Being bold for gender parity



Women around the world unite on one day of the year to mark International Women's Day (IWD), which celebrates social, economic, cultural and political achievements for women while also serving as a call to action for accelerating gender parity.

IWD falls on 8 March each year and organisers are asking participants to consider actions that reflect the 2017 IWD theme: #BeBoldforChange

Around the world we see women being bold for change; they are the leaders in reshaping lives of women through changing culture.

Standing up for each other and calling out actions that disadvantage women and girls takes courage, but brings reward too. We may not be Malala Yousafzai but we can be role models for others around us.

When we celebrate in our schools and TAFE colleges we stand with women and girls and those who identify as women and girls from around the world celebrating achievements and saying no to all forms of gender discrimination and gender disadvantage.

We do this because we want girls to grow into women who have the freedom to choose the roles they want without fear and because we know that for many reasons – many don't.

In Australia many think there is already gender equality but in reality there is not. There are disparities in the area of education, pay and leadership opportunities.

According to UNESCO, in October 2013: "There [were] 31 million girls of primary school age out of school. Of these 17 million are expected never to enter school. There are four million fewer boys than girls out of school."

Australia's Chief Scientist Alan Finkel and prominent business leader Ann Sherry wrote earlier this year: "In Year 4, one in three Australian girls has confidence in her mathematics abilities, compared with more than two in five Australian boys. By Year 12, there are two boys for every girl in advanced mathematics – and three boys for every girl in physics. By graduation day, men account for seven of every eight information technology bachelor degrees, four in five physics and astronomy degrees, and two in three mathematics degrees."

According to 2015 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures, the full-time gender pay gap is approximately 18 per cent, with women earning on average only 82 per cent of a man's pay. A woman has to work an additional 65 days each year to

earn the same as a man.

Many Australian women face an insecure retirement. Men's superannuation balances at retirement are on average twice as much as women's. Women, particularly single women, are at greater risk of experiencing poverty, housing stress and homelessness in retirement.

Data from DoE in 2014 of the gender representation of principals indicates that there is still not parity, particularly when looking at level 5 and 6 principals. While 71 percent of level 3 positions were female appointments, 42 percent of level 5 and 36 percent of level 6 principals were female appointments. The only parity of gender in 2014 was at level 4. When IPS status was examined, only 40 level 5 and 33 level 6 positions were with a female principal. With little oversight and devolution across the sector, these statistics suggest that gender parity has not been achieved and that specific strategies are needed to address the inequities particularly at the top levels.

While domestic violence victims are not solely women, the rates of intimate partner and domestic violence towards women are significant with approximately one woman a week killed in Australia by a current or former partner. Intimate partner violence is the leading contributor to death, disability and illness in women aged 15 to 44 years, according to the ABS.

In January 2017, women around the world held protests over the newly elected president of the United States and his stance on women. On this IWD we acknowledge we have made advances but have been reminded this is not a time to be complacent.

A celebration of IWD can be as simple as a morning or afternoon tea with colleagues and friends or using the resources below in your class.

As members of the SSTUWA, we encourage you to celebrate IWD and be bold for change – we need it.

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