



Driving Women's Participation in South Australian Industries Forum

Opportunities, challenges and the way forward

3 July 2024

Summary Report

Contents

- Acknowledgement of Country 3
- 1 Executive Summary 4
- 2 Context 6
- 3 Forum Summary 7
 - 3.1 Panel 1 - Organisational factors and levers for change in the workplace. 7
 - 3.2 Panel 2 - System enablers 8
- 4 Opportunities and Challenges 10
 - 4.1 The pathway to participation in male-dominated industries 10
 - 4.2 Recruitment 10
 - 4.3 Retention..... 11
- 5 The Way Forward 13
- 6 Appendix 1: Panellist Details 14
 - Panel discussion 1: Organisational Factors and Levers..... 14
 - Panel discussion 2: System Enablers..... 15
- 7 Appendix 2: Summary of Participant Responses 16
- 8 Appendix 3: Government Programs and Initiatives 17
 - South Australia 17
 - Commonwealth..... 17



Acknowledgement of Country

The Government of South Australia acknowledges Aboriginal peoples as the state's first peoples and nations and recognise them as the traditional owners, occupants and ongoing custodians of the lands and waters in South Australia. We further pay our respects to their Elders past and present and recognise the vital role they play in supporting their communities.

We further acknowledge and respect the leadership and profound commitment of Aboriginal women in improving the lives of their communities, and those of the broader South Australian community, through their tireless advocacy. Aboriginal women leaders play an important role in advancing the interests of girls and women through generously sharing wisdom and culture and through their continued advocacy over years, decades and lifetimes.

1 Executive Summary

South Australia is facing the dual challenge of addressing skills shortages across key industries required to sustain key projects while also increasing opportunities for *all* South Australians to participate in the state's economy.

- *The South Australian Economic Statement* highlights that “social inclusion and economic success go hand in hand” and positions an inclusive economy as central to our future success. South Australian women are critical to addressing both challenges.
- *The Skilled. Thriving Connected. Our Policy Direction for Skills in South Australia* released in March 2024 highlights the immediate skill needs of our state with skill shortages across defence, clean energy and the green economy, health, building and construction and cybersecurity and Information and Communication Technology – all of which are male dominated.
- South Australia's *Women's Equality Blueprint* released in July 2023 states the need to address occupational segregation as a key factor that results in women experiencing lower levels of economic security over the course of their life.

To progress solutions regarding these challenges, the Office for Women, Department for Human Services, South Australian Government hosted a forum on Wednesday 3 July 2024 focussed on increasing women's participation in traditionally male-dominated industries. The forum was attended by nearly 100 industry leaders and key public sector agency representatives from the construction, manufacturing, mining, defence, space, cybersecurity, and renewables industries.

The forum was designed to stimulate dialogue around challenges and barriers, showcase best practice, and identify collaborative strategies to improve women's participation and retention in male-dominated industries. Key themes included the importance of systemic change, cultural shifts, and government-industry collaboration to create a more conducive environment for women in these sectors. The event generated connections and established the groundwork for future initiatives to drive women's participation in South Australia's evolving economy. Key themes identified during the forum are summarised below:

Key barriers to women entering industries:

- Discrimination/stereotypes including misogyny, sexism and women not being taken seriously.
- Perceptions of not enough women to access these industries.
- Lack of awareness about opportunities available in these industries at school and university.
- Male leadership leading to bias in decision making.

Key challenges to women staying in industries:

- Lack of flexibility in working hours and lack of flexible working options.
- Experiences of male dominance and the ‘boys club’ in meetings and conversations.
- Workplace culture including poor leadership, lack of education and resistance from male managers.
- Lack of support from leadership and male allies impacting women's experiences in the workplace.



Examples of what has worked to increase women's participation:

- Changing recruitment advertisements/interview processes to address bias against women.
- Flexible working practices to accommodate parenting and caring responsibilities.
- Diversity and inclusion strategies with a focus on women to actively address the problem.

Key levers of change were identified including at the organisational level:

- More women in leadership/mentors to address male dominance and reduce bias in decision making.
- Safe workplaces to address this critical issue.
- Male allies and advocates to support and champion women in the workplace and as leaders.

