



NSW Women

No ordinary job: women and non-traditional work



One of the pitfalls of the workplace for women is the so called 'glass ceiling'. Well, now there's talk of another and it's called the 'glass cliff'. It describes the situation where women are promoted to risky, difficult jobs where potential for failure is high.

Researchers at Exeter University in the United Kingdom found evidence that 'organisations that appointed women to leadership positions tended to do so when the business was performing badly or was confronting tough problems'. So significant is this issue that the researchers have secured a grant worth a quarter of a million pounds from the European Social Fund.

Organisations such as the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) are likely to be interested in the findings from the 'glass cliff' study. This may help to explain why a minority of women hold high level decision making positions. The EOWA Australian Women in Leadership Census 2004, reports that in the top 200 ASX listed Australian companies, women hold only:

- ◆ 8.6% of Board Directorships
- ◆ 10.2% of Executive Management Positions.
- ◆ 3.1% of the highest Executive Management titles.

Tracking new barriers to women's full participation is vital for explaining why it is so hard to raise the number of women in leadership positions through to understanding the difficulties of retaining women in non-traditional jobs. It also provides evidence of where women are missing out on opportunities to be economically independent.

In January 2004, *The Age* newspaper reported², 'Nearly eight out of every ten jobs created last year went to men, as positions flowed to the building, construction and IT sectors'.

Message from the Minister

Welcome to the latest edition of *NSW Women* which focuses on non-traditional employment and trades for women.

As women's employment figures converge with men's participation rates, there has been little movement in the number of women taking up trades. While a trade may not be everyone's cup of tea, a trade qualification can provide creative and secure employment opportunities which women are missing out on. More importantly, many women are missing out on the benefits of economic boom times, such as growth in housing construction and IT sectors, through their lack of representation in these industries.

On the road to pay equity we must look at women's representation in non-traditional roles.

I hope some of the stories in this issue of *NSW Women* will inspire more women to look to a future trade qualification or a non traditional job for their future employment.

Sandra Nori
Minister for Women



Message from the Director

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I would like to thank the Minister, staff, Dr Elizabeth Coombs and the broader community of women who work with the Office for Women, for the warm welcome I have received since taking up my temporary appointment in March 2005. Many of you will know that Helen Boyton has been appointed as the Premier's Department Regional Co-ordinator for South West Sydney and I would like to thank her for her work in the past and wish her well for the future. Helen's role in the establishment of the Office within Premier's Department was a key factor in ensuring a speedy transition and I am sure I speak on behalf of everyone here when I express our appreciation of her energy and commitment.

This edition of *NSW Women* comes at a time when work is very much in the headlines. There are two national inquiries into balancing work and family - one parliamentary and one by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. Across the board there are discussions about how to grapple with labour shortages. The Office for Women looks forward to participating in these debates.

Sharon Boyd
Acting Director



No ordinary job: women & non-traditional work (cont'd)

The article cited Australian Bureau of Statistics figures indicating that, '...women have missed out on the benefits of Australia's jobs boom. Total employment grew by 172,000 in 2003, but only 38,000 positions went to women. Men took the other 78%. Of the 155,600 new positions in the property and business sectors, about 104,000 were awarded to men'.

In the period corresponding with the 2003 'jobs boom', unemployment for women was 6% consistently for 13 months in a row, whereas men's unemployment rate dropped from 6.2% to 5.3% in the year ending December 2003.

At the same time, the media has been full of stories about the shortage of skilled workers and the looming crisis associated with the ageing of our population, and the impact this will have on the workforce, and indeed, the economy of the country.

The most recent Department of Employment and Workplace Relations' National Skills Shortage List (2004) identified engineering, nursing, accounting, electrical and electronic construction, and food trades, as areas where employers find it difficult to recruit workers.

The federal government is responding to the skills shortage by increasing the intake of skilled migrants in 2006³ and is exhorting workers to remain longer in the workforce. No one, it seems, has thought to look at the contribution women might make to tackle the problem.

One of the biggest barriers to women taking up jobs in non-traditional, better paid occupations is the segregation of these jobs by gender. The Australian workforce is considered one of the most gender segregated workforces of the industrialised nations.⁴

Women are not entering non-traditional occupations at the rate of men, and if they do, they tend to withdraw or reduce their hours when they have children due to workplace demands, and the lack of family friendly workplace arrangements. Instead, women find themselves working in occupations dominated by other women, where they attract lower pay.

Excluding a majority of workers from a majority of occupations... is wasteful of human resources.. and reduces an economy's ability to adjust to change. With globalisation... and identified international competition, these factors have assumed greater importance.

International Labour Review, 1997⁵

The government sector is reversing this trend in some areas. In transport, there are now more women bus operators, train guards and station staff; in the Police Service, women now make up around a quarter of uniformed officers/detectives, and were 49% of graduate recruits in the 2002 intake.

