



media release

Women win seats in Australia's boardrooms: 2004 EOWA Census of Women in Leadership

While there has been a gradual increase in the number of women stepping up to senior positions, the third EOWA Census of Women in Leadership shows that Australia's corporate boardrooms are still dragging their feet.

Released today by the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA), the 2004 Census shows the number of women executive managers in Australia's companies listed on the ASX has increased by 1.8% to 10.2%. The number of women board directors has increased by only 0.2% to 8.6%.

The number of women in line positions, the experience widely considered necessary for rising to the most senior positions, has increased by 1.8%.

Significantly, the number of companies in the ASX200 with no female executive managers has decreased by more than 10% since the Census was first conducted in 2002, however this is still a high 42%. The number of companies with two or more women executive managers has increased to nearly 25%, a rise of 6.3% since 2002.

On all measures however, Australia lags behind the USA and Canada. 86% of US Fortune 500 companies and 62.4% of Canadian Financial Post 500 have at least one woman in an executive management position.

Announcing the results EOWA Director, Anna McPhee, said the fact that the figures have remained relatively constant across the three years of the Census shows that there are still significant barriers to women achieving senior positions in corporate Australia.

"Fly business class on any given day across Australia and you can see that women are just not up there in equal numbers to men", she said. "The 'pointy end' of the plane is telling it how it really is in boardrooms and at senior management levels around the country."

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Despite women's workforce participation climbing to the highest ever rate of 45% and 56% of university graduates being female, women are still scarce in the top most corporate positions. Of the ASX200 companies, women hold only two Chairs of Boards and four CEO positions, even though a recent Catalyst report found that women are just as likely as men to covet the top jobs.

"The results of the 2004 EOWA Census are confronting for anyone who believes that Australia is at the forefront of international business competitiveness. As corporate leaders face issues surrounding access to a skilled workforce, retention and sustainability, they need to look closely at culture, job design and workplace flexibility if they are going to win the global talent war", she said.

Industries with the highest representation of women on boards and in executive management are telecommunications, software & services, diversified financials, banks, insurance and retailing. Industries with a low representation of women on boards are automobiles and components, technology and hardware equipment, commercial services & supplies, real estate and energy. Industries with a low representation in executive management are consumer durables and apparel, hotels restaurants and leisure, food beverage & tobacco, capital goods and automobiles and components.

The EOWA Census of Women in Leadership is the definitive marker of the state of play for women in the workforce in Australia. It was undertaken with support from Platinum Sponsor, ANZ and Esanda, Gold Sponsor and research collaborator, Macquarie University and in partnership with leading US research and advisory organization, Catalyst.

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