

MEDIA RELEASE

Stereotypes about women's work, men's work threaten innovation

Australia's economy will be poorly equipped for future challenges if stereotypes about the kinds of work women and men 'should' do persist, the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) said today.

"Women quite rightly are being encouraged to pursue careers requiring scientific, technical, engineering and mathematics skills, but we should also be encouraging men to pursue careers in female dominated industries such as health care, to help meet the needs of our future population," Libby Lyons, Director of the Workplace Gender Equality Agency says.

"If we are serious about being an innovation nation, we need to start improving gender diversity in industries that will be growth areas in the years to come."

Research has shown that diversity improves innovation and performance so persistent gender segregation across the economy has the potential to undermine Australia's ambition for a smart future, Ms Lyons said.

Data shows that the proportion of women has increased over the past two decades in Australia's two female-dominated industries (*Health Care and Social Assistance* and *Education and Training*), while there has been a decrease in women's representation in the most male-dominated industry, *Construction* and little improvement in *Mining*.

Ms Lyons said society's deeply embedded gender stereotypes were partly to blame.

"It's time to reject the idea that certain types of work are better suited to women or men. A person's gender is not an indicator of their ability or interest in a particular area," Ms Lyons said.

The WGEA has today launched *women's work | men's work: great careers are for everyone* (www.wgea.gov.au/learn/womens-work-mens-work) profiling women and men working in non-traditional fields, to inspire the next generation of employees about careers they might embrace.

Ms Lyons said employers had an important role to play in challenging stereotypes and barriers to participation.

"Smart CEOs and executives recognise that diversity is good for business and in order to stay ahead of their competitors to attract and retain the best and brightest candidates, they must be driving an inclusive workplace culture with offering such as flexible working arrangements, access to comprehensive parental leave and equal pay for women and men," she said.

"Job-seekers should also think broadly about their futures and explore opportunities in non-traditional fields."

Released today:

- *women's work | men's work* profiles of women and men in non-traditional roles.
- [Fact sheet: Gender segregation of Australia's workforce](#)

Additional resources:

- [Guidelines to setting gender targets](#) and a [target-setting calculator](#) to help organisations improve diversity.

The Agency thanks the following organisations for participating in *women's work | men's work*: Caltex, AECOM, University of Sydney, G8 Education, Warrigal and St Vincent's Hospital.

About the Agency: The Workplace Gender Equality Agency is an Australian Government statutory agency charged with promoting and improving gender equality in Australian workplaces: www.wgea.gov.au

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