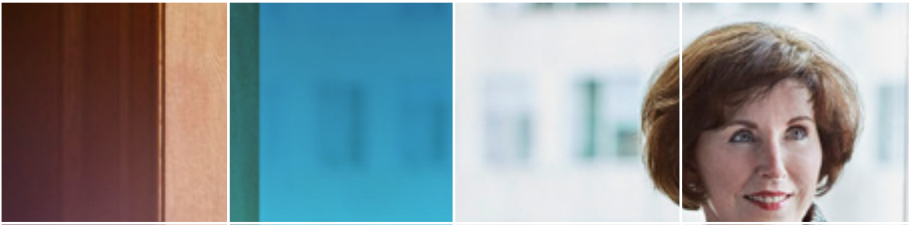
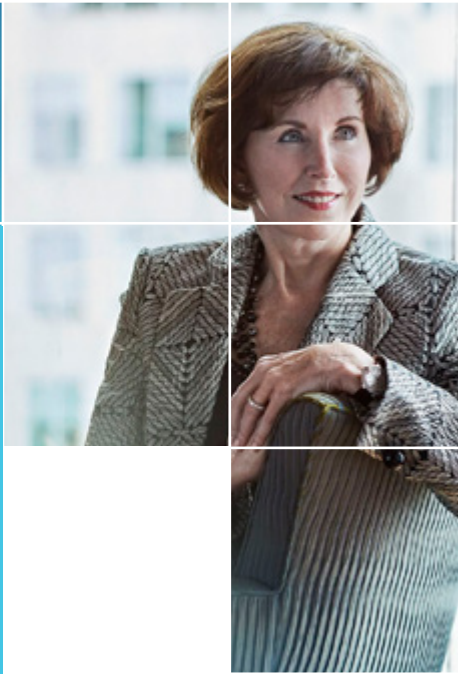




**Professionals  
Australia**



# SAME FIGHT - DIFFERENT ANGLES





*Professionals Australia fights to deliver proper respect, recognition and reward for professionals. Our gender and diversity work is one of the many different angles we take up in that fight.*

Our strength as a union or association is in members standing together and acting collectively - but as an organisation we need to understand the different groups within our membership and the different angles needed to protect, argue for and advance their interests - whether it be by profession - professional engineers, scientists, IT professionals, pharmacists, translators and interpreters, surveyors, vets or architects - or by groups like older workers, those who may be the only or one of few professionals in their workplace, recent graduates, early and mid-career professionals, the self-employed, students, those from the CALD or LGBTIQ+ communities - or women. We apply different lenses or angles to our work on members' behalf to ensure their complex and sometimes very different needs are properly represented and taken into account by policy and decision-makers. What holds this work together is that we are fighting for the same thing - proper respect, recognition and reward for professionals - but taking different angles so we can fight effectively.

Our advocacy on gender equity is about the removal of systemic and structural obstacles and barriers to merit-based advancement. Our work is entirely consistent with a merit-based approach to career progression. It argues for opportunities for development and advancement for all. In our work towards proper respect, recognition and reward, it's the same fight - from a different angle<sup>1</sup>.

It's a positive thing that many organisations are making a concerted push to improve gender balance and the representation of women at senior levels or in certain fields - this is in response to their historic under-representation that resulted from merit not being the only determinant of career advancement and success. In some organisations, targets for women in management, or in some cases quotas or special programs or opportunities for women in fields where they are under-represented are being implemented - these programs are responding to historic barriers to career advancement experienced by women. Same fight - different angle.

The objectives of our gender and diversity work are to:



ensure an understanding that our advocacy on gender equity is about the removal of systemic and structural obstacles and barriers to merit-based advancement. Our work is entirely consistent with a merit-based approach to career progression - it argues for equal opportunity for all;



advocate for a national strategy that values professionals' work and defines their place in shaping the nation's future including addressing the obstacles to merit-based progression and advancement for professional women;



ensure Professionals Australia has a credible voice in the national discussion around workforce development including increasing the participation of women in the professions - as examples, only 16% of the STEM-qualified workforce are female and only 13% of the engineering workforce is female;



ensure that policy measures to help rebuild the economy as we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis recognise the long-term gendered employment impacts on professionals.



ensure that the complex range of systemic factors that contribute to the gender pay gap in the professions (including in retirement savings) are documented and addressed in an effort to narrow that gap;



effectively communicate the critical contribution of a sustainable professional workforce to an innovative, economy on behalf of our members;



ensure diversity and inclusion are promulgated as part of Professionals Australia's core values;



ensure that sexual harassment and gender-based bullying are understood as serious workplace health and safety issues;



encourage members to participate in our women's network;



assist our male and female members to understand diversity issues and become informed advocates for change;



ensure merit-based progression and equal opportunity are driving principles of our work;



to mainstream our gender and diversity activities by integrating them with our profession-based activities;



ensure that gender diversity is understood as more than just a supply or pipeline issue and numerical equality on its own is not a solution - real change will rely on addressing the factors that contribute to the attrition of women from the professional workforce;



ensure gender diversity in the professions is understood as a mainstream economic and workforce development issue and a key economic reform priority for the coming decade - a 4% increase in the participation rate of women over the next decade would add \$25 billion dollars to the economy

We aim to integrate our diversity work within our profession-based programs and across our industrial, legal, research, communications and advocacy platforms.

Professionals Australia's work in the gender and diversity area aims to ensure we have a strong voice in the national discussion around women in the professions by helping identify and [document the gender pay gap](#), [providing evidence of women's actual experiences in workplaces](#), [providing practical solutions for employers to start addressing the attrition of women in workplaces](#), talking about [what unconscious bias is](#) and ways to address it, providing [practical career support](#) for professional women, looking at how gender equity issues play out in different industries such as [engineering](#), [IT](#) and [defence](#), collaborating with other like-minded organisations to bring about positive [long-term change](#) and utilising the industrial relations system to effect broader change in key areas such as superannuation, paid domestic violence leave, access to flexible work provisions, etc. We will also strongly advocate for policy measures considered through a gender lens to help rebuild the economy as we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis [recognising the gendered employment impacts of the pandemic](#).

1. Thanks to Laura Erickson-Schroth for this basic message - "[What's important is an] understanding that our lives are intertwined and that we are all fighting the same fight from different angles." Guardian Australia.





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