



Gender Equality Symposium

Challenging the norm

July 2023







Contents

Creating new norms – Retail areas of focus 04

The gender equality position statement 05

Case studies

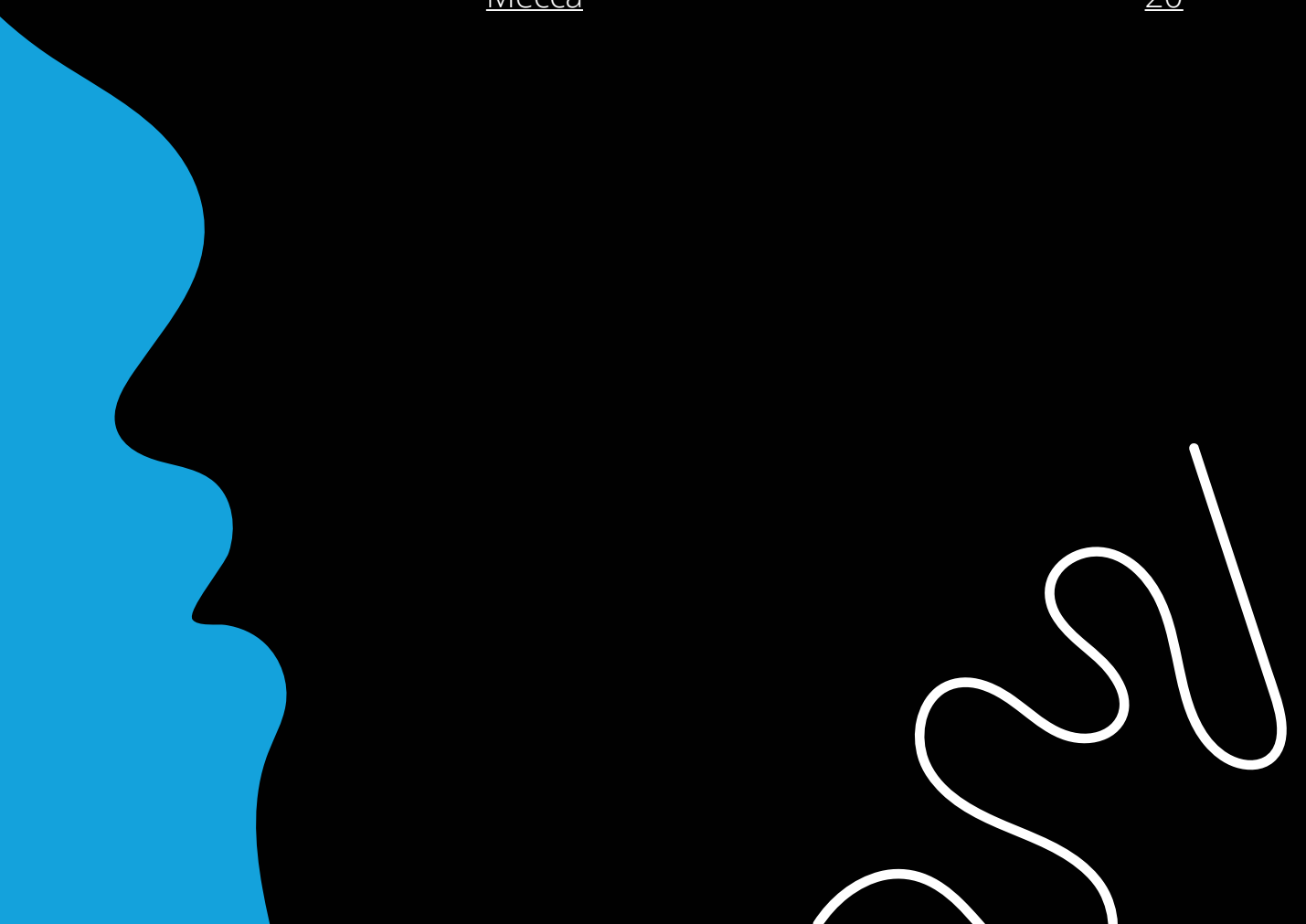
7-Eleven 06

Australia Post 10

Kmart 12

Coles 16

Mecca 20



The New Norms

Areas of Focus

- 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
- 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





Australian Retailers Association's Position Statement for Gender Equality

The Australian Retailers Association (ARA) is committed to addressing 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.



Sign up to ARA's Position Statement

Member Commitments

The following ARA Members support and commit to the ARA's Gender Equality Position Statement.




**Discover more case studies
from our previous symposium**

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

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

7-Eleven

Initiative description

7-Eleven recently launched a new Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging roadmap aligned with our broader Sustainability Strategy. One of the key Diversity pillars under the strategy is Gender, with an aligned target to achieve 40-40-20 gender balance across all levels of leadership and non-leadership roles in the organisation.

