



Women in fire and emergency leadership roles

How can we improve the gender balance?

A research report
commissioned by the Department of
Environment, Land, Water & Planning

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Gender & Disaster Pod

An initiative of WHGNE, WHIN & MIRI

Authorship and Acknowledgement

Our deep appreciation to the 480 people who took the time to complete a long questionnaire, and to the 23 women and men who participated in interviews and the focus group. It is your expert knowledge and lived experience that allows this research report to be written. It contributes to a body of research that is only emerging, and has the potential to improve the experiences of women and men in fire and emergency roles. The initiative of senior leaders within the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (and others in the emergency management sector) is both welcome and indicative of intent to make positive changes for the benefit of all.

Sincere thanks to the Reference Group, chaired by Euan Ferguson and including Claire Mumme, Ariana Henderson, Lia Sarto, Jill Karena, Caitlin Cruikshank and Ian Campbell-Fraser.

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Contents

Introduction.....	4
Research Objectives	4
Significance of research	4
Part 1: Contextual reading provided by DELWP	5
Role of DELWP/NEO in fire and emergency management.....	5
Part 2: Comparative analysis – desktop audit	9
Explanation of Data	9
Workforce Overview	10
Gender Composition (Overall Workforce)	10
Role Participation/Representation.....	12
Gender Composition (Leadership)	13
Gender Equity Strategies / Initiatives	15
Part 3: Research Methodology.....	16
Consent procedures	17
Method of analysis.....	18
Dissemination of research findings.....	18
Differentiation by organisation.....	18
Part 4: Quantitative Data Findings	20
Demographics of the respondents.....	20
Opinions on gender equality in the workplace and organisation	20
Observations about Gender Equality in the Organisation and Workplace	21
Opinions on Barriers and Solutions to Women Taking on Leadership Roles	21
Personal Experiences	22
Optional Questions	23
Part 5: Qualitative Data Findings – What the interviews revealed	25
Why we need to do this study	26
Praise for NEO in gender equality progress	28
Still a way to go: Progress is not success.....	30
Discrimination	33
Generational issue	39
Strategies	40
Discussion.....	41
Conclusion	50
Suggested strategies for improvement.....	51
References.....	59
Appendices	60
Appendix 1: Recruitment poster and email from DELWP Secretary.....	60
Appendix 2: Explanatory Statement and Consent Form	62
Appendix 3: Survey monkey questionnaire	66
Appendix 4: Interview schedules	69
Appendix 5: Quantitative analysis.....	71

Introduction

The purpose of this research project is to identify what actual and perceived barriers and enablers exist for women to take on fire and emergency leadership roles within the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the Networked Emergency Organisation (NEO). NEO includes Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and VicForests.

It is recognised that staff and managers across the organisations demonstrate personal leadership in both the fire and emergency roles they perform and their substantive roles. For the purposes of this report DELWP has defined leadership as Strategic, Incident and Team leadership roles.

The brief provided by DELWP noted that this project builds on the work completed through the former DEPI's *Women in Leadership* program and current initiatives in DELWP. It stated:

Fire and emergency management in Victoria has historically military origins and such male-dominated occupations as law enforcement, firefighting, engineering, and senior management. Further insights gained from the gendered nature of teamwork communication and emergency services culture has the potential to significantly increase the effectiveness of fire and emergency management performance at a time when it is most critical.

As of October 2014, 2,422 DELWP and associated employees in NEO agencies were accredited in fire and emergency roles. Of these 671 (28% per cent) were women and 1,751 (72% per cent) were men. There were 175 women who held leadership roles defined as Strategic, Incident and Team leadership roles. This represents 20% of the total personnel holding leadership roles.

Research Objectives

Objectives within this overall aim of identifying barriers to women taking on leadership roles in fire and emergency are to:

- (1) Conduct a desktop gender analysis to map the current fire management sector in terms of gender representation in fire and emergency leadership roles.
- (2) Conduct a 'survey monkey' with employees of DELWP and other NEO agencies (Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and VicForests) to assess the reasons behind, and attitudes to, gender disparity in fire and emergency leadership roles, and to identify solutions.
- (3) Consult directly in person with employees to flesh out reasons behind, and attitudes to, gender disparity in these roles, and to identify solutions

Significance of research

This is original research in an emerging area of interest to the emergency management field. The results of this research will feed into a broader DELWP/NEO project that seeks to improve gender diversity in fire leadership roles within DELWP and other NEO agencies.

Increasing the proportion of women in fire leadership roles allows a bigger pool of potential employees, broadens diversity, and increases the capacity of this sector.

DELWP Secretary, Adam Fennessy, was recently appointed a Victorian Male Champion of Change. The focus on gender equity provides the direction and support necessary for investigating the reasons behind this gender disparity in leadership roles, in order that DELWP and others can take action to advance gender equality in fire and emergency management. It is auspicious that both Adam Fennessy and Chief Fire Officer, Alan Goodwin, have demonstrated strong leadership in addressing gender discrimination.

The research is limited due to time constraints imposed by the fire season. Future research could involve travel to rural regions for interviews and focus groups, could extend to other aspects of diversity such as ethnicity and religion, and could consider barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and LGBTI people.

Part 1: Contextual reading provided by DELWP

The following information has been provided by DELWP. It provides an overview of the fire and emergency role of DELWP and its NEO partners, the current status of gender balance within fire and emergency roles and the current approaches being adopted by the agencies in relation to gender equity.

Role of DELWP/NEO in fire and emergency management

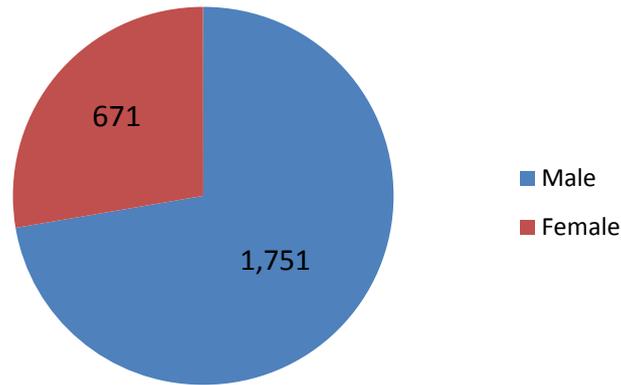
DELWP is tasked with creating liveable, inclusive and sustainable communities. DELWP is a land manager as well as a fire and emergency manager. Together with its portfolio agencies and delegated land managers, DELWP is responsible for managing almost 8 million hectares of land in Victoria (about one third of the state).

The combined fire and emergency management and land accountabilities within the DELWP portfolio incorporate prevention, preparedness, response and recovery functions.

The model for resourcing fire and emergency management functions within the DELWP portfolio sees a small number of staff with dedicated emergency management roles. In addition, seasonal staff are employed over the peak planned burning and fire season, and a surge capacity of staff drawn from across the portfolio and agency workforce are utilised to meet emergency management resourcing requirements during events or periods of peak delivery (such as the autumn planned burning season). DELWP portfolio staff with emergency management roles form a critical part of Victoria's firefighting capacity.

Current state of play

From a total workforce of 5,342 (2013-14 Annual Reports), 2,422 employees held fire and emergency roles in the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and the NEO agencies (Parks Victoria, VicForests, and Melbourne Water). This figure includes staff with dedicated fire and emergency roles and the surge staff from across the organisation, not including project fire fighters (PFFs). Of the 2,422 staff, 1751 are male and 671 are female.



Participation in roles is skewed, with heavy biases in traditionally feminine/masculine roles. Of particular note is the lack of women in leadership roles.

Staff can hold multiple roles that they perform depending on requirements. In total the 2,422 staff hold 4,909 roles (Departmental Fire Accredited or Readiness and Response roles).

Roles showing strong representation of either men or women are shown below. Most of the roles in which women have strong proportional representation are non-field based roles, such as Finance, Timekeeper, and Information Officer.

Capability Type	Female	Male	% Female	% Male
AERIAL DRIPTORCH OPERATOR	0	10	0%	100%
AERIAL SUPPRESSANT MIXING AND LOADING CREW MEMBER	12	161	7%	93%
AIR ATTACK SUPERVISOR	0	37	0%	100%
AIR OBSERVER	1	78	1%	99%
AIR OPERATIONS MANAGER	0	8	0%	100%
AIRBASE MANAGER	4	24	14%	86%
BASE CAMP MANAGER	4	13	24%	76%
BURN OFFICER IN CHARGE	13	260	5%	95%
COMMUNICATIONS PLANNING OFFICER	5	22	19%	81%
CREW LEADER	24	146	14%	86%
FINANCE OFFICER	29	7	81%	19%
FIRE BEHAVIOUR ANALYST	2	9	18%	82%
GENERAL FIREFIGHTER	233	829	22%	78%
INCIDENT CONTROLLER LEVEL 1	10	92	10%	90%
INCIDENT CONTROLLER LEVEL 2	2	34	6%	94%
INCIDENT CONTROLLER LEVEL 3	0	13	0%	100%
INFORMATION OFFICER 3	9	3	75%	25%
IRIS OPERATOR	76	9	89%	11%
LOGISTICS OFFICER LEVEL 2	6	18	25%	75%
LOGISTICS OFFICER LEVEL 3	1	16	6%	94%

Capability Type	Female	Male	% Female	% Male
MOBILE BASE CAMP SUPPORT	18	7	72%	28%
OPERATIONS OFFICER LEVEL 1	29	291	9%	91%
OPERATIONS OFFICER LEVEL 2	3	185	2%	98%
OPERATIONS OFFICER LEVEL 3	0	20	0%	100%
PLANNING OFFICER LEVEL 2	9	23	28%	72%
PLANNING OFFICER LEVEL 3	3	28	10%	90%
REGIONAL AGENCY COMMANDER	9	45	17%	83%
REGIONAL CONTROLLER	1	5	17%	83%
RESOURCES OFFICER LEVEL 2	32	10	76%	24%
SAFETY OFFICER	2	38	5%	95%
SITUATION OFFICER LEVEL 3	11	40	22%	78%
STATE AGENCY COMMANDER	1	11	8%	92%
STATE DUTY OFFICER	2	6	25%	75%
STATE PLANNING LEADER	0	4	0%	100%
STATE PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER	8	1	89%	11%
TIMEKEEPER	93	16	85%	15%
WARNINGS AND ADVICE OFFICER	12	4	75%	25%

In addition to the above, approximately 618 seasonal PFFs were employed in 2014/15. Of these 523 (85 per cent) were male and 95 (15 per cent) were female.

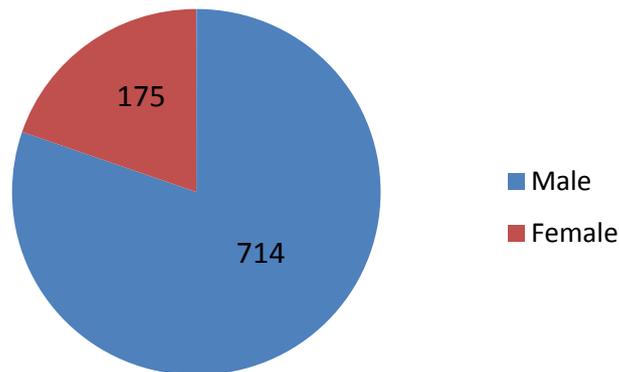
Fire and emergency incidents typically involve many people, responding to high risk situations that can change rapidly. They also have the potential to impact significantly on the Victorian community. In order to manage these types of incidents our leaders need to be able to:

- make time critical decisions;
- communicate with a range of stakeholders; and
- lead and motivate people to act.

Leadership positions exist across the spectrum of strategic leadership (e.g. Agency Commanders, Regional Controllers, Duty Officers), Incident leadership (key leadership roles within a Level 3 or Level 3 IMT), Team Leadership (Level 1 and level 2 roles) and personal leadership (emerging leaders and all emergency responders).

It is recognised that staff and managers across the organisations demonstrate personal leadership in both the fire and emergency roles they perform and their substantive roles. For the purposes of this report, Leadership has been defined as Strategic, Incident and Team leadership roles.

There are 889 personnel holding roles that fall within Strategic, Incident and Team leadership. Of these, 175 (20 per cent) are female and 714 (80 per cent) are male.



Gender equity programs

The following section outlines the commitment and approaches to gender equity that DELWP and its partner agencies have adopted.

DELWP

DELWP is committed to gender equity and generational and cultural diversity within its workforce, and in ensuring that the diversity of its workforce is reflected in its involvement in emergency management. The DELWP Gender Equity Action Plan is under development, and outlines a series of actions under six key action areas; Improving systems, Leadership and advocacy, Development and support, Flexibility first, Storytelling and Governance and measurement.

DELWP is actively engaged in a number of programs to promote and foster gender equality and cultural diversity within its day-to-day workforce and its emergency workforce. DELWP programs to support gender equity include:

- a pilot program to help our people to better understand their **unconscious knowledge and bias**;
- the self-paced **My Mentor** learning program;
- supporting DELWP women through the **ANZSOG program** 'Women in Leadership – Achieving and Flourishing'
- development of an in-house program for DELWP women aspiring to leadership.

Parks Victoria

Parks Victoria is currently actively working the gender diversity space. Acting CEO, Chris Rose, recently participated in Ken Lay's 'Gender and Disaster in Emergency Services' survey of emergency services' chiefs and executives.

Ariana Henderson and Sandra Robinson recently presented 'Bring Your Lipstick to Work' at the 2015 AFAC Conference in Adelaide. This project is focused on empowering women to be their authentic selves in a male dominated culture and be accepted. It also identifies that barriers to women becoming leaders in the emergency services sector need to be addressed,

and encourages organisations to ask questions regarding their culture, providing actions and strategies that can be undertaken to increase inclusivity.

Melbourne Water

Melbourne Water's 2015-18 Diversity and Inclusion Plan sets a vision of a diverse and representative workforce, and an actively inclusive, flexible and high-performance workplace culture that enhances their business and the lives of their people and stakeholders.

Over a three-year period the plan aims to move the organisation from one that tolerates diversity to one that leverages and excels in this area. It defines four focus areas, including gender equity, each with an associated action plan. These will be delivered by business working groups and overseen by a steering committee.

The Gender Equity Action Plan will set specific targets and strategies to promote gender diversity in Melbourne Water's recruitment, talent development and leadership programs, in order to build a strong pipeline of future leaders.

The plan aims to encourage and support women to reach their full potential, including increasing female representation in leadership roles and ensuring an inclusive mindset is integral to culture and leadership.

A working group will look at:

- Gender composition of their workforce and targets for improving gender equity
- Reviewing recruitment, promotion and remuneration practices
- Access and utilisation of flexible working practices
- Reviewing policies on harassment, discrimination and bullying
- Career and leadership development practices to support career progression

VicForests

VicForests recognises the challenges of improving gender equity across its business and has developed a range of formal and informal initiatives in recent years. These programs have focused on improved gender equality in work place behaviours, flexible working arrangements, recruitment practices and leadership development.

Part 2: Comparative analysis – desktop audit

There are multiple agencies in Victoria that have responsibility for fire and emergency management. Addressing gender equity is a priority of all agencies. The section below provides an analysis of the current composition of their workforces.

Explanation of Data

This report draws on the following two data sources:

(1) Data collected via an online survey by the Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA) in July 2015,¹ for the following six (6) Victorian emergency management organisations:

- Ambulance Victoria (AV)
- Country Fire Authority (CFA)
- Emergency Management Victoria (EMV)
- Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA)
- Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB)
- Vic State Emergency Service (SES)

(2) Data and contextual information provided directly by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)² – pertaining to DELWP itself and the other Networked Emergency Organisation (NEO) (which include Parks Victoria, VicForests, and Melbourne Water).

In some cases, data limitations prevent a direct comparison between DELWP/NEO and the other six emergency management organisations. For example, detailed data and contextual information has been provided for DELWP/NEO (such as proportions of men/women occupying specific roles) which is not available for the remaining organisations. These limitations are noted throughout the report.

Workforce Overview

Together, DELWP/NEO and the other six Victorian emergency management organisations, comprise a total workforce of 76,968 - 21 per cent (16,157) of whom are paid staff members, and 79 per cent³ (60,811) of whom are volunteers.

As of 2014, the distribution of staff across this workforce is as follows:

Total Workforce	AV	CFA	EMV	NEO (inc. DELWP)	ESTA	MFB	SES	Total
Paid	5142	2288	114	5342	888	2216	167	16157
Volunteer	404	55413	0	0	0	0	4994	60811
	5546	57701	114	5342	888	2216	5161	76968

Gender Composition (Overall Workforce)

There a number of other emergency service organisations, including Ambulance Victoria (AV), the Country Fire Authority (CFA), Emergency Management Victoria (EMV), Emergency Services Telecommunications Authority (ESTA), Metropolitan Fire Brigade (MFB) and Victoria

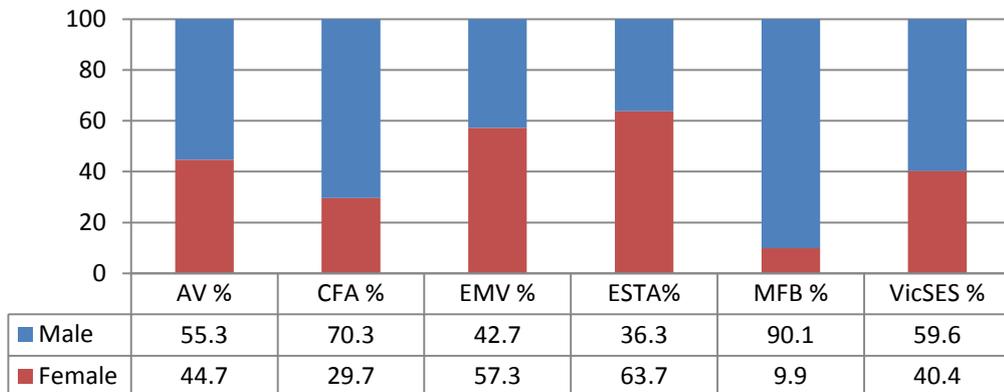
¹ EPA Victoria and Victoria Police, both of whom submitted responses to the ESTA online survey, have been excluded from this report.

² DELWP's responses to the ESTA online survey were not included in this report as data/information on DELWP/NEO was provided directly by DELWP.

³ This figure varyingly totals 59,812 or 59,772 according to data included in the ESTA survey.

State Emergency Services (VicSES). Across these organisations, a total of 10,876 staff members are employed in paid positions, 6,954 (64 per cent) of whom are male and 3,918 (36 per cent) of whom are female. The gender composition *within* each organisation varies considerably, with CFA and MFB employing upwards of 70 per cent men, while EMV and ESTA (000) employ higher proportions of female than male staff.

Gender Composition (Paid Workforce) Other Organisations



In total, DELWP and other NEO agencies employed 5,342 people in 2014, of which 2,013 are women. With a paid workforce comprised of 37.7 per cent women DELWP and other NEOs currently has the *third lowest* proportion of female staff, as compared to the other six emergency management organisations. MFB has the lowest proportion of female staff (9.9 per cent), while also reporting one of the highest proportions of staff defined as ‘Operational’ (84.7 per cent).⁴ (See ‘Role Participation/Representation’ below.) CFA has the second lowest proportion with 28.7% women.

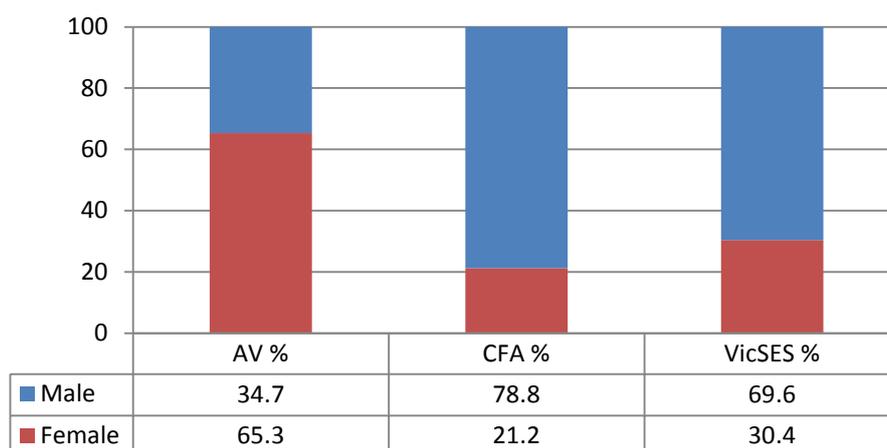
Only three of the six emergency management organisations include a volunteer workforce. Volunteers represent a sizable proportion of the total workforce, with 60,811⁵ volunteers currently engaged across AV, CFA, VicSES. Volunteer positions are overwhelmingly dominated by men within CFA (79 per cent) and VicSES (70 per cent) while, conversely, women occupy over 65 per cent of volunteer positions at Ambulance Victoria.

⁴ There is no set definition of ‘operational staff’.

⁵ This figure varyingly totals 59,812 or 59,772 according to data included in the ESTA survey.

Gender Composition (Volunteer Workforce)

Other Organisations



Role Participation/Representation

DELWP/NEO roles (as indicated in the Table on Pages 12-13 of this Report) have a strong representation of men in frontline and women in non-field based roles, such as Finance, Timekeeper, and Information Officer. Participation in roles is clearly skewed, with heavy biases in traditionally feminine/masculine roles. Of particular note is the lack of women in leadership roles.⁶

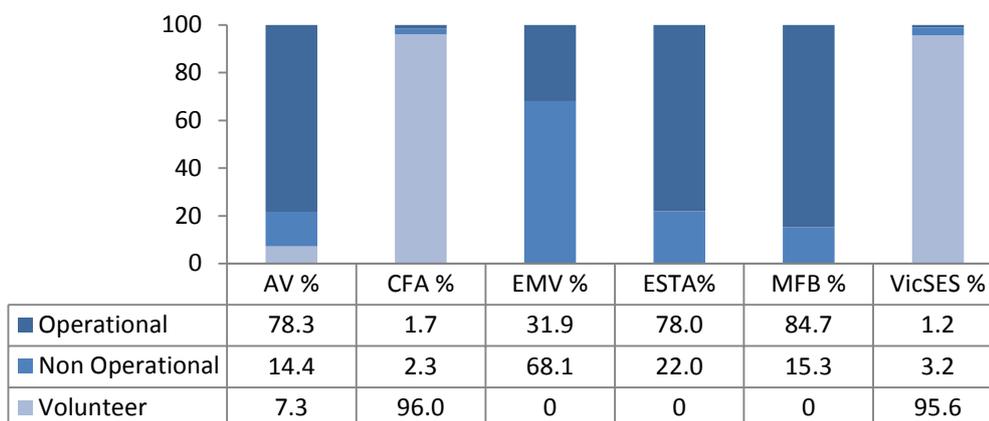
The division of male and female staff occupying specific positions across the other six emergency management organisations is not available for this report, nor is the gender breakdown under the roles defined as 'Operational' and 'Non Operational'. There is also no set definition available of what constitutes an 'Operational' or 'Non Operational' role.