At the system level the following levers of change were identified:

- Quotas to encourage affirmative action and ensure action towards gender balance.
- Collaboration across government/industry to ensure an adequate pipeline and support for women.
- Public awareness campaigns to address the lack of awareness and opportunities for women.

Next steps include:

- Office for Women to work with the Department for State Development on key initiatives.
- Creation of an ecosystem map of support to increase women in male dominated industries and collect / showcase examples of best practice for shared learning.



2 Context

Like elsewhere, economic security and economic equality of women in South Australia remains an ongoing and urgent challenge. Women in South Australia are paid 10% less on average than men, retire with less superannuation, spend more time in unpaid work and are less likely to be in leadership positions.

A key contributor to this inequality is the gender pay gap which was 11.5% nationally and 9.8% in South Australia in September 2024. *KPMG's She's Price(d)less Report (2022)* noted the gender pay gap across Australia is driven by gender discrimination, family responsibilities and its impact on workforce participation and gender segregation in job type.

Gender segregation is understood as the unequal distribution of men and women in high-paying industries (industrial segregation) and roles (occupational segregation). This segregation accounts for 24% of the gender pay gap in Australia. Although women's participation in the workplace has increased over the last few decades, they are still under-represented in traditionally male-dominated industries:

- construction (12.8%)
- mining (19.4%)
- transport, postal and warehousing (23.3%)
- manufacturing (29.1%),
- electricity, gas, water and waste services (29.8%).

The *She's Price(d)less* report also found that “gender segregation is a significant contributor to the gender pay gap as female-dominated industries have lower wages on average than male-dominated industries, regardless of educational attainment. Additionally, studies have shown that occupations which have gradually become female-dominated, have exhibited a steady decline in average earnings.”

At the same time, as noted in *Skilled. Thriving Connected. Our Policy Direction for Skills in South Australia*, South Australia is seeing key skill shortages in our most highly paid and male dominated industries - defence, clean energy, building, construction and cybersecurity. Increasing women's participation in these industries and addressing gender segregation would address many economic inequalities South Australian women face and meet the economic aspirations of our State.

Gender-diversifying male-dominated sectors requires not just building a pipeline of female workforce but also developing strategies to retain them. It is crucial to realising the benefits for women in South Australia, and for the South Australian economy.



3 Forum Summary

On Wednesday, 3 July 2024, the Office for Women, Department for Human Services, South Australian Government hosted a forum focussed on women's participation in traditionally male-dominated industries at the Wolf Blass Event Centre, Morphettville Racecourse. The aims of the Forum were to:

- Identify barriers and opportunities to recruit and retain women in male dominated industries at an organisation and system level and sharing best practice.
- Consider women's participation from an intersectional lens, focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls, women and girls living with a disability, regional and remote women and girls, as well as women of different ages.

Nearly 100 industry leaders and key public sector agency representatives attended from the construction, manufacturing, mining, defence, space, cybersecurity, and renewables industries.

The forum was opened by the Hon Katrine Hildyard, Minister for Women and the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence and the Hon. Susan Close MP, Deputy Premier and Minister for Industry, Innovation and Science, and Workforce and Population Strategy.

3.1 Panel 1 - Organisational factors and levers for change in the workplace.¹

This discussion centred around both challenges and opportunities within workplaces. This was a critical way to consider local factors that contribute to change including organisational structure and culture as well as strategy and processes that drive recruitment and retention.

The key themes arising from Panel 1 included the following:

More women in leadership and as mentors to address male dominance and reduce bias in decision making


“No roles models out there for young women” and “Not enough promotion of women who have been successful in these roles because there is still more men who are successful.”

