

## Chapter 3

# Factors driving workplace gender segregation in Australia

### Introduction

3.1 As explained in Chapter 2, vertical and horizontal gender segregation manifests itself across much of the Australian workforce. Workplace composition is much more than just a function of individual choices and actions. Patterns occur across industries and occupations because individuals' choices are constrained by a range of structural factors and social norms.

3.2 In Australia, systemic factors such as caring responsibilities and the availability of flexible work have combined with expectations about traditional gender roles to restrict the range of roles that are available (or perceived to be available) to men and women.

3.3 As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the gender segregation that results from this narrowing of choices has ongoing consequences for individuals and our economy. Unfortunately, without deliberate action, neither the consequences of gender segregation nor its causes are likely to ease in the future.

3.4 Globalisation and technological change are driving wholesale changes to both the structure of Australia's economy, and the jobs that are available to Australians. The ongoing influence of structural and social factors, however, means that new opportunities continue to reflect gendered patterns of work.

3.5 It is predicted that professional, scientific and technical services, education and training, retail trade, health care, and social assistance will provide for more than half of all new jobs over the next five years.<sup>1</sup> Although women have relatively large shares of employment in four of these five industries, they are under-represented in senior roles. Further, these feminised jobs and industries have lower average remuneration<sup>2</sup> than those dominated by men.

3.6 This chapter sets out (1) the structural and systemic factors and (2) the social norms and expectations that have led to gender segregation in the past, and that continue to impose themselves on Australia's workforce.

3.7 In doing so, it is necessary to traverse many issues regarding women's work and economic activities, such as the gendered responsibility for care, part-time work

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1 Australian Government, Department of Employment, 'Industry outlook', *Australian Jobs 2016* <https://australianjobs.employment.gov.au/jobs-future/industry-outlook> (accessed 31 May 2017).

2 Workplace Gender Equality Agency, *Gender Segregation in Australia's Workforce*, August 2016, p. 2, [https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/20160801\\_Industry\\_occupational\\_segregation\\_fact\\_sheet.pdf](https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/20160801_Industry_occupational_segregation_fact_sheet.pdf) (accessed 5 June 2017).

and flexibility, child care, women on boards and in senior management positions, and gender stereotypes about work. These issues that have already been covered in far greater detail by other, more specialised parliamentary inquiries than it is possible to do in this report.

3.8 This report aims to provide only a high level understanding of these issues, and instead concentrates on the contribution they make to gender segregation in the workplace.

## **Structural and systemic factors**

### ***Consequences of the gendered responsibility for care***

3.9 Responsibility for unpaid care is not evenly distributed. Women shoulder the majority of the duty of caring for the young, the sick and the elderly in their families, friendship groups and communities.

3.10 The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) estimated in 2013 that 5.5 million Australians between 15 and 64 years had unpaid caring responsibilities, and 72.5 per cent of these were women.<sup>3</sup>

3.11 It is beyond the scope of this inquiry to definitely address questions about whether this division of caring responsibilities is either fair or efficient, but the committee notes that it places a heavy emotional, time and financial burden on women.

3.12 The failure of our workplaces and workplace relations system to adequately respond to the gendered nature of care, however, creates structural and systemic pressures leading to gender segregation.

3.13 This section examines these structural and systemic factors including the availability of part-time and flexible working arrangements, child care, and opportunities for advancement, as well as proposed responses to these factors.

### ***Part-time and flexible work***

#### ***The need for work that can fit around care***

3.14 The gendered nature of caring responsibilities forces women to seek flexible and part-time employment.

3.15 Ms Amanda McIntyre, First Assistant Secretary, Office for Women, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) stated that:

Once women have entered the workforce, staying engaged—particularly after they have children, but also where they have other responsibilities such as elder care—is influenced by these caring responsibilities. The disparity in the share of unpaid care due to the entrenched underlying gender stereotypes impacts women's participation.<sup>4</sup>

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3 Women in Super, *Submission 32*, [p. 3].

4 Ms Amanda McIntyre, First Assistant Secretary, Office for Women, PM&C, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, p. 60.

3.16 Women comprise 46.2 per cent of all employees in Australia but they are heavily concentrated in the part-time workforce, constituting 71.6 per cent of all part-time employees. Women make up 36.7 per cent of all full-time employees and 54.7 per cent of all casual employees.<sup>5</sup>

3.17 Australia has one of the highest rates of part-time work in the world. Amongst Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, for example, Australia has the third-lowest rate of women in full-time employment.<sup>6</sup>

3.18 According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), in 2015–16 more than two in five employed women worked part-time (44 per cent), compared with 15 per cent of employed men.<sup>7</sup>

3.19 According to a 2012 report by the Grattan Institute:

While 55 per cent of employed women work full time, 85 per cent of employed men do, with the remainder working part time. These rates are substantially lower than in many other OECD countries...While Australia is just above the OECD average, the average includes countries with very low participation rates, such as Greece.<sup>8</sup>

3.20 Some of these are northern European countries with a distinct social compact which may not be easily replicated in Australia. However, female workforce participation is also substantially higher in Canada, a country that is culturally, economically and institutionally similar to Australia.