There are also more women working in the traditionally male-dominated occupations of agronomy, the Sheriff's Office, and WorkCover, where there is near parity for the position of inspector. Efforts are also being made to increase the representation of women in public works and services, as well as IT.

Working in partnership with NSW Police, NSW Ambulance and the NSW Rural Fire Service, the Employment Equity and Diversity Division of the Public Employment Office developed and delivered a networking forum for women working in emergency services and justice agencies. Over 70 women representing all agencies in this grouping attend the forum in September 2004. A networking resource is being developed for public sector agencies to use as a training tool, and a forum is planned for women working in transport agencies in September 2005.

In this issue of NSW Women we look at some women working in non-traditional areas, we look at the impact of gender on job satisfaction, review the issues being canvassed in the Australian Human Rights Commission project: *Striking the balance: Women, Men, Work and Family* and we make some suggestions about where to go to find out more about non-traditional work.

Making a difference in the transport, building and construction industries

In 2003 the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union was given a grant of \$30,347 from the NSW Government for the *Building Opportunities for Young Women in the Building and Construction Industry* project.

The initiative encouraged young women, particularly women from culturally and linguistically diverse, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, to join the construction industry. A variety of strategies were used: printed material; face to face discussions at the workplace between employers, schools and TAFEs; the establishment of a women's support network and a survey of women in the Building and Construction Industry.

The project, which was completed in 2004, provided work experience placements for female secondary school students, linked women to jobs in the industry, and helped women with their CV's.

A Women's Support Network Bulletin Board was also established on the CFMEU website.

In 2004 the Transport Workers Union received \$35,000 from the NSW Government's Office for Women for a *Building Power for Women in Transport* initiative. The union is trying to find ways of attracting and retaining women in the transport industry.

Forums will be held across the state to give women the opportunity to offer up ideas. As well, project workers will raise the suggestions with key employer groups, government agencies, transport workers and the Transport Workers Union.

The outcome will be guidelines setting out the rights of women in the transport industry, for employers, women transport workers and government agencies. The project is due to finish in 2005.

Profile: Katie Hicks, Stonemason

With a high UAI (Universities Admission Index) score sound enough to secure a place in Criminology and Psychology at the University of Western Sydney, it seemed Katie Hicks was assured of joining the fascinating world of criminology. One year in and finding it hard to maintain any real motivation for her study, Katie, by chance, read the book 'Pillars of the Earth' by Ken Follet. 'Pillars' tells a story about a stonemason and his family and their journey of discovery, perseverance and vision as they built a church together.

After much soul searching and agonising Katie quit university to pursue her vision of becoming a stonemason. Desperate to make her vision a reality, Katie rang every stonemasonry firm in the greater Sydney area but had no immediate success. In late 1999, six months after beginning her odyssey, Katie Hicks had her first big break when she received a phone call from the Manager of the Department of Commerce's stone yard. Impressed by her enthusiasm during the visit to the yard several

months earlier, he had retained Katie's details with the thought of one day being able to offer her an interview.

Now a fully qualified stonemason, Katie is the first female in New South Wales to successfully complete an apprenticeship in stonemasonry.

As with most trades, Katie concedes that she had to jump through the hoops just like any other new apprentice. 'One guy used to make me go and get his lunch for him every day which supposedly I had to do because I was the apprentice, not because I was a female, a fact that I, of course, would constantly clarify with him. As soon as a new male apprentice started at the stone yard, however I was quick to pass the buck onto him. There was nothing the old mason could do except agree, of course.'

Edited extract reproduced from:
www.newapprenticeships.gov.au produced by
Push Productions

Selina Hatcher: From bus operator to training manager in four years

Selina Hatcher can't stop smiling and she's infectious. It was definitely hardware's loss and the government's gain, when after 10 years working as a sales assistant in the hardware industry, Selina joined State Transit in 2000 as a trainee bus operator.

The change in career might seem dramatic, but as Selina describes it, the job was advertised as a customer service role and 'that's exactly what I had been doing'. Whilst her employer at the time didn't see what an asset they had, State Transit and the Government has, which is why Selina is on the inaugural NSW Woman of the Year Honour Roll.

Her career with State Transit started with the 2 year traineeship, working from the Port Botany depot. 'I loved it. It was hands on', she said.

She worked a shift which gave her four hours off in the middle of the day which was great she said for giving you the 'time to do all the things you need to do'.

Accustomed to working in a male dominated environment she fitted in well with the other bus operators, most of whom are male and over 55 years.

'The job is more about performance than gender - once you demonstrated you had the knowledge and the skill you were fine, 'she said. The passengers thought she was a 'novelty.'

Driving a 12.5 metre bus around Sydney, however, is not for the faint hearted.

'It's a hugely demanding job - physically and mentally exhausting.

'It's also high profile. You're carrying thousands of people on the bus every day - they're people's husbands, wives, mothers, kids,' Selina said.