Safe workplaces to address this critical issue and ensure women are protected

“We know that women that are harassed have twice of suicide rate as the general population. We know that any of those incidents have led to more than triple their leave being used up, relative to those people who don't experience that. So, we know they are Loss Time Incidents. If we treat them as such, we will investigate them as such, and we will put independent organisations such as Road Safe, which already exists, in charge of helping us find a wealth of data about systemic issues that have led to that behaviour, at the ground level”

“I know at least four women in South Australia alone, where they have walked away with an Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA), some money, with some damage to their careers. On the

¹ Panel facilitators and members are noted in Appendix 2.



other side, the male that misbehaves, remain in place, remain in the leadership role, and nobody can say anything about what just happened. If we want more females in higher levels, we should as a policy setting have a register of these NDA's. If I knew that company A have NDA's in place to deal with misbehaviours and company B has none, I would go to company B if I can have a choice.

Male allies and advocates to support and champion women in the workplace and as leaders

“Women need advocates and champions. We need people who are going to advocate for us when we are not in the room because that's when the decision is being made about who promotion is going to be awarded”.

Changing recruitment advertisements and interview processes to address biases

“Looking at recruitment practices, change language on job adverts. Change interview techniques around women - they might not be as strong on paper as men but on the phone they are brilliant”.

Flexible working practices to allow for parenting and caring responsibilities

“A hospital was built a few years ago in New South Wales, by a large company with a female Chief Executive Officer. They built a hospital in New South Wales, during COVID on a five-day week and in budget. Now, that is amazing. They partnered with the local university to survey and to have a look at the culture of their workers. 80% of them said that they have improved their mental health during that project. They got to see their kids play sport, they got to do flexible work hours.”

3.2 Panel 2 - System enablers²

The second panel discussed broader system challenges and potential solutions including policy, data and legislative factors. Key points of focus from Panel 2 included:

Quotas to encourage affirmative action and ensure action towards gender balance

“The ones who are the decision-makers in the boardrooms who have said 'we are hiring them because they're good at their job.' I think that that does change the culture within the workplace. You are always going to get people who says 'it is because of...'. But it takes time.”

“We can't put in those quotas, meet those quotas and then instantly expect change, it is not going to happen. 30 years ago, my mom said I couldn't enter the police force because I was female and I was too short. But now, over 50% of graduates are women. That was a 30-year change.”

“I don't have an issue with the quotas at all, but we need to look at the pool of people. Quotas need to be reasonable. If we've got, say, a quota of 100 female engineers, but the universities are only putting 20 graduates, we are setting industries to fail.”

² Panel facilitators and members are noted in Appendix 2.



Collaboration across government/industry to build a pipeline of women entering these industries

“The construction industry doesn't just mean builders. But girls and women don't necessarily know all of that. I think collaborations with Government with industry bodies, with organisations, such as National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC), for example, and getting their views, working together to work out what we can actually do and raising that awareness. You mentioned before the example of Netball, I think that was fantastic: People are seeing some of their heroes, their idols, encouraging women's participation in a male-dominated industry. So I think that is really important to raise that awareness.”

Public awareness campaigns to showcase opportunities for women

“It is really so important that we raise the public awareness of what roles, what opportunities are available, as well as the challenges that are faced. But I think it is important not just for women to see that, but for men to see it, as well, because I think we need men to support women in this industry too. I know there are a lot of fabulous men that do support women, but I think we need to do that together and raise that public awareness.”

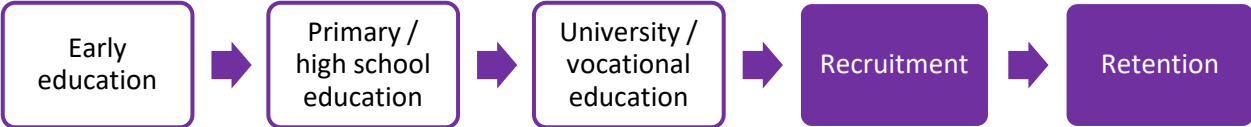
Throughout the forum participants were invited share their views on the barriers and challenges to women entering and remaining in male dominated industries (Appendix 1).

4 Opportunities and Challenges

4.1 The pathway to participation in male-dominated industries

Through the discussion panels and the participant contributions, the forum explored two key areas relevant for women and girls along the pathway to entering and remaining in a male dominated industry – recruitment and retention (See Figure 1). However, some of the insights were relevant to the earlier stages along that pathway and it is recommended these be explored further as a next step.