3.21 The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) reported that flexible work is a priority for women:

Over successive rounds of enterprise bargaining, when we go in to bargain for a workforce that is predominantly women who may well have caring responsibilities, their No. 1 priority is making sure that their rosters cannot change without advance notice, that they get parental leave, that they have caring leave when they need it to care for children et cetera. ... people could say, 'Well, people get what they want,' but it is a bit of a perverse consequence that, because women have historically taken on more caring responsibilities, they have had to [prioritise] their bargains in a certain way.<sup>9</sup>

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5 WGEA, *Gender workplace statistics at a glance*, August 2016, referring to ABS, *Characteristics of Employment Australia, August 2014, cat. no 6333.0*, 2015.

6 PwC, *Women in Work Index: Closing the Gender Pay Gap* (Australian edition), February 2017, <http://www.pwc.com.au/people-business/assets/pwc-2017-women-in-work-feb17.pdf> (accessed 26 May 2017).

7 ABS, *Submission 4*, p. 2.

8 John Daley, Grattan Institute, *Game changers: Economic Reform Priorities for Australia*, 15 June 2012, p. 38.

9 Ms Melissa Donnelly, Deputy Secretary, CPSU, *Proof Hansard* 26 April 2017, pp 23–24.

### *The availability of flexible and part-time work*

3.22 Not all industries and workplaces are equally flexible, however. The uneven distribution of flexible and part-time employment opportunities funnels women into particular industries and sectors.

3.23 According to Workplace Gender Equality Unit (WGEA) data for 2015–16 (see Figure 3.1 below):

- female-dominated organisations have the highest proportion of part-time and casual employment as a proportion of all employees;
- female-dominated organisations have the lowest proportion of full-time employees as a proportion of all employees compared to male-dominated and mixed industries; and
- the proportion of part-time employees in male-dominated organisations in 2015–16 is only 5 per cent.<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 3.1—Proportion and number of full-time, part-time and casual employees, WGEA data 2015–16**

Gender dominance	Full-time employees (%)	Part-time employees (%)	Casual employees (%)	Full-time employees (No.)	Part-time employees (No.)	Casual employees (No.)	Total employees (No.)
Female-dominated	34.7	35.1	30.2	436,394	442,247	379,552	1,258,193
Mixed	47.5	24.2	28.3	688,661	350,366	409,802	1,448,829
Male-dominated	82.6	5.0	12.4	1,088,603	66,525	163,154	1,318,282
All	51.5	19.8	28.6	2,213,658	853,138	95,2508	4,025,304

Source: WGEA, Agency reporting data.<sup>11</sup>

3.24 WGEA reported that less flexibility in male dominated workplaces tends to deter women:

Higher-paying male dominated workplaces have smaller proportions of part-time employees—around the five per cent mark. They tend to offer less flexibility and their full-time employees tend to work longer hours. These are all factors that may deter women with families and caring responsibilities from entering male dominated industries and occupations, so they often have to gravitate to the lower-paying female dominated industries because they offer the highest proportion of flexible work—particularly part-time and casual work.<sup>12</sup>

10 WGEA, *Submission 22*, p. 10.

11 WGEA, *Submission 22*, p. 10, Table 5.

12 Ms Libby Lyons, Director, WGEA, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2016, p. 34.

3.25 In industries other than health and social services, obtaining flexible workplace arrangements can be difficult. Australia 'lacks an effective enforcement or appeal mechanism providing little protection or support to the most vulnerable in the workforce such as precarious, unskilled, low paid or un-unionised workers' when requesting flexible workplace arrangements.<sup>13</sup>

3.26 The *Fair Work Act 2009* provides employees with at least 12 months' continuous service (and long-term casuals) with the right to request flexible working arrangements in a range of circumstances, including where the employee is the parent, or responsible for the care, of a child who is of school age or under. There is also a specific right for parents returning from parental leave to request part-time work.<sup>14</sup>

3.27 Department of Employment (DoE) noted that, while all modern awards and enterprise agreements provide for individual flexibility arrangements (IFAs), there has only been a small take-up of these arrangements (two per cent per cent of employees).

3.28 DoE spoke about the effectiveness of the right to request flexible work provisions:

...the Fair Work Commission...found that there was 80 per cent in 2009–2012, or thereabouts, and 90 per cent where requests were granted without any change. They are really very high percentages that have been indicated through those assessment mechanisms that people are having their requests granted.<sup>15</sup>

#### *Flexibility for whom?*

3.29 The Australian Industry Group (Ai Group) mentioned barriers to flexible workplace practices for men and women within the workplace relations framework, noted by the Productivity Commission (PC) in the Final Report of its recent review of the Australian workplace relations framework. Ai Group indicated that this view is shared by many employers:

These inflexibilities make it very difficult for employers to implement alternative working arrangements for workers who desire (or require) more flexible working arrangements.<sup>16</sup>

3.30 The Victorian Trades Hall Council (VTHC) cautioned that flexibility means different things to employers and employees. According to Professor Heap, Lead Organiser, VTHC:

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13 Carers Australia NSW, *Submission 12*, p. 2.

14 DoE, *Submission 14*, p. 23.

15 Ms Virginia Jay, Director, Pay Equity and Participation Section, Workplace Relations Policy Group, DoE, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, p. 53. Under section 653, the General Manager must provide a report on 'the extent to which flexibility arrangements under modern awards and enterprise agreements are being agreed to, and the content of those arrangements'. The report for 2009–12 was tabled on 13 February 2013 and the report for 2012–15 was tabled on 22 February 2016. See <https://www.fwc.gov.au/about-us/reports-publications/general-managers-reports> (accessed 1 May 2017).