After acknowledging that we have a significant opportunity to achieve this target in the technology space, on International Women's Day 2023 7-Eleven officially launched its second enterprise network group, TechWISE.

TechWISE (which stands for Technology Women in 7-Eleven) has been created to be a driving force toward greater gender balance across the technology space at 7-Eleven, the broader business and the wider convenience/retail industry by providing support, community and guidance for women across our organisation in both their career and personal life. The group also has a specific interest in internal talent retention as well as external talent attraction.





Context

It is globally recognised that women form a significant gender minority within the technology industry. By 2023, McKinsey estimated 1.2 million new jobs requiring technology skills would be created in Australia, yet as of 2021 women made up only 28% of the technology sector. 7-Eleven Enterprise Network Group TechWISE was originally established in early 2022 and all women within the 7-Eleven technology Tribe were invited to join the group, which now has 18 members.

7-Eleven also supported TechWISE to establish the first major partnership with Australian founded technology organisation Sisterhood Club, a community-led brain child of co-founders Georgie Hubbard and Pam Caldwell, that is dedicated to creating a more inclusive and equitable workplace culture that supports women's career growth and development.

Action

- Together TechWISE and Sisterhood Club have come together to promote and support gender diversity and inclusion across the technology space and the business more broadly. TechWISE provides a great opportunity for all women in technology at 7-Eleven to come together, share knowledge, leverage ideas and develop together. Through TechWISE, 7-Eleven seeks to support the targets laid out within the broader Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging strategy, to ensure that everyone has the equal chance to be heard, contribute to our success, and the way we work.
- The group meets every month to discuss the formal aims of the network and has been responsible for kickstarting initiatives such as panel discussions to celebrate women in technology within the business, developing a new mentoring program and has completed work to enhance the onboarding experience of new 7-Eleven employees. For 7-Eleven, this work has been instrumental in fostering more inclusive work cultures and encouraging more women and girls to consider a career in technology. "Partnering with Sisterhood Club provides us with an external networking avenue to enhance our focus on retaining and growing females in business and technology," says TechWISE founding member Merryn Matthews.

- To begin our partnership, all TechWISE members were gifted a Sisterhood Club membership NFT to unlock the benefits of the platform providing access to their digital school program. Additionally, 7-Eleven will be able to tap into the Sisterhood Club community to connect with other women in technology as we look to continue our focus on diversifying our workforce and achieving our 40-40-20 gender targets.

Result

- Immediate improvements to workplace culture and cohesion within the technology space, including organisation-wide engagement in the initiatives and support from other departments, including an appetite that has been uncovered to replicate the group across spaces such as People, Product & Customer. Since TechWISE launched 12 months ago, representation of women in technology at 7-Eleven has increased by 100%.
- While it is early days, TechWISE members say that their involvement in the group has enhanced their experience of working at 7-Eleven and that the partnership with Sisterhood club, including the ownership of an NFT, has been significant to their experience within the group. The hope is in time the group will enable greater gender balance both within the technology space and across the organisation.

Lessons learnt

- Providing an explicit platform for inclusion is one of the many elements required to move the dial for greater gender balance, particularly in the spaces that require our focus.
- As a brand that values diversity and inclusivity, we were proud to support TechWISE and the partnership with Sisterhood club, as these initiatives provide a platform for women to come together, learn from each other, and build valuable connections.

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

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

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After acknowledging that we have an opportunity to support, promote and mentor the senior women across the organisation, and through a desire to create a safe space for close connection, peer support and authentic conversation 7-Eleven launched a pilot program in partnership with Clinical Psychologist and Director of Awaken Consulting Amanda Pulford entitled Wisdom Tribe.

Wisdom Tribe was created to be a driving force towards forging greater connection, while setting aside regular time and space for senior women across 7-Eleven to 'find their tribe'. To have a safe space to connect with other women in leadership and talk about the things we don't usually talk about. The group has a specific interest in supporting senior women to forge closer personal connection with one another and connect to their purpose, authenticity and vulnerability.





Context

While 7-Eleven has achieved 40–40–20 gender balance overall we see gaps in the highest levels of leadership across the business; Board, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) & Area Leads (ALs).

The Wisdom Tribe was created as a pilot program to test and learn more about how we may support the senior female leaders within the business, with a view to roll the program out more broadly to additional cohorts (such as emerging leaders) in time. Originally Wisdom Tribe was started as a direct response to the 7-Eleven gender data and a recognition that we must continue to promote female leaders, retain those that we have and foster a greater community connected to purpose within the organisation.

Action

Working in partnership with Amanda Pulford the group co-created a sequence of monthly connection time centred around themes such as building community, authenticity, feminine vs masculine vs authentic leadership, understanding self from a deep and true perspective, understanding others, finding and living our purpose and values, challenging culture, and diving into topics that are often seen as 'taboo' in a leadership space – hormonal health, trauma and its tentacles, grief and loss. In between sessions participants were encouraged to read resources, experiment with new ways of beings, and to support each other through tips, tricks and techniques from own learnings.