Does she recommend it as a career for women? 'Absolutely! You meet lots of interesting people, the pay is good and you get trained on the job.'

At the end of her traineeship Selina graduated with a Certificate III in Transport Distribution (Road Transport).



Selina Hatcher

It wasn't long, however, before the trainee became the trainer. She now runs the Vocational Training and Education program, which involves writing, developing and running the Certificate III course, and managing over 100 trainers and assessors in Sydney and Newcastle.

When Selina heard she had been nominated for the 2005 Woman of the Year Honour Roll, 'I was so excited I did a little dance.'

It's hard not to smile with her - she's such an enthusiast for what she does. State Transit is clearly on a winner.

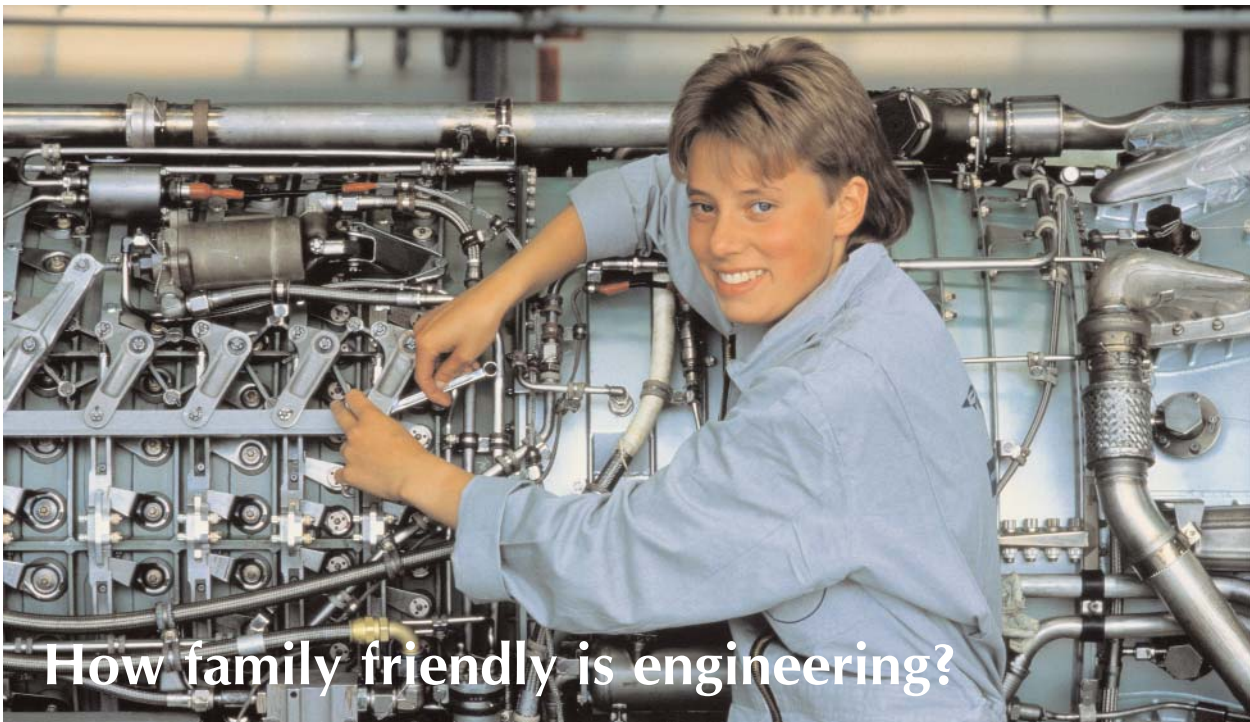
For more information on becoming a bus operator visit the State Transit website:

www.sta.nsw.gov.au/jobs



More women bus drivers are now on board. Photo courtesy of the State Transit Authority of NSW.

ENGINEERING SECTOR



How family friendly is engineering?

*Flexible work practices and equality driven workplaces are the key to retaining women engineers.
Photo by Michael Rosenfeld, courtesy of Getty Images.*

The Association of Professional Engineers, Scientists and Managers (APESM), conducted a survey of 535 women in 2004 - *Women in the professions*, which found that just 24% of engineers had children compared to 59% of pharmacists. Pharmacists were also more likely to work part-time or in a flexible work arrangement, compared with 86% of engineers working full-time.

It is the second time the survey has been conducted and the patterns for parenting were constant.

Erin Wood, National Women's Coordinator at APESM was reported saying in *The Age* in October 2004, that pharmacists had a greater likelihood of having children because of:

- ◆ stronger industrial agreements in the medical field
- ◆ a longer history of registration in the medical field
- ◆ deregulation of the industry resulting in longer opening hours.

By contrast, women engineers seem to leave the profession in the peak 30-39 year age bracket, which is when many women are having or raising children.

