



Australian Government
The Treasury

PROGRESSING WOMEN
A STRATEGIC PRIORITY

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PROGRESSING WOMEN — A STRATEGIC PRIORITY

Introduction

The 'Women in the Treasury' project formally commenced in May 2011 with the release of a paper analysing data on the recruitment, retention and progression of women in the department. Staff consultations were initiated at the same time to examine the opportunities and challenges faced by Treasury women.

The consultations identified features of Treasury's culture that underlie our strength as an economic policy advising department. The consultations also revealed, however, that elements of the culture can impede women's careers in Treasury. The Executive Board is committed to addressing the aspects of our culture that are inconsistent with an inclusive workplace whilst retaining those features that uphold the Treasury values. This is a long-term commitment. The Executive Board has drawn on the work of the Reference Group to develop a plan that comprises a suite of strategies to elevate the representation of women in leadership in the Treasury. The aim is to reach around 35 per cent female representation in the Treasury SES by 2016.

The Executive Board appreciates the effort made by the Reference Group and has carefully considered the Group's contribution in deciding on the areas of work that will be further developed as part of the 'Progressing Women' initiative.

The vision

To widen and deepen the pool of future leaders in the Treasury by harnessing the talents of women at all levels and in doing so, ensure that the Treasury is an employer of first choice for women and men.

In achieving our vision, we will build a more inclusive workplace in the Treasury, creating jobs and career pathways that staff value - at all levels and in all work areas.

Why is it important for the Treasury?

Treasury is a strong and well-regarded institution. The primary source of that strength is our people, who are committed, professional and strive for excellence. Treasury's strength also comes from a willingness to periodically examine our organisational performance, something we have done regularly over our history. Our capacity to self-reflect is a sign of organisational health and maturity. It enables a highly-performing institution like ours to look to an even stronger future.

As part of the Women in the Treasury project we have taken the opportunity to consider whether there are ways to improve our overall performance. Along with many other organisations across the private and public sectors, we have observed that there is scope for Treasury to better harness the technical, management and leadership skills of all staff. The findings from the staff consultations provide a compelling case for some changes to the way we work and, perhaps most importantly, the way we think. These are the same issues being encountered by other organisations. And like those organisations, we are striving to build a better workplace for all of our staff.

Research shows that women and men typically exhibit different leadership behaviours and that strong performance derives from a diversity in leadership behaviours. Stronger performance means different things to different organisations. The Executive Board believes the Treasury can strengthen its policy advising capabilities and be more influential by more explicitly valuing diverse and complementary leadership behaviours and by building a more inclusive workplace that more closely resembles broader society. Ultimately, these changes will enhance the job satisfaction and careers of both men and women.

Key strategies

Widening and deepening the pool of future leaders by harnessing the talents of women is now a strategic business priority for the Treasury.

This means that each and every member of the Executive Board is personally committed to addressing barriers to the recruitment, retention and progression of women. Progressing Women will be structured and systematic; it will become embedded and underpin the way Treasury works.

Recognising that there is no 'silver bullet', a range of strategies to address these factors, broadly grouped as follows, will be progressively implemented:

- leadership, governance and accountability;
- workplace policies;
- training and networks;
- performance assessment and career development; and
- measuring success.

Leadership, governance and accountability

The Secretary and all members of the Executive Board are committed to leading Progressing Women, and will be accountable for sustaining the momentum for change. Mr Nigel Ray will assist the Secretary by personally sponsoring Progressing Women.

An Inclusive Workplace Committee (IWC) will support the Secretary, Mr Ray and the Executive Board in their roles leading organisational change. The IWC will be chaired by the Secretary and comprise all members of the Executive Board (the Executive Directors and the General Manager, Corporate Strategy and Services Group), plus 3 female Treasury officers (an SESB2, an SESB1 and an EL2), 1 male EL2/SESB1, the General Manager of People and Organisational Strategy Division and two female external members (representatives from both the public and private sectors). In addition, we will seek an external mentor for the IWC. The IWC will be a decision-making body, will meet quarterly and will be responsible for guiding and monitoring the development and implementation of longer-term strategies. Expressions of interest will be sought for 18 month representation on the IWC.

The IWC will develop the program of work for Progressing Women, including milestones and reporting mechanisms to staff. The Executive Board has valued the opportunity to hear about the experiences of private sector organisations, such as Westpac and GE that are undertaking a similar journey. The IWC will continue to draw on the ideas and best practice of other private and public sector organisations in developing and implementing Progressing Women. Along similar lines, the Secretary has accepted an invitation to join the 'Male Champions of Change', a group of key corporate leaders dedicated to driving change in their organisations. This will help Treasury learn from what is working, and not working, in other organisations.

All Treasury staff will be supported in, and accountable for, embedding changes to systems and processes, either through their management role or personal responsibility for their behaviors and actions.

Workplace policies

Flexible working arrangements can enable all employees to better manage their career, home and community commitments. The Executive Board is committed to delivering greater options to facilitate this - it will not be a 'poor career choice' for Treasury staff to access flexible working arrangements.