16 Ai Group, *Submission 11*, p. 6.

...when the employers are talking about it, they are generally talking about flexibility for business arrangements, and that is why they promote insecure work arrangements, because it gives them the ultimate choice to be able to move their labour market around.

But, when women are talking about flexibility, they are talking about being able to have roles which will allow them to do drop-offs and pick-ups in relation to care and school and ensure that they can work their hours of work around the obligations of their family.<sup>17</sup>

3.31 Carers Australia NSW noted that some workplaces have begun to implement a 'flexibility by design' approach, whereby flexibility is a priority in determining the structure of individual positions and whole teams:

Proponents of this measure suggest that it prevents the need to accommodate individual scenarios and instead recognises that all employees are likely to have some form of caring commitment outside of work at some stage.<sup>18</sup>

### ***Addressing the need for flexible and part-time work***

#### *Legislative changes*

3.32 A number of submissions recommended specific legislative changes to strengthen employee access to flexible work arrangements, as follows:

3.33 The Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) recommended the following changes to the Fair Work Act:

- amend Part 2-2 (section 84 of the National Employment Standards) to include a right for a full-time employee to return to work from parental leave on a part-time basis, or the right for a part-time employee to return on reduced hours, with a right to return to pre-parental leave hours until the child is school age; and
- amend the right to request flexible work provisions to allow a role for the Fair Work Commission where there is a disagreement between the employer and the employee regarding requests for flexible work.<sup>19</sup>

3.34 Representatives from the AMWU told the committee that:

If you are making an application due to caring arrangements for some alterations of changes of hours, the employer can easily dismiss the application without sitting down, really, and discussing how it can be managed or accommodated.<sup>20</sup>

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17 Professor Lisa Heap, Lead Organiser, VTHC, *Proof Hansard*, 10 April 2017, p. 3.

18 Carers Australia NSW, *Submission 12*, p. 3.

19 AMWU, *Submission 37*, p. 12

20 Ms Robyn Fortescue, Assistant State Secretary, AMWU, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, p. 53. See also AMWU, *Submission 37*, p. 12.

3.35 New South Wales Council of Social Service (NCOSS) suggested that flexible working arrangements should cover all forms of caring responsibilities and be available to men and women:

...flexible working arrangements need to cover all forms of caring responsibilities and be actively available to men and women...it is a cultural shift.

The Paid Parental Leave Scheme, we would say, could be improved over time to allow for 26 weeks paid parental leave, ideally, offering four weeks to a partner on a use-it-or-lose-it basis. ...we need strong and responsive authorities to advocate for these positions and strong, independent monitoring and evaluation mechanisms that can hold us to account. The ASU recommended amending the Sex Discrimination Act to recognise indirect discrimination on the grounds of 'family responsibilities', and include a positive duty on employers to reasonably accommodate the needs of workers who are pregnant and/or have family responsibilities.<sup>21</sup>

3.36 Some witnesses were cautious about introducing further regulation, asserting that increasing the regulatory burden could damage the performance and competitiveness of Australian business.<sup>22</sup>

3.37 Ai Group recommended promoting dialogue between employers and employees rather than increasing regulation.<sup>23</sup>

#### *Normalising flexible work arrangements*

3.38 Some submitters emphasised the benefits of normalising flexible work arrangements. Despite the negative stereotype, there are potential benefits for employers; a study by Ernst & Young found women working part-time waste the least amount of time at work.<sup>24</sup>

3.39 Several submissions recommended measures to better manage the care responsibilities of both men and women. The AHRC's 2013 *Investing in Care* report included measures like:

- normalising flexible work arrangements for both men and women to ensure the equal distribution of unpaid care work; and

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21 Ms Tracy Howe, Chief Executive Officer, NCOSS, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, p. 29.

22 See for example, ACCI, *Submission 30*, p. 5, p. 19 and p. 24; AFEI, *Submission 27*, p. 6; Ai Group, *Submission 11*, p. 3.

23 Ai Group, *Submission 11*, p. 3.

24 ANMF, *Submission 34*, p. 7.

- preserving and improving paid parental leave measures, including the introduction of ‘use it or lose it’ father-specific parental leave modelled on the schemes that exist in Nordic countries.<sup>25</sup>

3.40 United Voice proposed a model of care work in which the care of young children and the elderly is shared between state-funded providers and both parents, underpinned by significantly higher wages for care work in undervalued industries, and expanded legislative mechanisms for parental leave and flexible working provisions.<sup>26</sup>

### *Access to child care*

3.41 Access to child care is important in helping women manage caring responsibilities. Affordable and reliable child care provides women with more options, and allows them to take on less flexible or full-time work in fields that otherwise would not be open to them.

3.42 The VTHC cited research establishing a positive correlation between increasing child care uptake and lowering of the gender earnings gap, and the level of child care subsidies and labour force participation.<sup>27</sup>

3.43 Access to child care accordingly is capable of mitigating some of the structural factors contributing to workplace gender segregation. Submitters indicated, however, that there were issues in finding affordable and reliable child care.