In 2001, the IEAust's National Women in Engineering (WIE) Committee completed the first major study of retention of women engineers. The findings of the *Careers Review of Engineering*

Women (C.R.E.W) confirmed that of the 55% women engineers employed at age 20 - 29 years, only 13.5% remain by the age of 40 years and over.

The study tells a story of the culture of direct and indirect discrimination women experience:

- ◆ 36% of women surveyed reported sex based discrimination, involving negative stereotyping and 27% had experienced sexual harassment.
- ◆ 48% of women and 24% of men surveyed earned less than \$50,000 compared with 9% of women and 27% of men for over \$81,000.
- ◆ They were allocated more menial tasks, and had fewer opportunities to do challenging work and more limited career progression than males.
- ◆ They describe their work as 'engineering technical' while men are 'engineering managerial'.
- ◆ Having children was a barrier to job and promotion opportunities.

The 2004 *Women in the professions* survey, identified five workplace conditions which would help keep professional women in non-traditional areas. Not surprisingly, flexible hours (57.1%) and parental leave (48.8%) were high on the list, along with training (60.3%), extended leave at half pay (31.9%) and job sharing (16.1%).⁶

INAUGURAL 2005 WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

As the pictures on these pages reveal, the **2005 Inaugural Woman of the Year Award**, held on International Women's Day, 8 March 2005, was a celebratory occasion.

The Premier's Reception, held at Government House, was attended by Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashier AC, Governor of NSW, the then Premier of NSW, The Hon. Bob Carr, the Minister for Women, the Hon. Sandra Nori, Deirdre Mason, Deputy Chair Premier's Council for Women, Lisa Forrest, guest speaker and women from across New South Wales, who were being recognised for their contribution to the state.

Selecting the **2005 Woman of the Year** was always going to be difficult so it was no surprise when it was announced that two women were to share the award - **Mary Rimoldi and Tracey Menzies**.

Tracey Menzies is widely recognised for her success as a swimming coach, particularly as coach to Olympic swimmer Ian Thorpe, since September 2002. She is a strong supporter of the NSW Government's sport age prevention program and has been proactive in attempting to banish bad behaviour towards officials.

For more than 30 years **Mary Rimoldi** has been a foster mother, caring for over 70 children during that time, many with disabilities and terminal illnesses. At 65 she is still looking after foster children, most recently a two day old child.

Joint winners, 2005 NSW Woman of the Year - Mary Rimoldi and Tracey Menzies.



Mary Rimoldi, the Hon. Bob Carr, Immediate Past Premier of NSW, the Hon. Sandra Nori, Minister for Women.

Guest speaker Lisa Forrest and Her Excellency, Professor Marie Bashir AC, Governor of NSW.



INAUGURAL 2005 WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

NSW Honour Roll 2005

A NSW Honour Roll was established to recognise the 21 women who had been nominated by each NSW Minister for their achievements within the Minister's portfolio.

Name	Position	Recognition for
Brenda Margaret Ainsworth	Director of Major Projects at Nepean Hospital	Excellent leadership in change management
Monika Armstrong	Director, Culinarius, catering business	Success in small business and supporter of charitable organisations
Suzy Balogh	Agricultural Protection Officer for Dept. of Primary Industries	First Australian woman to win an Olympic shooting gold medal
Wendy Blacklock AM	Actor/administrator	Talented actor and performer contributor as a creative administrator, and work with indigenous artists
Jill Boehm	CEO of the Cancer Patients Assistance Society of NSW	Instrumental in improving rural links to services
Janet Davies	President of the South Western Regional Tenants Association	Volunteer for 20 years, advocating on behalf of social housing tenants
Diane Garrood	Regional Manager, NSW National Parks Service	Pivotal in the creation of the Jervis Bay Marine Bay and finalisation of a Regional Forest Agreement in 2000
Selina Hatcher	Supervisor, Customer Service Workshop Program, State Transit	Won the WorkCover 2004 Safety Award for best training program
Terri Janke	Indigenous lawyer	Contribution to the resolution of legal issues and negotiations involving indigenous culture and heritage
Dawn Maynard	NSW Fire Officer, NSW Fire Brigades	Pioneer and advocate for women in the brigades



INAUGURAL 2005 WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

NSW Honour Roll 2005 (cont'd)