Result

The result has been a deeply connected cohort of women in leadership at 7-Eleven who support each other through the unique challenges of being a woman in leadership, who challenge each other to step into their leadership growth edges, who challenge the status quo within 7-Eleven at multiple levels of leadership, and who are now inspired to guide the next cohort of women in leadership at 7-Eleven to ensure we continue to surface, challenge and overcome any inequity in gender.

Lessons learnt

- We learnt that women truly have unique challenges facing them when it comes to their leadership, and that by surfacing these challenges we can support each other to find solutions, and if no solutions are available, then we feel less isolated in these challenges.
- We also learnt that through building community and supporting each other we can help each other become bolder, braver, and to challenge the status quo more to ensure we're all focusing on gender equity.
- And finally, we learnt that we have unique and valuable talents that help enhance leadership throughout 7-Eleven.

- 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

Australia Post

Initiative description

ProjectMe is a personal and career development program supporting Australia Post's frontline women to build self awareness, resilience and career agility. The program's overarching aim is to support participants to take the next step up in their careers and to create a sustainable pipeline of female talent across the business.

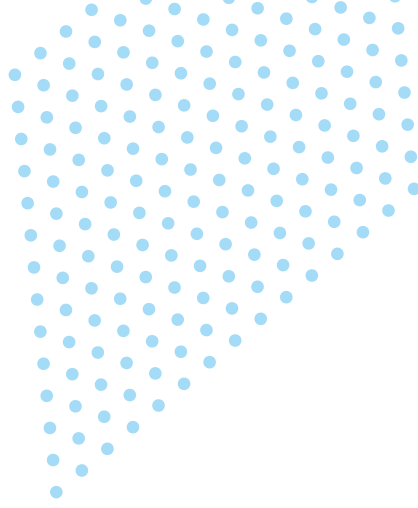
Over 7 weeks of blended learning, followed by 6 months of embedded self-guided learning, participants undertake learning through videos, workbooks, homework and discussion in group mentoring sessions facilitated by Australia Post Group mentors (circle leads). Circle Leads are volunteers from the business who undergo a selection process and training to prepare them for this role, many of which are senior leaders (GM's across P&C and Network Operations) and identified talent.

ProjectME supports participants to:

- Increase self awareness of strengths, values and personal barriers to success
- Increase resilience to manage change, pressure and stress in work and life
- Develop clear personal and professional goals to work towards
- Develop healthy and sustainable habits to operate at their very best
- Develop a good network of contacts across the business outside of their direct working teams.

Catriona Noble, EGM Retail, Brand and Marketing is executive sponsor for ProjectME, ensuring engagement and alignment of the initiative across the enterprise.





Context

We identified higher levels of turnover and lower levels of promotion within our female frontline workforce compared to our male workforce. When exploring why this was the case the following was revealed:

- Women worked in high male dominated environments and often only knew a few other females at Australia Post
- Women did not feel confident to apply for higher duties and opportunities.

ProjectME was developed specifically to address that inequity and to ensure we could assist female team members to realise their full potential through the development of new skills and networks and future career pathways. The program objectives include increasing the representation of women in management over time, increasing applications for promotions from female employees, facilitating networking and collaboration across the business and building mentoring capability within the business.

Action

- Australia Post partnered with Inklings in 2015 to design this unique program to address specific business challenges
- Started with 200 participants annually and modified content based on participant feedback
- Ensured ProjectME participants were flagged in our internal talent systems so we could track their career journeys internally
- Created a dedicated ProjectME community via Facebook and Viva Engage with hundreds of program participants sharing their learnings, inspirational quotes and photos throughout their journey – building awareness and interest in the program across the business
- How program content is delivered is being updated constantly. Traditional workbooks have been complimented with a new app incorporating team member videos and imagery throughout the content
- Work with the largest components of our business (Retail and Network operations) to ensure their leadership teams participate in the program as Circle leads, attend the final graduation ceremony and support their ProjectME graduates in their career pathways.

Result

Since launching the program in 2015, Project ME has made and continues to make an astounding impact on the 2000+ program alumni with 69% of graduates retained in the business and a 25% permanent promotion rate.

Through learning moments and shared insights, Project ME has helped to embed new ways of thinking and working together amongst Australia Post's frontline women, creating cultural change within the organisation at scale. On average, ProjectME Alumni observe improved engagement, capability, promotion and retention rates. Results from our latest culture and engagement survey show an increase in engagement and promotion by 5 points (compared to those that haven't completed the program) and a capability increase of 20%.