As noted earlier, the CFA and VicSES workforces are comprised largely of volunteers, with men predominantly occupying these positions (over 70 per cent). If it is assumed that these volunteer positions are primarily frontline fire/emergency/rescue roles, these figures indicate a high proportion of men in traditional field-based 'operational' roles. Similarly, MFB reports a high proportion (84.7 per cent) of operational staff, and the lowest overall proportion of female employees (9.9 per cent). Figures compiled by Women and Firefighting Australasia (WAFA) further indicate that 96 per cent of MFB's Career Firefighters are male, and only 4 per cent female.⁷

⁶ DELWP define leadership across Strategic, Incident and Team leadership roles.

⁷ Women and Firefighting Australasia Inc. (WAFA), 'Gender Balance Overview - Australasian Firefighters, 2015', (WAFA Scorecard)

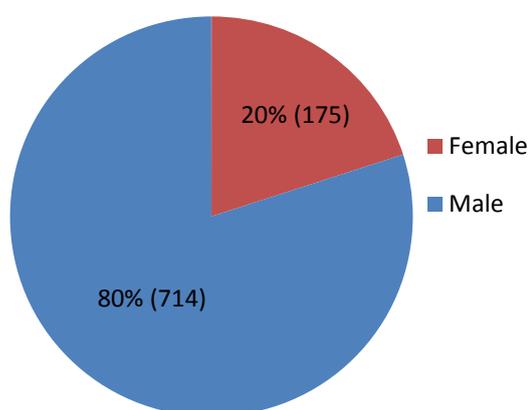
Operational, Non-Operational and Volunteer Positions Other Organisations



Gender Composition (Leadership)

DELWP defines leadership positions across Strategic, Incident and Team positions (as indicated in this Report, page 7). There are 889 personnel holding roles that fall within that definition. Of these 175 (20 per cent) are female and 714 (80 per cent) are male.

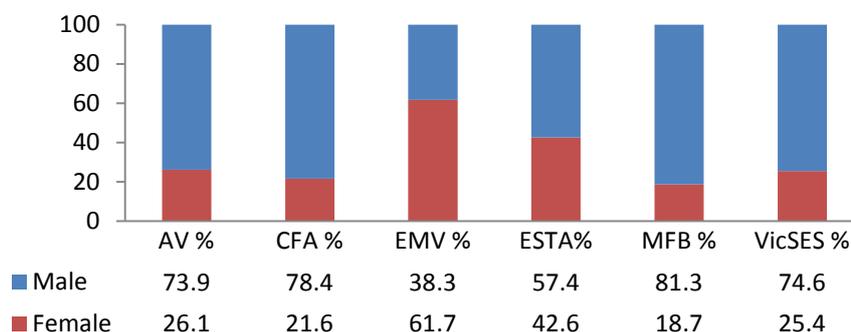
Gender Composition (Strategic, Incident and Team Leadership) DELWP



With the exception of EMV, both paid and volunteer leadership positions are predominately held by men across the six other emergency management organisations. DELWP/NEO currently has the *second lowest* proportion (20 per cent) of paid female leaders (although it should be noted that there is no *definition* of 'leadership' provided for the other organisations). Consistent with their higher overall proportion of female staff, ESTA and EMV also have the highest proportion of paid female leaders, with 42.6 per cent and 61.7 per cent respectively. Proportions of executive level leaders would be lower.

Gender Composition (Paid People Leaders)

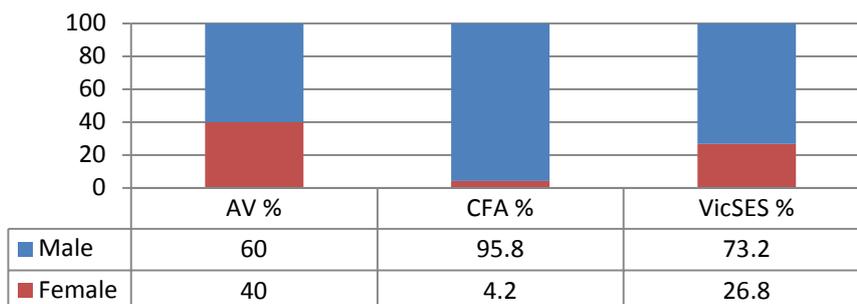
Other Organisations



Data from the emergency management sector indicates a general trend. Across all organisations, the percentage of female leaders is lower than the overall percentage of females in the organisation. For example, in AV, 44.7 per cent of overall staff are females but only 26.1 per cent of leadership positions filled by women. The exception to this trend is EMV, where 53.7 per cent of overall staff are women and 61.7 per cent of leaders are women. The figures may not be directly comparable as each organisation has their own definition of 'leadership roles'.

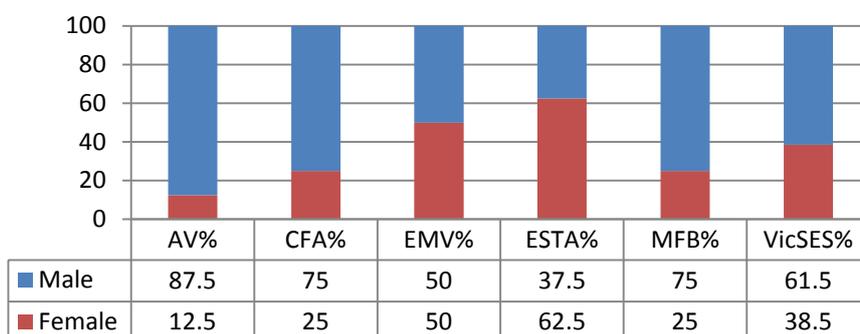
Gender Composition (Volunteer People Leaders)

Other Organisations



At the Executive Leadership/Board level, EMV and ESTA again have equal or dominant female leadership, with AV, CFA and MFB reporting the lowest proportions of women.

**Gender Composition
(Executive Leadership & Board/Authority)
Other Organisations**



Gender Equity Strategies / Initiatives

The gender equity strategies and initiatives of each organisation are part of sector wide focus on gender diversity. Diversity is a specific action in the Emergency Management Victoria’s Strategic Action Plan and the Gender and Disaster Taskforce was established to provide leadership in the sector. DELWP has a number of programs to support gender equity, as outlined in Section 1. Of the other six emergency management organisations, 100% identify gender breakdown by Level, Rank or Grade, and 100% report that they have an equal opportunities (EO) policy in place. ESTA is the only organisation to compare gender based salary equity. While 50% of the organisations (MFB, EMV and VicSES) report that they have strategies to increase diversity in the workplace, only MFB identifies a *gender-specific* strategy to increase female firefighters from 3.3% to 5% over 5 years. MFB also reports that they are working on a Women’s Employment Action Plan.

All organisations have procedures in place for reporting discrimination, and all report that employees are made aware of equal opportunity policies and provisions. The latter is generally embedded in induction procedures, although MFB reports the development of an ‘Online Workplace Behaviour Training’ module for all staff, and AV has a ‘compulsory induction program which includes an Equal Opportunity e-Learning module’. While diversity training and mentor/leadership programs are offered by most organisations, only CFA reports a mentoring program designed specifically for women in operational leadership positions called ‘Women in Fire’. The extent to which these programs are available and completed by staff is not known. The suitability of the method of delivery and content evaluation are unavailable.

With the exception of EMV (which already has a higher proportion of female than male leaders), all organisations rank ‘women in leadership positions’ as a Priority 1 or 2 in achieving greater leadership diversity.

Part 3: Research Methodology

There were three key elements in this primary research:

1. A survey, conducted through Survey Monkey
2. In-depth interviews
3. A focus group.

Ethics approval was obtained from Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC). The Consultation Matrix (below) shows that more than 500 people contributed to this research, 480 through a questionnaire with approximately 50 questions; 19 through in-depth interviews (9 face-to-face and 10 by telephone) and 4 in a focus group.

Consultation matrix

	Questionnaire	Telephone Interview	Personal interview	Focus Group	Total
Females	274	9	6	4	293
Males	206	1	3	0	210
Total	480	10	9	4	503

Overall, 9% of the total workforce of DELWP and NEO agencies contributed to the research. However, all the interviewees and focus group members had current or previous fire and emergency roles, and 85% of respondents to the survey had a current fire and emergency role. This suggests that a much greater proportion of those holding fire and emergency roles contributed to this research.

A number of planned consultations were lost due to illness and early, fire activity in the week beginning the 5th of October. Three interviewees (one ill, two deployed) plus eight focus group attendees were deployed to the fire effort. Only one from the focus group was able to reschedule for an interview and one (new additional) interviewee was sourced. Although the research team attempted to replace all lost interviews and restore the number of focus group attendees from those on the wait list and other new participants, this was impossible within the timeframe as people deployed to fires were still unavailable in the following week. However, it is believed this did not impact on the research as the smaller focus group of four people led to a more detailed, richer discussion.

Recruitment for interviews and focus group

A rigorous procedure was followed to ensure that those surveyed and interviewed represented a diverse range of men and women, from different age groups, localities, and from different organisations and fire and emergency roles. The project was launched by the Minister of Environment, Water and Climate Change, and was promoted by the Secretary. Recruitment for interviews and the focus group was by email and web-based staff newsletters at all the agencies, and via a poster pinned on noticeboards at all work centres where email use is less frequent and internet connection less reliable (see Appendix 1). It is important to note that even though invitations to participate were distributed through

DELWP/NEO, only the research co-ordinator decided and knew who was to be included in interviews/focus group.

Recruitment for the questionnaire

Respondents who participated in the Survey Monkey saw the link in one or more of the methods listed (email, flyer, newsletters, etc.) and were able to read the Explanatory Statement before completing the questionnaire (see Appendix 2). The Secretary of DELWP agreed that completion of the Survey Monkey, interviews and the focus group could be conducted in work time for DELWP employees.

The qualitative data interviews and focus group sample

Initial registrations came from 33 people – 6 males and 27 females – from locations distributed across Victoria – metro (10), regional (7), rural (13) and combined metro/regional (3). In the final sample, rural locations included NE, NW, SE and the SW areas of Victoria. Participant ages ranged from 27 to 57 years. Those involved traversed Levels 1 to 3 across a variety of fire and emergency roles. Length of service varied from more recent staff members to people working in the sector for over two decades.

Consent procedures

Those interested in being interviewed were asked to reply directly to the research team coordinator to increase confidentiality. Five criteria questions relating to gender, age, organisation, workplace and whether holding a fire and emergency role were asked to ensure a cross-section of candidates for interview. Options for date, time and venue were discussed. Potential participants were then emailed the consent form and explanatory statement (in Appendix 2). Respondents to be interviewed by telephone were asked to return their completed and signed consent form prior to the interview. People who wanted to be interviewed in person or participate in a focus group were asked to read the explanatory statement and bring the consent form or be ready to sign it before the interview or focus group

At the beginning of each consultation, participants were asked if they had signed the consent form and read the Explanatory Statement, and if they had any questions.

People who choose to complete a Survey Monkey questionnaire indicated their willingness to participate by their online submission or postal return of the hard copy. Although they do not need to sign a consent form to complete the Survey Monkey, the explanatory statement was provided, informing about the study and offering the opportunity to ask questions.

Data collection – interviews and focus group

A three-week period was set aside to conduct the survey, which was open between 4-18th September 2015. Survey Monkey was used so that responses were online and anonymous. The questionnaire is attached in Appendix 3. Interviews and the focus group were conducted from September 21st - October 9th 2015.

Two researchers attended interviews, and three attended the focus group - one as primary facilitator/interviewer and the other/s to take notes. Personal and telephone interviews and the focus group were digitally taped and transcribed. Recordings were deleted once transcriptions were completed. The Questionnaire and Interview Schedules for the interviews and focus group are attached, see Appendix 4. The interviews generally lasted approximately 45-60 minutes and the focus group was almost 90 minutes long.

The data was collected by the research team employed by Women’s Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE), Women’s Health in the North (WHIN) and Monash Injury Research Institute (MIRI). Suitably confidential and appropriate venues for personal interviews and focus groups were provided by DELWP.

The draft qualitative findings section was returned for participant checks. Two aspects of concern were the number of interviewees who chose to retract parts of their quotations for fear of identification, and the number who commented in interviews about the retribution women would face if this research report were to recommend quotas or other strategies that could adversely affect men.

Only the researchers have access to the original data, which was de-identified. Data will be retained at WHIN for at least five years. After five years, the electronic data will be deleted, and any paper archives shredded.

Method of analysis

Thematic analysis was used, assisted by NVivo V.10 Qualitative Data Analysis software package, which followed Glaser & Strauss’ Grounded Theory (1967). The coding unit was the sentence, and the purpose was to ascribe meaning. The result was a series of inter-related categories and sub-categories through which the meanings – and the argument of this thesis – emerged. Coding validity was enhanced by coding by two researchers, and by participant checks of the draft report.

Dissemination of research findings

As specified in the Ethics application to MUHREC, a research report was to be provided to the Reference Group and DELWP in the first instance, which may also be used by the research team with DELWP’s permission (for example to produce journal articles and other information). A Volume 1 Summary (approved by DELWP) will be produced for all participants. With DELWP’s permission, the final research report or parts thereof may be included as an information resource on organisational websites such as the GAD Pod.

Ideally, feedback on the results of the survey would express appreciation of the level of attention by respondents that is apparent in the survey responses.

Differentiation by organisation

No mandatory question was asked about the organisation the respondent worked in, however, optional responses indicate that respondents include 231 from DELWP, 93 from Parks Victoria, 4 from Melbourne Water, and 8 from VicForests.

Organisation	Employees with fire and emergency roles	Respondents who identified their organisation	Percentage
DELWP	1679	231	14%
Parks Victoria	660	93	14%
VicForests	54	8	15%
Melbourne Water	29	4	14%
TOTAL	2422	336	
Not specified		144	

Of those who identified their organisations, the response rate was remarkably consistent, with 14% from DELWP, Parks Victoria, and Melbourne Water and 15% from VicForests.⁸ There were 144 responses where the organisation was not identified.

Nine key questions were analysed comparing the average response from Parks Victoria and DELWP. These questions were chosen as they showed the greatest disparity in responses when disaggregated by gender for all respondents, and are therefore most likely to show an organisational difference. The result of this comparison indicated there is negligible difference in responses from DELWP and Parks Victoria respondents.

Three questions had a difference of only 0.3 and the remaining six questions had a 0.2 or less difference between the organisations. For example, in responses to the question 'My future career prospects in my fire and emergency role are limited by my gender', DELWP averaged 2.5 and Parks Victoria averaged 2.4. See diagram below.



Only 8 employees from Melbourne Water and 4 from VicForests chose to identify their organisation. The quantitative findings in this report therefore principally cover DELWP and Parks Victoria employees.

⁸ This is approximate as some respondents reported on recent experience in fire and emergency roles, with 91% of men and 79% of women indicating current roles.

Part 4: Quantitative Data Findings

The quantitative data is derived from the online survey that was available to staff from 4-18 September 2015. A clear trend from the survey was the strong, universal agreement with broad, general statements about gender equality. The differences between the opinions of men and women tended to emerge with more specific questions. There were consistently stronger differences in opinions between genders as compared to age group or region. Significantly, it emerges that a large majority of women feel their career is limited by the gender compared to a small proportion of men. This information was used to inform our interviews and focus group, which provides specific examples of employees' lived experiences.

Demographics of the respondents

There were 480 respondents to the survey. Of these, 57% were female and 43% were male. (See Appendix 5 for results for each question.)

There was an even spread between metropolitan, regional, and rural respondents. About a third of respondents were from regional areas (36%) and just over a quarter from rural areas (30%). The remaining 34% were from urban areas. There is a relatively consistent response across the region with only minor variations. There are some specific differences that emerge in the sex-disaggregated analysis.

The majority of the respondents (84%) had a current fire and emergency role and their responses indicate those without a current role previously held such roles. More men than women held these roles (91% to 79% comparatively). A total of 95% of the rural sample and 89% of the regional sample currently held fire and emergency roles compared to only 69% of the metropolitan sample. This probably reflects the greater proportion of staff with desk roles in the metropolitan area and the increased need for rural and regional staff to hold fire and emergency roles.

The age of both male and female participants were normally distributed. The 36-45 age group was the most common age category across all three locations (36%) and there were more males in the 56 years+ category than older females (18% and 7%, respectively). There were more females to males in both the 26-35 and 36-45 age groups. The age distributions for each geographic area were also normally distributed with slightly more men in the 55 to 65 category in the rural sample. The 36-45 age group was the most common age category across all three locations. There were slightly higher numbers of men from rural areas and more women from regional and metropolitan areas.

Analysis of individual sub-questions under question 5 showed remarkable consistency in responses from each region. However, two sub-questions under question 6 indicated a difference – 'Recruitment into fire and emergency leadership roles should be targeted to women to encourage greater representation' and 'Males have a much easier time establishing personal and professional networks within your organisation than females do'. Responses indicated a divergence of opinion with a scatter of responses from disagree strongly to agree strongly. Nevertheless, the responses from the three locations generally remained similar across the three locations.

Opinions on gender equality in the workplace and organisation

There was overwhelming agreement that men do *not* make better fire and emergency leaders than women (only 3% thought they do) and that gender does not matter if someone is fit and capable (with 95% of male and female agreement). More women (74%) than men (62%) agreed that their workplace would be improved with equal representation of men and

women in fire and emergency leadership roles. Only 7% agreed that men have much to lose with equal gender representation in fire and emergency leadership roles. More women than men agreed that men stand to lose with equal representation (11% and 2% respectively).

There was a significant gendered difference in support for recruitment material for fire and emergency roles being targeted towards women. More than half (54%) of women and only a third (36%) of men agreed or agreed strongly that recruitment should be targeted to women.

Over three quarters of men and women agreed that meetings tend to be dominated by men (78% and 86%, respectively). Following this, there was a substantial difference in opinion on the level of ease men and women have in establishing personal and professional networks in their workplace and organisation. Half the female respondents (one in two women) agreed with the statement compared to only one in five men.

Observations about Gender Equality in the Organisation and Workplace

There was a high rate of 'don't know' in several items which is surprising given the 'neutral' option. Across the board, this tends to be higher from metropolitan respondents. As this sometimes applies to issues of policy and organisational matters it may have implications for communication within the organisation. Nevertheless, there was a strong agreement that the workplace had improved for women in the past two years.

The high rates of agreement with general statements about women's equal rights, more specific questions yielded lower levels of agreement and wider disparity between men and women's opinions. An important indicator relates to issues of merit and is key to addressing gender inequality. One such statement: 'People are approved for fire and emergency leadership roles on the basis of their competency to perform the job' revealed that 75% of men agreed, compared to only 57% of women. Another statement that drew strongly gendered responses was 'Gender stereotyping is addressed and countered by individual staff members in the workplace'. Just under half of men agreed (49%) while only 27% of women agreed.

There was a lower rate of agreement that the organisation is supportive of men taking paternity leave than women taking maternity leave (49% and 59% respectively). Questions relating to organisational support for women taking maternity leave and men taking paternity leave while holding fire and emergency roles drew very different responses from men and women. In response to the question: 'My organisation is supportive of women taking maternity leave whilst holding a fire and emergency role', 72% of men and only 49% of women agreed. There was even lower agreement with the same statement about organisational support for paternity leave, with only 62% of men and 39% of women agreeing – again revealing a substantial gendered difference. A locality comparison showed that more rural (68%) and regional (58%) respondents compared to 52% of metropolitan respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the maternity leave statement. More rural (57%) and regional (51%) respondents agreed on organisational support for paternity leave compared to 38% by urban respondents.

Almost half of respondents thought that there were inspiring female fire and emergency leaders and male champions of gender equality in their organisation. There was higher agreement in regional and rural areas compared to urban areas.

Opinions on Barriers and Solutions to Women Taking on Leadership Roles

Only 1% agreed that women should *not* be in fire and emergency leadership roles. Yet, more than half (54%) of respondents agreed there were barriers to women taking on fire and

emergency leadership roles. When disaggregated by sex, the figures are very different, with 67% of females and 37% of men agreeing there are barriers to women.

Significantly, more than a third of respondents agreed that 'Discrimination on the basis of gender is a problem in the workplace'. Just under half of female respondents felt that discrimination based on gender was present in the workplace (47%) compared to 21% for men). Only one in four respondents agreed that there were initiatives in the organisation to encourage women into leadership positions. Again, more men (30%) than women (19%) believed this to be the case.

A majority of respondents (52%) agreed that there were career penalties for women caring for family, however, the penalties were not seen as high for men caring for family (32%). There was general support for flexible work arrangements, with the agreement stronger amongst men.

A third agreed they see fire and emergency leaders who engage in flexible work. Yet, rates of agreement with the statement that flexible work arrangements do *not* work for these roles were fairly high (43%), indicating an area for further examination. Only 37% of respondents agreed that 'I am satisfied with the flexibility of work arrangements in fire and emergency leadership roles'. There was 20% less satisfaction from women regarding the flexibility of their working arrangements (with agreement from 48% male and 29% female to the above statement).

Overall, there was little agreement with the statement 'there are negative attitudes to women in fire and emergency leadership positions in the workplace' at 23%. However other statements indicate higher levels of agreement with statements that contradict this. For example, only 42% of women agreed that male managers had a *positive* attitude to women taking on leadership positions, and one third (32%) of females agreed that men in leadership positions fail to pay attention to what women say. (In contrast, only 15% of men agreed.) This was higher amongst women in metropolitan areas (30%) compared with regional (23%) and rural (22%) areas.

There was a majority agreement (56%) that women bring a different style of leadership. However, almost a third (30%) agreed that women need to act tough and authoritative in fire and emergency leadership roles. The gender difference in opinion was clear - 42% of women agreeing, compared to only 15% of men.

Personal Experiences

There was a high positive response to the statement, 'I love working in my fire and emergency role' at 73%. The agreement was strongest in rural and regional areas (around 60% as compared to 45% in metropolitan areas). Only 1% of the 480 respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that women should *not* be in fire and emergency management leadership roles. While more than half (60%) of respondents felt they had been actively encouraged to apply for fire and emergency role, men (68%) felt they had been encouraged more than women (54%).

