



## GM Holden Case Study

### Organisational Background

As an automotive manufacturer, GM Holden Ltd has a predominantly male workforce working across engine and vehicle manufacturing operations, engineering, and sales. Since 1999 when the 'Diversity at Holden' policy was launched, there has been a concerted effort to attract and retain more women, especially into non-traditional roles. The company's strategy has been driven by the need to address the growing shortage of skilled workers within the labour market and a recognition that attracting and retaining more women will be a key factor in their ongoing sustainability. The other driver has been the need to demonstrate to both employees and customers that Holden is committed to supporting women in the workplace, within the company and also externally.

#### QUICK FACTS

- **Industry** – Manufacturing
- **Number of Employees** – 7,829 (as at September 2006)
- **Gender Split** – 10.7% women and 89.3% men; 25% women in Executive Management roles
- **2006 EOWA Status** – Waived | EOWA Employer Of Choice for Women

### Recruitment and Selection

#### ISSUES IDENTIFIED

Overall, female participation in the Holden workforce is 10.7%, with 17.5% in the salaried group. The very clear need to gain greater access to the talent pool has been identified, as well as the importance of attracting and retaining more women, particularly into non-traditional roles such as engineering. In the initial stages of the Diversity at Holden strategy, priority was given to ensuring that all recruitment processes were free from any gender bias. The following are some of the actions that were taken.

#### INITIATIVES

- All Holden's preferred recruitment suppliers' staff attend Holden's induction workshop, which incorporates the Diversity at Holden program. Furthermore, their contract with Holden stipulates that they must adhere to Holden's Diversity Policy as well as policies on EEO, Discrimination and OH&S and privacy legislation.

- All Hiring Managers have had to undertake an in-house training program in recruitment and selection before they could be involved in interviewing candidates.
- Promotions, advertising materials and the company's website feature images of women as well as men working in a broad range of roles at GM Holden.
- In 2005 and 2006, the CEO included in each Executive Director's KPI's a gender hire target, outlining that 30% of all new hires are to be women.
- In 2006, the Engineering Division re-introduced a Graduate Program aimed at female engineering graduates. A launch event was held to which engineering students were invited. Leaders from the company including senior women engineers made presentations and talked to the graduates about careers at Holden.
- At Career Fairs and other student expos, both female and male representatives of the company attend.

## **RESULTS**

- 3 of the 12 members on the senior leadership team are women.
- Women constituted 22% of all new hires (Jan – Sept 2006) up from 16% in 2004.
- Of all new hires into salaried roles, 27% were female (up from 25% in 2004).
- 8% of the hourly workforce (predominantly in engineering and manufacturing) are women. New hires into vacant hourly roles have increased to 16% in 2006 from 14% in 2004.
- Census data shows that in general, female employees feel more positive about working at Holden than men. In certain categories such as culture, fairness and respect and work/life balance, women recorded significantly more favourable responses.

## **Training & Development**

### **ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

An ongoing challenge has been the ability for women to develop their careers in non-traditional as well as more traditional roles within GM Holden. Many women employees had experienced a degree of isolation within their departments where they were the only female, and therefore had no support networks enabling them to discuss issues that impacted on their careers, or other topics such as work/life balance.

### **INITIATIVES**

Early in 2005, the Holden Women's Council was established. They meet bi-monthly to discuss and address issues of importance to women. A notable success was the event held on International Women's Day (March 8, 2006) which attracted 16 men and 80 women from within the company. They discussed issues such as the business

case for women in the workplace and strategies for marketing and designing for the women's market. Part of the day was reserved for discussion on women's self-development, career planning and mentoring. The feedback from the day was very positive, a repeat event was held in October 2006 with similar success and ongoing sessions have been planned.

Formal mentoring programs were also set up with women as both mentors and mentees.

## **RESULTS**

- Requests have been made for additional Women's Council meetings and there are other networking groups in the process of being formed across the organisation.
- There has been very positive feedback from the Women's Council event - women found that many of the topics covered had the potential to help them to address personal career development issues.

## **QUOTES**

*Inaugural President - GM Holden Women's Council: "The Council members work together to drive GM Holden business performance and brand by championing the contribution of women. My 18 months as President provided me with both personal and professional opportunities to develop strong networks with other women in the organisation. As an organisation, we set ourselves some challenging targets and as a result we have achieved outstanding outcomes - my belief is that the efforts of the Women's Council have been instrumental in Holden achieving these goals."*

# **Work Organisation**

## **ISSUES IDENTIFIED**

Early research within the company identified that there were very low numbers of women engaged in less than full-time work at Holden. Furthermore, despite 6 weeks paid maternity leave being available, there was only 67% return to work rate following maternity leave.

## **INITIATIVES**

- In October 2002, Holden introduced 14 weeks paid maternity leave for all employees with 2 or more years of service.
- A range of flexible work options policies are now available. These include part-time work, job-sharing and, where appropriate, working from home.
- A lactation break policy was implemented in 2005 and a lactation room opened in the new Port Melbourne Head Office. Other sites have appropriate accommodation available on request.

## **RESULTS**

- Analysis of parental leave data shows that of the 54 women who took maternity leave in 2004, 92% returned to work. More than a third have opted to return on a less than full-time basis. From those taking maternity leave in 2005, more than 70% have returned to work (half to part-time roles). This return rate was impacted by a number of employees on leave

who elected to participate in a voluntary separation program as part of a capacity realignment program in the Elizabeth manufacturing operations facility.

- Managers and members of the HR team have observed that women are generally proactive in identifying ways in which they can work flexibly so as to balance their work/life/family responsibilities.
- There has been observable, positive change in the behaviour and attitudes of many managers regarding this issue.

## **SUCCESS STORIES**

*Female Engineer, mother of 4 children*

"As a mother of four children who also works full-time, I really appreciate the laptop GM Holden has provided me and also the flexible working conditions of my job. The laptop has allowed me to better balance my family and work commitments (for example, participating in evening net meetings from home) and the flexible working hours allow me to take my children to school each morning."

*Corporate Affairs Co-ordinator, recently returned from maternity leave, mother of 2*

"GM Holden's commitment to its female workforce and its effort in seeking balance between work and home life is to be commended. Personally, Holden's policy to provide 14 weeks paid maternity leave and offer me flexibility on my return has only strengthened my commitment to Holden and has demonstrated to me that my family and I really do "matter" to Holden."

*Sales & Marketing Manager, recently returned from maternity leave, mother of 2*

"The maternity leave 14 week payment that Holden provides is a generous bonus at a time when there are lots of bills. I am fortunate enough to have a wonderful boss and a flexible job, which allowed for adaptability when I returned to work after maternity leave. I was therefore able to return for three days of my choice per week, which enabled me to spend time with my family as well as continue with my career which was important to me."