Name	Position	Recognition for
Margaret MacDonald- Hill	Executive Officer, Association of Mining Related Councils	Leadership skills as a mediator and facilitator
Kim McKay	Head of Operation AUXIN, part of the international operation targeting child pornography	Awarded in 2003 most outstanding female investigator by the Australasian Council of Women and Policing Excellence
Coral McLean	Director, Holy Family Education Centre, Mount Druitt	Work with local disadvantaged and indigenous communities
Phyllis Miller	President, Local Government Shires Association	Contributions to local government and to a range of community activities
Sue Paull	NSW Department of Corrective Services	Tireless worker for educational opportunities for male offenders
Kate Rose	Responsible for implementing Women's Strategy 2004-2010	Work on a range of educational programs for women eg Young Women at Risk, Women with Disability, Women from Language Background other than English
Cheri Templeton	Senior Burns Physiotherapist, Westmead Children's Hospital	President, Burns Support Foundation, a volunteer organisation offering support to burns victims and their families
Ingrid Van Beek	Medical Director, Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre in Kings Cross	Work on the prevention and reduction of drug-related harm and communicable diseases amongst marginalised populations
Kate Woodward	Managing Director, Hunter Belle Cheese	Successful regional business

INAUGURAL 2005 WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD

Electorate Women of the Year Honour Roll 2005

NSW Legislative Assembly members also nominated one woman from their electorate for outstanding achievement and leadership. The names of these women appear on the *Electorate Women of the Year Honour Roll 2005*, which is reproduced on this page.

Albury	Jane Ayers
Auburn	Mary Dias
Ballina	Sharon Cadwallader
Bankstown	Helen Williamson
Barwon	Robyn Barrett
Bathurst	Kathryn Knowles
Baulkham Hills	Violet Nutt
Bega	Annie Florence
Bligh	Elinor Wrobel
Blue Mountains	Andrea Williams
Burrinjuck	Helen Wood
Cabramatta	Dorothy Cole
Camden	Del Cotter
Campbelltown	Jacque Leabeater
Canterbury	Doris Sutton
Cessnock	Judy Wilson
Charlestown	Patricia Craig
Clarence	Fay Boyd
Coffs Harbour	Dorothy Hays
Coogee	Ingrid Van Beek
Cronulla	Elanor Houlahan
Drummoyne	Jane Howard
Dubbo	Pamela Bell
East Hills	Noeline Hunter
Epping	Emily Washer
Fairfield	Anne Mittiga
Georges River	Joan Locke
Gosford	Sheila Astolfi
Granville	Georgette Ghosn
Hawkesbury	Yvonne Impiombato
Heathcote	Christina Mannyx
Heffron	Nancy Hillier
Hornsby	Nancy Richards
Illawarra	Rita McBlain
Keira	Robyn Alderton
Kiama	Lynette Strong
Kogarah	Toni Horsey
Ku-ring-gai	Sally Gulson
Lachlan	Heather Blackley
Lake Macquarie	Beryl Mullard
Lakemba	Pauline Gallagher
Lane Cove	Amanda Cavenagh
Lismore	Jenny Ryan
Liverpool	Kate Nickolas
Londonderry	Janet Thompson
Maitland	Susan Forrester
Macquarie Fields	Alice Klaphake
Manly	Carol Douglas
Maroubra	Olga Anderson
Marrickville	Sally Fitzpatrick
Menai	Anne Iacovella
Miranda	Mary Rimoldi
Monaro	Heather Little



The 2005 Premier's Reception for International Women's Day was a celebratory occasion.

Mount Druitt	Joan Freeman
Mulgoa	Sister Mary-Louise Petro
Murray-Darling	Diana Hoffman
Murrumbidgee	Judy Findlay
Myall Lakes	Penelope Dobell-Brown
Newcastle	Rhonda Scruton
North Shore	Jean Tyacke
Northern Tablelands	Ellen Marjorie Seagrave
Orange	Diane Manchester
Oxley	Carol Surrey
Parramatta	Sister Patricia Donovan
Peats	Rose Kinney
Penrith	Jennifer Hollingworth
Pittwater	Karen Draddy
Port Jackson	Illeana McCann
Port Macquarie	Kellie Mills
Port Stephens	Patricia Harris
Riverstone	Maureen King
Rockdale	Sue Cran
Ryde	Aileen Lingard
Smithfield	Paula Chegvidden
South Coast	Margaret Hedger
Southern Highlands	Dellmai Dempster
Strathfield	Christine Strachan
Swansea	Amy McCallum
Tamworth	Gae Swain
The Entrance	Sandra Wilson
The Hills	Carol Murphy
Tweed	Trish Hogan
Wagga Wagga	Yvonne Braid
Wakehurst	Kerrie-Anne Quin
Wallsend	Wilma Simmons
Wentworthville	Majorie Raggett
Willoughby	Peggy Canfield
Wollongong	Margaret Fuller
Wyang	Clare Johnston

Helping women make a move into IT

Although many would argue that the information, communication and computer technology (ICCT) industry is a gender neutral field of employment, the story seems otherwise.

While women now represent a majority of all enrolments in Australian universities, their share of places in ICCT courses remains low and static. Despite IT being seen as an 'in demand' occupation with lots of employment potential, women remain under-represented.

There has been research on why women leave university level ICCT courses and possible remedies have been suggested. What is less well understood is why so few girls choose tertiary level ICCT courses in the first place. With luck we should soon have some answers. An innovative new research project will investigate what happens during high school that leads to fewer women doing university level ICCT courses.