Figure 1: Pathway to enter a male dominated industry



4.2 Recruitment

Figure 2 describes the barriers and challenges identified at an individual, organisational and system level to recruiting women into male-dominated industries. At an individual level these included women’s lack of confidence and lack of awareness of opportunities available. At the organisational level it was a lack of women as role models and at a systems level discrimination and stereotypes were the biggest barrier to women entering male dominated industries.

Figure 2: Recruiting women into the industry

Barriers and challenges

Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of confidence to apply for roles• Lack of awareness about opportunities
Organisational	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of women role models
Societal / System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discrimination / stereotypes

What work is needed

Individual

- Think 'outside the box', for example, forklift drivers

Organisational

- Changes to job advertisements and interview processes

Societal / System

- Quotas
- Public awareness campaign
- Accurate data to understand inequality
- Collaboration across government, industry and university sectors

Additionally, the panel discussions highlighted some examples of what has worked and what is needed to address barriers to recruitment at each of these levels. At an individual level, discussion centred around ways to encourage women to think outside the box of careers and roles traditionally available to women such as forklift drivers. Changing recruitment practices was also highlighted as being a successful key strategy to recruit more women and at a system level it was quotas, public awareness and collaboration across government, industry and the education sectors. More detail is available in Appendix 1.

4.3 Retention

Figure 3 below shows the key barriers and challenges to retaining women in male-dominated industries raised by participants and during the panel discussions. At an individual level, participants highlighted that being the only woman recruited to a male dominated industry is a problem as they are relied upon to do the cultural change heavy lifting causing them to burnout and leave. A lack of female role models, the 'boys club' and workplace culture are factors at the organisational level that impact women leaving an organisation and system barriers are discrimination and stereotypes that make it difficult for women to succeed in a male dominated industry.

Success strategies identified to retain women in male dominated industries primarily sat at the organisational level with flexible working practices, female leaders and mentors, male allies, safe workspaces and training were all highlighted. Targets, quotas and government procurement policies were all identified as being successful in retaining more women in male-dominated industries.



Figure 3: Retaining women in the industry

Barriers and challenges

Individual

- Only woman in the organisation - responsible for changing culture
- Misconduct

Organisational

- Lack of role models and opportunities
- Male dominated workplace
- Workplace culture

Societal / System

- Discrimination / stereotypes

What work is needed

Individual

Organisational

- Diversity and Inclusion Strategy - focus on pay equity and flexibility
- Flexible working practices
- Female leaders and mentors
- Safe workplaces including psychological safety
- Zero tolerance for and calling out bad behaviour
- Training - safe workplaces, culture, self-confidence, misbehaviour incident processes
- Changes to work practices to accomodate family commitments. For example, start work meetings later
- Recruit more than one women into the organisation/team
- Male advocates and allies
- Executive sponsorship for women

Societal / System

- Public awareness campaigns
- Government lead by example in procurement policies
- Diversity targets
- Incentives for organisations with positive gender equality policies & practices



5 The Way Forward

The discussions during the forum highlighted the need for industry and government to work together to increase women's participation in traditionally male-dominated industries with high gender segregation rates.

The connections formed will create opportunities for future collaboration and shared learning across government and industries. Following the forum, the contact details of all attendees were distributed to ensure participants could continue to connect and make progress on these issues and potential solutions.

For government

The Office for Women will continue to drive this important work and are collaborating with the Department for State Development to ensure these contributions form part of their ongoing work.

Initiatives to continue the momentum from this forum to increase women's participation in male-dominated industries include:

1. To commence a project to develop an ecosystem map of government and industry support/programs to increase women's participation in male-dominated industries. This will highlight gaps where additional support may be needed.
2. Collect and showcase examples of best practice for shared learning.

For industry

We extend our sincerest thanks to industry participants and appreciate the effort you made to participate in these important discussions. We invite you to:

1. Refer to Appendix 2 for details of government supported programs and notify the Office for Women of any industry-led programs to assist with the ecosystem map.
2. Consider how your organisation could address or implement the needs and potential solutions identified during the forum.
3. Share and showcase best practice examples.
4. Contribute to the ecosystem map to continue to build a collective understanding of how to increase women's participation in male-dominated industries.