It is of concern that a third of respondents indicated they were aware of discrimination against women in the workplace. More than twice as many women (43%) than men (20%) agreed, and of equal concern, 27% of female respondents agreed with the statement, 'I have personally experienced discrimination against women in my organisation'.

Importantly, only 1% of men, compared to 37% of women, felt they had faced barriers to taking on leadership roles because of their sex. Echoing this finding, only 26% of women did

not see their gender as a limitation to their future career prospects, compared to 84% of men. Only 2% of men, compared to 18% of women felt they had been denied development opportunities due to their gender.

Overall, 18% of respondents had experienced unwelcome remarks, emails, suggestions or jokes of a sexual/sexist nature in the workplace. The percentage was double for women compared to men (23% to 11% respectively). While 14% agreed they were aware of sexual harassment in the workplace – 8% male and 18% female, rates were higher amongst regional and rural respondents (metropolitan 9%; regional 14%; rural 16%). A total of 89% of men responded that they had never experienced sexual harassment in their organisation, and this figure was 70% for women.

Optional Questions

The online survey had several optional open-ended questions. Many respondents took the time to fill in these questions in great detail. A selection of quotes, which suggested specific reform, were selected below. This information informed the face-to-face interviews and the focus group.

Establish a structured sponsor system for women

I would undertake opportunities in my fire and emergency role/s if only ...there was a male mentor who supported women in leadership, and ... a women's network who met regularly and women's workshops held regularly to build leadership skills and resilience. (Female respondent)

People should be chosen on ability and not gender, but there needs to be mentorship. (Female respondent)

We need lots more women in all fire roles. People need to be identified early and mentored in the agency. Not simply fast tracked with limited experience. (Female respondent)

Monitor the approval of training and release to attend fires on deployment

I would take on a fire and emergency role if only... Rosters and work patterns were fully flexible, and male managers were fully on board. (Male respondent)

I would take on a fire and emergency role if only... those who decide what training/deployments you can go on would listen to what my skills and interests are. Because I'm a female, it was assumed I'd work in logistics. I'd rather gnaw my arm off. (Female respondent)

The culture should be transformed to be welcoming of women, with the 'blokey' culture erased and an overhaul of the 'traditional' training and progression (into leadership roles) processes and prerequisites. (Female respondent)

Change the culture from a 'boys' club'

I would take on a fire and emergency role if only... There was a greater understanding of the differing communication and leadership skills both women and men bring to the roles they work in. Other than women just doing the 'soft fluffy' stuff, like taking log notes or to making the coffee, and the men being the ones on the end of the radio making the calls. (Female respondent)

I would take on a fire and emergency role if only... It wasn't such a man's world... Testosterone, egos and strong personalities tend to dominate and for a female it can be very, very hard to operate in this world. Particularly if you are not the loud, ego strong alpha female personality type. (Female respondent)

I have pulled back and changed my career path away from fire as I have found that there is too much chest beating in Fire. I have found that fire is attracting the wrong type of people to Parks Victoria which has changed the culture of the organisation completely. (Male respondent)

Recruit a critical mass of women

Men also tend to be more accepting of risk when surrounded by other men, perhaps because of unspoken peer pressure or needing to prove themselves. This is a dangerous dynamic. (Male respondent)

There's no point putting [women] into roles if the men are unwilling to accept them, as the environment will be so unpleasant that they won't be able to perform to their full potential. (Female respondent)

There are limited numbers of women currently employed, and recruitment never goes external so current staff demographics are recycled. So how do you expect an increase in numbers of women to become involved in fire? (Male respondent)

Improve the quality and accessibility of leadership training for women

Without the support of one male co-worker I never would have built up the confidence to step up and become a leader. What I have learnt recently is that men and women work very differently in a stress based situation, it took specific training on personality types and working with others for me to learn and work around this and begin to feel comfortable making decisions - quite often as the only female leader on the fireline. (Female respondent)

Training course not all being five days somewhere across the state – [Try] other training methods? Online components? Splitting courses over two weeks instead of in a block? More location options??!). (Female respondent)

It's a pity some women have to act in a manner that is perceived as showing 'male' traits to be accepted and respected in this field. I've often had ideas about a strategic task dismissed only for the same man to ask me to do it hours later. (Female respondent)

Improve support for family/ work balance for women and men

Too often we take the easy option, e.g. it is easier to roster one person for 7 days, therefore, I will look to fill the roles that way. There is nothing stopping people 'job share' EM roles (e.g. share a roster spot). (Male respondent)

I have been able to do a few fill-in night shifts and leave at 6am instead of 7am to be home for kids getting up and husband going to work. These kind of examples rely on ad hoc arrangements, and the willingness of the resources officers or other IMT to be a bit flexible and understanding, rather than any administration or other systems we have in place. (Female respondent)

I would take on a fire and emergency role if only... There was the opportunity to do shorter deployment lengths, or job share the deployment. The 7 day commitment is hard for both men and women with families. As the majority primary care giver it prevents women from maintaining a fire career following having children. It also means that fathers are committed to longer deployments, which impacts women being in the work force. (Female respondent)

Due to missing two summers because of maternity leave I have now been penalised for a more senior role and a much less experienced male is being mentored in the role because I wasn't there. (Female respondent)

It is also really important that we do not punish/restrict anyone's participation due to life circumstances (e.g. opportunity to attend training, maintain continuity in accreditation during maternity leave, i.e. we should have a refresher program that seamlessly brings people on maternity leave back up to the accreditation level where they were at prior to going on leave, and enables them to continue their development). (Male respondent)

Part 5: Qualitative Data Findings – What the interviews revealed

This section reports findings from the interviews and the focus group. Analysis was inductive (see Part 3 for detailed methodology), whereby each sentence was systematically coded according to meaning. Around twenty main categories were created, each with a number of sub-categories, often to two or three levels.

The following presentation of central themes uses the words of participants as evidence for the observational statements by the authors. It begins with participants' overall reflections on the need for this research; the benefits more women in leadership roles could bring; and their praise for current management in contributing funding for this research project and for other gender equity strategies undertaken in recent months or years.

This introductory section is followed by participants' assessment of progress in reducing barriers specific to women undertaking fire and emergency leadership roles. It was interesting to note a theme whereby women who had achieved significant seniority tended to attribute their success (or part of it) to factors external to themselves or their abilities. The section on 'Discrimination' draws together observations and examples from participants' narratives in both senior leadership roles and, importantly, in operational and fire-ground situations. If women are blocked from deployment and training, they are unlikely to progress to senior roles in the operational stream, such as Incident Controller.

Findings then move to participants' suggestions of what would enable women to undertake these fire and emergency leadership roles, beginning with their belief that the passing of time, and new generations coming in will assist in progress towards equality for women. Their ideas for more direct strategies then follow.

The 'Discussion' to this qualitative findings section (Part 5) highlight findings that are common to other research on barriers to women taking on the most senior roles and where much feminist theorising has been undertaken. These fall into three areas: (1) sexism and discussion of gender equity measures (quotas and effective male role-modelling) under the heading, 'Sheilas can't get up in the truck; (2) barriers through pregnancy and parenting under the heading 'Minding the baby'; and (3) the misconception that women will always

help each other to progress in the workplace, under the heading, 'Kicking down the ladder'. It concludes with participants' – often sad – comments on the inevitability of good women leaving for other workplaces where their leadership ambitions will be nurtured.

Why we need to do this study

From an organisational perspective, it is simply good business to increase capability through diversity. Broadening the pool of employees increases capacity to deliver services, and in the emergency sector, the need to draw on trained, accredited and highly skilled personnel at 20 minutes notice is a reality throughout the fire season. Drawing on different ways of thinking and different kinds of knowledge increases the effectiveness of response.

How can we actually make good decision making in an emergency if we're not thinking from all those different backgrounds and what's the consequences? ... There will be a consequence of your action to somebody – somebody's ability to get to somewhere, somebody's ability to provide for their family, somebody's ability to have their income – so you have all those voices. (Female 11)

I seriously walk into a room with men and it is the same things they bring up over and over again and it's good but then a woman brings up something completely different which adds to it and takes that to the next level. (Female 12)

If we want to deliver a good outcome for community we actually need to enable different viewpoints to come into the management and decision making – to make ourselves open to that. (Male 2)

Men and women with small children have awareness that others may not. People with horses or pets are alert to situations where others may not be. The young have commonalities in patterns of behaviour, risks and strengths, as, for example, do people with English as a second language. This specialist knowledge can be an advantage in emergency management.

I know in Black Saturday the Incident Management Teams were criticised because their head was stuck in the firefighting side of it and they weren't looking at community safety and other issues. It's not a given but I think that there's every chance that if there were more women involved in that IMT maybe they would have taken a broader view of what needed to be done. (Male 1)

Beyond these advantages, using the findings of this study to create a fair workplace could lead to far greater benefits. Participants' narratives gave profound insight into the harm that comes from inequality and unfair treatment. The following quotes from two women make a compelling case for action on sex discrimination.

When I interview girls now sometimes they remind me of how I was at the interview, just super keen and willing to work hard. (Female 1)

You stand up for yourself but then you end up exhausted and then over time you just give up. My team is full of bitter women who really know their stuff and probably just haven't gotten anywhere because they've tried and given up. When I first started in the department I'd look at those women and think, 'I'll never end up a bitter bitch like that' but then the longer I've been here, the more I'm becoming that person. It gets you in the end. (Focus Group)

What women bring to fire and emergency leadership roles

Women are said by many to bring a different way of thinking to fire and emergency management that perhaps springs from their socially constructed roles as primary care givers and subsequent different skills, experience and knowledge in some respects. Perhaps sadly, a key theme in this research is that women moderate men's behaviour. Terms like 'ego' and 'testosterone' were common. Men are seen to be better behaved when women are on crews and after deployments where a 'footy trip' culture can prevail.

The few times where I've seen lives at risk or the absolute major fuck-ups, sorry to swear. But the times where the shit hit the fan and stuff's nearly gone wrong has all been down to male ego ... If there's a major incident or behavioural problems it never really seems to be the females in the crew that are causing the problems ... It used to be a real boys' club and they used to be able to drink on the way home from the fire in the cars and stuff and they loved that. They love that kind of blokey scene and now it's a bit different and you're expected to not just get your willy out and piss in front of everyone. (Female 1)

It's one thing to be physically fit, really built, but you can go in all guns blazing and burn out or make stupid decisions and you're just as likely or more likely to endanger a life as someone that knows how to manage their own physical fitness and abilities and can think clearly. (Female 4)

You get less chest puffing and that mucho stuff. It changes the dynamics in the room. (Female 5)

They have a different thought process. I used to say it much more crudely but blokes get full of testosterone and all charged up and go, go, go. The girls in the group will sit back and say 'hang on what about if we do it this way?' That makes for a really good team ethic. If I can have a mix of both sexes in my teams that I take away I'm really pleased because it brings in a whole different thought process. So it's just a different way of looking at things. They don't get as gung ho as the blokes. (Male 3)

They're all blokes and they're telling the jokes and they're this and they're that. I mean it's kind of that mob mentality ... In our crew we have some really strong females who will say 'Oi don't say that, that's not appropriate' and pull people up. (Male 4)

Participants commented that women often hold different ideas about risk and decision making, and are more willing to ask questions and challenge decisions.

Usually the females on the crew are the most likely to speak up and maybe that's because of the type of women that are attracted to this role are already pretty gutsy and pretty used to standing up for themselves. I think that is a trait that's kind of common within females in this industry is they are confident and they don't take shit from anyone. So they do tend to do it more I'd say for the amount of women that there are. Like a group of 10 if there's one chick it's probably her and another guy that'll say that, that'll stand up and go 'no, this is not right, this is too dodgy'. (Female 1)

Having women on the fire ground has advantages in their support for crew leaders. One woman described her role in assisting her crew leader in a manner that was supportive:

One example was in a first attack response and our leader couldn't cope very well with the stressful situation and so I had to step up and sort of talk through him so be his prop I guess. So people were still looking to him as the leader but just keep feeding him information like what he should be saying over the radio or messages that should be coming in and being sent out to the crew. Actions that the crew should be doing at certain times like when we should be filling the appliances up, which property we should go to next, is everyone here. Just doing it in a sensitive manner that I'm not standing on his toes but making sure that the crew is safe I guess. (Female 4)

Praise for NEO in gender equality progress

'It takes some serious leadership'

With very few exceptions, participants complimented the NEO⁹ leaders on undertaking this project, with some emphasising that this report should affirm the initiatives over recent years by DELWP and Parks Victoria in particular. They pointed to individual efforts from men in senior positions to consciously 'not speak over the top' of others, and to communicate different expectations of male managers so they follow their lead. Such demonstrations from above are crucial to culture change. This level of commitment seems to be mostly at the senior management level. Participants said they appreciate this level of support and engagement on gender equity from the top. The difference this can make is clear:

I think I was about to quit until I heard [Adam Fennessy's] talk on that and I thought, 'Oh I might stay'. (Focus Group)

DELWP and Parks Victoria need to be totally commended that there are some men in there who have truly supported gender diversity and spoken about it. That's incredible. They're aware of it and they've done things about it. (Female 11)

At a regional level, too, regional agency commanders were noted as welcoming gender equity initiatives.

It's been really strong and really positive and welcomed into there. (Male 2)

Middle management were not always viewed as positively:

Women's skills on the fire ground

'Honestly in my observations they're the same. To use a chainsaw you have to pass a chainsaw course so if you're picking the wrong end of a chainsaw up you're not going to get a chainsaw ticket. So if you've got the accreditation, you pass general firefighter course you've got the skills you can be out there. (Male 1)

⁹ As there are four NEOs represented by those interviewed, this report will use the collective term rather than DELWP/Parks Victoria/Vic Forests.

My current manager is very good and he takes on board all these things and so I know from his perspective, especially the flexible working, he's really put that in place and really encourages that in our team. It is that middle management that's often the issue. (Focus Group Participant)

Taking a stance to change culture from male privilege takes courage and strong leadership. As one woman said:

You've got people who've always worked in a certain culture and achieved results under that culture and being told to not behave like that and all of a sudden not behaving like that would be quite challenging. So that's a significant shift. (Female 13)

Men do stand to lose if there is equal opportunity for women. Longstanding male privilege is hard to let go. One respondent commented that some men feel that women in leadership roles is 'an affront to their masculinity', and others spoke of old notions of men as the 'breadwinner' getting in the way of women's progress.

They are sought-after roles and so perhaps there's a feeling that if it's open up to 50/50 competition then there's going to be half as much likelihood of them getting the job. (Male 1)

For my own self I've got no doubt it will have consequences on roles that I go for. But I think that's also then comes back to your own personal values ... I've got a 5 year old daughter, I hope this is not even something that is even an issue [for her] ... This is a similar thing from gender equality ... How could women not vote? (Male 2)

Participants had observed different practices in operation at every level, such as recruiting more women onto crews and into executive positions. More women were visible. They noted new opportunities for women in leadership training. The results were apparent for one woman in a fire and emergency role who spoke of her depot being inclusive and progressive. Participants' comments reflected that NEO agencies

'I was originally thinking well are there some roles where women just aren't able to do it to the same level as men because of the physical strength and things like that. I'm not convinced that there are because often you might be lugging around a drip torch and it's quite taxing physical work and you're bashing through the bush and it's draining but I'm not sure if being male or female has any influence on that. I think the influence on that is whether you've got a high degree of fitness or you don't.

There are roles that are very male dominated like a bulldozer driver and things like that but there's probably no reason why that should be. There's no reason why a male would drive a bulldozer better than a female, it's just experience and opportunity and I know one of my friends, she works in the mining industry and they prefer women to drive their heavy trucks because they look after the equipment better, they don't grind the gears, they don't drive them aggressively and smash them up.

So they actually look to proactively target women to drive this machinery so the same thing could apply to bulldozer operators.' (Male 1)

have achieved a shift over the past few years:

I'm seeing a lot more women ... in their 30s who are acting district managers or acting in senior fire management roles where two or three years ago you wouldn't have seen a female in those roles, particularly ... juggling the young children aspect of working as well. (Female 10)

We've been very keen to emphasise the value that females play, particularly in the firefighter role. (Male 4)

Many described a very positive, rewarding and enjoyable workplace and career in fire and emergency. They spoke of loving their work, being passionate about emergency management, serving the community, the excitement of fire, and the enjoyment of working outdoors:

It's just it's such a good environment to work in, emergency management, and you learn a lot about yourself and with maturity and with support you can become such a great asset to a community. (Female 4)

There's a lot of camaraderie. It's really great teamwork. I love going away with the team. (Female 6)

I was a hot refueller so they refuel the helicopters while they're still going. That was very exciting ... It was physically hard work as well and it gave me a real appreciation of fire too and how quickly things spread and the dangers around it. (Female 2)

Credit was given for DELWP's work in fatigue management, fitness testing and emphasising science and ecology in understanding fire, in addition to field knowledge and lived experience – all of which contribute to opportunities for women.

I just want to really iterate they have done some amazing stuff to increase diversity and provide opportunities for women. (Female 11)

The acknowledgement of significant progress in recent years sits within an understanding of the complexity that characterises the emergency management sector.

The whole firefighting thing and the emergency response is very complicated, with so many different roles and so many different people, so many different rosters, different agencies. It is very complex and I'm proud of what we do in our organisation but across all our agencies because I think the public don't appreciate the enormity and the complexity of managing bushfires. (Female 10)

Still a way to go: Progress is not success

Progress over recent years has emerged from changes implemented from within the NEO agencies as well as from women's advocacy and capability. There were ground-breakers amongst our interviewees: one woman won a prestigious medal, another was the first female fire management officer, another the first ranger in charge, another was one of only two women with 50 men at the first GFF camp. One was the first to negotiate flexible arrangements after her first child. Many women were the first in their workplace to take a stand on gendered issues.

The need for action is clear from the data. Along with positive feedback, participants also drew attention to obstinate problems and the evidence that equality is not yet here. The laudable increase in women still seems relegated to particular roles and lower levels (as evidenced in the Table on DELWP roles in Section 1).

Things like predictive services and weather and fire behaviour [... and] when you get out into the incident management teams - the more operational type roles - there's usually more men. I've never come across a female operations officer ... I don't think I ever saw a female incident controller and I'm not aware if there are any now. (Female 5)

A lot of emergency management is still male focused so there's a lot of threes and fours of women who do the day to day work but most of the management type roles are the men, and in a fire situation it's all men. There's a few planners maybe, very few operations if any are female. No incident controllers are female. I guess it fits the structure. It's very command up and down structure but there's no light at the end of the tunnel. There's no women coming up and through. (Female 8)

There was some direct criticism of the emergency management sector, for a culture perceived to be conformist, and perhaps resulting from lack of diversity.

I can only imagine what it would be like for someone else who doesn't ... conform. What I mean by conform is fit to being a male because it's very much a white male dominated workforce. (Male 2)

It's a white mans' deal. Like there's no halal meal options It's not even just women. (Focus Group)

 This section inspired Suggestions 1.1.

There was some discussion that the hierarchy in one organisation was such that speaking with a person more than two levels above or below was discouraged. Such a culture further separates managers and decision-makers from diverse perspectives, particularly as there are few women in top level management.

I've noticed that people who have come from DELWP very much stick to that. So the manager will only talk to your manager. (Focus Group)

A further concern is that achievements in gender equity are not universal in terms of levels nor across locations, as some regions and rural areas appear to be resistant to including women.

I'm a bit sick of talk the talk and no walk the walk. So there's a lot of talk and how great the department is but down at the lower levels it's not. (Female 8)

[The Secretary] says stuff like leading flexible teams and I don't understand what it means. It might be great for head office but I don't have that translated regionally. (Focus Group)

We talk the talk but we're doing nothing and the behaviours are all still there. (Female 12)

I'm extremely frustrated with the system ... we're not actually doing work that will implement change at the work centre level. (Female 14)

I think the metropolitan areas maybe more progressed with gender equality in the roles that we do in the Department and Parks Vic whereas regional and rural roles I don't think the gender equality is close. (Male 1)

Barriers for rural women extend to less access to women's leadership training through cost, distance, lack of promotion, and programs when the funding is for 'metro-based women'. As a side issue, one woman described a curious arrangement of a man running this training.

It's funny that a man is running the program for women in leadership! ... They always default these training opportunities to Melbourne which is totally not appropriate. (Female 9)

 This section inspired Suggestions 4.3, 4.4, 5.12.

Good luck or good management?

Some women credited external factors as major contributors to their success. One noted that there was little recruitment in the years following 'the Kennett era', and this void enabled her to obtain promotions. Another spoke of her job being 'created from the Royal Commission for Black Saturday':

The year I started was the second year they'd ever even had project firefighters in my area. So it was brand new and so I think not many people knew about it then so that probably helped my chances. (Female 1)

Yet another attributed her success to luck, and that there was a female Departmental Secretary in charge at the time of her promotion:

I was lucky when I got the fire management officer position we had a female secretary, and she was really clear in that there was not enough women in fire and so there was a real push for recruitment into roles of women. (Female 14)

Others reported having a head start in fire-fighting through being young and without family responsibilities and therefore free to go on deployments. One woman spoke of managing her career while balancing family obligations:

I just was prepared to go on lots of deployments when I was able to, go to a lot of burns ... I just did as much as I could and now I just try and maintain that by getting out as much as I can when I can. (Female 3)

Working in regional or rural areas assisted some women because there were more fires and burns (although it was also reported as problematic when conservative managers blocked training and deployment opportunities). Ironically, being in a low fire risk area also increased the likelihood of attending fires:

I was in a location that wasn't a high perceived fire risk. Interestingly it had lots of small fires so you got lots of practice but it didn't have campaign fires. So when it came to campaign fires we were the teams that were sent to the Mallee or to the Alps very quickly because we had the lower risk. (Female 11)

It was apparent that some personality types were more able to survive the 'blokey culture'. Women who could 'talk footy', who grew up with brothers or on farms, or who were feisty or funny or 'not shy' attributed these traits to getting on in their fire and emergency roles. Some participants reported never having felt sex discrimination. For some, their role was in traditionally 'appropriate' areas such as finance, communications or support roles. Others attributed this variously to 'luck' or 'having the right people around'. In fact, some spoke of being encouraged beyond their own motivation:

My local fire operations officer has really encouraged me to move up the ladder and I'm the one resisting, not them not giving the opportunity. (Female 7)

I personally have never experienced any issues with gender equity in nearly 15 years of working here. (Female 10)

The range of experiences described during interviews suggests career progress for women is highly dependent upon the personalities of those around them, and particularly those who decide if they can take up opportunities. Female 11 compared her own experience of a deployment with a friend's:

She just said it was the most horrible experience she'd had and I said, 'Wow that's amazing because I just had the most incredible experiences' and what I was allowed to do and the roles that I performed and where I went. She said, 'Yes, because your team supports you.'