3.44 Department of Employment and Training (DET) pointed out that the Productivity Commission has estimated that:

...there may be up to 165,000 parents (on a full-time equivalent basis) who would like to work, or work more hours, but are not able to do so because they are experiencing difficulties with the cost of, or access to, suitable child care. These are parents (mostly mothers) who are currently either not in the labour force or are working part time.<sup>28</sup>

3.45 DET indicated that returning to work after having children has a significant impact on job choices, with implications for gender segregation as well as their life-long earning potential':

Where accessible and affordable child care is not available, parents may be unable to return to their job of choice but instead may be forced into jobs that provide flexibility for part time work.<sup>29</sup>

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25 NCOSS, *Submission 26*, [p. 5]; WiS, *Submission 32*, [p. 9]; United Voice, *Submission 19*, p. 5; AMWU, *Submission 37*, p. 19; ACTU, *Submission 38*, pp. 9–10; see AHRC, *Investing in Care: Recognising and Valuing Those Who Care*, Vol. 1: Research Report, 2013, [http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/UnpaidCaringVolume1\\_2013.pdf](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/UnpaidCaringVolume1_2013.pdf) (accessed 5 June 2017).

26 United Voice, *Submission 19*, p. 4.

27 Research cited in VTHC, *Submission 13*, p. 10.

28 DET, *Submission 21*, p. 12.

29 DET, *Submission 21*, p. 12.



These include investment in the care economy and ensuring the payment of decent wages and conditions in the early childhood education and care sector.<sup>30</sup>

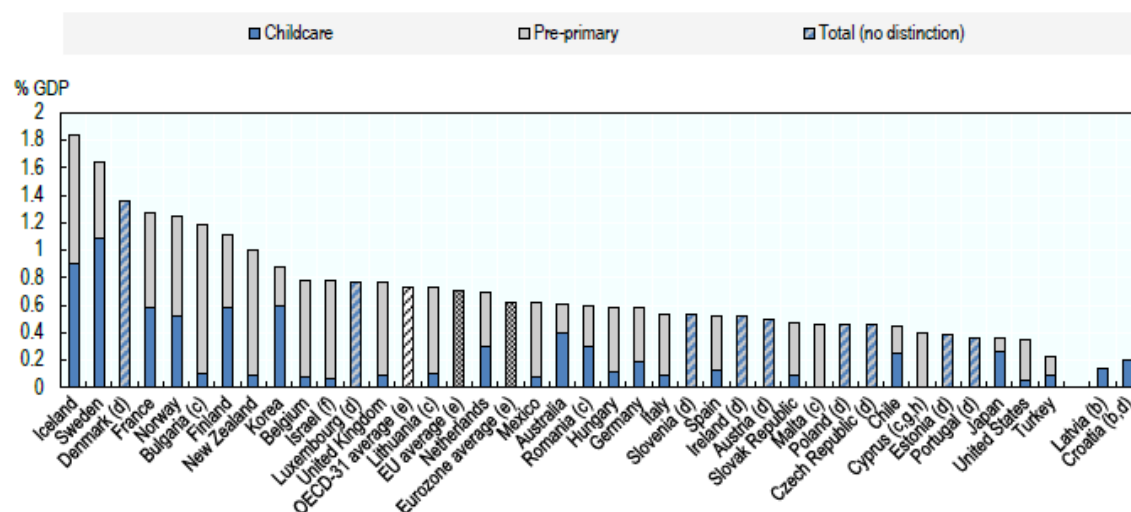
### *The need to invest in child care*

3.46 Several submissions noted the need to invest in the early childhood education and care sector. On the one hand, access to child care is a factor leading to gender segregation. On the other hand, as a low paid, female-dominated industry offering flexible work, the child care sector is also a case study of the consequences of gender segregation.

3.47 Professor Meg Smith, a member of Work + Family Policy Roundtable (W+FPR), recommended policy measures that directly address the undervaluation of work commonly undertaken by women in sectors such as child care.

3.48 The ACTU recommended a range of specific policy measures aimed at supporting workers with caring responsibilities.

**Figure 3.2—Public spending on early childhood education and care as a % of GDP, 2013 and latest data available**



Note: OECD Social Expenditure Database (OECD countries); Eurostat (for Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Lithuania, Malta and Romania).

Source: PF3.1: Public spending on child care and early education, OECD Family database, [https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3\\_1\\_Public\\_spending\\_on\\_child\\_care\\_and\\_early\\_education.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3_1_Public_spending_on_child_care_and_early_education.pdf) (accessed 10 May 2017).

3.49 The committee noted the findings of recent research into the benefits for investing in the care economy in comparable jurisdictions (see Figure 3.2 above). A 2016 analysis of seven OECD countries by the UK Women's Budget Group concluded that investing the equivalent of two per cent of GDP in the female-dominated care

30 Professor Meg Smith, Member, W+FPR, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, p. 1.

industry would produce larger employment effects than the equivalent investment in the male-dominated construction industry.<sup>31</sup>

3.50 Chapter 5 provides further detail about policies and legislation that address gender segregation in comparable overseas jurisdictions.