The project was inspired by a pilot study, conducted in 2002 by the former NSW Department for Women, which surveyed and interviewed students, staff and parents in two Western Sydney high schools.

One of the key findings was that the computing subjects offered in the NSW curriculum did not hold girls' interest. This was critical, since girls placed more importance on interest, while boys more often emphasised *future careers* when deciding what subjects to study at the senior level. While girls were highly engaged with and enjoyed using computers for school work, recreation and communication activities, they saw computers more as a tool for pursuing their interests. Boys, on the other hand,



Young women and men have different motivations for subject choice.

regard computers as an interest per se, and sought to understand how they worked. While both boys and girls held positive attitudes to ICCT study and jobs, girls were less interested in ICCT as a subject choice.

The current study, *From high school to higher education: Gendered pathways in information, communication and computer technology education* will explore how demographics, school, gender, and curricular differences across Australia's state systems influence the subjects that students take in high school, and where they go to next with their studies. The project will be conducted over 2005-2007, by a consortium of universities and industry partners across NSW, Victoria and South Australia. The Office for Women, Premier's Department, is an industry partner on this project.

Once we have a better understanding of these factors we should be able to develop strategies that might lead to more girls qualifying for, choosing, and entering tertiary ICCT courses.

For further information please contact Wendy Finnegan, telephone: 9228 3895, e-mail: wendy.finnegan@premiers.nsw.gov.au.

Public perceptions still a barrier⁷

A recent survey of 1200 people Australia-wide, by Talent2, an Australian recruitment and HR company, found that:

- ◆ 83% thought that women should be able to do such occupations as fire fighting, truck driving and crane driving
- ◆ 45% of the men surveyed believe society is unable to accept women and men swapping traditional work roles
- ◆ 96% of women felt there was bias against women in certain occupations while 85% of men thought so.

Talent2 reported '...jobs labelled as 'women's work' are not seen as avenues for advancement (for men) and are often lower in status and pay... and men in female dominated industries have been accused of riding the glass escalator up the corporate ladder whilst women in male dominated professions hit the glass ceiling.'

Source: Talent2, *Men still rule the roost at work*, media release, Sydney, 16 February, 2005.

TAKING ACTION

Where do I start looking for non-traditional work?

For anyone wanting to find a job, whether it's in the traditional or non-traditional area there couldn't be a better place to start than the Australian Government's JobSearch website. For all sorts of reasons it's a very useful site, not least because it offers a 5 minute quiz to find out where your interests might lie. (This reviewer did the quiz and it proved remarkably accurate.) Once you establish what you are interested in, it then throws up a variety of occupations that might fit the bill and the sort of work you might expect to do. With another click you're on the way to locating job vacancies in your area and/or training opportunities in that field.

If you already know the job you want, then use this site to check that you've got the right attributes and to investigate the employment outlook, potential weekly earnings and vacancies.

The site also includes apprenticeships with potential job vacancies, and highlights where there are skill shortages. The address is www.jobsearch.gov.au/careersearch.aspx

Another useful website is the Women's Electoral Lobby. It provides a range of links to organisations, committees and resources for women interested in working in the IT industry or the sciences. The address is www.wel.org.au/links.

WEL provides a link to WAVE - one of the most useful resources for women who are interested in working or training in non-traditional and emerging occupations. WAVE was developed by Swinburne University in Melbourne. It offers 100 links to resources and organisations on non-traditional work, and includes the national database of resources for, and about women, in non-traditional occupations. The address is www.converse.com.au.

Finally, if you want some first hand stories about how women got started in non-traditional trades, the type of training they did and their level of job satisfaction, then the federal government's 'new apprenticeships' website is also worth a visit. A variety of trades are listed including aircraft maintenance, plumbing, mechanics, engineering, construction industry, electrical utilities and boat



Photo courtesy of the Ambulance Service of NSW.

building. Just click on someone's name to find out more. You can also subscribe to the newsletter *No Limits* which provides more detailed accounts of women working in these occupations.

Also, use this website if you want to find out how to go about getting an apprenticeship. You can start at school, straight from school or many years after you've left school. The address is: www.newapprenticeships.gov.au/stories/apprentice.asp.

Photo courtesy of the Ambulance Service of NSW.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Success in a regional male domain

Phyllis Miller, the first woman President of the Shires Association of NSW said she knew early on 'I didn't want to be a follower, I wanted to be a leader'.

In 1995 Phyllis became a councillor on Forbes Shire Council and then two years later joined the NSW State Executive of the Shires Association, representing councils from the central west.

In 2003 she was elected President after a vote by Mayors across the State. Her timing wasn't ideal. The day after her election the NSW Government announced the biggest restructure of local government in 50 years, with amalgamations top of the agenda. 'My role was difficult to say the least but I enjoyed the challenge.'

