

Gender diversity in the Tasmanian State Service

HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS – OUR COMMITMENT
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Our vision

The Tasmanian State Service is an inclusive organisation, where women and men are valued, respected, and treated equally and fairly.



Our commitment

GENDER DIVERSITY IN THE TASMANIAN STATE SERVICE

Why aren't there more women in our Senior Executive Service?

There is a huge amount of research on the value of gender diversity. The research shows that organisations with equal gender representation in their senior ranks and boards are more productive and more successful. The evidence is incontestable.

Unfortunately, in the Tasmanian State Service, while over 70 per cent of our workforce are women, only 35 per cent of our Senior Executives are women.

We pride ourselves on making employment decisions based on merit, but with more female employees than males overall, clearly on merit there should be more women in senior roles.

We need to identify and remove the actual and potential barriers, including the cultures and policies that are holding back gender equality in our workplace. Naming up and addressing issues like unconscious bias is critical to the diversity and success of our workforce, to making us a workplace of choice in the eyes of the community, and to leading by example on gender equality in Tasmania.

This challenge isn't unique to our State or our sector, with many initiatives happening nationally and internationally to address the deficit of women in senior public and private sector roles.

As Heads of Departments we are committed to making a difference.

The key actions that we will undertake as a group will build on the efforts of our separate departments and we will:

- identify the barriers to women working in senior levels in the Tasmanian State Service;
- overcome unconscious bias; and
- support flexible work arrangements.

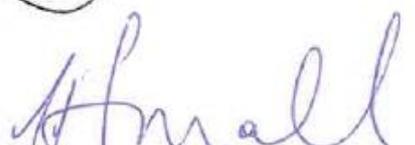
This combination of a whole-of-Service approach, and department specific initiatives, will ensure that we are doing the best we can for the State Service.



Greg Johannes
Head of the State Service
Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet



Jenny Gale
Secretary, Department of Education



Tony Ferrall
Secretary, Department of Treasury
and Finance



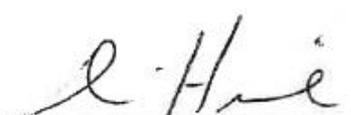
Mike Pervan
Secretary, Department of Health
and Human Services



Simon Overland
Secretary, Department of Justice



Kim Evans
Secretary, Department of State Growth



Darren Hine
Secretary, Department of Police, Fire and
Emergency Management



John Whittington
Secretary, Department of Primary Industries,
Parks, Water and Environment

Our Goal

50/50

The Tasmanian State Service's goal is to have equal representation of women and men in the Senior Executive Service.

The current representation is 35 per cent women and 65 per cent men. This is despite a workforce of 70 per cent women, and relatively equal representation of women and men in the feeder groups to the Senior Executive.

Our Target

at least 40 per cent women by 2020

Implementing strategies that specifically aim to increase the representation of women in the Senior Executive will lead to greater diversity in our thinking, and a State Service profile that matches the community it serves.

For some departments this will be more challenging than others, but it's a challenge that Heads of Departments are committed to addressing. As well as implementing the strategies outlined in the following pages, strategies will continue to be developed by each department that directly address department-specific barriers.

Achieving this target over the next four years will put the Tasmanian State Service on track to have gender equality in the Senior Executive, and across the entire State Service in the longer term.

Why focus on the Senior Executive Service?

The barriers for women in the workplace are more marked as the level of seniority rises. If gender equality is achieved at the Senior Executive level, then the Tasmanian State Service is on track to address the key barriers to equal participation.

What it will take to get to at least 40 per cent

Achieving gender equality means changing both the systems and the culture that put up barriers which prevent women from being able to reach their full work potential. The barriers commonly exist across the processes of selection, retention, mobility and promotion. To make the cultural and system changes that are needed to achieve gender equality there are three key areas of action:

1. identifying the barriers women face in the Tasmanian State Service;
2. addressing unconscious bias; and
3. promoting flexible work practices.

What's already happening?

Across the State Service there are already initiatives underway which directly address gender inequality.

Earlier this year the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment released a draft Gender Equality Action Plan which proposes a wide ranging set of actions to address the under representation of women in that Department.

The Department of Treasury and Finance, the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management are currently working towards White Ribbon Accreditation, with other departments committed to accreditation over the next three years.

The Department of State Growth is also addressing diversity, including gender equality, through its Culture and Values Program which is premised on leadership in an inclusive work environment and involves flexible work practices and addresses unconscious bias in employment decisions.

Identifying the barriers

Real stories of women's experiences working in the Tasmanian State Service

Research shows that the barriers in the workplace are real, and that there isn't an even playing field. There are common barriers across the private and public sectors that stop women from having the same access to opportunities as men.