Yet, even for Female 11, the experiences were not always translated into recognised achievements:

Wow, I don't exist! ... I'd done all these roles but it wasn't on paper because it was these other people's names that were on the paper. (Female 11)

 This section inspired Suggestions 1.5 and 5.

Discrimination

Decades of past sex discrimination, initially reflecting stark and criminal treatment of women, have left a legacy of an emergency management sector with 'a blokey culture'. All participants touched on this as a pervasive feature. It comes through in many of the quotations in different sections of this report. The following comments are an introduction:

I think if I put myself in the shoes of the female firefighter and I was the only person in a crew of 20, it's pretty daunting and intimidating ... The language is worse, the culture is more macho. People are trying to impress each other. It's just 'blokey' is the word I would use for it. It tends to correlate with less acceptable or responsible behaviour. (Male 1)

In front of all of us in the class, he said to us, 'Now how you really put out a fire is you grab it by the throat and you rip its head off and you shit down its throat. That's what I'm going to teach you.' That's how you put out a fire. (Female 11)

 This section inspired Suggestions 1.1.

Discrimination on the fire ground

I could use a chainsaw, pull trailers, a generator. I grew up a farm. So I met all the criteria and got an interview and it went really well. So I could answer everything, I had examples and I thought that was great but I didn't get the job. (Female 12)

Female 12 was speaking about when she first applied for a job with the Department years ago. Instead of the operational job she wanted, she was offered an administrative position – despite her complete lack of experience or qualifications for such a position. This kind of profiling whereby women are seen to be suited to particular roles and not others continues today. The interview data includes many examples where women have faced barriers in attaining and keeping operational roles but have been encouraged to progress in office-based roles. A current example is from one of the Focus Group participants who left a high paying job in administration to move to a NEO for a field job. After many years and making some career progress, she was pressured into taking an Administration Support Officer role:

Going to [my current job meant] half a pay cut from what I was already doing before that, [which] was very administrativeal [...but] I want to do a job in the field ... and it's like the male Field Services Officer – we have pretty similar jobs – yet he gets the field work and I get the project management. And it's consistently like that. And then to go [from] three years as a Field Services Officer to an Administration Support Officer role? Well I've just come full circle. I've just lost [those] years.

Q: So you didn't say anything?

I did, I said I didn't want to do it and then I was asked to do the interview and think about it. So I did the interview and got the job. And I said I don't want to do it. Why would I want to do it? (Focus Group)

Gender stereotypes are embedded into our understanding of society from birth and some discrimination experienced by women stems from unconscious bias. The assumption that women are not suited to outdoor work or do not want it does not fit the reality that some women do want fire and emergency roles – both on the fire ground and in leadership roles.

So therefore if person A or B have a certain bent towards gender inequality well it stands to reason and if you've got attitudes like that yeah, look I would give you the role but sector commander's really important. He's going to be making decisions that

can save lives so unfortunately missy I'm going to give it to blokey bloke here. (Male 4)

The AIIMS structure demands that those in Incident Controller levels have extensive fire ground experience, so it is essential that women have equal opportunity to do these roles early in their career. Our interviews left no doubt that women want operational fire and emergency roles:

We've got young women who want to be out there on the fire line getting down and dirty on the crew with a rake hoe in their hand and sorting out dozer drivers. (Female 10)

Many times, throughout the interviews, women made the point that their experiences of discrimination – such as being denied opportunities for training or deployment, or overlooked for crews or promotions, or being asked to scribe or sit in the back of a truck, seeing male colleagues being treated favourably, or having to prove themselves every day as able to take charge – were mostly not deliberate. The women displayed a generosity of spirit in excusing men for their sexist behaviours, saying it was often unconscious, and these men failed to see women as having future potential or seeing them as obvious leaders. Female 5 spoke of ‘an unconscious bias when in interviews you just automatically assume the guy is going to do a better job’. The effect, nevertheless, is discriminatory and damaging.

A person who works for us – she got a comment back from someone [and ...] they pretty much said, ‘Oh well, we'd give this to you but you're a female and you can't do this, this and this’. (Male 2)

One woman articulated the misconceptions that apply to women’s ability in fire ground roles:

To be an advanced all you need to hold huge chainsaws that weigh stupid amounts. So there's a bit of a tendency to think the women they're just physically not quite strong enough for the work which I totally disagree with because the amount of times that you need to use a chainsaw that big is so, so small ... There's a couple of guys that already do that who want the work for themselves so it's a total misconception basically. There's no physical limitations to women in this job at all that I can vouch for after doing it for five years. It's never occurred to me ever. But the perception that that is a problem is probably the biggest hurdle. (Female 1)

Another told of a young woman who had her first year as PFF in 2009 and attended the Black Saturday bushfires. She did very well, but the following year was not invited back and the reason was they needed tanker drivers. The question she posed was, ‘Can women not drive trucks?’

Conversely, participants told of men receiving favourable treatment, evidenced by selective fast-tracking, or observations of men being assessed at a lower standard and sometimes being given accreditations because their skill was needed.

I would go to the course with them and within 12 months all the blokes that I went to got signed off but it would be two to three years before they would allow me to sit the test and be signed off ... There's still so many egos and they're still picking the team if you like ... jobs for mates. Taps on the shoulders for secondments to their mates and it's never women. (Female 11)

“ When I first started, and this is the bias that happens ... it's been there since I started and it's still there. So I went and had to do a chainsaw course so I had to cut down trees. I went, did it all with the PFF, did it. He told me to cut these trees down, told me to land this one there, that one there. Yes, did that. That's okay. Did everything. There were other people who hooked them in trees and things and others who passed That night I was in the depot and the instructor was talking to the forest officer who was there and the forest officer was saying, 'How'd they all go? ... and I was in the next room so they didn't realise I was there. The instructor said, 'Oh yeah, these are passed but this one has to come back and [she] has to come back.' The forest officer said, 'Why does [she] have to go back? She dropped her trees where you told her to'. 'Oh yeah, but I just think she'd benefit from some more experience.' This is when I say I've had some amazing people because he just went, 'No, you're going to sign her off. She passed the test.' ... I really think that comment was oh she must have fluked that so we'll just see whether she can fluke it again. I think that was a common thing all the way through and it still is.”
(Female 11)

*When there are training opportunities available they just seem to be just given to the same people over again.
(Female 15)*

The previous area chief ranger at our office was a male so they fast tracked him and he's become a duty officer. They gave him all the experiences. Our current area chief ranger is a woman. There's no fast tracking. There's nothing. No, nothing. (Female 12)

 This section inspired Suggestions 1.2.1, 1.2.3, 2.1, 2.5, 3.

Discrimination in senior leadership roles

For women who have made it to senior leadership roles, discrimination is apparent in other ways.

The number of times I'll walk into a room of men, which I'm very intimidated by ... they'll be talking away. As soon as I walk in, silence. What they were talking about is no longer appropriate to talk about once I've walked in. Oh, I've just killed the party. (Focus group)

Women spoke of being side-lined from conversations and of their statements being ignored in meetings. One woman recalled a high level multi-agency meeting the previous week where her comment was only to be acknowledged when repeated by a man. Worse still, she spoke of aggressive behaviours:

I've sat in meetings where basically because I was a female rep of a government organisation I had quite aggressive, verbally and almost bullying behaviour towards me doing my job and to the point [my manager] went to the next meeting and sat in the back of the room and called the behaviour. (Female 14)

Complete exclusion from key meetings was also reported:

There'd be times when you weren't even invited to the IMT meetings and I go, 'I understand that it's on now so I'm going to sit down at the table and join in'. (Focus group)

This woman who made this statement suggested it could also have been because her role was in public information which, despite its formal role in the AIIMS structure and reiteration of its importance by key leaders, remains a 'soft' part of emergency management.

One day I was the sector commander and on a line. Anyway they came with a helicopter to pick us up and take us for a flight over so we could see the thing. Anyway, they landed and they got out and I was off-sided by a colleague of mine who'd been around a long time and the person got out of the helicopter. He spoke to him and he said 'oh come on let's go' and the guy said 'oh no, it's not me, it's [her]' and the guy went 'no, no, don't be silly, no. This isn't a joy fight. Come on, let's go.' The guy I was with just had to keep going 'no, she's in charge and he's like 'yeah, but come on, stop this' and it took this guy probably four times before I was allowed to get in the helicopter and go with this guy before he would believe him. Again it wasn't malicious that he wasn't but he just couldn't believe that I would be in charge of this sector. (Female 11)

Many spoke of being limited in their careers by the very fact of their own ability in doing important substantive positions well, and being told by those who decide or approve their requests to do fire and emergency roles that they are too important and must stay to do their usual role. Women questioned why they were only person able to do their job and why the organisation had not better prepared for succession to allow them to progress in their careers.

It was termed indirect discrimination by one participant:

"I keep saying, 'Why am I being penalised for being the only person with this Level 3 role and why did this only happen after I was on leave for 12 months and missed a summer?' It's not that I haven't made myself available. It's not that I haven't been flexible, it's not that I don't have the experience ... They said 'Well we have enough people with this other skill now so we need you in the Level 3 role', I said, 'No-one has spoken to me about that, what if that's the role that I actually have a passion about?' ... if I had still have been on it the previous year they wouldn't have even considered throwing me off and I'm still fighting to get back onto the roster in an equal manner." (Female 14)

I know of one who is unlikely to progress through that because she's a level three planning officer and that's what the region needs. That's what they're short of. So instead of addressing the shortness, and training people in the planning role they're just going, 'Oh you'll do that, you don't need to do this'. (Female 8)

A more subtle exclusion is offering promotions to women, but in administration or office-based roles that take them out of field roles. The effect of this is to shake women's confidence and undermine their belief in themselves as leaders:

Why at this point in my career am I being viewed as someone who should step up to an EA role? Why don't you ask one of the male rangers to do that? (Focus Group)

Low expectations and benevolent sexist, whether well intended or not, have the effect of excluding women from moving into leadership roles.

There's no expectation that I'll actually deliver on anything because I'm just a girl.

It comes back to that sheltering effect. Oh no, we're not going to put you there. No, we don't want you to have that burden. (Female 11)

I think it links back to that thing of always partnering a woman with a man on the fire line so that he can look after her. (Focus Group)

 This section inspired Suggestions 1.1, 1.3, 3.

Women held to higher standards

When women do achieve leadership roles, they can face resentment from men who feel they were entitled to these roles and that women only get these jobs because of current policy. They not only have to do the job, but do not have the same margin of error allowed to men. Any mistake or failing is attributed to being a woman, and evidence of women's unsuitability for such fire and emergency roles. They need to doubly and triply prove themselves.

I did get quite a lot of resentment actually when I got this ... a lot of guys had applied for it and missed out so they haven't gotten over that yet ... now even though I've kind of stepped up and shown them that I can do the role really well and I do get a lot of praise and I fit in really well here and I feel like I've nailed it basically. But I still do get resentment from them ... I think when females do get leadership roles or get promotions I think there is a bit of resentment that it's not because they're worth it but it's just because they're trying to make up the numbers. (Female 1)

And I just feel like you've got so much more to prove and you do have to prove yourself to a point to be just capable. Whereas guys walk into it and they're just trusted. (Focus group)

In tandem with higher standards are impossible expectation. Negative responses are evoked by women being strong. Strong women are judged differently to strong men. If self-assured, this can be misinterpreted negatively.

Well you're a bitch to everyone. I call it like it is and it gets me in trouble so many times because you just get sick of people. We've got a job, let's just do it. (Female 8)

So there's a happy medium between not being too abrupt but having enough confidence to do the role. (Female 4)

And it appears women have to earn respect, or prove themselves, beyond that expected of men in leadership positions.

If it was a guy ... everyone would have just been fine and just been like oh yeah, they stuffed up. But if it was a female they'd be rolling their eyes going, 'oh here we are, got to get the token female up there to make us look all equal'. (Female 1)

There's also I think a bit of perceived pressure from myself in that I don't want to stuff up to lose that credibility I feel like would lose the credibility quicker than perhaps a guy could on the fire line. (Female 4)

Women in leadership positions told of being overlooked as leaders, and having to make extra efforts to make themselves known and to check in with people.

The high standard for women means that when women make mistakes, the suggestion is they failed because of their sex. The same explanation is not made for men's mistakes and failures. As one man said:

I think that's that difference... (It) is that I don't have a lens that's in there saying people are going to be judging me because of this. (Male 2)

 This section inspired Suggestions 1.1 and 1.3.

Generational issue

Many participants were hopeful that generational change will help in breaking down the barriers to women. Cultural beliefs of 'a women's place' were seen to be time limited by most, with optimism for greater equality as times goes by.

I've certainly worked with men who are pricks, there's no question of that. They're sexist, racist. They're just about all gone. They're just about all gone. They're just about out of the show. Yeah, those blokes just don't cut it anymore. There's no room for them in our organisation. They're gone. (Male 3)

It's always the older guys that really struggle with it because when they started there were no women in the department. So now when they see the younger women coming in it really kind of threatens them or something and they just don't think it is right. (Female 1)

Half of them are 50 plus so they're from that old school of thought where women sit in the kitchen baking and making babies. I've been told at least on one occasion by two separate people when we sat in the crew room ... and that's when I was told straight out by these two guys that females don't belong on the fire line. (Female 9)

The identification of generational change as instrumental in bringing about gender equality in fire and emergency management foregrounds the importance of current and new leaders in their advocacy and in their own language and behaviour. Intervention with young men is essential to avoid passing on discriminatory attitudes or even 'indoctrination' as one male termed it:

The people that are close to retiring that have been around for a long time ... and they're often the ones that are establishing the culture because they're the ones that people look up to as these are the really capable firefighters, these are people we need to listen to and if they're giving negative comments and attitudes about female firefighters then that's rubbing off on younger people as well. (Male 1)

 This section inspired Suggestions 1.1.4.

Strategies

The men and women interviewed had a wealth of ideas borne from years of experience about how to improve the gender balance in fire and emergency leadership roles. Their suggestions comprehensively covered (a) structured organisational changes, (b) a range of required training; (c) mentoring and networks for women; and (d) the critical importance of continuing and extending leadership from the top with clear messages to counter biases.

(1) Establish a structured sponsorship program where active sponsors are rewarded that actively creates opportunities for women.

(2) Audits of gender equity achievements; documentation and accountability for those approving training and deployment; developing *objective* criteria for opportunities and progression; attaching accountability for fire and emergency role development plans to the organisational structure not just the individual; quotas (with some arguing against this); changes to recruitment; improvements to rostering.

(3) Address the 'boys' club' culture of the organisation, such as through behaviour change training, bystander or intervention training. The training must be followed up or attached to assessment:

And you go into a course to do your appropriate workplace behaviour. And everyone goes there and they get their box ticked because they've attended. And then they walk straight back out and do exactly the same thing. (Focus group)

The culture could also be addressed through backing gender policies with support mechanisms and addressing resistance.

(4) Address recruitment and promotion practices to increasing the number of women in the organisation.

(5) Increased leadership training for metropolitan and rural women who work full or part time.

(6) Improve family/work balance for women and men. Support Champions (from top and middle level leaders); clear communication to challenge past notions and ideas, e.g. that part time workers and short deployments were less valuable than traditional full time 7-day/12 hour deployments.

One [issue] is part-timers have to stop justifying why they're doing part-time ... I would have a lot of people going 'oh you're going home already' and I used to say 'oh but I've got to pick up kids' or 'I've got to do this.' Now I just go 'well actually that's my contract and I deliver on my contract'. (Female 11)

Managers are seeing it. Seeing their part-time workers actually manage their time quite well because we know we're not here the next day, we tie it all off. (Female 12)

Some also related strategies that had worked well. One spoke of a successful program on codes of conduct that had been developed and trialled in work centres. Another of nominating an observer at meetings to 'call on people's behaviour'.

This section was the basis for the Recommended Strategies for Improvement.

Discussion

This section draws on the research team's background in gender studies and the literature review to focus on three key issues for women in the workplace. The sub-headings identify sexism; societal expectations of women as primary care-giver; and senior women who prevent other women from advancing in their careers as key themes. The raw data from this study confirms the centrality of these issues as barriers to women's career progression to senior leadership roles.

'Sheilas can't get up in the truck'

It was noteworthy that some participants came to the interview to ensure a balanced report and to congratulate the NEO agencies on their gender equity policies and initiatives in recent years. Some stressed that they had never experienced any kind of sexism or limitation on their career progress. There were apparent reasons for their positive experiences. For example, they were in a fire and emergency role where the percentage of women sits at 70-89% (according to the table in Section 1) – in Finance, Public Information, Mobile Base Camp Support, as Timekeepers, Iris Operators or Warnings and Advice Officer. They were effective in their jobs and they had personalities and backgrounds that suited a male environment. Some had no family responsibilities. Some had never taken maternity leave and attempted to return. They could tolerate sexist behaviour and accept it just as part of the job, especially when they were on crews.

I really enjoyed it. Of course there was sexism but all in all I found [the experience] positive. (Female 15)

Not all women are prepared to do this, and the effect of discrimination can be damaging:

I learnt a really strong lesson around not standing up for what I felt was inappropriate behaviour ... something that I accepted as okay behaviour just in order to fit in was actually not acceptable to someone else ... it caused her great distress. (Female 14)

Concepts like the 'glass ceiling' for women and the 'glass escalator'¹⁰ for men resonate because they are common experiences and observations in the workplace, and NEO agencies are no exception.

It's not just in our heads, it's real. The glass ceiling is there. (Female 9)

The senior managers are deeply aware of this and intent on making positive changes (hence, the commissioning of this report amongst other initiatives) but there appears to be a stagnation and fundamental lack of understanding of how structural discrimination works by many NEO employees. Two participants made often-heard comments that would be true if male privilege no longer existed:

¹⁰ Noble, C., & Pease, B. (2011). Interrogating male privilege in the human services and social work education. [Report]. *Women in Welfare Education*, 10.

People have to be the right people and have to earn it still. I don't want the job just because I'm a female. I want the job because I was the best applicant for the job. (Female 6)

It's not 'We want 10 of the best' it's 'We want four women out of the 10'. Well it diminishes the people who have got there on their own merits. (Female 5)

Another confirmed this frequently expressed argument and then countered it:

The second you say that we've got a quota...that builds resentment amongst the rest of your workforce because it's special treatment, all that kind of shit. The whole argument that you're giving a job to someone who's second best when really they're potentially the best person for the job. You just haven't given the opportunity to prove that. (Female 9)

A senior manager interviewed made the same observation and reiterated the point:

The government has gone through a board replacement process and made sure that 50% of the boards are female. I've tried to understand ... why do we need to do that? Surely there's enough capable females out there that it's not something you have to be proactive about. What my experience in the last 12 months [suggests it's] because we're not allowing those people, we're not treating people as equals. (Male 2)

In success, there are individual factors, organisational factors, and societal or cultural factors at play. Comments like Female 6's above neglect all but the individual factors. The former Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, makes the observation that when there are not women in 50% of senior roles you know that merit has *not* been applied. In relation to NEO agencies, one participant said:

I work with tons of fantastic people that should be in planning roles but they're not, they're in Resources. So it's not on merit, it's just on convenience ... It's the same argument on public boards. If merit worked, there would already be 50% of women on public boards and there isn't. So merit is obviously a broken system. (Focus Group)

One participant captured the extra effort required of women to be treated equally in operations roles:

You've got to be a strong woman in a male dominated industry. It hasn't helped me whatsoever. I'm still getting stuck with radio operator or scribe or some other wanky job like that but at least I'm getting out onto the field more and more often because I'm putting my foot down and saying, 'No, I'm not doing that job'. (Female 9)

A common experience for women was being asked to do jobs that men didn't want to do, underpinned by a belief that these were more suited to women:

It's like 'Oh, do you want to do logistics? We need someone'. It's like, 'No. Nobody wants to do that'. So they ask a girl. (Focus Group)

He'll get me to scribe. I even got into the park about 12 times last year because I would be doing all the paperwork. (Focus group)

I just often get pigeonholed just like probably every other female that's told you. The typical response when it comes to it ... females that are VPS - so have a substantive role - they often get chucked into the commander offsider or radio operator or even scribe. They're not often put in with the actual crew. (Female 9)

The DELWP table shows zero percent of women in high level and highly operational roles. Some reasons for this stem from post-war policies about 'men's jobs', as well as regressive attitudes:

I think a lot of those roles ... are still seen as men's jobs, like they'll be out driving a bulldozer or using a chainsaw or slashing tracks or dropping trees, things like that and there is still very much a belief ... that if women are in those roles they're token and they're just playing around, they're window dressing to gender equality and doing the right thing. (Male 1)

The 21st century demands a more modern approach. The current (and some former) NEO leaders have demonstrated the will to make these changes in order to increase the capacity of their organisations.

Participants' narratives of blatant and damaging discrimination were in the context of women with ambition – to be the best fire fighter she could, or to reach the highest levels in fire and emergency. Location seemed to make a difference:

I only received the training because I went to a different district and through my fire role development plan the person there couldn't believe that I hadn't been offered any of the training yet. (Female 15)

Women spoke of being set up to fail, of benevolent sexism (where men look after women, thereby limiting their work roles), of doing the work but not having it recorded, of being excluded from training and deployments, of assumptions about how much responsibility they want, of being expected to take notes:

I was in a meeting and I was the only female and nobody knew why I was there and I wasn't there to be the note taker. At one point the

“Another manager came in and asked what we were talking about. ‘Oh, just women’s roles in fire and emergency.’ He said, ‘Oh I’m sick of hearing about it’ ... and he got all red in the face and he was really attacking towards me and I knew it was coming because it's never an easy topic and he's a fire manager.

He's the one who does the development for staff and he said ‘I’m sick of it and to tell you the truth we're all sick of it. We just see the message and everyone's over it’.

You know when you're caught off guard because it was a positive conversation we were having and it just deteriorated straight away ... I didn't know. I just didn't know what to say.”