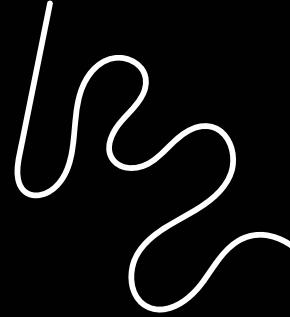
- ProjectME alumni are encouraged and supported to join various initiatives across the business including Network Operations Women, National Association for Women in Operations and Women@Post
- ProjectME is an award-winning program; 2022 Bronze Stevie Award (Asia-Pacific) in the Innovative achievement in human resources category
- 2022 Finalist in the Australian Training and Development Awards (AITD).

Lessons learnt

- The power of connection. A key highlight is the opportunity to connect with women from other areas of the business that they may not have otherwise, as well as the connection with their circle lead.
- Over the years, we have evolved the training of our Circle Leads as they play such a pivotal role - they now complete facilitator and coaching training as well as general Circle Lead training
- We recognise the significance of the people leader and have involved them more actively - they now attend briefings and sit in on the final circle.
- We have improved our engagement of alumni and embed their learnings, profiling their experience internally and encouraging them to apply for the role of circle lead in future programs.
- Make the program content relatable to the audience – we updated content to better translate (not as formal, international) and reflect our workforce with videos and imagery of our team members in our stores and facilities in uniform.

- 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

Kmart



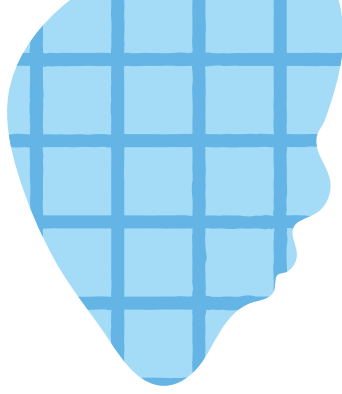
Initiative description

Achieving gender balance across functions and at all levels of leadership is one of the four pillars that constitute Kmart's Diversity and Inclusion strategy. Kmart believe when people from different backgrounds and experiences come together it enables us to innovate, make better business decisions and create the most value for our team members, customers and community.

In 2017, women represented 37 per cent of all leadership roles across Australia. This was exacerbated in operational leadership roles where women represented only 32 per cent of leadership positions. In 2018 Kmart took part in a gender-audit to evolve the gender equity strategy. Findings showed extrinsic factors played a role in the progression of women such as the societal perception of long hours associated with the retail industry and the perceived incompatibility of retail and having a family. The audit also showed intrinsic factors which included unconscious bias, a lack of openness and application of flexibility and a greater need for support during career transitions.

Kmart have a philosophy and target to achieve a gender balance of 40 per cent women, 40 per cent men and 20 per cent either gender or gender diverse team members in leadership roles across all functions, as this allows for critical mass to be achieved in decision-making processes across all areas of the business, not just at an organisational level. Over the past six years, Kmart have created an eco-system of initiatives to improve gender equity holistically and ensure improvements are sustainable to achieve gender balance. Kmart conduct annual reviews and continually enhance gender equity practices.

Kmart underpins the gender-equity ecosystem by building the capability of existing leaders and functions by focusing on improving systemic barriers such as the environment, internal talent succession and recruitment processes, bias and team member experience.



Action

Gender Pay Equity: Kmart have commenced the implementation of a new position evaluation methodology and remuneration framework. This framework provides consistency and objectivity when assessing the internal relative value of different positions and pay grade structures. Kmart conduct two gender pay equity reviews per annum across all leadership pay levels. The new framework will enable Kmart to analyse the salaries of men and women at a more granular and comparable level, and address any true gender pay equity gaps based on role and level in the organisation.

Paid parental leave, return to work and caregiving support:

Kmart offers permanent team members paid parental leave which includes up to 12 paid weeks for primary care givers and up to 2 weeks for non-primary care givers, regardless of gender. Non primary care givers may transition to a further 10 weeks leave if taking on the role of primary carer. Kmart team members are entitled to paid parental leave after six months service, and those who become parents through birth, surrogacy and adoption are entitled to paid parental leave. Recently, Kmart introduced five days leave in the tragic circumstance a team member experiences a miscarriage (regardless of gender). There is no limitation on the number of times this entitlement may be accessed.

An online platform also provides tailored support to team members with caregiving responsibilities including pregnancy, working parents, and caregiving of adults and people with disability. The platform provides a keeping in touch program to support team members and leaders to better plan and prepare for their parental leave transitions. Kmart offers a variety of return-to-work options for team members including graduated return to work, part-time and job share options, formal and informal flexible working and tailored coaching for specific roles. In Kmart's most recent 2023 engagement survey, caregivers of children were highly favourable towards their future career, and feeling they can be their authentic selves at work.

Flexibility: Kmart offers both formal and informal options to access flexible working arrangements through our 'Flex Where, Flex When, Flex Well' policy. The multi-layered approach to flexibility provides team members with the opportunity to work from different locations including home, and other Kmart sites. The approach to flexible working also promotes part-time, job share and change to hours and a variety of lifestyle options including purchased leave and support through career transitions.

