

Chapter 4 Leadership

Women in Parliament

Thirty years ago, there were only six women in the Senate and none in the House of Representatives. In 2008, there are 27 women in the Senate and 40 in the House of Representatives, representing 27.6 per cent of all Commonwealth Parliamentarians.¹ As at 30 October 2008, there were three female Parliamentary Secretaries out of a total of 12 and seven female Ministers out of a total of 30, including one holding the position of Deputy Prime Minister for the first time. This represents 23 per cent of Ministerial positions and 20 per cent of Cabinet members.

The Australian Capital Territory has the highest percentage of female parliamentarians in a state or territory parliament, with 41.2 per cent. New South Wales and Western Australia have the lowest percentage at 28.1 per cent and 28 per cent respectively.²

Australian government boards and bodies

Women comprised 33 per cent of the total membership of Australian Government boards and bodies, as at 30 June 2008. They also held 22 per cent of Chair or Deputy Chair positions.³

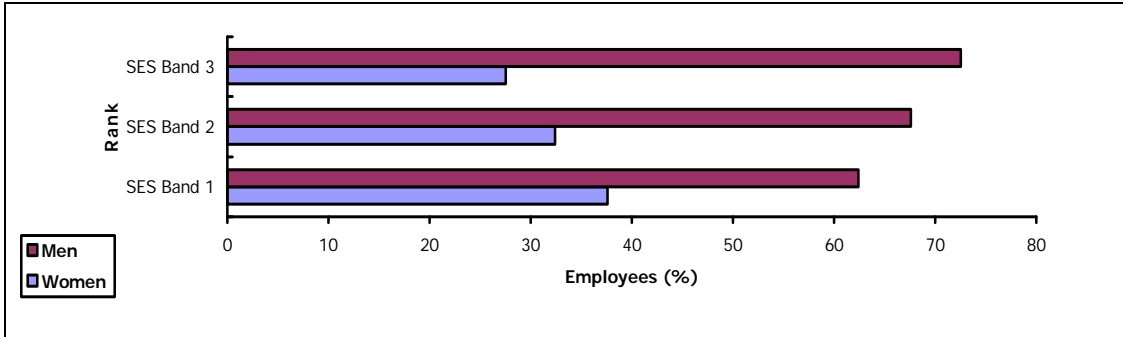
Australian Public Service

Women comprise the majority of those employed in the Australian Public Service (APS), at 57 per cent of the current workforce.⁴

In 2007, women made up only 36.1 per cent of the Senior Executive Service (SES) of the APS.⁵ As shown by Figure 4.1, women's participation diminished towards the higher senior executive positions, with the percentage of women ranked at the lowest senior executive levels (SES Band 1) (37.6 per cent) substantially higher than the percentage of women at the highest senior executive rank (SES Band 3) (27.5 per cent).

Throughout the APS structure, men outnumbered women in the executive levels while women outnumbered men in the lower levels.⁶

Figure 4.1: Employees of the Australian Public Service Senior Executive Service by gender, 2006-07