Contact us

Email DHSOFWGenderEquity@sa.gov.au.

6 Appendix 1: Panellist Details

Panel discussion 1: Organisational Factors and Levers

Facilitator



Dr. Ariella Helfgott
Director of Strategic Foresight
Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Panellists



Kiara Johnson
Owner and Director
Platinum Civil Construction Group



Michelle Lyon-Green
Director of Talent and Workforce Planning
Nova Systems Australia and New Zealand



Eva Balan-Vnuk
Chief Information Officer
Department of Treasury and Finance

Panel discussion 2: System Enablers

Facilitator



Cassie Manser
Managing Director
Capture Culture

Panellists



Amanda Brady
President
Platinum Civil Construction Group
National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC)



Reneke van Soest
General Manager, Transformation
Santos Ltd

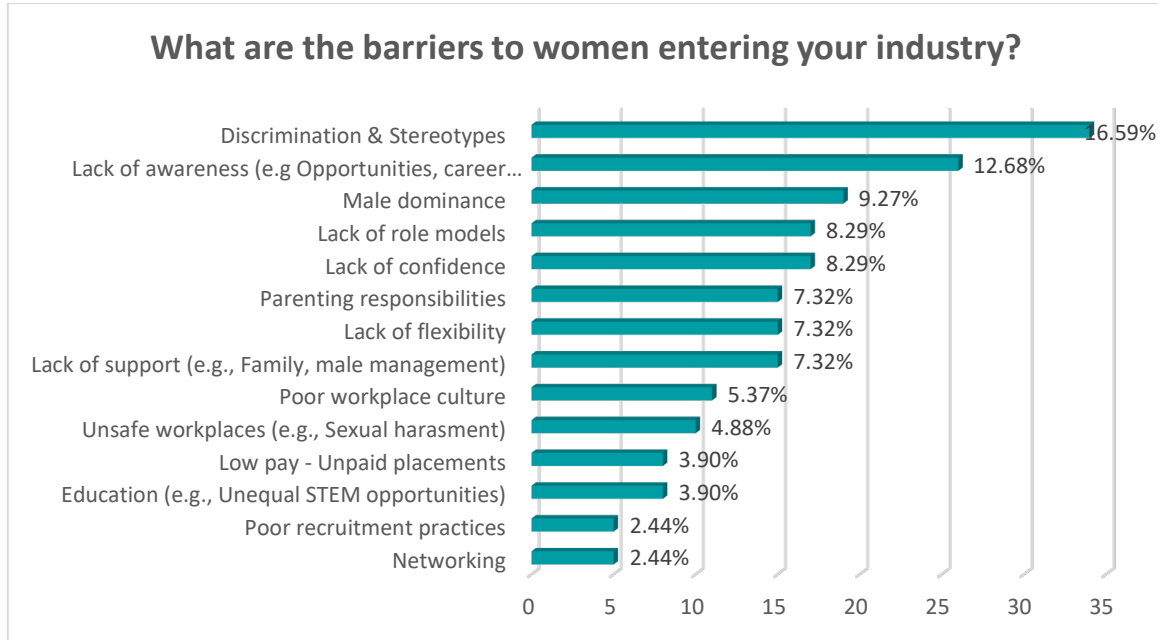


Etha Van Linden
State Head of South Australia
Australian Industry Group

7 Appendix 2: Summary of Participant Responses

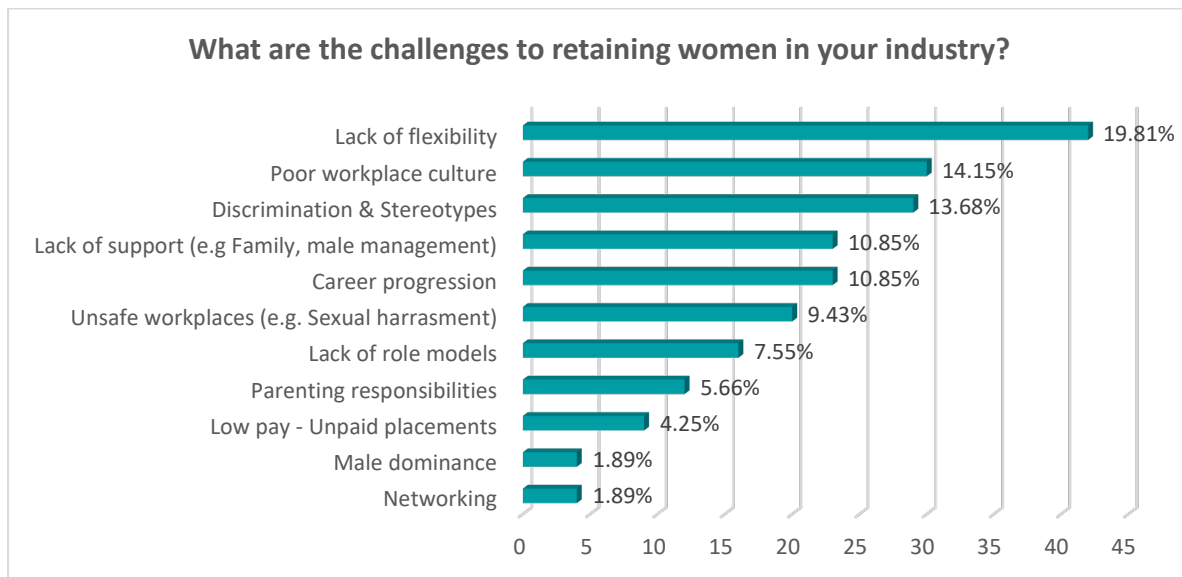
There were 205 responses from participants at the Forum about the barriers to women entering male dominated industries, summarised in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: What are the barriers to women entering your industry?



A total of 212 responses about the challenges of retaining women in male-dominated industries were received from participants during the forum as highlighted in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5: What are the challenges to retaining women in your industry?



8 Appendix 3: Government Programs and Initiatives

A range of government programs and supports are available at a South Australian and Commonwealth level including:

South Australia

Defence Industry Connection Program

The [Defence Industry Connection](#) program provides scholarships for under-represented university students, including women to undertake work placements with local defence companies.

<https://defencescholarships.aigroup.com.au/>

Skills Shortage Solutions

The [Skills Shortage Solutions](#) develop solutions to skills shortages and open new opportunities to connect South Australians to training and future jobs.