### *The career cost of flexible and part-time work*

3.51 Women's need for flexibility in work arrangements has contributed to vertical and horizontal gender segregation in Australian workplaces, with an over-representation of women professionals in lower-paid roles and the under-representation of women in senior, management and leadership roles.<sup>32</sup>

3.52 Women regularly choose part-time or casual employment 'below their skill level' so that they can manage both paid work and unpaid family responsibilities, suggesting that the availability of part-time work is a significant factor contributing to vertical and horizontal gender segregation in Australian workplaces.<sup>33</sup>

#### **Box 3.1**

And so, when I announced I was pregnant with my second child I was told I lied to my manager. And now I'm halfway through my training and I don't get to finish it. I asked if I could be involved in the team meetings and I was told 'no, you're part-time'. But I was responsible and experienced enough to hold the fort while the whole department went to the team meeting. It was the same with leave, if I had appointments during the week I was told I had my non-working days to do those. And I can't help it if my child has specialist appointments. All this because I am a female, I was definitely not afforded the same opportunities as others due to me having children.

Source: Local Government Worker, Melbourne, VTHC, *Submission 13*, p. 11.

3.53 The VTHC noted, for example, that women frequently reported having to take lower status roles in order to get part-time hours or being forced to move to less secure working arrangements in order to achieve the flexibility they needed to accommodate their caring responsibilities.<sup>34</sup>

3.54 These decisions are sometimes made for women. Traditional career evaluations place a higher reward on a full-time uninterrupted career trajectory. A broken career pattern can lead to stereotyping of women as less committed to their careers. This is also associated with professional isolation, difficulties with re-entering the workforce, and pressure to return from maternity leave early.<sup>35</sup>

31 Jerome De Henau, Susan Himmelwelt, Zofia Lapniewska and Diane Perrons, *Investing in the Care Economy: A gender analysis of employment stimulus in seven OECD countries*, A report by the UK Women's Budget Group for the International Trade Union Confederation, March 2016, p. 31.

32 PA, *Submission 1*, p. 17.

33 A Hegewisch and J Gomick, 'The Impact of Work-Family Policies on Women's Employment: A Review of Research From OECD Countries', *Community, Work and Family*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2011, p. 126. Also see WGEA, *Submission 22*, p. 10.

34 VTHC, *Submission 13*, p. 11.

35 PA, *Submission 1*, pp. 19-20; WiS, *Submission 32*, [p. 3].

3.55 Many women with caring responsibilities feel they are penalised in their jobs, and are more likely to be employed in lower paying jobs and in less secure employment.<sup>36</sup>

3.56 The Police Federation of Australia (PFA) provided some results from their survey of flexible working arrangements (FWAs) in the police force. Results indicate that 80 per cent of police on flexible working arrangements are women. Additionally, 85 per cent of police on FWAs are constables, with sergeants and commissioned officers under-represented. The draft report noted feedback from respondents:

...because they are not full-timers they [believe they] are consistently overlooked, not being considered for or offered training.<sup>37</sup>

### **Social norms and stereotypes**

3.57 Social norms and gender stereotypes reinforce gender segregation by limiting the roles deemed appropriate for men and women. This section will examine how gender expectations express themselves in education, training and throughout a person's working life. It will then examine female participation in STEM fields before considering men and women working in non-stereotypical industries and jobs.

#### ***Gender stereotypes about work***

3.58 Gendered stereotypes of industries and occupations play a crucial role in creating gender segregation in the Australian workforce.

3.59 According to Women in Super (WiS):

There are deeply entrenched views in Australia regarding the types of careers that girls/women have traditionally been expected to do and what boys/men should do. Although this has changed somewhat over recent years, the gender segregation data produced by WGEA shows that it may well be the expectations of the workforce especially graduate and Gen Y's that has changed but not the workforce itself.<sup>38</sup>

3.60 Although gender stereotypes can sometimes lead to men and women opting out of particular fields, in many cases these decisions are made for them by companies' recruiting and HR practices. Both of these situations are considered below.

#### ***The role of gender stereotypes in individual decisions***

3.61 Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) emphasised that, along with other measures, there is a need to challenge broader societal stereotypes in order to bring about cultural change within workplaces:

Employer efforts to achieve gender equity in the workplace are important and are to be encouraged, but should run in parallel with a broader social discussion that challenges stereotypes and effects cultural change, so that

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36 VTHC, *Submission 13*, p. 10.

37 PFA, *Submission 17*, p. 8.

38 WiS, *Submission 32*, [p. 2].

women and their partners can make considered choices about the way they balance work and personal priorities.<sup>39</sup>

3.62 WGEA described gendered stereotypes:

...few men are attracted to lower paying female dominated industries because of the stereotypes around men's work, which has most likely contributed to the lack of males in health and education.<sup>40</sup>

3.63 Ai Group described the difficulties in recruiting females to jobs traditionally done by males, even when actively targeting females.<sup>41</sup>

3.64 The AMWU described about the reasons for the low numbers of women in technical and trade positions:

Young women are still diverted, if you like, at the high school level, from considering going into non-traditional fields. There is report that was released last year that shows that, if they do so choose, there is quite an extreme amount of harassment and bullying that the young women face—they have to go through trials and tribulations to complete their apprenticeship—so there need to be structural changes.<sup>42</sup>

*The role of gender stereotypes in employer practices*

3.65 The Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (BCEC) reported that unconscious bias contributes to the pay gap:<sup>43</sup>

The issue of unconscious bias was flagged as one explanation for really quite a strong finding in the last WGEA gender equity report, which sought to compare the pay of male and female employees on graduate training programs in private organisations.

