business and political leaders. An insightful report by Goldman Sachs JBWere **connecting GDP to gender equity in Australia**, a benchmarking report on the **current state of play of women in leadership in the USA**, an Australian **Inquiry into pay equity** and initiatives in **France, Hong Kong and Australia** to increase **women's participation on boards**. In particular we highlight:

### **1. AUS research: Australia's Hidden Resource - The economic case for increasing female participation**

Goldman Sachs JBWere's recent Research Report "Australia's Hidden Resource: The economic case for increasing female participation" highlights the disparity in participation, wage and productivity levels between the female and male workforces. GSJBWere argues that this disparity means that women comprise an under-utilised market resource and that unleashing Australia's ready-made pool of talent would increase Australia's GDP. Recommendations are made to address the gender pay and participation gaps, including via education, incentives and leadership inclusion targets. This report is a valuable contribution to the gender equity debate. [AUS research: Australia's Hidden Resource - The economic case for increasing female participation](#)

### **2. USA research: The White House Project Report - Benchmarking women's leadership**

The "White House Project Report: Benchmarking women's leadership" provides a clear benchmark of "by how much" the gender gap in leadership and pay differs in 10 major sectors within the USA (eg business and academia). In summary, while women are well-represented in low to mid-level employment positions, they are substantially under-represented at senior levels. The report argues that the advancement of women is vital to address the workforce participation issues associated with the looming retirement of many "baby boomers." Controversially the researchers also argue that the leadership qualities of female leaders are more effective than males in this current unstable economic period. [USA research: The White House Project Report - Benchmarking women's leadership](#)

### **3. AUS Government report: Making it Fair - Pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce**

"Making it Fair" is the Australian House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment and Workforce Participation's response to the Federal Government's Inquiry into women's participation in the workforce, particularly in relation to pay equity. It contains 63 recommendations for change, which cover legislative amendments, the establishment of a Pay Equity Unit, greater powers for the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, more rigorous data collection and new supports for disadvantaged groups. [AUS Government report: Making it Fair - Pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce](#)

### **4. International change: Women on boards**

Quotas or targets? In countries around the world, governments and governance bodies are laying out changes to ensure gender parity for women in leadership positions. The French government has proposed a quota system, similar to that of Norway and Spain. In Hong Kong and Australia, corporate governance bodies have made

public recommendations that companies publicly disclose their diversity initiatives and progress. One way or the other, accountability for gender equity is being firmly placed on the shoulders of company directors.  
[International change: Women on boards](#)

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