(Female 12)

facilitator said, 'Can somebody write this down?' And I kid you not, the whole room looked at me. And obviously the look on my face was appropriate because I had a lot of people after apologise. (Focus group)

The most astounding were requests to change from operations to personal assistant roles. After making choices that did not involve traditional roles considered appropriate for women, and often enduring discrimination from people who disagreed with women in physical and operational fire and emergency roles, informants to our research indicated their rejection of being coerced back to radio operations or note-taking or roles described as 'fluffy'. The narratives made it clear that women have their own ideas of what roles they are capable of doing and actually want, both on the fire ground and at executive level:

Q. So within the firefighting what's your ideal role to have there?

A. I don't care. I'm really easy. As long as it's a physical role and it's not radio, it's not scribe, it's not some fluffy role I don't care ... There's the expectation that, well, that female can't do the same work that a male can do which we all know isn't true. There's bloody lazy guys out there and bloody hard working females out there. So I guess it's breaking that belief. (Female 9)

I have people in higher management say to me, 'We really want to help you but you need to tell us what you want'. So ... I will say something about a possible manager position, leading a team or having the opportunity to mentor. I'll suggest all these things and in every single situation, I'm not taken seriously. They kind of laugh and say, 'No, what do you really want?' And I think, 'Oh wrong answer, you tell me what I want then. Oh OK, note-taker, EA'. (Focus Group)

Excluding women from training and then putting them forward for assessments for senior roles is setting women up to fail. One woman gave a comprehensive example:

I've been asked to get assessed for crew leader because that's my next thing that I've got to achieve whereas I keep saying to them 'well I'm not comfortable getting assessed for crew leader until I get more on ground experience'. Then they turn around and say, 'Well you've had experience at this fire and this fire and this fire' and my response to that is usually, 'Yeah, but at that fire I was the radio operator, at the second fire I was the scribe for the ops officer and for the third fire I was in the IMT'. So you can't get field experience sitting in an IMT or sitting in a vehicle next to the ops officer. So I've kind of said 'well I'm not going to get assessed until I'm comfortable but I can't get comfortable until you give me more field experience'. (Female 9)

A senior leader in fire and emergency management with three decades of fire experience reflected on how young, capable women can have a career in fire easily blocked:

I've just had a grad student here for a little while, a female grad student. She's been lucky enough that she's picked up another role and I said to her 'how are you going to go for fire' and she said ... 'I reckon I'm done for fire, I won't be allowed to do fire in my new role in this organisation(DELWP)'. (Focus Group)

She hasn't had much exposure but she's really keen and ready to go. I was a bit blown away by that. (Male 3)

Quotas or Special Temporary Measures are sometimes the only way to achieve gender equality in the workplace. The past 50 years suggest that anything less yields slow and piecemeal change. Discussions of quotas often emerged in interviews – usually as something to be avoided at all cost for fear of retribution from male colleagues who would ‘blame women’ for the loss of their unearned privilege.¹¹ Women were penalised for speaking out in the past.

I used to be quite vocal on treatment of women when I first started work but then I found that didn't really get me anywhere so it actually suppressed me a bit so I just put my head down and got on with my job. (Female 12)

Yeah, and then you get called a feminist like it's a bad thing. Because I just want equality, I'm sorry [laughs], 'You radical lesbian you'... (Focus group)

Once that happens a few times you just keep your mouth shut. (Female 13)

Tellingly, one man interviewed contacted us the day after to retract some information. His concern was that colleagues may recognise his description of their sexist remarks. (Subsequently, many other retracted parts of their quotations when the draft was circulated.)

The need for education of the whole workforce on sex discrimination, behaviour change, bystander interventions and quotas is clear. Both women and men expressed anxiety about pushback from any changes that NEO agencies senior leaders may implement as a result of this report.

I like to think that I have a good work ethic and I'm always positive and I've never really caused anyone any grief. I sometimes find [when] talking gender diversity, men get quite defensive and that's a conversation I'll have with you later. Things are worse than ever now. (Female 12)

A lot of people rely on overtime and they make financial decisions based on being deployed over summer. So if a finding that came out of this process was, 'Because of the women's workshops, we are now changing all the shifts' ... I think you'd have to be really careful of associating that with women. (Focus Group)

Promotion of gender equality and equal opportunities requires strong and effective leadership from the top, as has been demonstrated in recent years, and having middle management solidly reinforcing these strategies and messages.

It's one thing for the organisation to have a policy but it's another thing to actually be reality. (Focus group)

Others in positions of influence in the AIIMS structure, such as Incident Controllers, play a highly influential role in role-modelling non-sexist behaviour and zero tolerance for sexism.

¹¹ Pease, B. (2010). Undoing privilege: Unearned advantage in a divided world. London: Zed books.

There could be disciplinary action as in previous social change initiatives. One top level leader described how:

I pulled a couple of CFA guys up about inappropriate behaviour. They were just that amazed, they couldn't believe that I said something ... It was about females ... and I said, 'No, you blokes are barking up the wrong tree. I'm not going to put up with it while I'm training you. You can keep your comments to yourself' ... If I don't set the example the message doesn't get out ... There's definitely generational change that is happening ... It's not that long ago we were told to stop smoking in vehicles ... I know only two years ago my counterpart across the state still had issues with staff smoking. He was a new manager there and he said, 'Well that's it, there'll be disciplinary action taken if you continue to smoke in vehicles'. A big change for them. They'd never been told that. (Male 3)

Such intervention, especially from high level influential leaders would take the pressure off women to manage the discriminatory comments for themselves or each other, and would curb sexist behaviour from men lower in the hierarchy. A focus group discussion touched on this:

*If someone says something sexist or neglecting of women, someone will say, 'Oh, come on'.
Only really women I find.
It's pretty hard when they are senior to you. Is it going to be career limiting if I say something about this? (Focus Group)*

 This section inspired Suggestions 1.1, 1.2.1, 1.3, 1.4.3, 2.6, 2.7, 3, 4.1, 4.2.

Minding the baby

A major barrier for women's fire and emergency leadership aspirations is time out for maternity leave. Even women who do not have children and have no intention of it can be impacted by assumptions that women will leave to have babies.

*You can't generalise and go, 'Women don't want this or women don't want that'.
We're people not just women. (Focus Group)*

One woman stated this case clearly:

Yeah, I don't have kids and I certainly have no intention of having them. So for me, I'm sure that would probably affect someone with a family or especially a young family but for me no issue. (Female 9)

Clearly, assumptions should not be made that women - any woman, all women - are going to be less available and less committed through family responsibilities. Some will. Producing the next generation is an imperative for the human race and many women and men do become parents. Some participants who took maternity leave found the time away from work to be isolating and disruptive. On their return six to 12 months later, some described a new regime, with new jargon, new technology and new people. Induction to this altered workplace and

role was not provided. One participant described having to apply for a job because the job she left no longer existed.

I was ringing and making phone calls and getting people to call me back while I was on maternity leave. It was the most isolating and distressing experience I've gone through in my career ... I came back and I didn't know anyone and no-one knew me ... So I'm applying for jobs while on maternity leave with people who didn't even know who I was. (Female 14)

Time out for women with a role on the fire ground starts immediately due to safety requirements regarding the effect of smoke on the health of mother and foetus. Some women saw this as a chance to develop new skills in other areas of fire and emergency management. The way progress through the AIIMS structure currently works, however, penalises people unable to stay on the roster available for deployment each summer. The penalty for men having lengthy time off was different:

Our only female Level 2 operations officer in the state – she went away and had children and when she came back she had to fight to get recognition that she was still a Level 2 operations officer because she'd had 12 months off ... And she left because she got so pissed off ... [But] blokes who couldn't go out and fight because they had hip issues ... retained their Level 2 accreditation. (Female 14)

A regular gender audit of consequences for time away - whether for pregnancy, sick leave, study, or other reasons – could identify inconsistencies in career penalties for absence. The social context in Australia in 2015 is still invested in the woman as the primary carer along with her role as income-earner.

So from the day they find out they're pregnant until the day they get back from maternity leave ... they're not out there as I've just said consistently learning how to become safe, effective leaders. Then they come back, often they come back part-time and being part-time makes it extremely difficult. Then of course there's the kids, particularly if they're still breastfeeding or whatever depending on what the husband's doing whether he's in a position to stay at home and look after them or whether he's working fulltime. All these things play into it and then what we find is a couple of years slip by, boom and we don't see them. Then maybe they start to come back in if they don't get pregnant again and the cycle sort of continues, then you can add another year or two on. Or if they do come back in then we can't just put them straight back into it because the world's changed. They've lost some of their skills and experience so we need to rebuild that and give them the time back in as a general firefighter before we can put them back into a leadership position. (Male 4)

Social changes to more equally share the burdens and joys of raising children sit in tandem with organisational changes that encourage men's paternity and family leave, and support women to retain their expertise and job level in the years when couples have children. Assumptions that women with children will not be reliably available for the roster overlooks more equal relationships where men share parenting, even when women are part-time:

Not making the assumptions that we just spoke about that they're not available because they work three days a week ... if you ask them they can

generally make arrangements in place and they'll really appreciate the opportunity. (Male 2)

Organisations can assist with supported 'on-ramping' by offering targeted training and induction back into the workforce without loss of status. David Morrison, formerly Lt. General from the Australian Military, has spoken of such initiatives in that institution. This could minimise the organisational impact detailed by Male 4 in his previous quotation (see above). Another approach is to enable men to share parenting:

Statistics show one in five men are denied flexible work time but if we allow men then they're supporting their partners and it keeps women progressing in their careers ... They don't want to hear it but it's true. (Female 12)

While organisations delay tackling supportive on-ramping, families make decisions about managing their lives:

People keep saying 'when are you going to have another one' and I just say 'I couldn't even contemplate it because it would just be too difficult with two to do fire roles'. (Female 3)

The perennial problem of the roster is central to women's equal opportunity in two respects. The first is that the traditional way for men to reach high levels in operational roles has been to amass substantial experience in deployments every year, combined with achieving the accreditations required for each step. This is not achievable for women who take maternity leave and are prohibited from an on ground fire and emergency role during pregnancy. Secondly, once women and men have babies and children, management of rosters becomes difficult – both for the parents (mostly the mothers in couples with traditional gendered roles) and for the NEO employees responsible for organising them under the existing systems.

If you're asking me as a resource manager please don't do it because it would be a nightmare to manage. If you're asking me as a thing that we should be doing to make it easier for people to go away and possibly to have more resources available, yeah ... But we're getting better systems that will be able to support that too. At the moment the current system is not flexible enough to support that tracking, management of resources' perspective. (Female 14)

The willingness to tackle a new approach is evident as people experience the challenges of the existing roster in their own lives:

I'll have a different approach when I go back in terms of people's availability. I've got a better appreciation now having been a mum about people's willingness, how long they're prepared to go away for and what we ask of them. (Female 7)

A degree of agility is required to more adeptly match people's availability with the essential assurance of a skilled and ready workforce to respond to emergencies. More responsive software combined with objective allocation by those organising rosters could begin to address the complex issues involved. Shorter deployments of 4-days to match the CFA and SES and some NEO regions would enable more women and men to be available for the roster.

 This section inspired Suggestions 1.2.2 and 6.

Kicking down the ladder

As half the population, women are not all the same. Any woman will not necessarily be a good boss or mentor. Participants gave examples of women (or spoke of) having to work hard in a man's world to attain leadership roles and seeing any kind of gender equity initiatives as diluting their success. Women have sometimes had to take on masculine leadership styles to progress, or have pursued career rather than motherhood, or they may see other women as a threat. Women who succeed on men's terms have commented that they enjoy working in a male environment, so are reluctant to see it change. The interrupted career path that women often have, with time out of their workplace for maternity leave creates a career vulnerability and young women they have previously mentored may be seen as competitors upon their return. Further, the opportunity for women to fill senior leadership or traditionally masculine roles is not as great as for men due simply to the lower acceptance of women filling most of the coveted roles. It is understandable self-preservation that motivates women to hold on to their hard won position.

There was one decision in particular where I put the thought around the gender balance and actually [the female in charge] was comfortable for it not to be a female in that role. (Male 2)

Instead of being able to be themselves or women that aren't blokey ... it tends to be the ones that can swear better that are making it and ... that is just having to try and conform to the culture to get through. (Male 1)

For these, and all the reasons that some men are not good mentors to younger men, all women cannot be counted on as supportive of other women.

Women have had to fight their way there so when there's younger women there they're not that inclined to mentor them, they've done all the hard yards themselves. And I have noticed that. There are some people that are really understanding but there's also a lot of women that are like, 'I've fought really hard to be one of the boys' and that's where they want to stay. (Focus Group)

Nevertheless, many women interviewed spoke of inspiring and supporting women. Indeed, acknowledged or not, women who have gone before have been ground-breakers for younger women. Men, too, had been instrumental in encouraging women in their careers, and many interviewees spoke of their unwavering support.

A mentor or sponsor system that recognises this is essential for enabling all women with potential to move through such hierarchical structures as in the emergency management sector.

It can be really hard to find enough females in leadership positions, you look at the hierarchy and like, 'there's one over there and maybe one over there and that's it' ... And in emergency you go, 'hmmm'. (Focus Group)

 This section inspired Suggestions 5.

Consequence of ignoring women's concerns

As NEO leaders are acutely aware, recruitment needs to be adjusted to target young women more effectively, and organisation-wide effort must be made to address women's concerns. This research is motivated by this imperative, recognising that increasing the number of women in leadership roles in fire and emergency will have a flow-on effect in inspiring young women. The last few years have seen great strides in leaders' advocacy and policy changes. How this translates and is enacted at lower levels and across the state is the current challenge. Lack of quick success – because these changes are decades late – will result in women leaving for sectors known to have more opportunities for women who aspire to be leaders:

For me, there's even part of me that thinks I need to fight through this and hope that things change in time but there's also a part of you that things, how long do you let it affect you?... And I think that walking away is what a lot of women end up doing. (Focus Group)

I just went, 'right' and that really summed up my decision that I'd made. After another not obtaining an accreditation whilst others did, I just went, 'right that's enough' and made my decision to leave the organisation. I couldn't fight this battle anymore because it was still there, underlying. (Female 11)

That's where I went 'OK I need to move on and just accept and go stop butting your head against a brick wall' ... I got sick of chasing ... I think there's an element of being unloved where they're been given roles but perhaps not so much leadership roles or their organisation hasn't managed to be flexible enough to make sure they're included in significant decision making. So you just start to accept that you're not that valuable. (Female 13)

In conclusion, it was interesting to note a theme whereby women who had achieved significant seniority tended to attribute their success (or part of it) to factors external to themselves or their abilities. The notion of women not wanting to be leaders or not having the required confidence is true for some women – as it is equally true for some men. Barriers face women through assumptions that they will not be interested, confident enough, or available enough for the rigor involved in leadership in fire and emergency roles. A critical first step is to challenge managers' assumptions about what women want or can do and require documentation indicating women have been asked and have been assessed or approved on the same basis as men. When assessments are made about women's confidence, it must be acknowledged that women are, in fact, expected to be better at the job than men. Participants spoke of inevitable human mistakes being attributed to women's gender as the cause – reasoning that is never applied to men in leadership positions.

Conclusion

The barriers to women taking on leadership roles in fire and emergency identified by respondents were real, rather than perceived. Women have fewer role models and sponsors than men and less developed networks. They face barriers in accessing training and release for deployments. They work in a milieu described by most as “a boys' club”, where men are seen to dominate meetings and stereotype the abilities of women. There are simply more men in senior roles, leaving senior women isolated and often overlooked. Relatively few respondents knew of gender equity initiatives, and leadership training for women was sometimes inaccessible. Reflecting the wider literature on barriers to women in executive

roles, key barriers were threefold as described above – related to career penalties not faced by men for family responsibilities, sexism and assumptions of women helping other women's careers.

Some participants were under the misapprehension that women need to earn their leadership positions on 'merit' and any attempts by management to fast track or nurture women for leadership roles would lead to scepticism about the capability of women in senior roles. This widespread misunderstanding fails to recognise the glass elevator that exists for men, along with the more recognised glass ceiling for women.

Male privilege ensures that male characteristics are more highly valued and rewarded. These include both biological characteristics with the male population generally taller and stronger than the female population, and socially constructed characteristics such as being stoic, decisive and unemotional. Maleness guarantees one dimension of privilege whereby all men share a sex-based advantage to some extent (Kahn, 2011), and the intersection of other factors – race, disability, class – affect the 'patriarchal dividend' (Pease, 1010).

DELWP and NEO management have shown courageous leadership in tackling gender inequity in their organisations and this is clearly appreciated by many employees. The immediate task is now, not only to address the issues raised in this research but, to address the 'push-back' from men who feel their unearned advantage slipping away. The level playing field for men and women – and for others not yet equally represented – is attainable.

As Michael Kimmel (2002) writes, when the standard human is seen to be white and male, women and non-whites face immediate barriers. It is commendable that the leaders of DELWP and the other NEO agencies are directly tackling this issue of equal rights. And it is right that others welcome it. One man interviewed told us:

For my own self I've got no doubt [gender equity measures] will have consequences on roles that I go for. But I think that ... then comes back to your own personal values ... I've got a 5 year old daughter, I hope this is not something that is even an issue [for her].

Suggested strategies for improvement

The following section identifies a number of strategies, supported by examples, for improvement to address the key barriers identified from this research. These strategies have been informed by the DELWP/NEO participants, the survey monkey findings, the literature review and the expertise of the research team. These recommended strategies address barriers that are specific to the fire and emergency management program as well as organisation wide. The detailed strategies below have been summarised in Volume 1.

DELWP management have advised they are committed to undertaking a process of staff engagement in early 2016 to reflect on the findings and recommended strategies and ultimately provide input to the strategies and actions DELWP and its NEO partners will progress. This will culminate in an Action Plan towards June 2016. As several of the recommended strategies have implications across the fire and emergency management sector, DELWP management have advised they will consult across the sector to ensure that an integrated approach is taken.

The recommendations have been ordered in terms of priority. The recommendation to 'Establish a structured sponsorship for women' and 'Monitor the approval of training and release to attend fires on deployment' were common and important themes raised by the participants. The first recommendation regarding the structured sponsorship program is outlined in detail to provide a case-study example of how the organisation could address this critical issue.

1 ESTABLISH A STRUCTURED SPONSOR SYSTEM FOR WOMEN

- 1.1 Establish a 'Gender Equity Sponsor Program'¹² within DELWP (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning) and each NEO (Networked Emergency Organisation). In the first year, potential sponsors would self-nominate, as would women seeking a sponsor. The process of matching would be initiated by the woman seeking a sponsor who would directly email women and men from the list of potential sponsors.
- 1.2 After the first year, ensure only senior and suitable women and men continue as sponsors. This could be achieved through a system whereby female employees are eligible to vote for a 'Sponsor of the Year'.
- 1.3 Establish the 'Sponsor of the Year' award as prestigious by attaching a financial benefit and appending the award ceremony to a significant organisational or sector wide event, such as the Victorian Emergency Management Conference.
- 1.4 Publicise the full list of nominations so that women seeking sponsors can select new or alternative sponsors from a recognised pool of suitable women and men.
- 1.5 Use the list of award nominations as a database of women and men from which members are also drawn for recruitment panels, and as trainers and assessors. (Members must declare conflict of interest if a person they are sponsoring is to be interviewed.)
- 1.6 Refine the role description for sponsors through consultation within the organisation and include, for example: (1) meeting and taking on female employees as either a sponsor , (2) agreeing to a mutually acceptable arrangement for discussions, (3) reviewing after 3 months then annually (or sooner if workers' arrangements change). Sponsors are required to be significantly further progressed in their career than the employee, and to sponsor a maximum of five female employees.

¹² This program is called a Gender Equity Sponsor Program to differentiate it from the DELWP Mentor (or other NEO) program which it builds upon. Additionally, 'a [2010 Harvard Business Review report](http://www.harvard.edu/pressoffice/2010/03/04/can-women-succeed-without-a-mentor/) argued that women may actually be over-mentored, but under-sponsored. And that sponsoring—advocating to get somebody a job or promotion, mentioning their name in an appointments meeting, actively helping that person advance—is what makes the real difference in women helping women get ahead. Mentoring is one thing, but actual follow-through is quite another; the difference between talk and action'. (Drexler, P. 2014 <http://www.forbes.com/sites/peggydrexler/2014/03/04/can-women-succeed-without-a-mentor/>)

- 1.7 Recognise these additional sponsor roles with a title, status and recognition (stipend or non-monetary reward).
- 1.8 The head of DELWP and each of the NEO agencies to form an in-house organisational 'Gender Equity Review Panel' – an overview body for each organisation and nominate an executive support employee to manage the Gender Equity Sponsor program as an additional part of their current role (mainly in May-July). Membership would be the Head along with the top three nominated sponsors in each year (membership would change each years depending on nominations).
- 1.9 The role for each Gender Equity Review Panel is: (1) to promote and present the Sponsor of the Year Award, and (2) to review the annual brief summary report on the program (provided by the executive support employee, as below).
- 1.10 The annual task for the Executive Support nominee is, in May – July, to: (1) run and analyse the annual questionnaire asking both females being sponsored mentees and their sponsors mentors about their levels of satisfaction (e.g. 'What has worked well and not so well for you from this arrangement over the past 12 months?'), (2) list the sponsors and mentors who are participating in the Gender Equity Sponsor Program and circulate this and the list of those nominated for the award to all female staff, (3) remind respondents of the process by which they change their existing sponsor or mentor aarrangement (e.g. advising their sponsor or mentor of completion and advising the Executive Support), and (4) write a brief summary report for the Gender Equity Review Panel.
- 1.11 Require women who are being sponsored or mentored to: (1) make contact directly with a potential sponsor or mentor from the list circulated, and (2) return the annual questionnaire indicating their level of satisfaction.
- 1.12 Utilise teleconferencing or Skype where necessary to ensure sponsors and mentors are available to women in both rural and urban locations.

2 MONITOR THE APPROVAL OF TRAINING AND RELEASE TO ATTEND FIRES ON DEPLOYMENT

- 2.1 Increase the requirement for documentation of applications for training and deployment and managers' decisions.
- 2.2 Conduct a sex-disaggregated audit on who has been released for each training and deployment; and who is nominated for the first deployment list.
- 2.3 Conduct a sex-disaggregated audit on who has been released for each training and deployment; and who is nominated for the first deployment list.
- 2.4 Follow this audit with review of the reasons why women have not be released and provide incentives/ support managers to improve the release of female employees for training and deployment.

- 2.5 Where female employees have 'Fire and Emergency Role Development Plans', attach accountability for their progress to managers who hold the power to approve their applications for training or to attend fires on deployment. Accountability then moves up the line, and sits ultimately with the most senior leadership.
- 2.6 Where such plans do not exist, establish an accountability system for managers to ensure female employees are released for training and deployments *as a default*.
- 2.7 Automate eligibility to remove subjectivity and unconscious bias in approving training or deployment. For example, approval is to be based on achievement of each 'step' rather than managers' perceptions of employees' suitability for particular roles.
- 2.8 Non-approval for training or to attend deployments would be subject to automatic review by a panel of three drawn from the pool of sponsors and mentors (see Recommendation 5.5 below).