Kmart executive leaders take an active approach to role model flexible working with a number of senior roles working remotely, and demonstrating flexible working practices through work from home, and adjusting work hours.

Development: Inclusive Leadership is an organisational wide leadership development program underpinning the gender equity eco-system and Kmart's focus on inclusion. The session includes a focus on inclusive language, recruitment and talent reviews which look to better understand team member aspirations and remove barriers created by workplace constructs such as limitations around flexibility, job design, workplace adjustments, bias and stereotypes. As part of the focus on Inclusive leadership, changes have been made to recruitment processes including inclusive language and gender diversity within shortlists.

Kmart also offers a range of in-house leadership programs and holistic mentoring program for men and women, which pairs mentors and mentees based on individual development needs.

Result

- As of May 2023, women represent 47 per cent of all leadership positions within Kmart Australia, an increase of 10 percentage points. Women represent 46 per cent of operational leadership roles, an increase of 14 percentage points and represent 41 per cent of all executive leadership roles.
- As of May 2023, Kmart's operational – ie. stores and distribution centres, commercial – ie. merchandise and design and support functions – ie. people and capability and corporate affairs have reached 40:40:20 gender balance with a focus remaining in technology.
- Further evidence of the progress Kmart has made is that in our most recent 2023 engagement survey, men and women felt equally favourable towards balancing their work and personal life and towards their future career.

Kmart

Initiative description

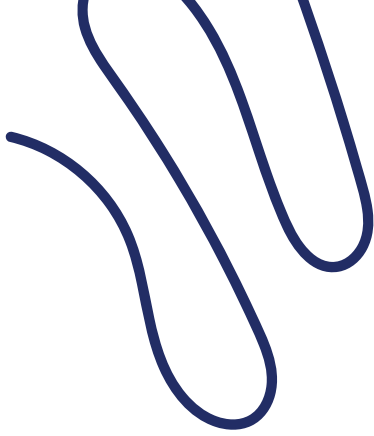
A key element of ensuring Kmart is successful in creating a truly diverse and inclusive organisation is through the implementation of Kmart's four pillar Diversity and Inclusion strategy. Kmart's vision is to be progressive in creating equality in the workplace and providing everyone with equitable access to opportunities and resources. This includes providing holistic support to team members to ensure all team members despite their personal and socio-economic circumstances have the opportunity to thrive and be successful in our business.

Kmart employs team members from all backgrounds, genders, education, age, disability, family responsibilities, sexual orientation and gender identities and are committed to providing an inclusive workplace where everyone feels respected and safe.

Research tells us, anyone can be impacted by family or domestic violence regardless of education, age, gender or socioeconomic background. In 2016, over two million Australians reported they had experienced physical domestic violence and over 3.6 million Australians reported they have experienced emotional violence (ABS 2016).

Kmart recognise as a retailer there is a responsibility to support community efforts to address violence towards women and support the victims of domestic violence. In Australia, women represent 57 per cent of the retail sector, and at Kmart 63 per cent of the workforce.





Context

This case study will share the personal story of a team member who has experienced domestic violence and the support they received when leaving the relationship. This case study has sought the permission of the team member to share this information.

Action

In the four years leading up to this case study, there were many failed attempts by the team member to leave a relationship where they experienced physical and emotional violence. This was largely the result of the nature of the domestic violence, maintaining their safety and a lack of education within mainstream societal systems.

Kmart was able to play a supporting role in this team members attempt to leave, through the following mechanisms and support:

Financial Support: After leaving the relationship, temporary accommodation was required for a number of weeks before securing a permanent home. Due to the financial implications of leaving the relationship, Kmart provided the team member with a loan which was paid back over six months. The loan created an opportunity to secure temporary accommodation and fund the upfront costs for a rental property.

Flexibility: Due to the nature of domestic violence, the team member was required to work from different locations for a period of months and required ad hoc changes to work hours to attend appointments relating to children, police and support. Kmart supported this by providing both informal and formal flexible working options to create a safe environment for the team member. Following this experience, a flexible working policy and framework was introduced into the business titled Flex Where, Flex When, Flex Well which facilitates informal flexible working options which sits alongside and complements existing formal flexible working arrangements.

Leave and Policy: At the time, the team member utilised personal leave when required. Since this experience, two days paid domestic violence leave and three days unpaid domestic violence leave was introduced. This was followed by a further eight days paid domestic violence leave, totaling ten days in 2023.

Wellbeing Support: During the period of violence prior to leaving the relationship, psychological and wellbeing services were difficult to access. The provision of the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provided an opportunity to seek support without documented evidence of utilising the support for example bank statements. After leaving the relationship, the domestic violence continued for a number of years, having accessible resources available provided the team member with immediate and ongoing support.

