



GENDER EQUITY – IT'S NOT MYTH, ITS MATHS



**Sarah Buckler, General Manager
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According to the World Economic Forum, at its current trajectory the global gender equity gap will be closed in 170 years.

As the mother of boy-girl twins, who strives every day to give both children equal access to all that the world has to offer, International Women's Day is a timely reminder to check in and see what hope I have at meeting this challenge.

Interestingly, statistics would predict, that despite my daughter being more likely to be higher educated, during her life she will earn, on average, 18.8 per cent less than her brother, do twice as much unpaid work as he will, and by the time she retires have only half as much accumulated superannuation.

While this may not be what happens, it is clear to me we all

still have work to do to bend this curve.

For its part, local government is changing. After all, diversity is the very fabric of grassroots democracy. The 2016 Council elections saw the number of female mayors increase from 12 to 16 and the proportion of female councillors move to just under a third. The best result ever in terms of overall representation in the sector.

Greater gender diversity makes smart political sense. Governments should seek to reflect the communities they serve, and access to a wider range of ideas, life experiences and viewpoints can only make for more accurate representation and informed decision making.

In 2015, the Premier made Queensland political history when she swore in the first Cabinet with a 57 per cent majority of women, a trend soon followed by the newly elected Canadian Prime Minister.

Gender equity also makes good economic sense. Boardrooms across the globe are beginning to understand this and embrace it within their work structures and practices. The ANZ Bank Equal Futures Campaign is a good example of this.

But when the starting salary of female graduates is 4 per cent less than men, women in Australia on average earn \$295 per week less, and you have a better chance of being a CEO of an ASX200 listed company if your name is Peter than if you are a woman, it is worth thinking more holistically about the system.

We need to build a collective understanding of why removing barriers is so important. And that the barriers are not just contained in the workplace, they are in our kindergartens, around our kitchen tables and on our screens.

It is also not a battle between the sexes, we are all set to gain. We need to shift thinking and ignite action in a system that is constraining our potential.

We need to target all societal drivers, from the factors influencing individuals making education and career choices, through to societal expectations on the roles of men and women as carers and breadwinners, and the impact of unconscious bias and the glass ceiling effect on our workforce structure and culture.

For industries like local government – and other traditionally male fields like the construction and infrastructure industries – this translates into a need for us all to promote equity of opportunity in ways that improve female employability.

And the world is stepping up. We are seeing leaders and global companies step up. Governments are stepping in, and education and awareness is shifting attitudes and long held beliefs. Researchers from Columbia Business Schools mapped The Daughter Effect in Denmark, and the improved position of women in organisations once the CEO welcomed a daughter into the family. CEOs from Australian companies such as Telstra, Microsoft Australia, Commonwealth Bank and Griffith University have signed up to be



International Women's Day

Pay Equity Ambassadors as part of the In Your Hands Initiative.

Statistics show that there's big money to be saved in adopting this kind of workplace support. It's estimated there's around \$1.4 billion to be saved per year through flexible working arrangements. Companies with women as senior executives in some estimates have shown a 47 per cent premium on average return on equity.

As the world is currently in transition to a fourth industrial revolution, diversity will be critical to adapt to a highly-connected world with constantly changing expectations.

It is paramount we unlock this potential and opportunities, not only because women are one half of the world's population but because ensuring the healthy development and appropriate use of the world's talent pool will have a significant outcome on our ability to effectively function in a contemporary society.

Happy International Women's Day.

Sarah Buckler was previously the Manager of Economic and Public Policy for the LGAQ 15 years ago and then worked in senior roles within the Queensland Government before returning to the LGAQ in 2016 to take up the role as General Manager – Advocate, Local Government Association of Queensland.

She holds a Bachelor of Laws and Bachelor of Economics with first-class honours.

CONNECTING WITH COUNCILS AND ENGINEERS A FOCUS FOR BPEQ IN 2017



Kylie Mercer, BPEQ Registrar

Ask someone what councils are about and you might hear the oft-repeated phrase 'rates, rubbish and roads'. While simplistic, the phrase does reference the critical work councils perform, through their engineers, to design, plan and deliver vital infrastructure.

Along with roads, other examples of public works engineering include bridges, transport planning, water supply, sewage, dams, electrical grids, public facilities, urban planning, building inspections, disaster management and recovery and asset management plans.

Look at the corporate structure of many Queensland councils and you will find an infrastructure committee, a director of engineering services, works and planning services or similar,

further underscoring the role of engineering at the local government level.

Given the importance of the tasks performed by engineers, BPEQ has made it a priority to engage with Queensland councils and engineers, and consultant engineering firms that may contract with councils.

This month, BPEQ staff visited Mackay, Mount Isa, Richmond, Rockhampton and Yeppoon to hold seminars on the Professional Engineers Act 2002 and RPEQ system with council engineers and other stakeholders. An added benefit is that RPEQs can count the seminar time toward their continuing professional development (CPD).

The main areas of conversation during these seminars include 'what is a professional engineering service', the five elements of direct supervision and RPEQ certification. While the seminars are targeted at unregistered persons, engineers who have been registered for several years have indicated to BPEQ the great value in having attended.

BPEQ plans to have met with all Queensland councils and their engineers by the end of 2017. The following dates are proposed for BPEQ's remaining registration roadshows:

- Gympie, Maryborough and Sunshine Coast – April 2017
- Cairns and surrounds – May 2017