3 CHANGE THE CULTURE FROM A 'BOYS' CLUB'

Challenge the hierarchical structure so that division of people into classifications does not extend to social interactions. Encourage a culture of people contributing equally in diverse roles and levels. In communications, emphasise people, not levels, and ensure women are free to participate equally. The following steps operationalise this:

3.1 Challenge male bias.

- 3.1.1 Require all staff – both women and men – to attend gender awareness training about unconscious bias.
- 3.1.2 Require all male staff to attend by-stander training to increase their willingness to publicly name discriminatory and exclusionary behaviour and comments.
- 3.1.3 Review employees' understanding of training with a follow-up session three months after. Trainers then would submit a report to Heads of DELWP and NEO agencies.
- 3.1.4 Develop a program whereby recognised leaders within DELWP/NEO mentor other men in ways to inhibit/eliminate male sexism (or otherwise communicate their strategies such as through a newsletter article).
- 3.1.5 Pay particular attention to ensuring that there a consistent understanding of gender equity policy and practice throughout the NEO organisations and across regional and rural workplaces.

3.2 Ensure merit is applied by eliminating unconscious bias and removing structural barriers.

- 3.2.1 Review the accreditation system for progressing up through the AIIMS structure, and through DELWP and NEO agencies to ensure its relevance to modern fire-fighting and emergency management demands.
- 3.2.2 De-emphasise *annual* fire experience. Draft and test new minimum standards for what is required of fire and emergency management leadership roles to clarify objective criteria for each leadership position. For example, for an IC Level 1, nominate a base line minimum number of days on the fire ground in the previous 5-year period (rather than requiring consistent annual deployments). This may be 4 x 4-day deployments, 2 x 7-day deployments. For an IC Level 2, and IC Level 3, how a person handled difficult and diverse situations is relevant to developing the credibility required and objective criteria could be determined by a NEO working group. (The relevance of this to gender equality is that annual deployments as a pre-requisite to maintaining fire accreditation mainly mostly excludes women taking maternity leave. This is particularly the case for women who are interested in pursuing operational fire and emergency roles rather than the more strategic planning, resourcing and communications areas.)
- 3.2.3 Critically review the required career path to reach Level 3 IC (as per 3.2.2 above).

3.3 Address current and past sex discrimination.

- 3.3.1 Ensure a critical mass of women at PFF and entry level (See Recommendation 4 below) and in executive levels, ultimately aiming for all levels, to increase retention and improve women's experience. The proportion would be such that women do not feel they are token.
- 3.3.2 Recruit or fast track for 50/50 split in executive teams.
- 3.3.3 Back up gender equity policies with support mechanisms (e.g. such as in these recommendations).
- 3.3.4 Conduct annual reviews/audits of progress and outcomes each May-July. In particular, audit the availability and take-up of the gender equity programs offered.
- 3.3.5 Address expected resistance (from some men and women) through encouraging reporting of increased gender-based harassment. This could be through an anonymous site on each organisation's intranet where discriminatory comments are noted. This would alert managers to the scale of the problem.
- 3.3.6 Review workplace behaviour policies and hold training to enhance understanding of required behaviours – to be delivered at all levels.

4 RECRUIT A CRITICAL MASS OF WOMEN

- 4.1 Recruit equal numbers of males and females as Project Fire Fighters (PFFs) and entry level employees.
- 4.2 Review advertising methods for recruitment. Contract consultants from Workplace Gender Equality Agency and recognised gender advocates and academics to devise more effective recruiting for females.
- 4.3 Participate in Career/Industry Days at schools and Open Days at universities, focussing on attracting women to apply as PFFs.
- 4.4 Place female work experience students in DELWP/NEO, including Aboriginal young women and those from a culturally and linguistically diverse background.¹³
- 4.5 Minimise interviewers' subjectivity in recruiting by conducting medical and fitness tests before interviews. Populate interview panels with women and men from the database of sponsors and mentors who have not been part of the medical or fitness tests.
- 4.6 As part of induction and yearly performance reviews (or discussions on Fire and Emergency Role Development Plans), in print and verbally, advise new recruits that reviews (such as this research) have found that opportunities for on-ground fire experience and deployments become harder to manage with family responsibilities.
- 4.7 Kick-start fire leadership careers for young women and men by 'over-releasing' them for deployments and training in their early years with DELWP and NEO agencies.

5 IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND ACCESSIBILITY OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING FOR WOMEN

- 5.1 Ensure female facilitators conduct leadership training sessions.
- 5.2 Subsidise the cost of leadership training to minimise impost on budgets.
- 5.3 Hold training sessions in both rural and metropolitan locations. When this is not possible, include travel allowances for rural women so the impost on budgets is equitable.
- 5.4 Promote the notification of training sessions to all staff with sufficient notice to allow attendance.

¹³ A number of resources/programs to support such initiatives are available from Steve O'Malley at MFB.

6 IMPROVE SUPPORT FOR FAMILY/ WORK BALANCE FOR WOMEN AND MEN

- 6.1 Encourage men to take paternity leave as allowed for in organisational policies/entitlements. (See, e.g. the Swedish model with incentives for men).
- 6.2 Apply 'on-ramping' whereby on return from maternity or paternity leave, women and men resume their place in the organisation as if they had not left, and are given training and support so there is no loss of skill in this transition.
- 6.3 Establish support groups for women and men on maternity or paternity leave, whereby they can join a monthly group and be briefed on changes over the duration of their absence.
- 6.4 Nominate a Human Resources (HR) role, whereby a senior HR employee is accountable for engaging women and men while on maternity and paternity leave and for up to six months after their return.
- 6.5 Examine the suitability of the Federal Government's 'Nanny Scheme' for emergency workers in DELWP and NEO fire and emergency roles, and for rural workers.

6.6 Support part-time fire and emergency roles.

- 6.6.1 Write a plan for delivering regular statements from senior and middle managers that part-time work is equally valuable to the organisation as full-time work; that part-time workers are no less committed to the organisation; and that part-time work is possible (and even advantageous in some respects) in critical and senior roles.
- 6.6.2 Reflect current thinking and promote the concept that 4-day deployments are valuable and credible in terms of experience.

6.7 Improve the roster system

- 6.7.1 Eliminate assumptions that people will or will not be available for rosters based on sex, family responsibilities and perceived commitment. Automate availability for rosters through improved computer software to avoid assumptions and enable employees to put themselves on the roster (or not).
- 6.7.2 Commission software to assist in complex rostering and tracking.
- 6.7.3 Consider increasing the number of 4-day deployments in line with the practice of CFA, SES and some DELWP/NEO regions.
- 6.7.4 Explore ways to manage deployments and availability through comprehensive consultation with staff, avoiding 'call when needed' options to allow for planning and increase the potential pool of available personnel.

Q. What would equal numbers of men and women at all the levels mean to you?

A. Just opportunity...

Q. What do men have to lose if women have equal representation?

A. Only power... (Female 8)

References

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Kimmel, M. (2002, 2002 November-December). Toward a pedagogy of the oppressor. (Education). *Tikkun, 17*.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Recruitment poster and email from DELWP Secretary

Women in Fire and Emergency Leadership

How can we improve the gender balance?



Only 30 per cent of fire and emergency roles **are held by women**

Only 23 per cent of fire and emergency leaders **are women**

We Want to Know Why

Have your say in our online **survey and interviews**
Tells us what you think are the barriers and solutions

For more information, and to **complete the survey** (by **18 September**),
go to the **How We Work** section of the **DELWP intranet**

To participate in the focus group or an interview, please contact Judy Jeffrey at Women's Health
Goulburn North East at judyjeffrey@activ8.net.au or 0488 589 740, by 11 September 2015

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VICTORIA
State Government

Environment,
Land, Water
and Planning

Message from the Secretary

Teamwork

Service Excellence

Ownership

Wellbeing & Safety

Diversity across fire and emergency

At DELWP we play a crucial role in protecting the safety and wellbeing of our community, and when we respond to fire and other emergencies we need to be ready to meet the diverse needs of those who are affected.

To deliver the best outcomes it is important that we have women and men in leadership roles and throughout all fire and emergency roles, and today our Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Lisa Neville is initiating within the Department a project to get more women into fire and emergency leadership roles.



The Women in Fire and Emergency Leadership Roles research project is about identifying the barriers for women to working in fire and emergency roles. All staff across DELWP and our portfolio agencies are invited to get involved through an [online survey](#), interviews and focus groups.

This is your opportunity to share your views on how we can make tangible changes to our culture and systems that will create a welcoming, inclusive environment for women in our fire and emergency roles at DELWP and our partner agencies.

Your feedback will help us identify strategies and actions that will build on our Gender Equity Action Plan, and will be shared with our partner agencies who have made a joint commitment along with me and our Chief Fire Officer Alan Goodwin to improving gender diversity across the fire and emergency sector. I encourage you to get involved in this important piece of research. Find out more about the [project](#) on the DELWP intranet.

Appendix 2: Explanatory Statement and Consent Form

EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

(on Monash University letterhead)

(DELWP, Parks Victoria, VicForests and Melbourne Water)

Project: Women in Fire and Emergency Leadership Roles (CF15/3037 – 2015001280)

Chief Investigator's name: Dr Debra Parkinson

Monash Injury Research Institute (MIRI)

Women's Health Goulburn North East (WHGNE)

Women's Health In the North (WHIN)

Phone: 0423 646 930

email: debra.parkinson@monash.edu

You have been invited to take part in this study by the Secretary of Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) via his weekly update. Please read this Explanatory Statement in full before deciding whether or not to participate in this research. If you would like further information regarding any aspect of this project, you are encouraged to contact the researchers via the phone number or email address listed above.

What does the research involve?

The aim of this research project is to identify what actual and perceived barriers and enablers exist for women to take on fire and emergency leadership roles within the DELWP and the Networked Emergency Organisation (NEO) (Parks Victoria, Melbourne Water and VicForests) and to identify solutions.

Objectives within this overall aim are to:

- (1) Conduct a desktop gender analysis to map the current fire management sector in terms of gender representation in fire and emergency leadership roles.
- (2) Conduct a 'survey monkey' with employees of DELWP and Networked Emergency Organisations to assess reasons behind, and attitudes to, gender disparity in fire and emergency leadership roles, and identify solutions. The aim is to get as many people as possible to complete the survey.
- (3) Consult directly with employees, via interviews and focus group) to flesh out reasons behind, and attitudes to, gender disparity in these roles, and identify solutions.

If you decide to participate in (2) above, by completing the Survey Monkey questionnaire, this will take approximately 20 minutes and can be completed on-line or by hard copy (and posted to me at WHIN, 680 High Street, Thornbury, 3071). If you decide to participate in (3) above, this will involve approximately 45 minutes of your time in a personal or telephone interview, or if you decide to take part in the focus group, it will take between 60-90 minutes.

DELWP and NEO agencies have agreed for this to be undertaken during work hours. To accommodate as many staff as possible, telephone interviews will be offered and times can be negotiated between the participant and the researchers.

There is a set number of interviews being undertaken, so the researchers will select interview and focus group participants to ensure a cross section of personnel across agencies, work location, gender and fire role status. It is important to note that even though invitations to participate have come through DELWP, only the research team will make decisions as to who may participate in interviews/focus groups.

Why have you been invited to contribute to this research?

This research is seeking male and female employees of DELWP and NEO aged over 18 years of age. We are interested to hear employees' opinions and experiences of gender disparity in this sector. You may have heard about this research from co-workers or friends, or you may have seen Intranet articles, posters or emails notifying employees about this research. If you are interested in being interviewed (in person or by telephone) or in being part of a focus group, please read this Explanatory Statement to ensure you are happy to proceed and sign a Consent Form.

You may choose to complete a Survey Monkey questionnaire and your online submission or postal return of the hard copy is evidence of your willingness to participate. Although you will not need to sign a consent form to complete the Survey Monkey, this explanatory statement provides information about the study and offers the opportunity to ask questions.

Source of funding

The Office of the Chief Fire Officer within DELWP has commissioned this research. The recipient of the funding is the research collaboration, drawing on research team members from Women's Health Goulburn North East, Women's Health In the North and Monash Injury Research Institute.

Consenting to participate in the project and withdrawing from the research

Participation in this project may involve you being interviewed. You may choose an individual telephone or personal interview or to be part of a group interview. If you agree, your interview will be digitally audio recorded as a back-up and for transcriptions. All information remains anonymous as your name will not be attached to any of your responses.

The consent process involves signing and returning the consent form by email prior to your telephone interview, or on the day of your personal interview or focus group. You have the right to withdraw from further participation at any stage until the day after your interview, and until the start of the focus group. There will be no implications or ramifications from your withdrawal. However, please note that it will not be possible to withdraw your data after these times as your data can not be pulled out from the focus group data, and as data from individual interviews will be sent for transcription and analysis as soon as possible. It will not be possible to withdraw your Survey Monkey response once submitted or posted.

Possible benefits and risks to participants

We do not anticipate any risk from your participation beyond the discomfort that may emerge from holding different life experiences and opinions from others. Participants will be provided with the names of professional counselling services available to them via their organisation or independently, should they require it.

There is no payment for your participation.

Confidentiality

Any information obtained in connection with this project will be de-identified. In any publication, information will be provided in such a way to minimise the possibility that you will be identified. Information gathered through interviews will be coded to maintain anonymity.

If you decide to participate in group discussions rather than an individual interview, you may experience embarrassment if one of the group members were to repeat things said in a confidential group meeting. All care will be taken to maintain privacy and confidentiality, and the group will be asked to follow these rules.

Storage of data

The content of the interviews/focus groups will be treated confidentially. Coded and de-identified data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at WHIN for a minimum of five years and then destroyed.

Only aggregate de-identified data may be used for other projects where ethics approval has been granted. The de-identified research findings may be used in a number of ways beyond the research report, including in journal articles, conference presentations and on our organisational websites.

Results

A summary report will be made available to interview and focus group participants by the researchers at the conclusion of this project. It will be emailed to you if you have provided your email address, and have indicated you would like a copy. Key findings from the research report will be distributed by DELWP to all staff of DELWP and NEO. With DELWP's permission, the final research report or parts thereof may be included as an information resource, for example on organisational websites or in journal articles.

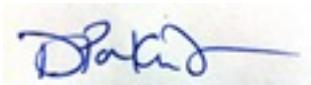
Complaints

Should you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of the project (Ref **CF15/3037 – 2015001280**), you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Monash University Human Research Ethics (MUHREC):

Executive Officer
Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)
Room 111, Building 3e
Research Office
Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: +61 3 9905 2052 Email: muhrec@monash.edu Fax: +61 3 9905 3831

Thank you,



Dr Debra Parkinson

CONSENT FORM

on Monash University letterhead)

Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)

Networked Emergency Organisations (NEO agencies)

Project: 'Women in Fire and Emergency Leadership Roles'

Chief Investigator: Dr Debra Parkinson

I have been asked to take part in the Monash University research project specified above. I have read and understood the Explanatory Statement and I hereby consent to participate in this project.

I consent to the following:	Yes	No
Taking part in an individual personal interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking part in a telephone interview	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking part in a focus group of up to 12 people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Audio recording during the interview / focus group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Name of Participant _____

Participant Signature _____ **Date** _____

Privacy

Information collected will be stored securely. Please refer to the Explanatory Statement for more detail. Information may be disclosed to other relevant government agencies if required by law. The collection, use and disclosure of your personal information is regulated by the Victorian Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014.

Appendix 3: Survey monkey questionnaire

Thank you for taking part in this survey. It is broken into four sections and has 45 questions you can answer with a click, and five sentences we want you to finish. We need you to answer some demographic questions prior to commencing the survey, and the demographic questions at the end are optional. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes and can be completed in your work time.

Please read through the Explanatory Statement.

Introduction: Please note the following definitions:

1. 'fire and emergency roles', refer to both accredited and non-accredited fire and emergency roles;
2. 'fire and emergency **leadership** roles', are referring to Level 2 or Level 3 fire and emergency roles, or an equivalent leadership position in the SCC;
3. the 'workplace' is the location where you carry out your fire and emergency role (this could be a work centre or any location where you are deployed to which may vary, e.g. SCC, IMT, fire line), unless otherwise stated;
4. your 'organisation' refers to your organisation in relation to its employees and fire and emergency roles, not your organisation in its day-to-day business;
5. 'gender' refers to the socially constructed attributes, opportunities and relationships associated with being male and female;
6. 'sex' refers only to the biological differences between men and women;
7. 'gender equality' refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men; and
8. 'gender equity' refers to measures to redress a lack of gender equality (e.g. salaries, affirmative action, sexual harassment policies).

Demographic questions as required responses:

- Male/ Female
- What is your age? <26, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56-65, 65+
- Do you work in a metropolitan, regional or rural area? (By regional, we are referring to a densely populated area outside the Melbourne metropolitan area).
- Do you have a fire and emergency role?

Part 1: Your opinions on overall gender equality in the workplace and your broader organisation

1. The **workplace** would be improved with equal representation of men and women in fire and emergency leadership roles.
2. My **organisation** would be improved with equal representation of men and women in fire and emergency leadership roles.
3. If a person is fit and capable, it doesn't matter if they are male or female in a fire and emergency leadership role.
4. Men have much to lose if women have equal representation in fire and emergency leadership roles.
5. Lives could be at placed at risk as a result of equal representation of men and women in fire and emergency leadership roles.
6. Recruitment into fire and emergency leadership roles should be targeted to women.
7. In general, men make better fire and emergency leaders than women.
8. Meetings regarding fire and emergency management at the workplace tend to be dominated by male staff.

9. Males have a much easier time establishing personal and professional networks **within the organisation** than females do.
10. Males have a much easier time establishing personal and professional networks **in the workplace** than females do.

Part 2: Your observations about your organisation's approach to gender equity measures:

11. The working environment at the workplace in which I carry out my fire and emergency role has improved for women over the past two years.
12. People are approved for fire and emergency leadership roles on the basis of their competencies to perform the job.
13. Women in fire and emergency leadership roles have the uniforms and resources they need to work efficiently.
14. When deployed offsite to a fire incident, there are adequate change and bathroom facilities for women.
15. My organisation is supportive of **women** taking maternity leave whilst holding a fire and emergency role.
16. My organisation is supportive of **men** taking paternity leave whilst holding a fire and emergency role.
17. It is possible for women to continue breastfeeding after returning to a fire and emergency leadership role from having a baby.
18. There female leaders in fire and emergency management organisation that inspire me.
19. There male champions of gender equity in fire and emergency roles in my organisation.

Part 3: Your opinions on barriers/solutions to women taking on leadership roles in fire and emergency management

20. There are barriers to women taking on fire and emergency leadership roles in my organisation.
21. There are initiatives to encourage women to fire and emergency leadership roles in my organisation.
22. Working life in fire and emergency leadership roles is characterised by a negative attitude to women.
23. Male managers have a positive attitude towards women taking on a fire and emergency leadership role.
24. Men in fire and emergency leadership roles fail to pay attention to what women say.
25. Women need to act like men in fire and emergency leadership roles.
26. Women should not be in fire and emergency leadership roles.
27. The women who succeed in fire and emergency leadership roles bring a different managerial style to men.
28. Flexible work arrangements do not work for fire and emergency leadership roles.
29. Working part-time in a fire and emergency leadership role is an option.
30. In fire and emergency leadership roles, there are career penalties for **women** caring for family.
31. In fire and emergency leadership roles, there are career penalties for **men** caring for family.
32. Sexual harassment is a problem in the workplace.
33. Discrimination on the basis of gender is a problem in the workplace.

Part 4: My experiences and perceptions

34. I have faced barriers to taking on fire and emergency leadership roles because of my gender.
35. I have been actively encouraged to apply for fire and emergency roles.
36. In my most recent experience in applying for a substantive position in my organisation, the interview panel consisted of a diverse group of people.
37. I see people in fire and emergency leadership roles who engage in flexible work.
38. My future career prospects in my fire and emergency role are limited by my gender.
39. I always wanted to be a fire fighter.

40. I love working in my fire and emergency role (*if applicable*).
41. Gender stereotyping is addressed and countered by individual staff members in the workplace.
42. I have experienced unwelcome remarks, emails, suggestions or jokes of a sexual/sexist nature in my substantive role.
43. My responsibilities outside of work restrict my opportunities for progression in my fire and emergency role.
44. I am satisfied with the flexibility of work arrangements in fire and emergency leadership roles.
45. I am aware of discrimination against women in the workplace.
46. I have personally experienced discrimination against women in my organisation.
47. I am aware of sexual harassment in the workplace.
48. I have personally experienced sexual harassment in my organisation.

Please finish the sentences:

49. I would take on a fire and emergency role if only....
50. I would take up training and professional development for progression in my fire and emergency roles if only ...
51. Women should not be in fire and emergency leadership roles because
52. Women should be in fire and emergency leadership roles because...
53. It would be easier for workers in fire and emergency leadership roles to combine work with family life if

And as optional responses:

- What is your current substantive role?
- What is your current level? (If applicable, please list VPS level.)
- What is your primary fire and emergency role, and at what level?
- Do you have caring responsibilities? If yes, please describe them.
- Any other demographic information you want to tell us?

Appendix 4: Interview schedules

Focus group questions:

The purpose of having a focus group is to spark conversation about opinions, beliefs, and attitudes towards women taking on fire and emergency leadership roles at DELWP (and NEO).

1. We've been advised that there are 2,420 employees in accredited fire and emergency roles at DELWP and NEO, and 72% of these roles are filled by men. What's your opinion about this?
2. What would gender equality mean to you in relation to fire and emergency leadership roles? How feasible is that?
3. In your opinion, what are the barriers and solutions to women taking on fire and emergency leadership roles?
Follow up question: *In your opinion, how are men responding to women taking on fire and emergency leadership roles?*
4. What would the effect be on your organisation (refer to above definition) if there were equal numbers of women fire and emergency leadership roles? Positives/ Negatives?
5. *The final questions will be identified from initial data analysis from the Survey Monkey. They will seek to clarify and elaborate quantitative responses that are unclear or unexpected.*

Interview questions (face-to-face and telephone):

1. Why did you offer to be interviewed?
2. Can you tell us a bit about your substantive role?
3. How do you see your career prospects in the future? (Short and long-term)
4. Do you have a fire and emergency role?
 - If yes, which one and what level?
 - If yes, what was your motivation for choosing that particular role?
 - If yes, what was it that helped you get (and keep) that fire and emergency role?
If no, but you would like to have a role, what would have to change for you to take up a fire and emergency role?
 - If yes, but in the past and not current, what would need to change to take it up again?
5. What would gender equality, in terms of equal numbers of men and women, mean to you in relation to fire and emergency leadership roles? How feasible is that?
6. In your opinion, what are the barriers and solutions to women taking on fire and emergency leadership roles? (Follow up question: *In your opinion, how are men responding to women taking on leadership roles?*)
7. Have you personally experienced or observed career limitations in fire and emergency roles resulting from gender? Can you tell us what happened?
8. What do men have to lose if women have equal representation in fire and emergency leadership roles? What do men have to gain?
9. What do women have to lose if women have equal representation in fire and emergency leadership roles? What do women have to gain?
10. What would the effect be on your organisation if there were equal numbers of women in every fire and emergency role and at every level? Positives/Negatives?

