



Professionals Australia launches *Gender bias in STEM* series

Professionals Australia today launched its Gender Bias series to mark Equal Pay Day.

CEO Chris Walton said the national gender pay gap is an indicator of the relative position of women in the workforce reflecting a number of complex factors that operate to disadvantage women including earnings differences arising from the under-representation of women in senior, management and Board positions, the distribution of unpaid caring responsibilities as well as gender discrimination and a range of systemic and unconscious biases.

“Our Women in STEM report showed that almost a third of respondents (31%) expected to leave their profession within five years. The attrition of so many women STEM professionals is a significant waste of expertise, talent and investment.”

“Many of the barriers that face professional women in STEM are not unique to the STEM community. They can however be exacerbated by the precarious employment that characterises employment that is contingent upon grant-based funding, the stereotyping of STEM professionals as predominantly male, and disturbingly high rates of discrimination and sexual harassment. Our survey found that 25.8% of respondents had been sexually harassed in the course of their employment, 51.6% reported being directly discriminated against and 42.1% said they had been bullied at work.”

“So the issue,” Walton said, “is not so much to encourage more women into STEM, but to remove the obstacles and barriers and biases which operate as disincentives for women remaining in the sector. To do this, issues such as systemic and unconscious gender bias which disadvantage women must be addressed. We wanted to highlight the complex range of factors that create disadvantage and a gender gap for professional women.”

Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show the national gender pay gap stands at 16.2% - only slightly down on the previous 12-month period.

On average, men working full-time earned \$1,613.60 and women earned \$1,352.50, a difference of \$261.10 per week.

The gap reported by the ABS (Cat. no. 6302.0) is greater still for the Professional, Scientific and Technical Services industry where the gap sits at 23.5 per cent, marginally down on last year’s figure of 24.4. For Professionals as an occupation, the gap stands at 21.2 per cent down on 23.6 per cent last year. Overall, Agency results show that in 2015 the gender pay gap was higher among managers than non-managers – 28.8% the gap for managers and 20.9% for non-managers.

The Workplace Gender Equality Agency’s *Gender workplace statistics at a glance* fact sheet is available [here](#).

The Gender Bias in STEM series is available [here](#).