...until we deal with the issue with unconscious bias, it will be very hard to drive gender pay gaps to zero. A recent survey of Australia's business, government and not-for-profit sectors found that gender bias in feedback and promotion decisions also inhibits the equal progress of women into leadership positions, with 60 per cent per cent of men and 41 per cent per cent of women promoted twice or more in the past five years.<sup>44</sup>

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39 Ms Alana Matheson, Deputy Director, Workplace Relations, ACCI, *Proof Hansard*, 10 April 2017, p. 17.

40 Ms Libby Lyons, Director, WGEA, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, p. 35.

41 Ms Genevieve Vaccaro, Principal Adviser, Workplace Relations Policy, Ai Group, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2016, p. 44.

42 Ms Robyn Fortescue, Assistant State Secretary, AMWU, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, p. 52.

43 Associate Professor Rebecca Cassells, Principal Research Fellow, BCEC, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, p. 8.

44 Bain and CEW, *Advancing women in Australia: Elimination bias in feedback and promotions*, [http://cew.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/FINAL-Report-Summary-for-CEW-Members\\_Advancing-Women-in-Australia.pdf](http://cew.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/FINAL-Report-Summary-for-CEW-Members_Advancing-Women-in-Australia.pdf) (accessed 1 March 2017).

3.66 A number of submitters provided evidence about programs they were undertaking to reduce the role of gender stereotypes and unconscious bias in their organisations.

3.67 Ai Group reported that its members are seeking to remove unconscious bias in recruitment and promotion.<sup>45</sup>

3.68 The Reserve Bank's share of female graduates, from fields as diverse as economics, finance, law, mathematics and statistics, has increased as a result of changing its recruitment practices:

We engaged more intensively with universities so that students knew about the Reserve Bank as a place where one can have a rewarding career in an inclusive environment.

We used separate teams for shortlisting and interviewing, to reduce unconscious biases at later stages of the selection process. We moved our recruitment campaign earlier and started fast-tracking the obviously good candidates to interview and decision before deciding on the full slate of interviewees.<sup>46</sup>

3.69 The ACCI argued that business leaders can play an important role in driving structural and cultural change within their own organisations and promoting the benefits of a diverse workforce more broadly.

3.70 The Australian Public Service Commission (APSC) reviews practices to identify and address unconscious bias as part of the Australian Public Service (APS) gender equality strategy. The strategy:

...requires all agencies to have tailored but ambitious gender equality targets across all leadership levels and business areas and to implement action plans to reach them. Every portfolio department has now done this and many of those plans are already public. Agencies are also required to review their recruitment, retention and performance management practices to address areas of gender inequality, including by identifying and mitigating unconscious bias.<sup>47</sup>

### *Workplace culture*

3.71 Bias is not always unconscious and not always covert. This committee received troubling evidence about workplace cultures that were threatening and hostile to women.

3.72 The Victorian Trades Hall Commission undertook a survey of women's experiences at work:

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45 Ms Genevieve Vaccaro, Principal Adviser, Workplace Relations Policy, Ai Group, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, p. 44.

46 ACCI, *Submission 30*, pp. 23–24.

47 Ms Stephanie Foster, Deputy Public Service Commissioner, APSC, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, pp 19–20.

- 64 per cent of respondents have experienced bullying, harassment or violence in their workplace;
- 60 per cent of respondents reported feeling ‘unsafe, uncomfortable or at risk’ in their workplace;
- 44 per cent of respondents reported experiencing discrimination at work;
- 23 per cent of respondents don’t feel that they are treated with respect at work; and
- 19 per cent of respondents cited ‘unsafe work environment’ as a factor in their decision to leave paid work.<sup>48</sup>

### Box 3.2

I have had my manager wolf whistle at another woman worker, and when I said that is not okay to do at work the manager asked me if I was jealous. I raised this harassment with my manager's boss and he said the issue was a personality clash.

Source: Copy Writer and Editor, Carlton North.

I was working in an office and it was commonplace for the male employees to openly tell me what they wanted to do with me sexually. This was done frequently both verbally and in writing. It was before I went into health—I was working in financial trading and was even traded by the male staff.

Source: Environmental Health Worker, Melbourne Western Suburbs, VTHC, *Submission 13*, p.7.

### *Education and training*

3.73 Gendered stereotypes about work arise earlier in individuals’ careers through gendered expectations about education and training.

3.74 PM&C acknowledged that:

Participation in the workforce in particular industries ...is influenced early by gender stereotypes, which, in turn, influence the educational choices that women make and determine the knowledge and skills that women and men bring to the workplace.<sup>49</sup>

3.75 WGEA noted that gender segregation is reinforced by course choices and graduate career choices:

...graduates are overwhelmingly entering fields dominated by their own gender—almost 90 per cent of the graduates in health care and social assistance industry are women, while men continue to dominate construction (almost 80 per cent) and mining (almost two-thirds).<sup>50</sup>

3.76 NCOSS described how unconscious bias affecting career counselling:

48 VTHC, *Submission 13*, pp. 7-8.

49 ACCI, *Submission 30*, pp. 23–24.

50 Diversity Council Australia, 'Gender segregation in the workplace inquiry', 17 February 2017, <https://www.dca.org.au/News/News/Gender-segregation-in-the-workplace-inquiry/560> (accessed 2 March 2017).