As a first step, a part-time workers' forum will be convened to develop a practice guide for 'effective part-time work' to improve the consistency of management of flexible work arrangements across the department. More broadly, managers and part-time staff will be accountable for ensuring open and explicit discussions about working arrangements, both for part-time roles and for those full-time staff who want to work flexibly.

The IWC will draw on ideas from the part-time workers' forum to develop innovative approaches to job design and work allocation, including job sharing, the capacity for staff to work from home (with appropriate IT support) and effective work practices to ensure job requirements can be met without compromising agreed flexible working arrangements.

Training and networks

Experience in other organisations shows that underlying and unrecognised bias can impact on judgments of management and leadership styles and the allocation of work. Treasury is unlikely to be different. As a result, the Board has decided that all managers, commencing with the Executive Board and the SES, will undertake awareness training on the impact of common and unrecognised biases, and this will be provided more broadly to all staff. Many organisations already do this, such as NAB and ANZ.

The IWC will also examine appropriate business models for a Treasury mentoring scheme for both women and men, with a defined structure, remit and programs. The aim is to roll out programs progressively from the first half of 2012.

Performance assessment and career development

The Performance Management System (PMS) is integral to the Treasury management model and to our absolute commitment to advancement on merit. It is critical that the PMS is applied consistently, and as intended, to deliver effective and fair outcomes for all staff.

The consultation findings show that there is a need to refresh understanding of how the PMS should be applied. Consistent with the findings of the Strategic Review, a 'refresh' of the PMS, particularly focused on ensuring alignment with the findings of the two reviews will be developed, along with associated training. The IWC will examine the effectiveness of the Career Development System in light of the identified barriers and in developing other strategies, such as the mentor scheme.

Enhanced strategies for talent and leadership development will be important features of Progressing Women. This is consistent with an agreed recommendation of the Strategic Review (and the 2011 Administrative Review), that the Treasury develop a workforce planning package that includes talent and leadership development for all staff. This package is expected to be finalised in the first half of 2012.

As part of talent and leadership development, the IWC will also develop initiatives that are specifically tailored to equip women for leadership roles. These initiatives, along with the proposed awareness training and a specific series of guest speakers on leadership, will be incorporated into the Treasury's existing programs, such as graduate training and leadership development.

Measuring success

The Executive Board is committed to measuring Treasury's success in meeting our vision and ensuring that Treasury is a better workplace for all staff. Success will be measured in a number of ways, to ensure we are dealing with the specific barriers that were identified in the staff consultations through the strategies outlined above.

However, private sector experience suggests the need for setting quantitative 'key performance indicators' to ensure the required management focus in implementing sustained change. The Board has taken the decision to set a target as a strong signal of commitment and a transparent indicator of intent. The Board has a long-term objective of at least 40 per cent female representation in the Treasury SES. This would be very difficult to achieve in 5 years, given that currently only 23 per cent of Treasury SES are female (this compares to 37 per cent for the APS as a whole, 40 per cent in PM&C and 29 per cent in DoFD). Hence, as an interim step, the Board has set a target of around 35 per cent female representation in the Treasury SES by 2016.

Treasury's target is broadly consistent with the Government's objective of 40 per cent female representation on Government boards by 2015 and private sector organisations, such as Westpac.

The Executive Board reiterates that this is a target to which we will aim; this is not a quota. The target will not be applied to specific business decisions such as promotions. The merit principle will remain fundamental to the Treasury culture; however, we must ensure that all candidates of merit are provided with equal opportunity to progress at Treasury. The strategies to develop a wide and deep pool of leaders by harnessing the talents of women are about ensuring the merit principle within Treasury is fully developed, by reducing the barriers against the development of this talent. Hence, the strategies will enhance the Treasury's capacity to take merit-based decisions by recognising and rewarding diverse and complementary leadership behaviours.

The target is only one aspect of measuring our performance. The IWC will also identify and monitor specifically designed indicators that will measure Treasury's success in addressing the identified barriers to the recruitment, retention and progression of women, along with indicators to ensure merit principles are being fostered. These will include updating the statistics contained in the data analysis paper, qualitative data collected from specific questions in the Treasury Opinion Survey, as well as measures of overall job satisfaction from working in Treasury, and female application rates in recruitment processes. Other specific measures will be developed and implemented by the IWC.

The Executive Board is also committed to undertaking another consultation process in around 2½ years time to gather qualitative data on the success of Progressing Women. This will allow sufficient time for strategies to be further developed and implemented.

Next steps

In the New Year expressions of interest will be sought from staff to hold positions on the IWC. The first meeting of the IWC will be held in February/March 2012 and the Committee will begin to consider the implementation of strategies for Progressing Women.

In the interim, Corporate Strategy and Services Group will undertake preliminary analysis of an approach to developing training initiatives, particularly awareness training, and establishing the part-time workers' forum.