<https://skills.sa.gov.au/skill-shortage-solutions>

Software and Engineering Degree Apprenticeships

[Software and Engineering Degree Apprenticeships](#) with a focus on attracting women.

<https://www.aigroupapprentices.com.au/programs/degree-level-apprenticeships/south-australian-software-engineering-apprenticeship/>

SAYES program

A business mentoring and learning program, [SAYES](#), designed to help SA entrepreneurs establish a business or further develop and grow their existing business.

<https://sabusinesschamber.com.au/>

Commonwealth

Building Women's Careers Program

The [Building Women's Careers Program](#) aims to drive structural and cultural changes that enhance women's access to flexible and inclusive vocational education, training, and employment opportunities.

<https://www.dewr.gov.au/building-womens-careers-program>

Women Building Australia

[Women Building Australia](#) is a collaborative initiative between Master Builders Australia and the Australian Government aimed at attracting and supporting women in the building and construction industry.

<https://www.womenbuildingaustralia.com.au/about-women-building-australia>

Working for Women Program

The [Working for Women Program](#) aims to improve outcomes for women and gender equality in Australia, with a focus on addressing gendered attitudes and stereotypes and taking action across the following five priority areas: gender-based violence, unpaid and

paid care, economic equality and security, health, and leadership, representation, and decision making.

<https://www.pmc.gov.au/office-women/working-for-women-program>

Girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Toolkit

The [Girls in STEM Toolkit](#) (GiST), provides girls and young women with resources to help them understand how their existing skills and interests can link to STEM careers and study pathways.

<https://www.thegist.edu.au/about/>

Equal by 30 Campaign

The Commonwealth has committed to achieving gender equality in the clean energy sector through its participation in the [Equal By 30 Campaign](#) which focuses on equal pay, leadership, and opportunity.

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/energy/women-in-energy/equal-30>