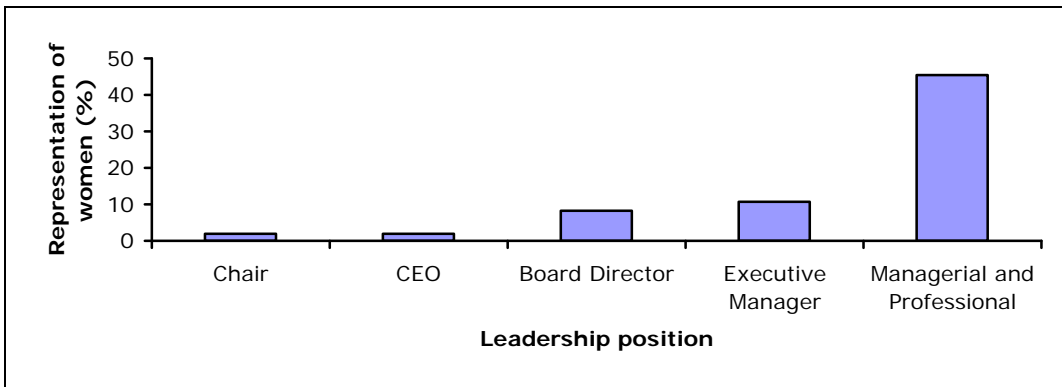


Source: Australian Public Service Commission 2007, State of the Service Report 2006-07, APSC, Canberra, Section 5.

Private company directors and managers

Since 2002, the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency (EOWA) has conducted a biennial census to measure the status of women on boards and women executive managers in the nation's top 200 companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX). Figure 4.2 shows the status of women in leadership positions as at 1 February 2008. Only four boards (2.0 per cent) had a woman as Chair (up from two in the 2004 Census), and six companies had a female CEO (3.0 per cent, the same as in 2004).

Figure 4.2: Women in leadership positions on ASX200 companies, 2008



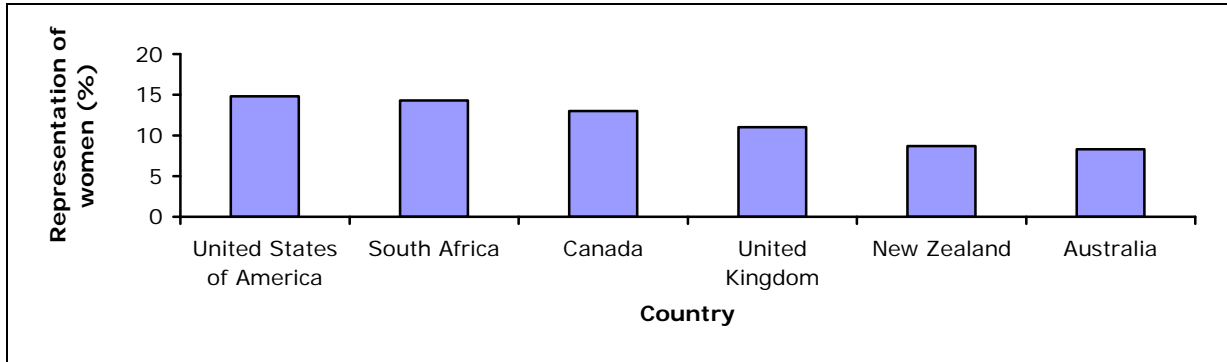
Source: Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency 2008, 2008 EOWA Census of Women in Leadership, EOWA, North Sydney, Figure 1.

Board directors

The number of women holding leadership positions in the private sector has decreased at all levels from 2006. In 2008, women held 8.3 per cent of board directorships in ASX 200 companies (125 seats out of 1,505) compared with 8.7 per cent in 2006.⁷ This is lower than other Western countries (Figure 4.3). Although the number of board

positions has increased since the 2006 Census, the number of seats held by women was not reflected in this increase.

Figure 4.3: Women on private sector boards, an international comparison, 2008



Source: *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency 2008, 2008 EOWA Census of Women in Leadership, EOWA, North Sydney, Figure 6.*

Over half (51 per cent) of companies had no women on their boards at all, and only 11.5 per cent of companies had two or more women on their board.⁸ Only 6 per cent of companies had 25 per cent or more female board directors, which is half the percentage of 2006.

