

# POSITION STATEMENT GENDER EQUALITY

## CONTEXT

Equality is a fundamental human right for all, regardless of gender identity. For the Australian retail sector, the most immediate priority in terms of gender equality is to address imbalances between women and men.

Despite women controlling an estimated 75% of consumer spending and representing 57% of the retail workforce<sup>1</sup>, data from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) notes that:

- Female directors represent 27% of board positions<sup>1</sup>
- Female CEOs lead 17% of Australian retail businesses<sup>1</sup>
- There is a 15% gender pay gap between women and men working in similar roles<sup>1</sup>

One side effect of this pay gap is lower retirement savings for women. As at June 2019, the median superannuation balance for men at retirement was \$178,800 in comparison to \$137,050 for women, equating to a 23% gap<sup>2</sup> in savings.

In addition, complaints statistics released by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) reported that 76% of the 479 sexual discrimination claims in 2019-20 were made by women<sup>3</sup> and the 2020 Respect@Work Report notes that women are 50% more likely than men to have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace<sup>4</sup>.

This imbalance is generally worse for First Nations' women, women of colour, trans women and women with a disability.

## POSITION

The Australian Retailers Association (ARA) is committed to addressing these imbalances and promoting gender equality across the retail sector to improve choice, career progression and financial security for women through their working life and into retirement.

## ROLES

The ARA's role is to unify our sector behind a common vision for change, outline the policy and advocacy measures that will frame discussions with government and other stakeholders, and support our members' efforts to address gender inequality.

In addition, the ARA Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Advisory Committee will also:

- Continue to shape, advance and promote gender equality in retail through the delivery of a suite of initiatives
- Endorse a gap analysis against best practice and prioritise areas of improvement for Australian retail
- Work with the WGEA to monitor our sector's progress
- Partner with a range of industry experts to develop a set of practical tools and resources

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To meet our commitment of advancing and promoting gender equality in the Australian retail sector, we need to:

1. Focus primarily on addressing the imbalance between women and men in our sector but ensure that gender equality is not positioned exclusively as a 'women's issue'
2. Recognise that members may have different challenges and may require different solutions, given the differences between large national and international retailers, and our small and medium sized members who represent 95% of the ARA's membership
3. Leverage expertise from the ARA's largest members to uplift capability across the whole sector

## ACTIONS

To improve choice, career progression and financial security for women in retail, the ARA believes the sector will need to:

1. Develop and deploy awareness campaigns, education events and forums to address sector-specific sexual discrimination and harassment issues, in line with Recommendation 47 for key industry groups outlined in the Respect@Work Report<sup>4</sup>
2. Identify opportunities to strengthen policies in relation to workplace sexual discrimination and harassment
3. Adopt a 40:40:20 gender mix in boards and executive teams, with an aspirational target that 50% of director and leadership positions should be filled by women by 2030, in-line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals
4. Take actions to address the gender pay gap and remove barriers to financial security for women in retail, through their working life and at retirement
5. Remove barriers that hinder women in retail realising their full potential, through improved flexibility, career pathways and return-to-work options for working parents
6. Advocate for more cost-effective childcare and increased flexibility in childcare arrangements
7. Offer equal access to parental leave and address the stigma of men taking on caring responsibilities
8. Support community efforts to address violence towards women and establish leave provisions to support victims of domestic and family violence
9. Remove rigid gendered stereotypes in advertising, product ranging and pricing, signage and visual displays

### Notes

- 1 - WGEA Data Explorer - Retail Trade (<https://data.wgea.gov.au/industries/76>)
- 2 - Association of Superannuation Funds of Australia, 2022-23 Pre-budget Submission ([https://www.superannuation.asn.au/ArticleDocuments/1588/ASFA\\_Pre-Budget\\_Submission\\_2021-22.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y](https://www.superannuation.asn.au/ArticleDocuments/1588/ASFA_Pre-Budget_Submission_2021-22.pdf.aspx?Embed=Y))
- 3 - AHRC 2019-20 Complaints Statistics ([https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/AHRC\\_AR\\_2019-20\\_Complaint\\_Stats\\_Final.pdf](https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/AHRC_AR_2019-20_Complaint_Stats_Final.pdf))
- 4 - AHRC Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report (<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/respectwork-sexual-harassment-national-inquiry-report-2020>)