...what we hear through our young women's network is that at school there is unconscious bias through the careers counselling process. Indeed, by not naming it upfront I think allows for the unconscious bias to continue.<sup>51</sup>

3.77 NCOSS spoke further about how unconscious bias also affects the way girls experience their first jobs:

...for a lot of young women [they] have their first job concurrent with being at school. So they may be working at the local supermarket or in a coffee shop. What you are seeing is you are at school and you are not perhaps being developed and shown opportunities in the same way around STEM. But then you also go into the workplace for your part-time job and you are prevented...from doing any of the auditing of the financials and the stocking out the back and you are put out the front to run the checkout. The 'checkout chick' phenomenon is a thing.

Girls do not get the job as the barista. That has a level of skill attached to it. So the boys are the baristas and the girls are the waitresses. All of these things we hear—and we are surprised to hear, ...I hear these young women who are aged between 15 to their mid-20s in our group telling us these things...That is today in Australia. But that is a reality.<sup>52</sup>

3.78 Given the importance of gender stereotypes in shaping career decisions, it is unfortunate that there is limited consideration of gender, or the specific needs of women and girls, in career guidance materials.

3.79 In its submission, economic Security4Women (eS4W) referred to research they conducted in 2014 that focused on career guidance and advice provided in secondary schools. It indicated that there is evidence of gender bias in existing career counselling resources and approaches.<sup>53</sup>

3.80 NCOSS also gave evidence that:

...through our young women's network (we hear) that at school there is unconscious bias through the careers counselling process.<sup>54</sup>

### ***Continuing influence of gender stereotypes—the example of the STEM sector***

3.81 Gender stereotypes are more than a historical hangover. They continue to be created and propagated and, unless addressed, will lead to a gender segregated future.

3.82 The under-representation of women in the STEM sector provides a good case study of the role of social norms and expectations in driving gender segregation. As a

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51 Ms Tracy Howe, Chief Executive Officer, NCOSS, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, p. 30.

52 Ms Tracy Howe, Chief Executive Officer, NCOSS, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, p. 30.

53 economic Security4Women, *Women and Girls into Non-Traditional Occupations and Industries: Broadening Career Options for Secondary School Students*, Based on research by Elaine Butler, Kira Clarke and Linda Simon, *Women in Adult and Vocational Education (WAVE)*, p. 14, <https://www.security4women.org.au/wp-content/uploads/eS4W-Career-Exploration-Project-Report-20140615.pdf> (accessed 29 May 2017).

54 Ms Tracy Howe, Chief Executive Officer, NCOSS, *Proof Hansard*, 26 April 2017, p. 30.

well paid and growing field, it also provides a salient example of the consequences of gender segregation for the gender pay gap.

3.83 Three quarters of the fastest growing occupational categories requiring knowledge and skills relate to the STEM sector. However, STEM fields also have low levels of female employment in Australia, as elsewhere, with around 30 per cent of graduates being women, less than 30 per cent of jobs being held by women, and a gender pay gap of around 30 per cent.<sup>55</sup>

3.84 According to the 2016 Global Gender Gap Report:

It represents a key emerging issue for gender parity, since STEM careers are projected to be some of the most sought-after in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.<sup>56</sup>

3.85 Since 1987, women have outnumbered men graduating from higher education, comprising 60 per cent of graduates in recent years, yet less than one in 20 girls considers a career in the high-demand, highly-paid STEM fields compared to one in five boys, despite girls and boys receiving similar results in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) science test.<sup>57</sup>

3.86 This is not just an issue for women; it constitutes a form of labour market rigidity that constricts Australia's economy. It is widely recognised that engaging more women in STEM professions will enhance our capacity to participate in a rapidly evolving and increasingly competitive global economy. As Professionals Australia (PA) noted:

A workforce characterised by diversity brings together a range of people who think differently and approach problems in different ways—and this creates a “diversity advantage” that generates a range of benefits including a thriving innovation culture, a positive impact on the bottom line and incentives to remain in the STEM workforce.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Combatting stereotypes***

3.87 A number of submitters suggested ways in which men and women could be encouraged to combat stereotypes and undertake non-traditional careers.

3.88 The Tasmanian Women's Council (TWC) noted that women's current underrepresentation in certain occupations can lead to the 'false assumption that increasing their representation would lower overall productivity':

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55 G Gilmore, 'Fourth industrial revolution: could automation make life worse for women?', *The Guardian*, 7 December 2016, cited in United Voice, *Submission 19*, p. 7.

56 World Economic Forum, *The Global Gender Gap Report, 2016*, <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-gender-gap-report-2016>, (accessed 10 January 2017), p. 29.

57 CCIWA and CGE, *Submission 28*, p. 3; Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), *The Gender Pay Gap over the Life Cycle*, March 2016, <http://www.actu.org.au/media/886499/the-gender-pay-gap-over-the-life-cycle-h2.pdf>, p. 4 (accessed 16 December 2016).