'The reforms forced local councils to look at the way they do things. We're now much more financially aware and efficient. We consult more with communities about our delivery of services and we are more transparent.'

Phyllis left school in year ten, 'that's all you did back in the old days' she says. She completed a secretarial course in Young, married and after the birth of her first child moved to Forbes with her husband. There, they set up their own stock and station agency. They had four more children and are still running what is now a multi-million dollar business.

She says working in the male dominated environment of the stockyards prepared her for the Association, which is male dominated 'and in some ways a conservative organisation'.

'I've had to work twice as hard as a man to do the job. I knew if I wasn't successful then it would be a long time before we got another opportunity.'

Phyllis is the immediate past President, stepping down at the end of June 2005 when her two year tenure ended. She received phone calls from mayors to express their disappointment she's going. 'I've had a lot of feedback which suggests I've been enthusiastic and energetic, and maybe haven't done too bad a job.' She attributes this to being very direct and up-front. 'I haven't dodged any of the hard issues. I've confronted them head on.'

The Presidency is a highly political job, involving lots of lobbying of Ministers. 'If you're a Minister

you've got a specific portfolio. When you're the President [of the Association] you have to cover all the issues - roads, energy, environment, country water supplies and sewerage.'

Given her nomination for the NSW 2005 Women of the Year Honour Roll it seems clear Minister Kelly thinks she has done a good job.

Phyllis says it has been a big commitment and required lots of travel - 'it's not a job for someone without stamina' she says. 'The biggest skill you need is to be confident about who you are.'

'A lot of women will try to get a position without empowering themselves first.'

'I did my apprenticeship as a divisional representative on the Executive and I also went looking for other tasks to do.'

'Be yourself, don't try to get a job for money, position and power. Do it because you want the job. If you're good at something those other things will take care of themselves' she says.



Phyllis Miller, Immediate Past President, Shires Association of NSW

EMERGENCY SERVICES SECTOR

Women fire fighters make history

For the first time ever, women involved in fire fighting from across Australia and New Zealand, got together in Sydney over two days in early May, to talk about the work they do, to share their experiences, and to explore ways of encouraging more women to take up fire fighting.

Over 140 women working full-time, part-time and as volunteers attended the forum. In addition to frontline fire fighters, there were also human resources personnel, equity and diversity officers, university researchers and senior executives from fire fighting authorities and other agencies.

The NSW Minister for Sport, Recreation and Tourism, and Minister for Women, the Hon. Sandra Nori MP officially opened the Forum. The Welcome to Country recognised the contribution firefighters make to preserving women's sites. Speakers on day one included Commissioner Greg Mullins from NSW Fire Brigades, Lisa Corbyn, Director-General Department of Environment and Conservation, Assistant Commissioner Mark Croweller, NSW Rural Fire Service and Dr Merilyn Childs, Director of the Fire Services Research Project at the University of Western Sydney (and Forum Convenor).

Some other high profile women spoke on day two including Pru Goward, Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, and Christine Nixon, Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police.

The stories of nine women fire fighters, presented under the theme - '*Stories From Around Australia*', was one of the hits of the forum. Their accounts of becoming involved in fire fighting were emotional, heart warming, humorous and truly inspiring.

Photos courtesy of New South Wales Fire Brigades.

One of the issues explored at the forum was why the number of women involved in fire fighting in Australia is below 3% of the full-time workforce. Strategies to retain women in fire fighting related employment were also canvassed. It's clear that some kind of mentoring and support program is needed, as well as a formal communication network for women in fire fighting.

Delegates voted unanimously to establish an Australasian association for women in fire fighting. An interim working party will move on establishing such a permanent industry association. As part of this process, a report on the outcomes of the forum and recommendations for strategies to improve the recruitment and retention of women in fire fighting will be prepared and submitted to the Australasian Fire Authorities Council for consideration.

The First National Women in Fire Fighting Forum was an initiative of the Fire Services Research Project at the University of Western Sydney (UWS) and was generously supported by NSW Fire Brigades, UWS, NSW Department of Environment and Conservation, NSW Rural Fire Service, Tasmania Fire Services, Metropolitan Fire Brigade Victoria, Country Fire Association Victoria, Family and Community Services Department and Airservices Australia.

For further information about the interim Working Party, please contact Fiona Millhouse fiona.millhouse@environment.nsw.gov.au or Carmel Donnelly carmel.donnelly@fire.nsw.gov.au.

(L to R) Comm. Greg Mullins, NSW Fire Brigades, Lisa Corbyn, D-G NSW Dept of Environment and Conservation, Fiona Millhouse, Manager Fire Management Unit, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Dr Merilyn Childs, Director Fire Services Research Project, UWS, Ass. Comm. Mark Croweller, NSW Rural Fire Service.