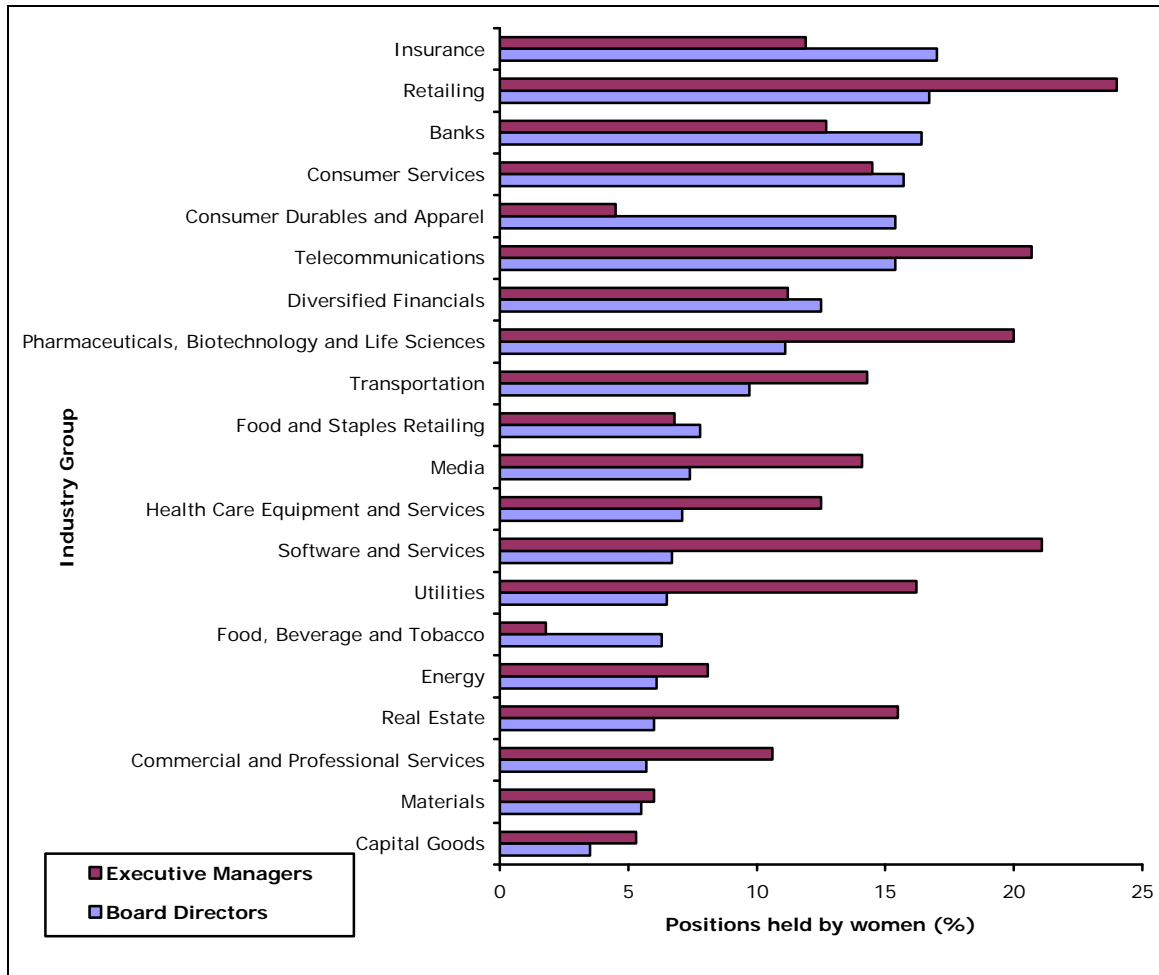
Executive managers

Women were better represented in the executive manager ranks of ASX200 companies, but the number of female executive managers had still fallen from 2006. Women held 10.7 per cent of executive manager positions, down from 12 per cent in 2006. Nearly half of all ASX 200 companies (45.5 per cent) had no female executive managers and less than a quarter had two or more female executive managers.⁹

Women's leadership by industry group

Figure 4.4 shows the representation of women as board directors and executive managers by industry group. The insurance, retailing and banking industries had the highest representation of women on boards, while the retailing, telecommunications and software industries had the highest percentage of female executive managers. Capital goods, materials, and food beverage and tobacco industries had the lowest proportion of women executive managers and few women sitting on boards.¹⁰

Figure 4.4: Female board directors and executive managers by industry group, 2008



Source: Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency 2008, 2008 EOWA Census of Women in Leadership, EOWA, North Sydney, Appendix 3.