Talent Management and Succession: Kmart takes an inclusive approach to talent development by attempting to understand team member aspiration and where possible removing the barriers created by workplace constructs such as limitations around flexibility, job design, bias and stereotype. The team member has since been promoted into a senior leadership role, overcoming perceived barriers through remote flexible working practices.

Result

This was the first attempt of leaving the relationship whilst the team member worked at Kmart. The financial, flexible working and wellbeing support provided during this period was crucial to the positive outcome for the team member.

Lessons learnt

- Since this experience, Kmart has adopted a range of formalised processes including domestic violence leave, flexible working policies and an inclusive approach to people processes.
- Kmart continue to review how support can be enhanced, including further education for people leaders.

- 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

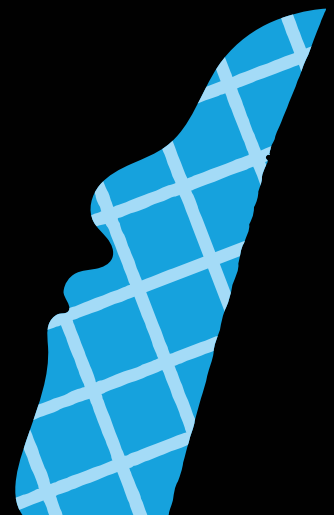
Coles

Innovative career pathways for female leaders

Initiative description

Our Gender Equity strategy has prioritised career pathways and career development opportunities for women whilst also mainstreaming flexible working, for all, particularly in our Operations function.

1. **Store Manager Accelerator Program** – a 6-month program to develop new hires (female / female identifying) with leadership experience outside food retailing to develop into a Store Manager role through a combination of on-the-job training, formal learning program, shadowing and mentoring.
2. **RelaunchHER** – was designed to attract women in tech back to the workforce after a career break who may lack current knowledge, skills or confidence. This program is supported with flexible working, training and mentoring.
3. **ChangeUp** – a personal leadership development program targeting women in middle management who come together in small cohorts from across the business for career planning, development and networking, sponsored by leaders in the business.
4. **Leading with Flex** – a virtual learning module led by our CEO which speaks to the commitment of our organisation to flexible working. The training includes retail operational leaders sharing their personal commitment to flexibility and what they expect of other leaders in supporting flexibility.





Context

- We have a large proportion of our workforce in male-dominated functions (ie. Technology, Operations, Supply Chain, Manufacturing).
- We also recognise that the middle management layer, as the largest leadership layer tends to be the least gender balanced across the Australian workforce, and can often be the ceiling for female leaders. So, we wanted to bring sponsorship, networking and leadership development to this group.
- To support gender equity we know that flexible working is key for all genders. We worked with the relevant areas of the business to understand the barriers to women progressing into leadership roles in our Retail stores leadership roles, our technology function and across our business.

Action

- Store Manager Accelerator Program (SMAP) recognised the lack of appeal of the Store Manager role, particularly for women with young families, with a large amount of weekend and evening work. As well as redesigning rosters to build in flexibility for store managers, we tested our assumptions on the 'successful pathway' to store manager, which tended to be biased towards grocery department manager roles typically performed by men. Understanding that great leadership is harder to teach than supermarket operations, SMAP targeted women in the workforce who had retail leadership experience from outside the food retailing/supermarket sector. We created a 6 month program with shadowing and operational skill building, alongside flexibility and mentoring.
- RelaunchER recognised that technology skills are changing regularly, and the change can negatively impact (mostly) women who may have taken a career break from their technology career. RelaunchER focused on a supportive cohort program which provided updated skill building, flexibility, mentoring and support.
- ChangeUp helps participants build confidence and clarity in an individual's leadership vision and legacy, career aspirations and how to leverage strengths in role. Sponsorship is provided by line managers and executive leadership, and the cross-business networking has provided critical support for women across the business.

Result

- Our Store Manager population has substantially increased in gender diversity and the program has demonstrated the value of leadership capability in this critical role, also resulting in some of our first situations of job-share roles at Store Manager level.
- The RelaunchER program has also increased the gender diversity of our technology population and opened up new talent pools in this highly competitive talent segment. The program has also improved our reputation as an employer in this space.
- ChangeUp has led to promotions, role changes and increased connection for emerging female leaders within our business. ChangeUp has had a particular focus on intersectional representation and has seen progression for women who are culturally diverse and women with disabilities or in caring roles.
- Our focus on flexibility has seen uplifts in Flexibility engagement scores and use of flexible arrangements overall.

Lessons learnt

- Understand the barriers and use data and insights to inform decisions. Not every gender balance issue is an 'acquisition' issue, it may be a career pathway and retention issue.
- Acquisition challenges are difficult to solve in tight and constrained talent markets. Creative and bespoke solutions are required that consider equity not just equality.
- Test your own assumptions on what defines success in a role. Understanding role success profiles is key to this, redesigning work can lead diversity in the way work is done. Challenge 'how things have always been done'.
- Be willing to take risks and try new things, measure, tweak and improve.

