

Sydney, NSW 2109 Australia

Telephone: (02) 9850 7257  
Facsimile: (02) 9850 9457

E-mail: lyn.danninger@pru.mq.edu.au  
Web: www.pr.mq.edu.au



## Media Release

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### **Study finds the glass ceiling still firmly in place for Australian women executives**

The glass ceiling for women holding executive positions and sitting on boards in Australia has become a little harder in the last two years, according to the newly-released 2008 EOWA Australian Census of Women in Leadership.

Macquarie University's Peter McGraw, Director of the Labour-Management Studies Foundation, who conducted the research for EOWA, said while he was disappointed to see fewer women at the top of the corporate ladder, the numbers did not surprise him.

"I'm not surprised that the numbers of senior women have declined because this is consistent with international trends in developed economies. There have been similar findings in the UK, USA and Canada in the last year," he said.

One of the major indicators illustrating the inequality existing between men and women at the top level was the drop in the number of women executive managers in ASX 200 companies. McGraw found that the numbers declined from a high of 12 per cent in 2006 to 10.7 per cent in 2008. Further, the number of companies with no women executive managers rose from 39.5 per cent in 2006 to 45.5 per cent in 2008.

McGraw believes there are a number of reasons for the decline in the number of women holding senior positions.

"I think there are probably several reasons including old fashioned discrimination, rigid working patterns which discourage women looking for more flexible arrangements and not enough female mentors and role models to encourage women on the tough road to the top," he said.

While the number of women in line management roles grew from 4.7 per cent in 2003 to 7.4 per cent in 2006, the 2008 Census found those gains were actually reversed to pre-2004 levels dipping to 5.9 per cent. McGraw says the same downward trend was also reported in the 2007 US Census.

At the board level, there were more than 10 men to every one woman and at CEO level, there were 49 male CEOs for every female CEO in the ASX200. Women chaired just four boards and held 8.3 per cent of board director positions, declining from a high of 8.7 per cent in 2006. Just over half of all ASX200 boards have no women board directors.

At the time the Census was taken, women held just four CEO positions.

McGraw said the current declines do not bode well for next generation of aspiring women executives.

“It is an unwelcome trend at a time when the education system is producing record numbers of well qualified young women. It shows that the boards and executives of Australian corporations need to rethink their talent management processes to ensure that they get the best and brightest into top jobs no matter what gender they are.”

**Media Contact: Lyn Danninger**  
**(02) 9850 7257, [lyn.danninger@pru.mq.edu.au](mailto:lyn.danninger@pru.mq.edu.au)**