Women and the law

Three of the seven High Court Justices are women.¹¹ This is the first time that three women have sat on the bench of the High Court.

Victoria is currently the only State to have a female Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. It is also the State with the second lowest percentage of women serving on the bench of the Supreme Court at 19 per cent. The Northern Territory had the lowest representation of women at around 11 per cent. Queensland and South Australia have the highest percentage of female Supreme Court Justice at around 30 per cent. The remainder of the States and Territories have an average of around 20 per cent female Supreme Court Justices.¹²

Vice Regal women

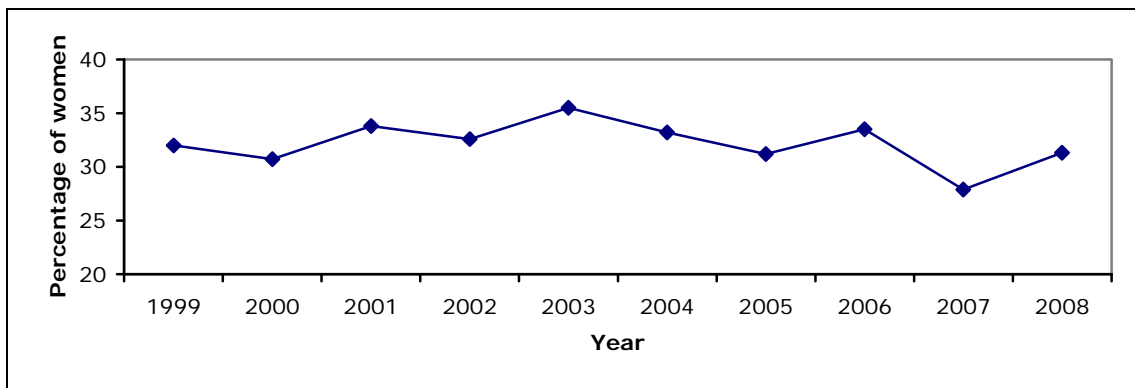
Australia currently has its first female Governor-General, Her Excellency Quentin Bryce AC. New South Wales and Queensland currently have female Governors.¹³

Australian Honours

Since its introduction in 1960, 11 women have been named the Australian of the Year.¹⁴ The most recent female winner was Dr Fiona Wood AM, in 2005.

Over the past 10 years women have comprised around a third of recipients of the General Division of the Order of Australia. Appointments to the Order of Australia confer the highest recognition for outstanding achievement and service. Figure 4.5 shows the number of women as a percentage of those who have been appointed to the Order of Australia over the past decade.¹⁵