But every organisation also has unique issues and challenges.

It's important to understand the real experiences of women working within the Tasmanian State Service and not just assume we know what the barriers are.

By listening to the stories of women and men in our workplace to identify the main barriers and the real work experiences of women in the State Service, strategies can be developed that address the core issues.

What's involved?

Understanding the stories of women about the barriers they have faced while working in the Tasmanian State Service.

This will be supported by:

- research involving face-to-face consultation with people in the State Service;
- developing strategies to address the key barriers identified; and
- promoting the success stories of women in the State Service.

What's already happening?

In developing its draft Gender Equality Action Plan, the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment undertook extensive consultation involving more than 600 employees. This consultation included workshops to develop the draft Plan and subsequent consultation on the recommendations in the draft Plan. The consultation process found that there were some real and systemic issues that the Department is now able to actively address.

The Department of Treasury and Finance has set up a gender equity working group that has undertaken a comprehensive staff survey (65 per cent response rate) and is running focus groups to identify barriers and opportunities to improving the representation of women in leadership in the Department. This process will inform the development of Treasury's Women in Leadership Plan.

Unconscious bias training

Testing the assumptions that underpin decision making

Unconscious bias is the assumptions that are made about another person based on common cultural stereotypes and our personal experiences.

Research shows that one of the greatest contributors to inequality is the assumptions and biases that are held about people because of their gender, age, race, disabilities and sexuality.

By being aware of individual and group biases, and how they are influencing our decision making, whether it's in recruitment and selection, managing employees or preparing and implementing policies, we can make better employment decisions and provide more considered and objective policy advice.

What's involved?

Unconscious bias training will be rolled out to all Heads of Departments, Senior Executives and managers.

It will form a core part of our recruitment and selection training, and our management and leadership training.

This will be supported by:

- trialling recruitment processes that make it more difficult to be unconsciously biased;
- developing a tool kit to assist managers address unconscious bias in their decision making; and
- developing guides for having more inclusive workplaces.

What's already happening?

The Department of State Growth has, as a core component of its Culture and Values Program, an initiative to address unconscious bias in employment decisions.

Training on unconscious bias has also been included in the 2016 Strategic State Service Management Program.

Flexible work practices

Embedding flexibility

Meaningful flexible work options allow for the workplace to:

- adapt to change;
- provide a pathway for gender equality;
- assist in talent attraction and retention;
- improve workplace productivity; and
- increase diversity.

Flexible work practice is more than working part time. It is about structuring roles to have reasonable workloads, changing expectations about people's availability, supporting working from home on a regular or ad hoc basis, or varying hours to enable family or personal events to be attended during the normal working day. It is also about breaking away from the assumption that we have to work long hours every day to be productive and good at our job.

Flexible work practices emphasise the importance of teams so that we don't become dependent on individuals, and we recognise that with technology we can work away from the workplace. It's also about adapting to different stages of employees' careers, and giving employees different employment experiences.

There are many formal and informal examples for workplace flexibility across the State Service. We need to promote where they work well, and make it an accepted part of our work culture that we support flexibility.

Flexibility will look different across the State Service. Some work services are more open to flexible work arrangements than others. However, we should not assume we can't support flexibility; we need to look for opportunities, no matter how small, that could make a difference.

Flexibility will help break down stereotypes that caring/family responsibilities are gender issues.

What's involved?

We will develop a whole-of-Service approach to flexible work practices. We understand that having flexible work practices brings a number of management challenges including work health and safety and performance management. Such an approach will therefore be supported by:

- developing a set of tools to assist managers to design and manage flexible work practices;
- running courses for managers and employees in workplace flexibility; and
- reviewing industrial provisions to break down stereotyping of women and men.

What's already happening?

The Department of Premier and Cabinet is advertising all its vacancies with flexible work options. Employees also have access to formal and informal flexible work arrangements to support them to meet personal commitments.

Monitoring and reporting

As Heads of Departments we will oversee the implementation of our commitment to achieve gender diversity in the Tasmanian State Service. The strategies we will be adopting to achieve this are through identifying the barriers women face in the State Service; addressing unconscious bias; and promoting flexible work practices.

To ensure gender diversity is being achieved, we will receive quarterly updates on progress against these strategies, and we will monitor the gender diversity profile of the State Service and engagement scores in People Matter Surveys to measure the impact that these changes are having over time.

We will also ensure our departments' Annual Reports include a gender profile of our workforce including reporting on attraction, recruitment, movement and retention rates by gender.

Supporting the implementation of the three strategies

The State Service Management Office will assist Heads of Departments to implement the three strategies to achieve gender diversity, and will work with departments to develop appropriate tools and initiatives, and to share experiences and learnings.



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