11. A highly experienced fire fighter said he is supportive of gender equality in his fire and emergency organisation, but he said, 'this is difficult because lives are at risk ... ' What's your response to this statement?
12. You said your fire and emergency (if applicable) role is Did you always want to do this role? What were the career options for you as a person growing up?
13. Is there anything you'd like to tell us that we haven't asked?
14. *The final questions will be identified from initial data analysis from the Survey Monkey. They will seek to clarify and elaborate quantitative responses that are unclear or unexpected.*

Appendix 5: Quantitative analysis

Quantitative analysis approach

- Analysis focusses on ‘agreement’ or ‘strong agreement’ with the statements to enhance our understanding and ensure the results are interpretable to participants.
- Where the ‘don’t know’ or ‘not relevant’ response was more than 10%, this is noted in the analysis.
- Questions that elicited substantial differences in male and female responses (and some apparently contradictory responses) will be examined further through interviews and the focus group.
- In developing the question list for the Survey Monkey, existing questionnaires were drawn upon, and contextualised and adapted to suit the context of this research. New questions were also added. As questions were changed, and not all the questions from source questionnaires were used, comparison of results is not possible.

The sample

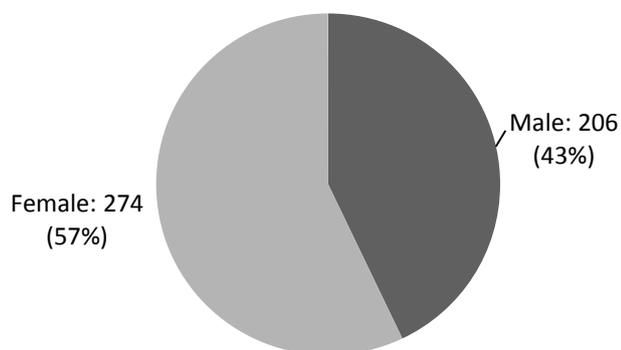
- 480 completed questionnaires.
- 584 responses, in total, of which 104 were incomplete.
- Extra textual responses (91 pages) demonstrate that the participants strongly engaged with the topic and the process. This qualitative data provides elaboration to the statistics.

Demographics

- Sex: Male 206 (43%) and Female 274 (57%)

Chart 1 below shows that the sex of respondents was fairly evenly distributed, with somewhat more female than male respondents.

Chart 1: Sex of respondents

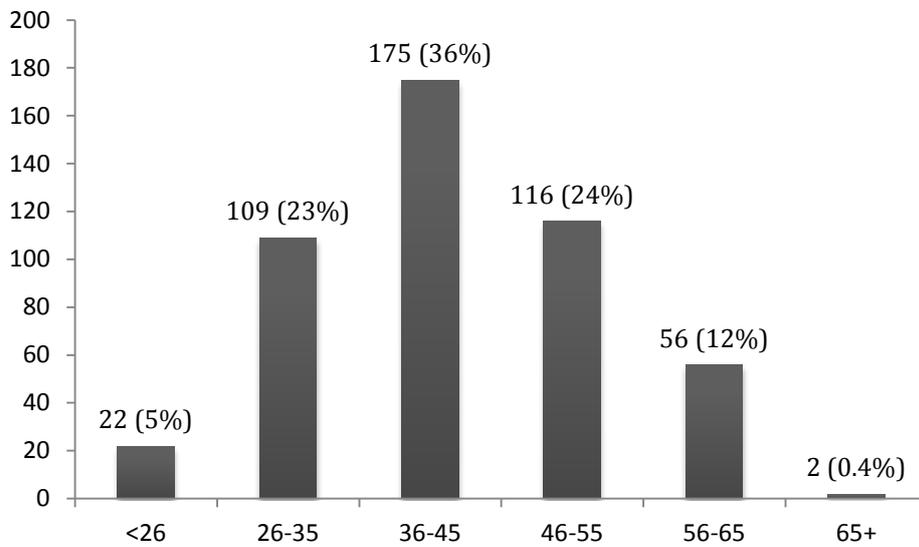


- Age:
 - <26 22 (5%)
 - 26-35 109 (23%)
 - 36-45 175 (36%)
 - 46-55 116 (24%)
 - 56-65 56 (12%)

65+ 2 (0.4%)

Chart 2 below shows that the age of the respondents was roughly normally distributed.

Chart 2: Age of respondents



- Region:

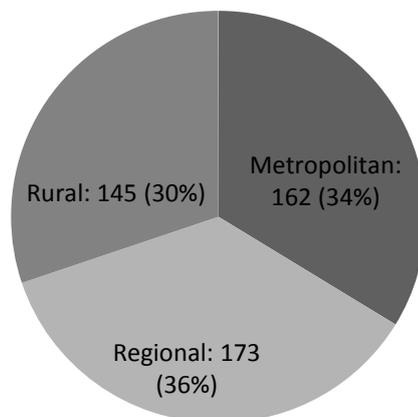
Metropolitan 162 (34%)

Regional 173 (36%)

Rural 145 (30%)

Chart 3 below shows that the region of respondents were fairly evenly divided between metropolitan, regional and rural.

Chart 3: Region of respondents



- Fire and emergency role:

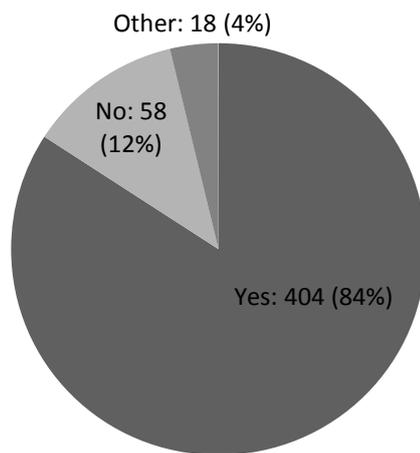
Yes 404 (84%)

No 58 (12%)

Other 18 (4%)

Chart 4 below shows that the respondents mostly had fire and emergency roles.

Chart 4: Fire and emergency role of respondents



- Age by gender

Both male and female are normally distributed by age

Slightly more, older males (56+) compared to older females (18% - 7%)

More females to male in both 26–35 years and 36-45 years

- Region by gender

More metropolitan females compared to males (40%-25%)

More rural males compared to females (39%-24%)

- Role by gender

More males had a fire and emergency role (91%-79%)

Findings

Question 5: Your opinions on overall gender equality in the workplace and your organisation

The workplace would be improved with equal representation of men and women in fire and emergency leadership roles.

- 69% agree or strongly agree

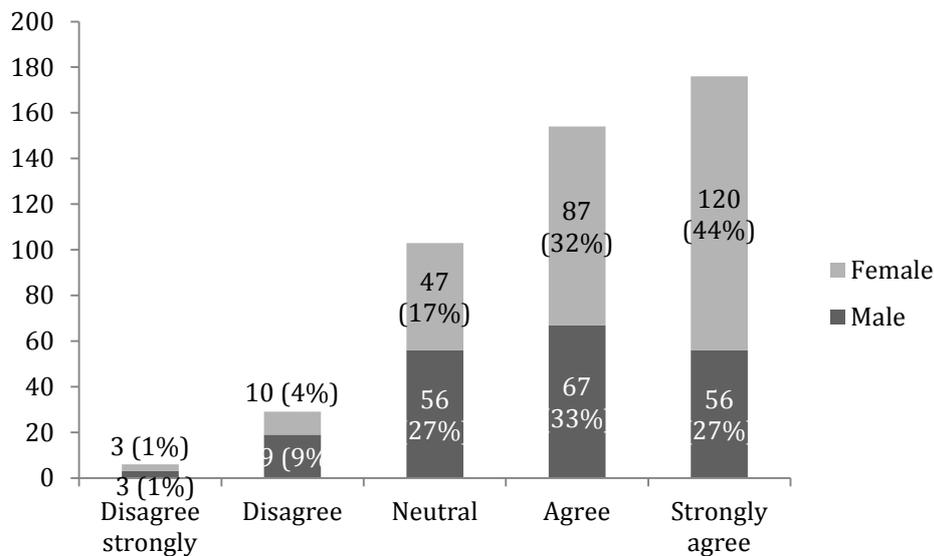
- 62% male; 74% female agree or strongly agree

My organisation would be improved with equal representation of men and women in fire and emergency leadership roles.

- 69% agree or strongly agree
- 60% male; 76% female agree or strongly agree

The two bars on the right of Chart 5 below indicate that overall most respondents agree or strongly agree with this statement, with the largest category being 'Strongly agree'. Within 'Agree' and 'Strongly agree', females are more strongly represented than males as indicated by the lighter colour.

Chart 5: *My organisation would be improved with equal representation of men and women in fire and emergency leadership roles*



If a person is fit and capable, it doesn't matter if they are male or female in a fire and emergency role.

- 95% agree or strongly agree
- 95% male; 95% female agree or strongly agree

Men have much to lose if women have equal representation in fire and emergency leadership roles.

- 7% agree or strongly agree
- 2% male; 11% female agree or strongly agree

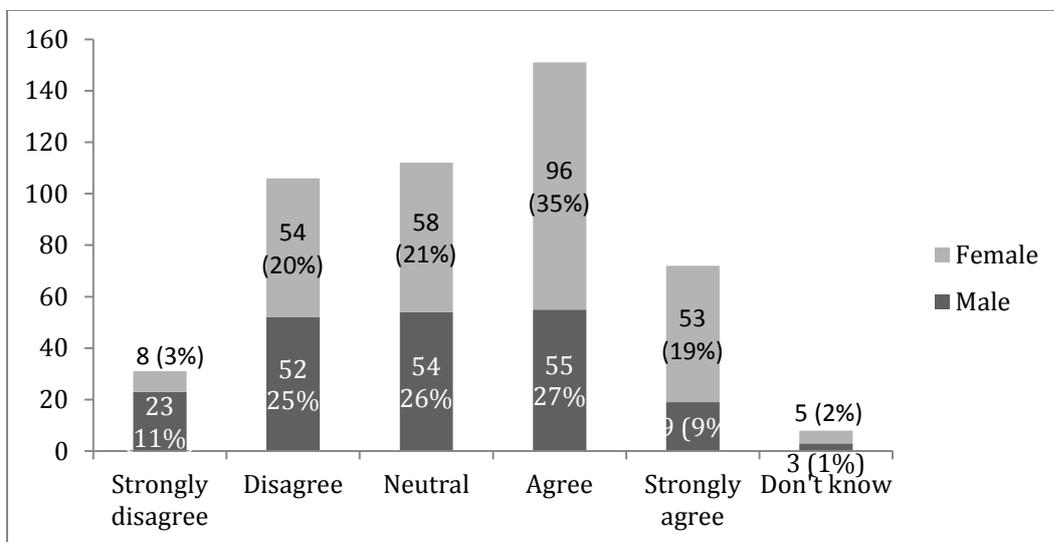
Question 6: Your opinions on overall gender equality in the workplace and your organisation

Recruitment into fire and emergency leadership roles should be targeted to women to encourage greater representation.

- 46% agree or strongly agree
- 36% male; 54% female agree or strongly agree

Chart 6 below suggests that overall most respondents agree or strongly agree with this statement, with the largest category being 'Agree'. Within 'Agree' and 'Strongly agree', females are more strongly represented by males as indicated by the lighter colour.

Chart 6: *Recruitment into fire and emergency leadership roles should be targeted to women to encourage greater representation*



In general, men make better fire and emergency leaders than women.

- 3% agree or strongly agree
- 4% male; 2% female agree or strongly agree

Meetings regarding fire and emergency management at the workplace tend to be dominated by men.

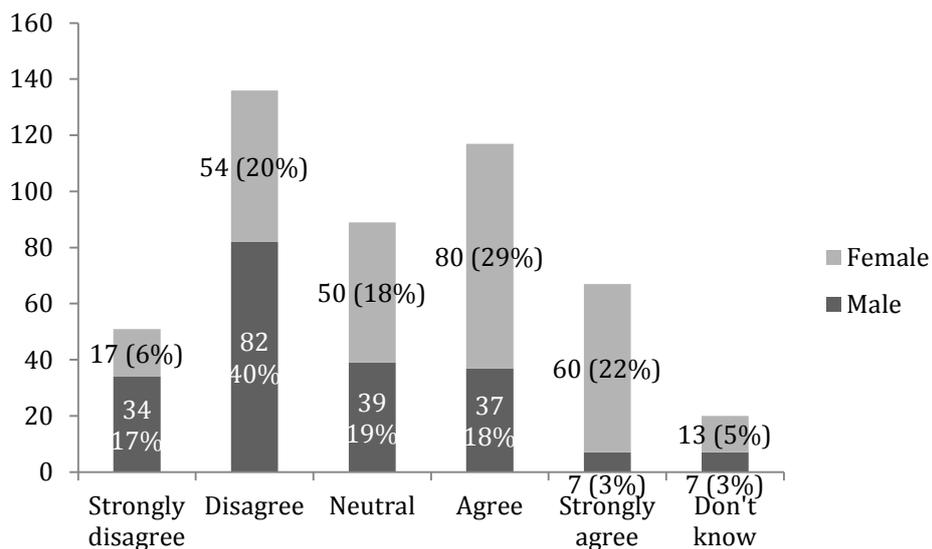
- 83% agree or strongly agree
- 78% male; 86% female agree or strongly agree

Males have a much easier time establishing personal and professional networks within your organisation than females do.

- 38% agree or strongly agree
- 21% male; 51% female agree or strongly agree

Chart 7 below indicates that overall most respondents disagree with the statement. Of those who disagree, most are male. However, a significant proportion of respondents agree or strongly agree, and of these, most are female.

Chart 7: *Males have a much easier time establishing personal and professional networks within your organisation than females do*



Males have a much easier time establishing personal and professional networks in the workplace than females do.

- 39% agree or strongly agree
- 23% male; 51% female agree or strongly agree

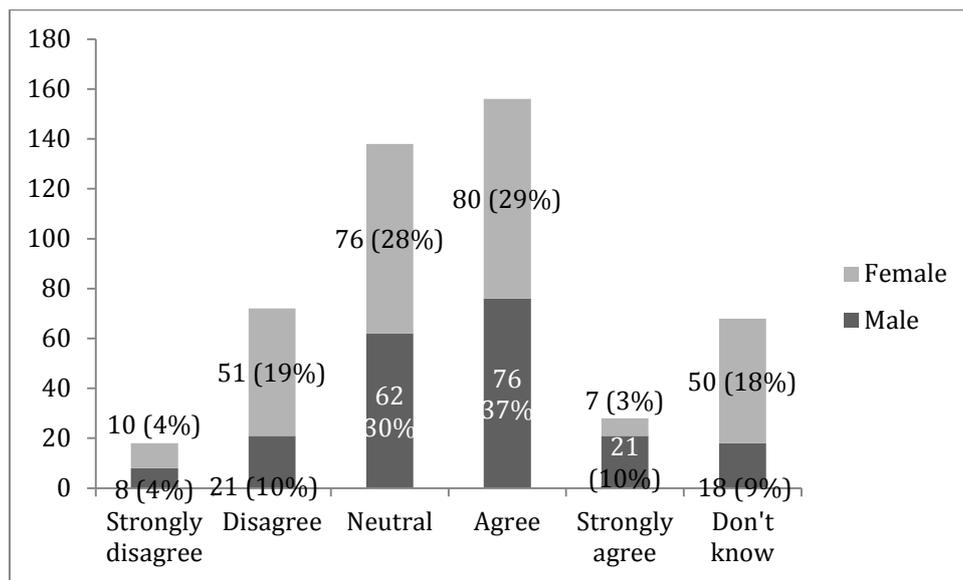
Question 7: Your observations about your organisation’s approach to gender equity measures:

The workplace in which I carry out my fire and emergency role has improved for women over the past two years.

- 38% agree or strongly agree
- 14% don’t know
- 47% male; 32% female agree or strongly agree

Chart 8 below shows that most respondents are neutral or agree with the statement. Of those who are neutral, agree or strongly agree, more are male; of those who disagree, strongly disagree or don't know, most are female.

Chart 8: *The workplace in which I carry out my fire and emergency role has improved for women over the past two years.*



People are approved for fire and emergency leadership roles on the basis of their competency to perform the job.

- 65% agree or strongly agree
- 75% male; 57% female agree or strongly agree

Women in fire and emergency leadership roles have the uniforms and resources they need to work efficiently.

- 47% agree or strongly agree
- 19% don't know
- 53% male; 42% female agree or strongly agree

When deployed to a fire incident, there are adequate change and bathroom facilities for women.

- 41% agree or strongly agree
- 24% don't know

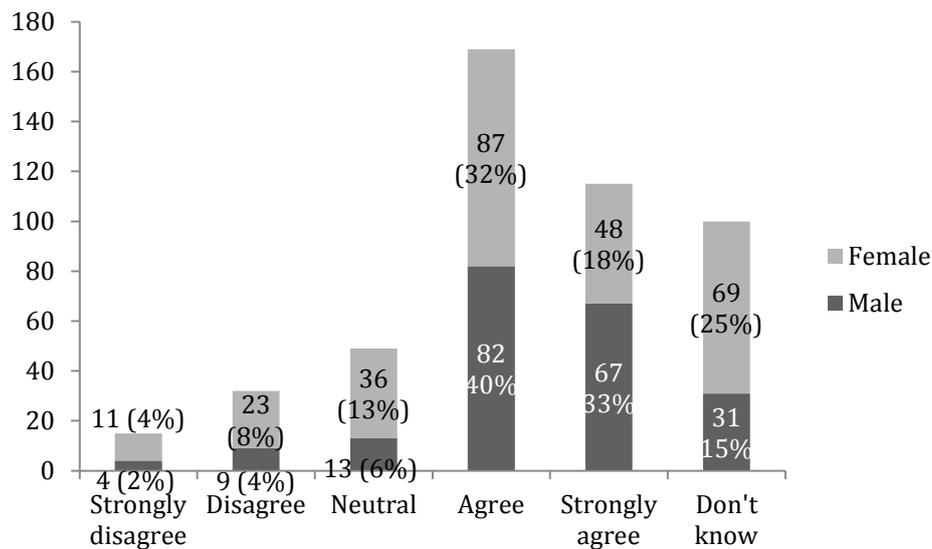
- 45% male; 38% female agree or strongly agree

My organisation is supportive of women taking maternity leave whilst holding a fire and emergency role.

- 59% agree or strongly agree
- 21% don't know
- 72% male; 49% female agree or strongly agree

Chart 9 shows that most respondents agree, strongly agree or don't know. Of those who agree or strongly agree, more are male than female. Of those who disagree, strongly disagree or don't know, however, most are female.

Chart 9: *My organisation is supportive of women taking maternity leave whilst holding a fire and emergency role*



Question 8: Your observations about your organisation's approach to gender equity measures:

My organisation is supportive of men taking paternity leave whilst holding a fire and emergency role.

- 49% agree or strongly agree
- 28% don't know
- 62% male; 39% female agree or strongly agree

There are female fire and emergency leaders in my organisation who inspire me.

- 46% agree or strongly agree
- 48% male; 45% female agree or strongly agree

There are male champions of gender equity in fire and emergency roles in my organisation.

- 43% agree or strongly agree
- 16% don't know

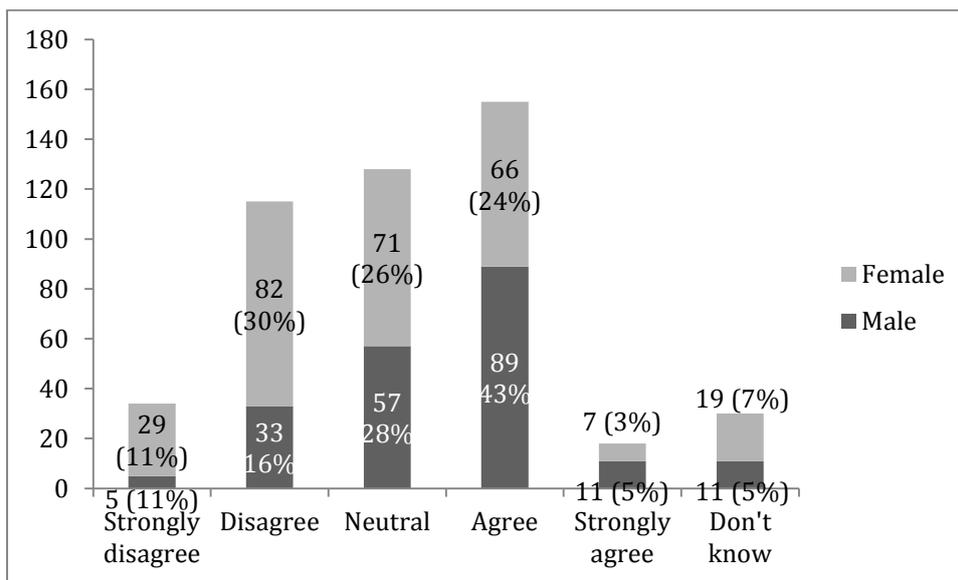
- 46% male; 41% female agree or strongly agree

Gender stereotyping is addressed and countered by individual staff members in the workplace.

- 36% agree or strongly agree
- 49% male; 27% female agree or strongly agree

Responses to this statement are varied, with the largest number of respondents in the 'disagree', 'neutral' and 'agree' categories. However, more females than males are neutral, disagree, strongly disagree or don't know, while more males agree or strongly agree.