Figure 4.5: Women as a percentage of appointments to the Order of Australia

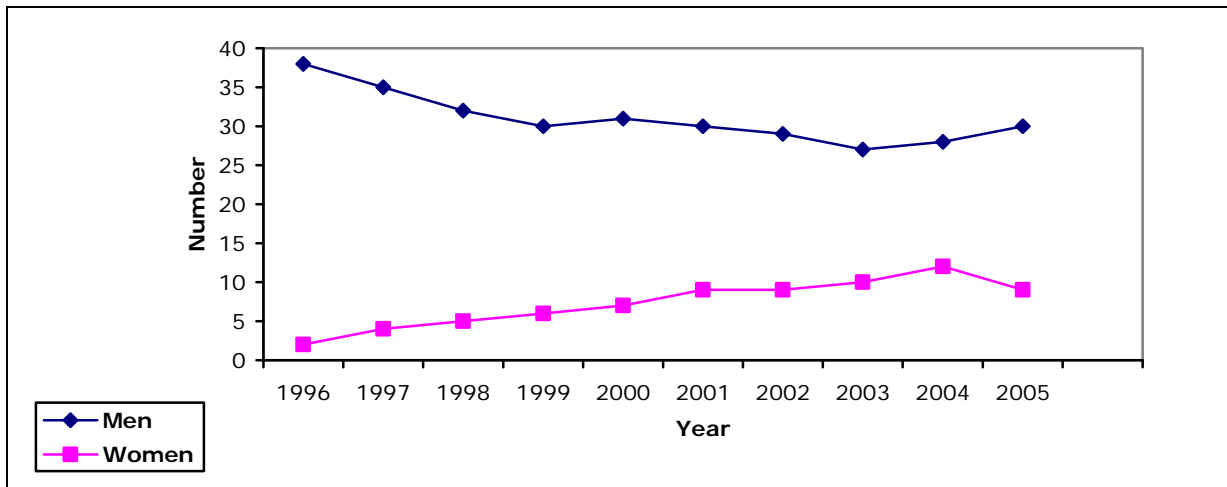


Source: Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat 1999-2008, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra (data available on request).

Higher education

The number of women holding Vice Chancellor positions has steadily increased from two in 1996 to 12 in 2004 (Figure 4.6).¹⁶ Women also held around 30 per cent of Deputy Vice Chancellor positions in 2005, compared to less than 20 per cent in 1996.¹⁷

Figure 4.6: Vice Chancellors by gender, 1996-2005



Source: *Universities Australia 2007, University Staff Profile (1996-2005)*, Universities Australia, Canberra, Tables 3 and 5.

References

- ¹ Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, *Composition of Australian Parliaments by Party and Gender, as at 30/10/2008*, Department of Parliamentary Services, Canberra, 2008.
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Office for Women, *Government Boards Report 2008*, Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra, 2008.
- ⁴ Australian Public Service Commission, *State of the Service Report 2006-07 – Australian Public Service Statistical Bulletin*, Australian Public Service Commission, Canberra, 2007, Section 5.
- ⁵ Ibid.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, *2008 EOWA Census of Women in Leadership*, Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency, North Sydney, 2008, p.5.
- ⁸ Ibid.
- ⁹ Ibid, p.8.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p.22.
- ¹¹ High Court of Australia, viewed 22/01/2009, www.hcourt.gov.au/justices.html and Attorney-General for Australia, Press Conference, Blue Room, Parliament House, Canberra, 15 December 2008, http://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/www/ministers/robertmc.nsf/Page/Transcripts_2008_15December2008-PressConference,BlueRoom,ParliamentHouse,Canberra
- ¹² Supreme Court of Western Australia, viewed 30/10/2008, www.supremecourt.wa.gov.au; Supreme Court of Victoria, viewed 30/10/2008, www.supremecourt.vic.gov.au; Supreme Court of Queensland, viewed 30/10/2008, www.courts.qld.gov.au; Supreme Court of New South Wales, viewed 30/10/2008, www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au; Supreme Court of the Northern Territory, viewed 30/10/2008, www.nt.gov.au/ntsc/judges; Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory, viewed 30/10/2008, www.courts.act.gov.au; Supreme Court of South Australia, viewed 30/10/2008, www.courts.sa.gov.au; Supreme Court of Tasmania, viewed 30/10/2008, www.supremecourt.tas.gov.au.
- ¹³ Commonwealth of Australia, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, viewed 31/10/2008, www.gg.gov.au/governorgeneral.
- ¹⁴ Commonwealth of Australia, *It's an Honour*, Canberra, viewed 29/10/2008 www.itsanhonour.com.au. Includes Judith Durham's win as a member of The Seekers in 1967.
- ¹⁵ Australian Honours and Awards Secretariat 1999-2008, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra.
- ¹⁶ Universities Australia, *University Staff Profile (1996-2005)*, Universities Australia, Canberra, 2007, Table 3.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.