Striking a balance for women and men

It is almost a cliché, everyone these days is looking for a better work/family balance. Parents wrestle with the competing demands of the need to work, the desire to work and the joys and demands of children, and also caring for elderly parents.

On June 22nd this year, the Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission released a discussion paper - *Striking the Balance: Women, Men, Work and Family*, on the many issues around paid and unpaid work and family, to provoke a debate about what needs to be done to find a better balance. There are many issues and nothing is straightforward.

For a start everyone is working longer hours. The average hours worked by full time workers is 44 hours per week; 45 hours for men and 41 hours for women. This increase is more striking for men aged between 35-54 years.⁸

Since the median age for men becoming fathers is 32.3 years⁹ and for women becoming mothers - 30.5 years¹⁰, men and women are working harder and longer during the child rearing years.

Parenthood and gender are the most significant factors in determining how Australians use their time. On average, women spend more time in unpaid work (including household and caring responsibilities.) Labour force participation rates for men are 71.5% while for women they are 56.1%.¹¹

Although men have increased the time they spend with children, it is women who spend the most time with children. Women do 90% of childcare tasks and 70% of all family work.¹²

It is also most commonly women who care for people with disabilities and the elderly. By 2044-45 one in four Australians will be 65 years and over.¹³ Some women, particularly those having children later, are finding themselves caring for elderly parents at the same time they are caring for younger children.

Surveys of fathers indicate they would like to see more of their children but that work often gets in the way of family life. However, even though some workplaces offer more family friendly initiatives, men don't seem to take them up. The usual make up of families, therefore, sees the male as the primary

breadwinner and the woman as part-time worker and full-time mother. There may be many reasons for this, not least that women still only earn 85.1% of the male dollar, for full-time ordinary earnings.¹⁴

Women represent 71.2% of all part-time workers.¹⁵ Whilst part-time work allows women time to accommodate family responsibilities it can be far from ideal. The work may not be particularly satisfying, it may not be sufficient in terms of hours and it may not provide career structures, training and development opportunities.

Of Australian women with two or more children only 43% are in the workforce; in the UK this figure is 62% and 82% in Sweden.¹⁶ Some suggest that better gender balance in home tasks may help increase this figure.

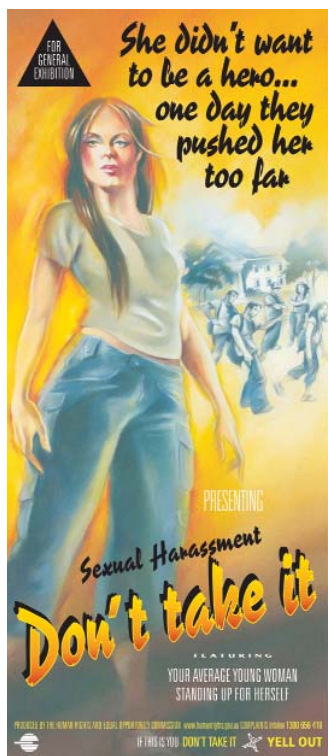
The decisions made by individual families about the work/family balance are not just important within families - they can and do have an impact on the broader community. If people leave the workforce to care for children or older parents then there are economic implications for them and for the country.

The federal government has made it clear that it would like Australians to stay longer in the workforce, but it also wants them to have more children. As the population ages, labour needs to be replenished. In order to compete in a global market we need a solid base of skilled workers, whereas at present, we have a skills shortage.

There are strong drivers then to look at what needs to be done to help Australian families manage their competing demands, and at the same time, help meet the broader national interest.

The discussion paper, *Striking the Balance: Women, Men, Work and Family* looks at the impact of gender on paid and unpaid work and on caring responsibilities. It also reviews family friendly industrial arrangements in the workplace and examines legislation, policies and practices. Submissions and comments are invited by 30th September 2005.

For full details of the discussion paper, visit www.humanrights.gov.au/sex_discrimination/strikingbalance/index



Say no to workplace discrimination

- ◆ In 2003, 31% of complaints lodged with the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) related to sexual discrimination. 87% of the complaints were in the area of employment. 35% of the complaints alleged pregnancy discrimination and 27% alleged sexual harassment.¹⁷
- ◆ In NSW in 2003, sexual discrimination was the leading reason for complaints in the area of employment, accounting for 33% of complaints. Discrimination against carers was the fifth most likely cause of discrimination complaints at work.
- ◆ A HREOC national phone survey in 2003 found that one in four Australians have been sexually harassed. The HREOC resource, *Sexual Harassment in the Workplace: A Code of Practice for Employers* clearly explains what constitutes sexual harassment, how employers can be liable and how they can avoid liability by taking all reasonable steps to prevent this occurring in their workplaces. For resources such as the posters on this page go to: www.humanrights.gov.au/sex_discrimination/sexual_harassment.html.

Source: Human Rights & Equal Opportunity Commission (2003) Annual Report 2002-2003.



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