- 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**

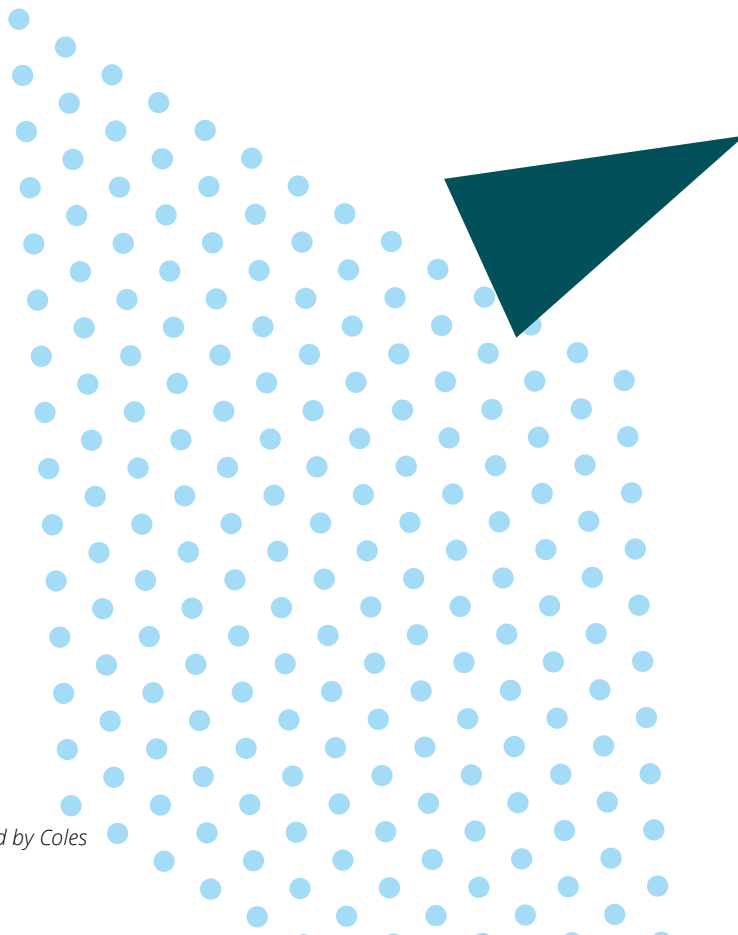
Coles

Developing men to be active allies for gender equality

Initiative description

StepUp was born from a realisation that gender equality can still be largely perceived as 'about women' or a 'women's issue'. We know that gender equality is everybody's issue, and men have a key role to play in progressing equality.

StepUp is an intensive program for men about connecting them to the drivers of gender inequality, both systemic and personal, building the foundations of active allyship.





Context

- A lack of men getting involved in gender equity initiatives
Identified male champions who felt conflicted about how to be an active ally, in fear of being misinterpreted or 'speaking over'
- In scanning the market, we see plenty of programs targeting women (which are important) but nothing to face into the fact that men have a pivotal role to play.

Action

We worked with a pilot group of male champions and People and Culture professionals to design the program. We connected with leaders of our Gender Equity Team Member Network to share lived experiences of gender bias in the workplace. We partnered with an external provider who are experts in leadership development and also executive coaching to design a program that was both a cohort collective experience augmented with individual coaching sessions to ensure we could safely challenge biases and create real and sustained behaviour change. The program has also been independently evaluated by university academics.

The program culminated in presentations from the participants to an audience of executive sponsors, line managers and colleagues.

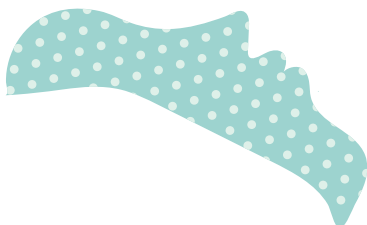
Result

The program has been ground-breaking in many ways. We often see women willing to show vulnerability and share reflections in the workplace. It was a more unique experience to see the same in the men who participated. The changes shared were impactful both in the workplace and in the men's personal lives.

While we are still finalising the full evaluation, there is significant interest in the program from other companies and also internally from men wanting to join a future cohort. There is also demand for a more scalable version to impact more people.

Lessons learnt

- Sustained change takes time – for individuals to connect with their own lived experience, and gain insights that inspire change, time investment is required. The program was supported by individual coaching to accelerate insight and change.
- Programs that rely on making participants feel uncomfortable in order to lever insights can be challenging to facilitate and sell internally. Programs must be designed to build psychological safety quickly, and facilitation choice is key. The D&I team and Gender Equity Network also played a role in identifying male participants, promoting the program and contributing to design conversations.