Chart 10: *Gender stereotyping is addressed and countered by individual staff members in the workplace*



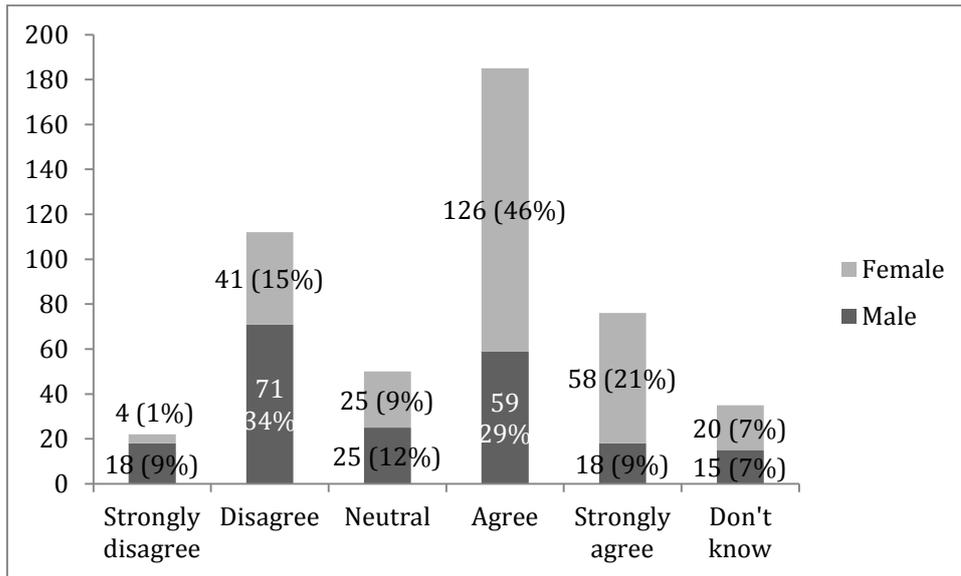
Question 9: Your opinions on barriers/solutions to women taking on fire and emergency leadership roles

There are barriers to women taking on fire and emergency leadership roles in my organisation.

- 54% agree or strongly agree
- 37% male; 67% female agree or strongly agree

Chart 11 shows a range of responses, with the largest number of respondents choosing 'Agree', followed by 'Disagree'. However, more males strongly disagree or disagree while more females agree or strongly agree.

Chart 11: *There are barriers to women taking on fire and emergency leadership roles in my organisation*



There are initiatives to encourage women to fire and emergency leadership roles in my organisation.

- 24% agree or strongly agree
- 15% don't know
- 30% male; 19% women agree or strongly agree

There is a negative attitude towards women in fire and emergency leadership roles in the workplace.

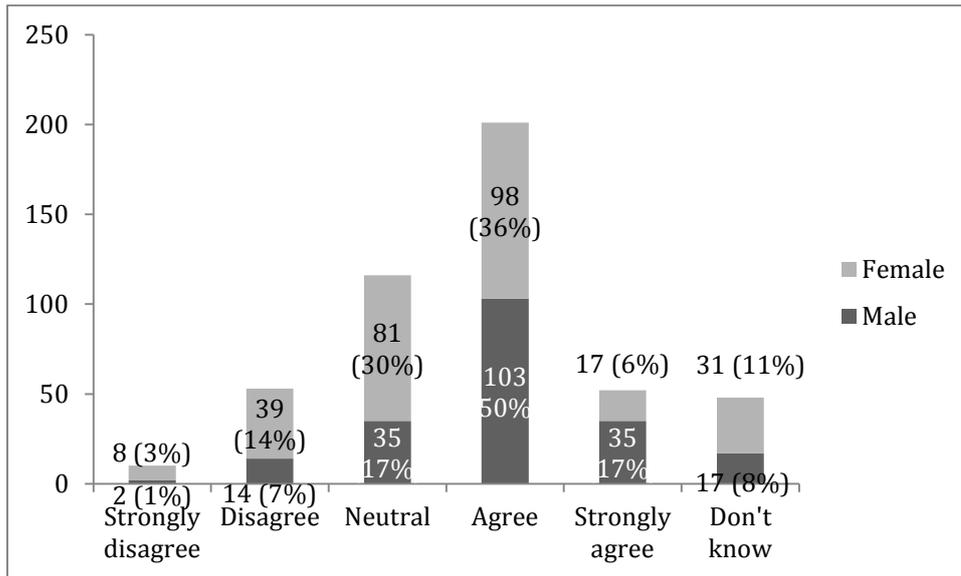
- 23% agree or strongly agree
- 17% male; 27% female agree or strongly agree

Male managers have a positive attitude towards women taking on a fire and emergency leadership role.

- 53% agree or strongly agree
- 67% male; 42% female agree or strongly agree

Chart 12 indicates that the largest number of respondents agree with the statement. However, more males than females agree or strongly agree, while more females are neutral, disagree, strongly disagree or don't know.

Chart 12: *Male managers have a positive attitude towards women taking on a fire and emergency leadership role*



Men in fire and emergency leadership roles fail to pay attention to what women say.

- 25% agree or strongly agree
- 13% don't know
- 15% male; 32% female agree or strongly agree

Women need to act tough and authoritative in fire and emergency leadership roles.

- 30% agree or strongly agree
- 7% don't know
- 15% male; 42% female agree or strongly agree

The women who succeed in fire and emergency leadership roles bring a different leadership style to men.

- 56% agree or strongly agree
- 49% male; 62% female agree or strongly agree

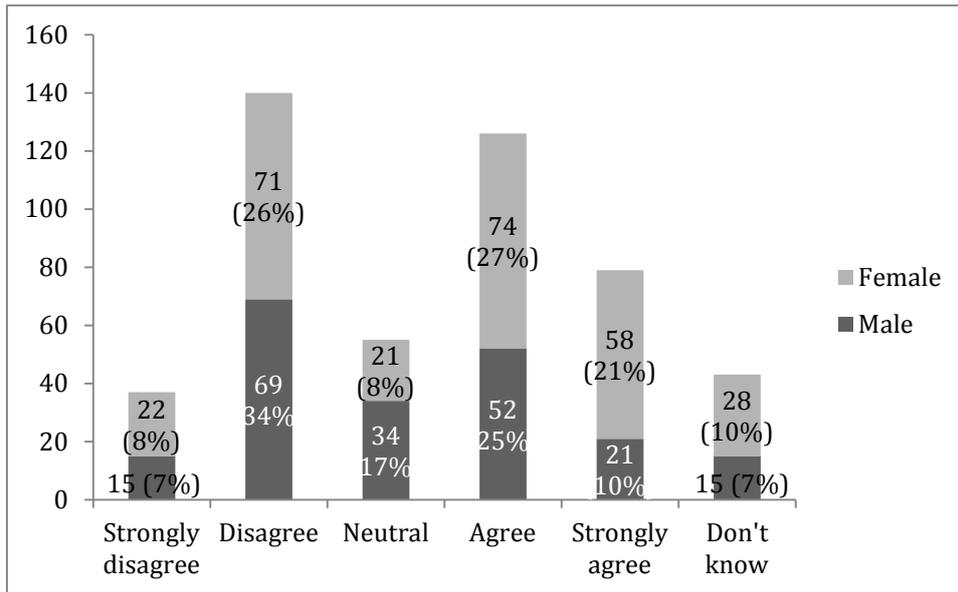
Question 10: Your opinions on barriers/solutions to women taking on fire and emergency leadership roles

Flexible work arrangements do not work for fire and emergency leadership roles.

- 43% agree or strongly agree
- 35% male; 48% female agree or strongly agree

Most respondents either agreed or disagreed with this statement. However, although the numbers of females who agreed or disagreed were very close, more males disagreed and of those who agreed or strongly agreed, most were female.

Chart 13: *Flexible work arrangements do not work for fire and emergency leadership roles*



Working part-time in a fire and emergency leadership role is an option.

- 43% agree or strongly agree
- 16% don't know
- 47% male; 39% female agree or strongly agree

In fire and emergency leadership roles, there are career penalties for women caring for family.

- 52% agree or strongly agree
- 19% don't know
- 46% male; 57% female agree or strongly agree

In fire and emergency leadership roles, there are career penalties for men caring for family.

- 32% agree or strongly agree
- 21% don't know
- 43% male; 23% female agree or strongly agree

Sexual harassment is a problem in the workplace.

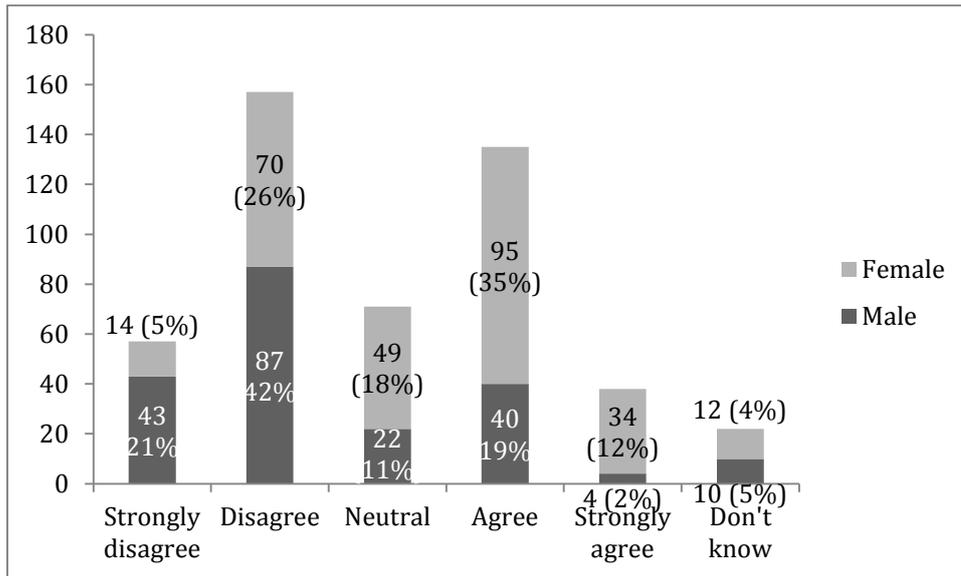
- 13% agree or strongly agree
- 9% male; 16% female agree or strongly agree

Discrimination on the basis of gender is a problem in the workplace.

- 36% agree or strongly agree
- 21% male; 47% female agree or strongly agree

Chart 14 demonstrates that most males disagree with the statement, while most females agree with it. Similarly, many more males strongly disagree while many more females strongly agree.

Chart 14: *Discrimination on the basis of gender is a problem in the workplace.*



Women should not be in fire and emergency leadership roles.

- 1% agree or strongly agree
- 1% male; 1% female agree or strongly agree

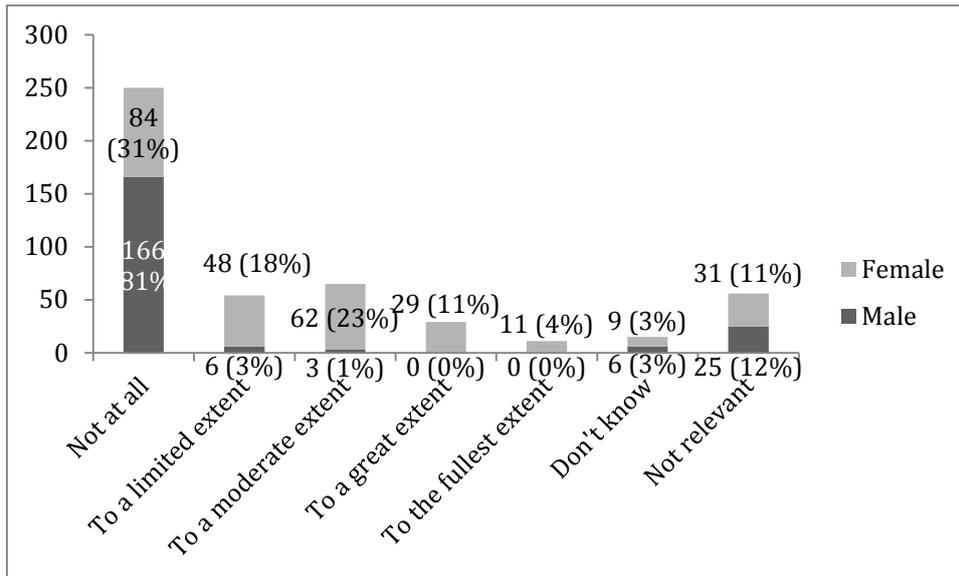
Question 11: My experiences and perceptions

I have faced barriers to taking on fire and emergency leadership roles because of my gender.

- 22% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 12% not relevant
- 1% male; 37% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent

The chart below illustrates that the large majority of males (81%) have not faced any barriers to taking on leadership roles due to their gender. While a very small number of males experienced barriers to a limited or moderate extent, none experienced it to a great or fullest extent. In contrast, while the most popular category among female respondents was also 'not at all', only 31% of females chose this category while sizeable minorities had experienced some degree of barriers.

Chart 15: I have faced barriers to taking on fire and emergency leadership roles because of my gender.



I have been actively encouraged to apply for fire and emergency roles.

- 60% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 68% male; 54% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent

I see people in fire and emergency leadership roles who engage in flexible work.

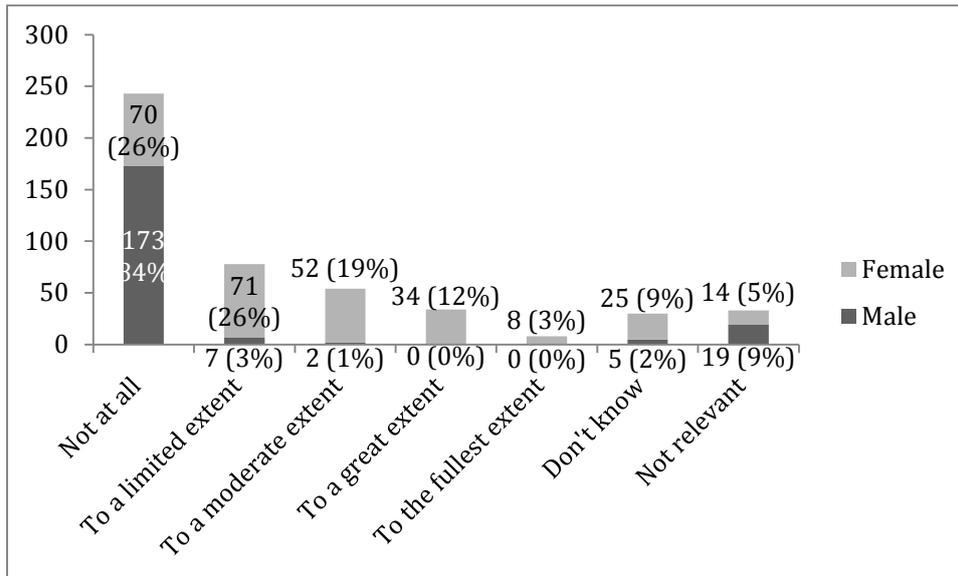
- 34% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 19% don't know
- 43% male; 26% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent

My future career prospects in my fire and emergency role are limited by my gender.

- 51% not at all
- 84% male; 26% female not at all

The below chart indicates that a large majority of male respondents (84%) believed their future career prospects were not limited at all by their gender. Very few males selected the categories 'To a limited extent' and 'To a moderate extent', while none selected 'To a great or the fullest extent'. Female respondents' responses were more evenly distributed, with small numbers in each category.

Chart 16: *My future career prospects in my fire and emergency role are limited by my gender.*



I always wanted to be a fire fighter.

- 33% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 11% not relevant
- 37% male; 30% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent

I love working in my fire and emergency role (if applicable).

- 73% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 13% not relevant
- 76% male; 70% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent

My responsibilities outside of work restrict my opportunities for progression in my fire and emergency role.

- 34% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 25% male; 41% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent

Question 12: My experiences and perceptions

I have experienced unwelcome remarks, emails, suggestions or jokes of a sexual/sexist nature in the workplace.

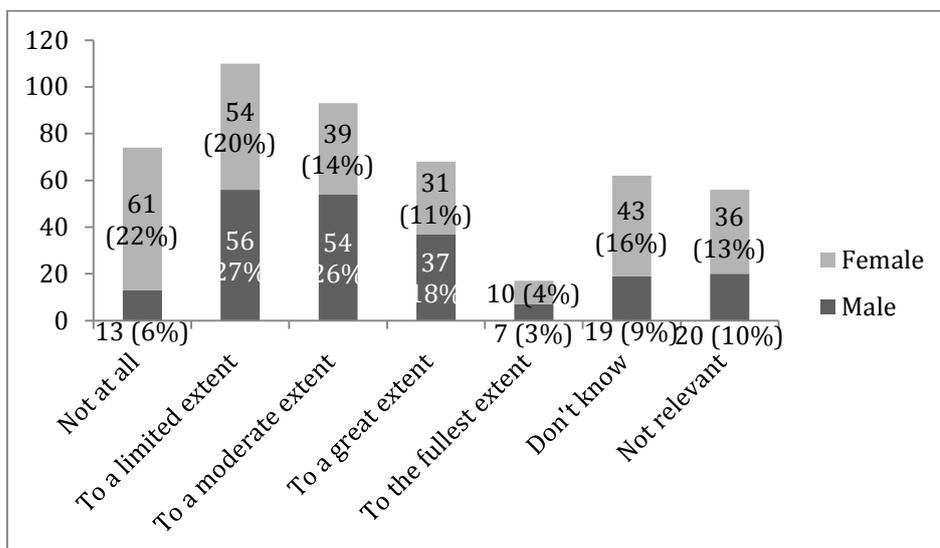
- 18% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 11% male; 23% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent

I am satisfied with the flexibility of work arrangements in fire and emergency leadership roles.

- 37% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 48% male; 29% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 13% don't know, 12% not relevant

Responses to this question were relatively evenly distributed. Notably, a large proportion of female respondents selected 'Don't know', or 'Not relevant'.

Chart 17: I am satisfied with the flexibility of work arrangements in fire and emergency leadership roles.



I am aware of discrimination against women in the workplace.

- 33% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 20% male; 43% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 29% not at all
- 42% male; 19% female not at all

I have personally experienced discrimination against women in my organisation.

- 20% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 11% male; 27% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 28% to a limited extent
- 26% male; 28% female to a limited extent
- 48% not at all

- 57% male; 41% female not at all

I am aware of sexual harassment in the workplace.

- 14% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 8% male; 18% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 29% to a limited extent
- 29% male; 29% female to a limited extent
- 52% not at all
- 60% male; 46% female not at all

I have personally experienced sexual harassment in my organisation.

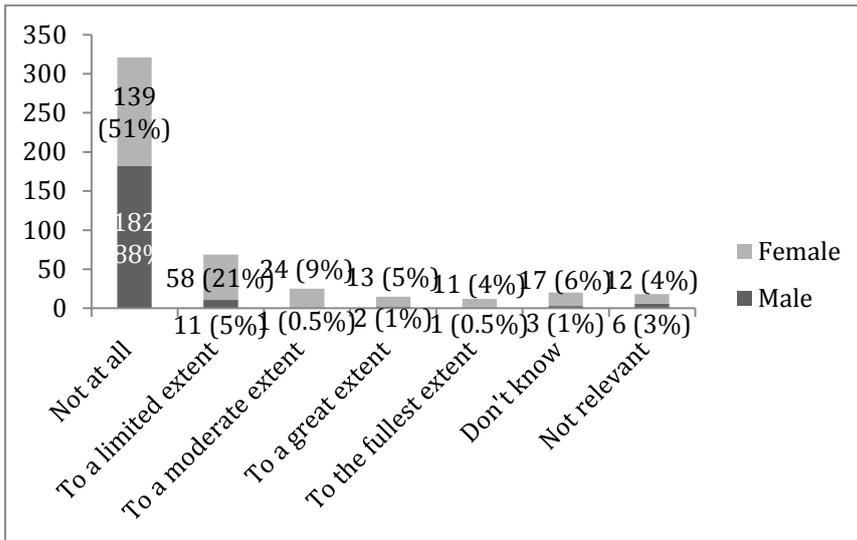
- 6% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 1% male; 9% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 13% to a limited extent
- 6% male; 18% female to a limited extent
- 79% not at all
- 89% male; 70% female not at all

I have been denied development opportunities because of my gender, e.g. deployments, training, etc.

- 11% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 2% male; 18% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 14% to a limited extent
- 5% male; 21% female to a limited extent
- 67% not at all
- 88% male; 51% female not at all

Responses to this question revealed that the large majority of male respondents and about half of female respondents had not been denied development opportunities due to their gender. A very small number of males had experienced some level of denial, while somewhat larger numbers of females had experienced some level of denial.

Chart 18: *I have been denied development opportunities because of my gender, e.g. deployments, training, etc.*



Regional, rural and urban analysis

Question 7

One in five women (21%) disagree or strongly disagree with the statement 'People are approved for fire and emergency leadership roles on the basis of their competency to perform the job'.

More rural (68%) and regional (58%) respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement: 'My organisation is supportive of women taking maternity leave whilst holding a fire and emergency role' compared to 52% of metropolitan respondents.

- 59% agree or strongly agree overall
- 21% don't know

Question 8

A similar response was found to the statement, 'my organisation is supportive of men taking paternity leave whilst holding a fire and emergency role' with more rural (57%) and regional (51%) respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing compared to 38% by urban respondents.

- 62% male; 39% female agree or strongly agree

There is about a 10% gap between urban and rural responses to the following statements:

There are female fire and emergency leaders in my organisation who inspire me.

- 46% agree or strongly agree
- 48% male; 45% female agree or strongly agree
- This was higher in regional area with 51% and rural with 48% and metropolitan 39% agreement.

There are male champions of gender equity in fire and emergency roles in my organisation.

- 43% agree or strongly agree
- 16% don't know
- 46% male; 41% female agree or strongly agree

This question has a similar pattern of responses and was higher in regional areas with 46%, 43% in rural areas and 39% in metropolitan areas.

Question 9

There was higher agreement from metropolitan (30%) areas than regional (23%) and rural (22%) areas with the following statement: Men in fire and emergency leadership roles fail to pay attention to what women say.

Twice as many women than men agree or strongly agree (32% female; 15% male)

Men in fire and emergency leadership roles fail to pay attention to what women say.

- 25% agree or strongly agree
- 13% don't know

There was higher agreement from metropolitan (35%) areas than regional (28%) and rural (28%) areas with the following statement: Women need to act tough and authoritative in fire and emergency leadership roles.

- 30% agree or strongly agree
- 7% don't know
- 15% male; 42% female agree or strongly agree

Question 10

Sexual harassment is a problem in the workplace.

Responses vary across the three locations (metro 9%; regional 14%; rural 16%). However, almost twice as many women agree with this statement than men (9% male; 16% female).

Question 11

The biggest disparity between localities was in this question: 'I love working in my fire and emergency role' with agreement to a 'great extent' and 'fullest extent' from 45% metro compared to 57% rural and 61% regional.

- 73% to a moderate/great/fullest extent
- 13% not relevant
- 76% male; 70% female to a moderate/great/fullest extent