58 PA, *Submission 1*, p. 5.



A further effect ...is, 'you can't be what you can't see'. The lack of visibility of women in traditionally male-dominated fields (including as teachers in male-dominated tertiary subjects, particularly STEM) is a significant contributing factor to ongoing gender segregation in the workforce.<sup>59</sup>

3.89 Dr Karen Struthers' research suggests that female students often know little about male-dominated trade careers, and may not be confident to pursue them:

Encouragingly, it seems that more girls would pursue male-dominated trade careers if they had more experience of them, and more positive role models and media images of girls in male-dominated roles.<sup>60</sup>

3.90 Although there is a range of information available to promote non-traditional career choices for girls, several witnesses pointed out that career guidance materials are fragmented<sup>61</sup> and varied in accessibility. Existing resources include:

- the AHRC's *Women in Male-Dominated Industries Toolkit* providing strategies to assist employers in attracting women to male-dominated industries and occupations;<sup>62</sup>
- WGEA's *Gender Strategy Toolkit* for assisting employers in achieving gender equality within their organisations;<sup>63</sup>
- *Girls Can Do Anything*, a website developed by eS4W, contains information on role models, career pathways to non-traditional occupations, pay rates in male-dominated industries, and an explanation of gender-segregated workforces and the impact that this has on the gender pay gap;<sup>64</sup> and
- initiatives being implemented by individual businesses and organisations such as IBM, Reserve Bank of Australia and Dulux Group to improve women's participation.<sup>65</sup>

3.91 Some industry-led initiatives are supported by the Australian Government, including the Australian Women in Resources Alliance e-mentoring program, which provides mentoring for women in the resources sector to overcome the barriers of

59 TWC, *Submission 5*, p. 4.

60 Dr Karen Struthers, *Submission 2*, p. 3.

61 See for example, Ms Frances Davies, Member, Social Policy Committee, National Foundation for Australian Women, *Proof Hansard*, 10 April 2017, p. 12. Also see eS4W, *Women and Girls into Non-Traditional Occupations and Industries*.

62 AHRC, *Women in male-dominated industries: A toolkit of strategies*, 2013, <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/projects/women-male-dominated-industries-toolkit-strategies> (accessed 2 March 2017).

63 WGEA, *Gender Strategy Toolkit: A direction for achieving gender equality in your organisation*, [https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Gender\\_Strategy\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://www.wgea.gov.au/sites/default/files/Gender_Strategy_Toolkit.pdf) (accessed 2 March 2017).

64 See *Girls Can Do Anything* website, <http://www.togatus.com.au/girls-can-do-anything/> (accessed 7 March 2017); eS4W, *Submission 7*, p. 4.

65 DCA, *Submission 18*, pp. 11–13.

living and working in remote regions. It received Government funding for a further 100 mentoring places in 2016.<sup>66</sup>

3.92 Allocating responsibility for addressing the under-representation of women in male-dominated trades is needed.<sup>67</sup> However, the future shape of the labour market should be taken into consideration when encouraging more women into traditionally male-dominated industries:

Encouraging women to further expand supply into male dominated occupations which are already in relative decline is unlikely to improve the position of women. Also, if more women enter 'male' trades they will not be entering other occupations which are experiencing relative growth such as in services and increasingly demanding better-educated women.<sup>68</sup>

#### *Men entering female-dominated industries*

3.93 Few submissions addressed the issue of men's participation in female-dominated industries, although the DoE pointed to the need to encourage men to consider growth industries such as health care and social assistance, which is projected to grow by 250,200 jobs between 2016 and 2020, and education and training which is projected to grow by 121,700 jobs over the same period and account for 37.6 per cent of the projected growth.<sup>69</sup>

3.94 A 2014 report prepared by Health Workforce Australia predicted that Australia's demand for nurses will significantly exceed supply, with a projected shortfall of approximately 85,000 nurses by 2025, or 123,000 nurses by 2030 as a result of population health trends, an ageing nursing and midwifery workforce, high levels of part-time employment and poor retention rates.<sup>70</sup>

3.95 The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) provided the nursing profession as an example of some of the challenges facing the 'caring professions'. Despite the projected growth in female-dominated caring professions, it is expected that there will be skills shortages in some of these professions:

In order to...have a sufficient health workforce that is going to meet the needs of the community...in the coming decades, we are going to need a

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66 DoE, *Submission 14*, p. 21; ACCI, *Submission 30*, p. 20.

67 Dr Karen Struthers, *Submission 2*, p. 3.

68 AFEI, *Submission 27*, pp. 4–5.

69 The automotive manufacturing industry in South Australia and Victoria, for example, is set to close by the end of 2017. DoE, *Submission 14*, p. 22. See DoE, 'Employment projections 2016', *Labour Market Information Portal*, <http://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/GainInsights/EmploymentProjection> (accessed 1 March 2017).

70 HealthWorkforce Australia, *Australia's Future Health Workforce: Nurses*, Detailed Report, August 2014, [http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/34AA7E6FDB8C16AACA257D9500112F25/\\$File/AFHW20-%20Nurses%20detailed%20report.pdf](http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/34AA7E6FDB8C16AACA257D9500112F25/$File/AFHW20-%20Nurses%20detailed%20report.pdf) (accessed 7 March 2017), p. 3.

much bigger workforce. A more efficient health workforce is going to be one that is more nurse-led and less reliant on medical practitioners as the leaders of the health workforce, but that requires shifts in professional recognition and acknowledgement...that is going to require a greater workforce overall. Having more men represented in nursing would assist in achieving both those things, we believe.<sup>71</sup>

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71 Ms Annie Butler, Assistant Federal Secretary, ANMF, *Proof Hansard*, Sydney, 26 April 2017, p. 54.