- 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

Mecca

Capturing hearts and minds through inclusion and diversity education

Initiative description

We believe that education is at the heart of change. So, when we set out to find inclusion and diversity education for our team, we knew that we wanted something that could change hearts and minds. We collaborated with Dr Emma Fulu and The Equality Institute (EQI) to create bespoke education, which is being rolled out to all MECCA team members. Due to success of this education with our team so far, we've also worked with EQI to offer it more broadly to other organisations.

Context

One of the most important things we can do as an employer is empower our teams to be as inclusive as possible, and the best way we can do this is through education. This creates a better experience for our team members, customers and the broader community.

When we looked for inclusion and diversity education courses, we saw two things: community organisations with incredible insights but little resources to create scalable training, and corporate organisations with more generic but scalable content. We knew neither of these options would work for MECCA.

We were lucky to have a pre-existing relationship with Dr Emma Fulu who was already working on the creation of Gender Equality Foundations education. Emma is the Founder and Executive Director of The Equality Institute (EQI), a global feminist agency working to advance gender equality and end violence against women and girls. After many passionate discussions, we soon realised that we had a shared vision of what great inclusion and diversity education could be.

We saw an opportunity to make an investment, not just for us but for the broader retail industry to create highly-engaging, impactful, scalable and lived experience-led education content. We also saw the opportunity to support an incredible business, led by a woman of colour, to create a new revenue stream and continue to scale their advocacy efforts to create a more equal world.

Action

This marked the beginning of a two-year long co-development process. Our partnership with The Equality Institute encompasses investment of capital, a close co-creation process, rigorous testing, and a continual pursuit of improvement, all with a singular objective: to create impactful education which changes hearts and minds.

Our Inclusion and Diversity Lead worked closely with EQI to ideate concepts, film content, curate lessons and gamify learning relevant to retail and office-based roles. We're currently rolling these modules out to our team members as paid education to support our commitment to inclusion, equity and diversity. We then collect detailed data and feedback on the training and work with EQI to understand areas for innovation and improvement.

We've now proudly co-developed three online modules which sit alongside Gender Equality Foundations in the 'Equality at Work' education suite on our MECCAiversity platform:

This case study was provided by Mecca



MECCA

- Inclusion, Equity and Diversity Foundations, which is a 60 minute course, aims to build awareness and understanding around the basics of diversity, equity and inclusion at work, and the skills to act
- Inclusive Language, a 30 minute course, which aims to support learners to understand why inclusive language matters and how to apply it in their daily work lives, from pronouns, to everyday conversations, and beyond
- Conscious Inclusion, a 45 minute course, which is all about how unconscious bias shapes the world we live in and supports learners to feel an empowered obligation to interrupt bias.

Each of these modules have been specifically designed to be intersectional, incorporating lived experiences and insights from multiple identities including First Nations peoples, LGBTQIA+, disability and people of colour.

To make the biggest impact possible, we maximised our investment by empowering EQI to on sell the courses to other retailers and organisations, generating revenue to enable EQI to scale their business and support their work in global equality.

We've also welcomed EQI into our M-POWERed Collective, a diverse group of 20 founders and changemakers advancing equality and opportunity for women and girls with the support of MECCA, giving them further access to a whole network of support and internal expertise. We're also using the expertise of the MECCA team at Support Centre to help The Equality Institute promote the Equality at Work series more broadly.

Result

The Equality at Work education suite is now available to be purchased via The Equality Institute website.

We've rolled out Gender Equality Foundations to nearly 3,000 team members (45% of our workforce), with over 90% of team members reporting their understanding of gender equality as good and very good. Over 82% of team members reported now feeling confident in talking about gender equality. We received overwhelmingly positive comments from team members including:

- "Loved this course! Feel very privileged to be working for a company who places such genuine value for us to be a part of the positive change and education - would love more training in actually having these conversations with people who both align and who may not align with the impacts of Gender Equality both in a workplace and everyday life."
- "While I do appreciate any and all strides Mecca takes to educate the team and drive change in the human rights space I must say the content this time around resonates particularly well with me (and other team members from what I've heard). This is largely due to the course being outsourced to an organisation who's entire mission is the cause they're educating us about."
- "What an amazing course covered almost everything to do with gender, diversity and inclusivity."

We're rolling out Inclusion, Equity and Diversity Foundations and Inclusive Language this year to all team members, and around 800 team members have completed these courses so far. Conscious Inclusion is phased to roll out next year.

It's still early days for EQI's distribution of the courses, but they're already gaining traction across sectors including government, local councils, philanthropic organisations, global business and corporates.

Lessons learnt

- We've learnt so much over the past two years about what it takes to create bespoke education and how resource intensive it can be.
- We've also learnt that truly embedding this education requires much more than just rolling out the course and we're in constant discussion about different ways to embed this learning in tangible ways.
- It's also important to understand that these topics can bring up complex emotions within team members so appropriate support mechanisms need to be in place.



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